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This digest features important articles on development and social transformation in order to reach those working in the field and not having knowledge of these documents. It is aimed at promoting further reading of the originals, and generating public debate and action on public issues. The articles are compiled and edited for easy reading and comprehension of the concepts, and not so much to reproduce the academic accuracy of the original texts.

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Education as Vision for Social Change

Amman Madan

Elementary Education for the Poorest and Other Disadvantaged Groups: The Real Challenge of Universalisation by Jyotsna Jha and Dhir Jhingran; Centre for Policy Research, New Delhi, 2002; pp 255+ tables. [CED Ref: B.N21.J60]

To reduce universalisation of education to the narrow aspects of building school rooms and improving textbooks is to deny the vast potential of the idea.

The development of a fresh vision of education is linked to the larger process of rethinking what it means to be an Indian, and what it means to be developed.

Jha and Jhingran's report is a timely reminder that the universalisation of education is about much greater things; it is about the universalisation of the ideas of freedom and equality and the full realisation of individual potential.

The question of reform in Indian education has usually been conceived of in narrow ways – putting children in school and getting schools to function efficiently. This has been tantamount to missing the wood for the trees. *It misses the question of the larger purpose of education – what kind of society do we want to create, what kind of mode of production do we want our society to be built upon, what are the ideologies that schools create and how do they connect up with social change?*

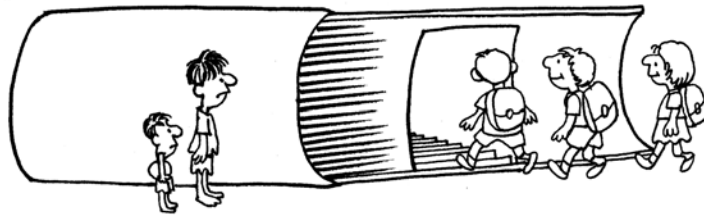
Education as Vision for Social Change. *Amman Madan, Economic & Political Weekly, Vol 38, May 31, 2003.*

[http://www.epw.org.in/showArticles.php?root=2003&leaf=05&filename=5875&filetype=html\[C.ELDOC6007175\]](http://www.epw.org.in/showArticles.php?root=2003&leaf=05&filename=5875&filetype=html[C.ELDOC6007175])

Debates on education tend to meander either in administrative trivia or see ideals like child-centred education independently of what is happening in the

larger society outside schools. *Little effort is made to link up with the processes going on in everyday life – the growth of a market economy, a widespread thrust toward democratisation, a fast-changing social structure, the destruction of old inequalities and the creation of new oppressions.* It is blandly assumed that if children are in schools and are being taught, everything will automatically become hunky-dory.

Such sociological innocence cannot but serve dominant vested interests in our present political economy. Many prominent Indians pointed out a hundred years ago that the **schools set up by the British basically served to integrate people with the new power establishment that was then springing up. That insight on the structural role of schooling continues to hold true.** The challenge continues to be that of constructing a fundamental critique of power and society and building an educational system that breaks free into a wider vision of both. It is unfortunate that the independent Indian state, which should have been at the forefront of such a radical critique, is instead content with minor and conservative tinkering around, happy to let market processes have their way.



Jyotsna Jha and Dhir Jhingran’s study represents a refreshing break from the usual unambitious literature emerging from government policy-making circles. In their *Elementary Education for the Poorest and Other Deprived Groups: The Real Challenge of Universalisation*, as the sub-title suggests, **they try to go into the heart of the matter.**

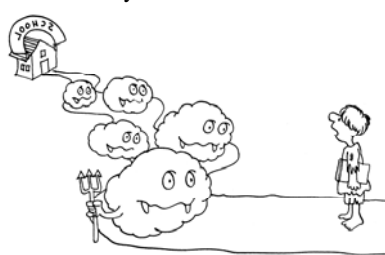
It is truly a pleasure to see a study talking the language of the universalisation of elementary education, but cutting loose to argue that poverty and powerlessness are by far the greatest obstacles to achieving its goals. It is these

that discourage the poor from sending their children to school much more than anything else. This is a timely reality check for our policy-makers, reminding them that the state's slogan of universalisation of education is actually tied up with the removal of inequalities and oppressions from this land.

Jha, Dhingran and their team of researchers focused on how various kinds of deprivations contribute towards decision-making regarding schooling. They display considerable methodological sensitivity towards trying to understand what kinds of factors and processes add up to or subtract from people's decision to send their children to school. *The study is obviously influenced by the traditions of studying decision-making in economics, but does not get into a mathematical treatment of the same.*

A key principle organising their inquiry is the distinction between a desire for education and a demand for education. They argue that developing a commitment for education has a high cost for the poor. There may be a widespread desire for education, but many factors must combine before a certain threshold limit is reached beyond which regular attendance or even enrolment is attained. A strong point of the study is the emphasis on understanding the context within which children, their parents and their communities live. It is the context which to a large extent defines the contributory factors and whether the threshold limit is reached or not.

The study describes in some detail the economic relations which underlie



poverty in the places studied.

In rural areas accessibility, availability of basic amenities and

Fieldwork for the study was conducted in the first half of 2001, and took place in 11 rural districts in 10 states, of which nine are among the poorest districts in the country.

Two districts were deliberately chosen to represent richer areas and round off a good deal of heterogeneity in contexts among the total of 37 villages studied.

Fifteen slums in five cities were also studied, ranging from the environment of a large mega-city to a small flood-prone railway junction.

the character of agriculture are examined. Ownership of land, the availability of wage work and the proximity of resources like forests are important factors that deeply influence the quality of life of the poor. Intertwined with these are caste and religious identities, which add their own bonds and flavours to the compulsions of the poor.

To their credit, Jha and Jhingran throughout accept and seek to bring forth the variations in the nature of poverty, both among diverse regions and among groups within the same region. They also pay attention to the differences to be seen in the conditions of the scheduled castes, scheduled tribes, girl children, Muslims and OBCs.

Yet, in all that diversity, there emerges a common picture of the life situation of the poor. This is characterised by a life of hardship and great insecurity. Survival depends on a very thin thread and there is little in reserve to tide over a crisis. Debts are incurred regularly and while they keep people alive their repayment sucks the poor dry of whatever resources they had any chance of gathering. *As such, there are severe odds against taking a long-term view of life and planning for the future. When life depends on such wafer-thin margins the labour of children makes a vital difference to the poor.*

This coincides with what the poor said to the field teams when asked for the reasons for non-enrolment or non-attendance. By far the most common reasons have to do with children being diverted to income-generating activities, helping with the cattle and the farm, taking care of siblings while parents go out to work, and the cost of buying school dresses and textbooks among others. In short, the major cluster of reasons is associated with keeping the family's head above water.

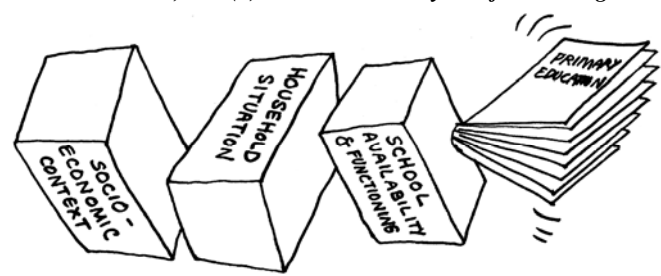
Reasons like schooling being boring or the school being far away are clearly not the most commonly cited ones among the poor. Among the very poor and girl children, their importance falls even lower, with family survival reasons gaining further.

The urban poor have a somewhat different pattern.

The greater availability of wage work and higher consumption patterns lead to a greater pull away from school into child labour outside the home. At the same time, there is a greater commitment towards education among parents who see the linkage of education with power all around them. School environments have a much greater role to play in urban slums, with a much larger number of children saying they stay away because they find school boring or oppressive.

The study also seeks to understand the poor who do actually send their children to school. In many cases it is simply that there has been no recent crisis forcing the sudden withdrawal of the child from school. In other cases, where circumstances have been quite desperate, it is the parents' commitment to schooling which keeps children in the classroom, even at the cost of additional debts and hardship. Parents' commitment emerges largely as a cultural force, influenced sometimes by political movements or by long-term visions, or by hopes of future employment. The regular functioning of a school with a sufficient number of friendly teachers also does make a difference. Its absence simply adds to the steepness of the climb which children and their parents have to make to reach school.

The study concludes that there are three dimensions that are critical to the universalisation of elementary education: (1) the socio-economic context, (2) the household situation, and (3) school availability and functioning.



After a brief summary of the state policies on education over the past two decades, Jha and Jhingran restate one of their central arguments (p 249): “The inclusion of children from poor and deprived groups in the fold of sustained schooling can be achieved only with a fundamental change in the approach and

functioning of the schooling system, on the one hand, and the socio-political empowerment of the poor and the deprived on the other.” *A clear long-term vision is called for, which does not distract itself with isolated short-term measures.*

This would require among other things, the bulldozing of vested interests who resist any attempt for basic change. It would need a reorientation of personnel all over the bureaucratic hierarchy towards a more inclusive approach when dealing with education for the poor. Several unorthodox measures such as motivation camps, remedial teaching and seasonal hostels would need to be made part of the mainstream strategy, while maintaining in them the same high standards which are expected of conventional measures.

In government there must take place a shift in the meaning of accountability from allegiance to rules and orders to the actual achievement of the defined goals. Decentralisation must take place so that the ultimate accountability is to the people. There must be a marked improvement in the quality of governance so that it delivers at least the basic amenities of life to the poor. Good governance is the keystone of the entire effort. Without it there can be no empowerment of the poor and no universalisation of education. Parallel to this must take place a wider process of empowerment through social and political movements. Education must enter into the agenda of all the social forces acting in the country; only then through their joint efforts can the universalisation of elementary education take place.

... but one still wishes that they had carried their critique further. Implicitly the kind of education they would like to see universalised is basically one that integrates the poor with the mainstream economy and culture. Education seems to be aimed at bringing people into the middle-class, preferably with government jobs, and enable them to interact and negotiate with the market and the state.

There is another way of looking at what education seeks to do – it aims at building a new kind of society, one with justice and freedom, where everyone gets the context and support to live up to his or her greatest potential. The real challenge of universalisation then would be how to

implement such a vision of education for social change. The authors break out of the cosy niceties of conventional thinking about education, but still do not go far enough.

The challenge is to understand how education operates within a given social structure, both reproducing it as well as sowing seeds of change. The way out is to work out what the alternatives are, in terms of modes of production and cultural patterns, and how education can tie up with various other agencies in moving towards those alternatives. There is the urgent need to try and create a vision of an economy and polity that would provide a basic minimum to all and thus bring people to a point where they actually have some freedom of choice.

The universalisation of freedom is at the heart of the universalisation of education, and that should not be confused with the technical detail of getting a 100 per cent enrolment figure in schools. ▶

NOTES

Means and Ends

The question of Violence as a means has always been as fascinating as it has been abhorrent. In today's dominant discourse on civil society, all violence tends to be tarred with the same brush – uncivil.

But violence in the face of injustice cannot be wished away. The question is how to subsume it in a political culture that enables the voice of the tyrannized to be heard, yet does not let it turn renegade.

In our preoccupation with civility, we have turned a deaf ear to tyranny and oppression.

Arun Kumar explores the emergence of violence in Bihar. For him 'Violence, no matter in what name it is courted – tactic, expediency or compulsion – blurs the distinction between emancipatory and retrogressive, the Left and the Right.



'The Ultra Left in Bihar began its career by following the violent path already taken by a number of individuals between 1967 and 1971. It picked up the argument of individualised cases of resistance and turned it into a 'party-line', a generalised political wisdom, into a social good the 'inevitability of violence'.

'Not surprisingly, in the Ultra Left's extreme vision there was little space for self-criticism, doubts, ambivalence and thus for dialogue and

democracy itself. Today the Ultra Left, unable to break the vicious circle of violence, is doomed to follow the politics of marginality’.

In a similar vein, Sumantha Bannerjee points out that the ultra left has fossilised its conception of class enemies, and is missing the main threat from high profile national leaders of the Sangh Parivar. More important is the failure to expand their mass base, giving ground to the communal elements in their own backyard.



Violence and Political Culture: Politics of the Ultra Left in Bihar, Arun Kumar, *Economic & Political Weekly*, Vol. 38, Nov 22, 2003.



<http://www.epw.org.in/showArticles.php?root=2003&leaf=11&filename=6531&filetype=html>. [C.ELDOC6008724]

Naxalites: Time for Introsepion, Sumanta Banerjee. *EPW Commentary*, Vol. 38. No.44, Nov 1, 2003.

<http://www.epw.org.in/showArticles.php?root=2003&leaf=11&filename=6437&filetype=html>. [C.ELDOC6007915]

Violence and Political Culture Politics of the Ultra Left in Bihar

Arun Kumar

I am more and more convinced that true revolutionaries must perceive the revolution, because of its creative and liberating nature, as an act of love ... What indeed, is the deeper motive which moves individuals to become revolutionaries, but the dehumanisation of people? – Paulo Freire

Violence is taken here as a conscious response to difference in order to eliminate it. In this sense, it is illusory because violence can only eliminate the person who differs but not the difference itself. Ideas, having lives of their own, are replaced by ideas alone; a person subscribing to a particular idea is merely a carrier of that idea.

Violence erodes the space for dialogue and it does so owing to its inextricable link with arbitrariness. In this sense, political violence betrays the same dualism



of 'good' and 'evil' and similar obsession with absolute truth that can be historically associated with religions, ... The revolutionary violence, thus, mirrors the norms of 'divine justice', its radical claims notwithstanding. This deep-seated antagonism to difference does not leave much space for democratic norms and values to grow.

The two following arguments are often applied as 'explanations', and at times, as outright 'justifications' for violence. One is about the inevitability of it; the poor and dalits, the

marginalised and subjugated were not given access to democratic fora to raise their concerns. The need to voice their pain and, more importantly, to be heard, therefore, forced them to speak the language of violence. It is a powerful argument and must be taken seriously. In the face of relentless structural violence, whether or not there was an alternative way to conduct politics of transformation is a question that should be addressed with adequate historical sensitivity.

The other issue pertains to what may be called victim-hood, ‘violence was forced on us’, ‘it is the only way one could survive in the given scenario’, etc.

What is interesting about this argument is that it is professed not just by the protagonists of the Ultra Left, but also by the propertied and the powerful upper castes: ‘we are forced to pick up arms to save our land and dignity from the onslaught of the Naxals’, has been a common refrain of the Ranveer Sena supporters, for instance, and their like in the past. Conceptually, it extends even to the Hindutva ideologues, ... Perpetrators of violence under this scheme claim only to be responding to the violence unleashed by the Other. Likewise, when asked to stop killings, they would invariably maintain: ‘ask them to stop first’.

One of the important philosophical sources of such glorification is religious, *brahmanic*, to be precise. Detachment is the key here; ‘*hinsa*’ committed with ‘*nishkam bhav*’ (detached feeling) for ‘*loksangraha*’ (the general good, welfare of the society) is not *hinsa* at all, announces the Song Celestial, *Srimadbhagavat* Gita. Martyrdom becomes the driving force; no one is a criminal in such endeavours, there are only heroes. Religious sanctions of violence, however, go beyond the vision of *loksangraha*.

During anti-colonial struggles, violence attended a new height as a means to national liberation. Even though it was employed in Freedom movements before him, Frantz Fanon, one of the greatest ideologues of ‘emancipatory violence’ by the oppressed, explains its significance:

The violence which has ruled over the ordering of the colonial world, which has ceaselessly drummed the rhythm for the destruction of native social forms and broken up without reserve the systems of reference of the economy, the

customs of dress and external life, that same violence will be claimed and taken over by the native at the moment when, deciding to embody history in his own person, he surges into the forbidden quarters. ... violence is a cleansing force. It frees the native from his inferiority complex and from his despair and inaction; it makes him fearless and restores his self-respect”.

About the peasants in a colonial predicament, Fanon echoed Mao's views - the starving peasant, outside the class system, is the first among the exploited to discover that only violence pays...

Violence and the Ultra Left

Though the first spark of the Naxalite movement appeared in Musahari village of Muzaffarpur district in 1967, it was in Bhojpur district that the movement cemented itself before spreading throughout central Bihar.

What often does not get highlighted is the fact that the poor and dalits began organising themselves, not all under the banner of Naxalite politics, not on the question of land redistribution or payment of minimum wages, but on the question of 'izzat' (dignity). Once they organised themselves in some form, issues of lands and wages were automatically taken up.

This is an important point in order to understand and analyse the Ultra Left and the nature of their violent politics. Even during the early 1970s, when the official line of 'annihilation of the class enemy' reigned supreme, the 'death punishment' was accorded only to those landlords who were perceived as obstacles to the movement.

From 1967 (Musahari in Muzaffarpur) to 1971 (Ekwari in Bhojpur), 'Naxalbari' was not really an organisation or a party or even a front. It was more like a phrase that caught the imagination of tens of thousands of toiling masses; it became an expression of epochal wrath, yet not articulate, but laden with the destructive strength of a storm. It was sporadic, at times even erratic and extremely violent.

What is today referred to as the Ultra Left had no history of organised non-violent struggle. Individuals had revolted and been killed. It was rendered impossible for the individuals to be non-violent in their protest against a systemic repression ritualised by a centuries-old caste system and protected and patronised by all the three legs of the independent Indian state, the executive, the legislature and the judiciary.

That the **Ultra Left picked up the argument of the ‘inevitability of violence’ involved in individualised cases of resistance and turned it into a party-‘line’**, a generalised social wisdom, is invariably missed by the scholars of the subject. Violence which had emerged as a language of politics for the unorganised dalits and poor, became the politics itself under the organised Ultra Left.

The Ultra Left in Bihar began its career not by preparing and leading a non-violent mass movement but by following the violent path already taken by individual heroes; it embraced this currency of political sentiment and proceeded to articulate people’s anguish and frustration by burning copies of the Indian Constitution, blowing away police stations and shouting slogans like, ‘*varg shatruron ka chhe inch chhota karo*’ (behead the class enemy) in order to realise, ‘*lal kile pe lal nishan*’ (Red flag on the Red Fort).



The period of individual annihilation to ‘liberate and turn feudal zones into Red areas’ was short. After the declaration of the emergency, the state moved in swiftly, to reclaim its monopoly over violence and as a result by 1976, the Naxal movement was virtually crushed. This inspired a rethinking by the Ultra Left about their political line.

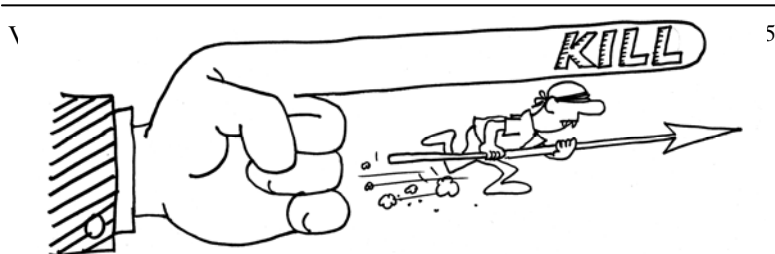
Doubts had begun to creep into many of the factions of the Left. Some seriously began to question the wisdom of leaving out the legislative front altogether. The need for an open mass movement was registered. A number of groups got together in April 1982 to start what came to be known as the Indian People's Front. They decided to show allegiance to the Indian Constitution and its parliamentary process of governance, they abandoned the earlier policy of individual annihilation, violence was downplayed, armed squads of professional 'revolutionaries' were announced to be disbanded. Instead, the focus shifted towards 'arming the masses', as they were the ones with direct stakes in the Revolution.

This could have turned into a historical moment in the annals of the Left movement in Bihar, but it was not to be. Armed squads were continued secretly, violence had now openly become a question of 'tactic' that demanded the rhetoric of disbanding armed squads of 'professional revolutionaries' and, instead, a move to 'arm the masses' themselves.

The wisdom of creating a mass movement while continuing to court violence has proved to be rather politically naive. The IPF experiment was given up also because the leadership sensed that it had little control over the masses as compared to the control over cadres. Dualism in political philosophy and dishonesty in political ethics ensured that the call for an open peaceful mass movement was merely an eyewash and not a clean, genuine political departure from history. With such intellectual and theoretical laziness, with such distrust in the democratisation of politics, with such strong addiction to marginality, they failed to realise that a Manichaeian violence, based on the supposed primeval conflict between light and darkness also presupposes Satan as co-eternal with god.

Violence and Political Culture

Following his faith in anarchism and violence, Bakunin, like Kropotkin and Rudolph Rocker later, had made a candid confession, "it is necessary to abolish completely, in principle and in practice, everything that might be called



political power, for so long as political power exists, there will always be rulers and the ruled, masters and slaves, exploiters and the exploited”.

Influenced by the great ideals of the French Revolution, their conviction in Socialism and Liberalism led them to argue for the liquidation of the state, unlike the communist revolutionaries who wanted the state to be under the dictatorship of the proletariat. The Anarchists had set themselves clearly against any form of political power. The Ultra Left in Bihar has pursued violence to create a particular political order. Predilection for destruction, violence and spontaneity is where the similarity between the two ends.

The commonsensical adage that violence begets violence has come to haunt the political culture of Bihar. Violence has become the reason of the time, as it were. Open democratic political discussion and education of the masses have never really been a strong point of the Left. Ambivalence, difference of opinions, and openness to new ideas are routinely discouraged and this has a theoretical basis in their reluctance to address the question of violence philosophically.

It is not a coincidence that many sections of the Ultra Left today are at sea as to what programme to follow, not only to further the struggle for redistributive justice, but also to keep their cadres together.

The line between a criminal and a militant leftist has begun to disappear. Now we have more extortionists and kidnapers than ever before, many of them masquerading as agents of social change.



To conclude, the vicious circle of violence and destruction has become like an addiction to a drug, we think it is needed for our survival, but which actually slowly but surely kills us.

How else can we explain the Ultra Left's refusal to learn from the phenomenon of '*niji senas*' (private armies)? Many explain the rise and growth of caste-based *senas* as a response of the landed gentry to the violence unleashed by the Naxals in the 1970s. This line of thinking had primarily begun as a propaganda by the landed elite, but over the years after tireless repetition, it has turned into a political wisdom, thanks to the English-speaking intelligentsia.

The truth is that when the Naxals pursued the politics of individual annihilation almost throughout the 1970s, there were no private armies. The Indian state could deploy all its might- legislative, administrative, judicial, and, of course, military- to effectively deal with Naxal violence; its rural allies had a Constitutional cover to thwart class struggles. Since the moment the Ultra Left gave the call for mass mobilisation, we could see caste-based *senas* mushrooming at regular intervals.

Why? Because the state and its social base can deal with a violent polity, but it cannot live with a non-violent mass movement that seeks to alter the status quo. Then the state and its lackeys need anti-Constitutional measures, like, *niji senas*, to crush a mass movement which they openly cannot, as long as they commit themselves, even perfunctorily, to the Constitution.

The Ultra Left refuses to learn that it is not their violence but non-violent mass mobilisation that the state and its allies are afraid of. It fails to see that it is ultimately in the interest of the state that every mass movement turns violent and thus loses its legitimacy to grow.

It does so because it has become a hapless captive of violence, addicted to marginality, as it were. It is only logical that the Ultra Left would spare none, not even their fellow comrades if the latter happened to hold a different opinion or stake a counter-claim over 'their territory', their 'sphere of influence'.

Faced with a powerful and ruthless opposition, armed with the rationality of distributive justice, preoccupied with altering the modes of material production, protagonists of the Left find little time to engage with issues like political culture, ethics, or, morality, let alone politics of spiritual transcendence.

“Justice must be obtained, by any means, here and now”; they often appear in a tearing hurry.

In debates about ethics of struggle or ascertaining propriety of means to avail an end, the revolutionary protagonist often takes the reins with a numbing arrogance. In this regard, **the tenacity of violence is unfailing. It might be embraced as an instrument, but violence has a tendency to substitute politics with itself.** ▶

Naxalites: Time for Introspection

Sumanta Banerjee

By their impetuous acts, they have acquired the reputation of choosing the wrong targets – and missing the real ones. In the present situation in India, who should be their main targets?

Regional satraps like Chandrababu Naidu, Buddhadeb Bhattacharya of West Bengal and Baburam Marandi, ex-chief minister of Jharkhand (all the three have been named by the PWG as targets in the hit-list it has announced through its web site on October 4).

Or the more dangerous, high-profile national leaders of the *Sangh parivar* who are allowed by an indulgent central government to run free in their predatory expeditions that rip apart the Indian poor along communal lines?

When will the leaders of the PWG, MCC and other similar groups realise that it is these elements who pose the real threat to them, since they are steadily hollowing out the potential mass base of these very Naxalite groups? They have already sneaked their way into the tribal base of the Naxalites in Andhra Pradesh, Bihar and Jharkhand.

If the leaders of the Naxalite groups ponder over these questions, they will realise that they have been reduced to an insignificant force in the Indian political scenario and lack any decisive power to change the balance of forces in favour of any revolutionary transformation of our society.

They are paying the price for having been obsessed all these years with underground activities and neglecting the task of politicising the wider public sphere of civil society which had been usurped by the Hindu communal forces by whipping up a religious frenzy.

During the last decade of the rise of Hindu communal forces, when these Naxalite groups failed to actively resist the Hindu communal death squads, many among the Muslim victims increasingly gravitated towards Islamic religious terrorist groups. They found that these groups were providing them with the only avenue for protesting – and retaliating. Yet should not the Naxalite groups have been their natural allies? Instead of being allowed to drift into religious terrorism, these Muslim protesters could have been drawn into a secular militant movement led by the PWG, MCC and other Naxalite groups

against the Sangh parivar, as well as their Islamic counterparts, in various parts of India.

This failure to expand their mass base through such actions has condemned the various Naxalite groups to remain confined to isolated pockets in Andhra Pradesh, Orissa, Chhattisgarh and Bihar.

The BJP has been able during the same period to spread its tentacles to the south, in traditionally non-communal states like Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Kerala, to the interior villages of a Left-Front ruled West Bengal (from where the VHP recruits 'Ram-bhakts' for its Ayodhya campaign) and even to the tribal areas of the north-east.

Instead of indulging in peevish acts of revenge on a few ministers and politicians, it is about time that the leaders of the various Naxalite factions put their heads together to work out a far-reaching plan of action that would mobilise their followers and rally the people to wage war against the fanatical Hindu fundamentalist forces.

It is these elements who are their 'class enemies' and who today pose the main threat, not only to their politics, but also to the liberal and democratic values nursed by sections of the Indian bourgeoisie, among whom they can find allies who can be brought together in a united front. ►

The Political Economy of Sprawl in the Developing World

Multinational Monitor in an interview with Anna Kajumulo Tibaijuka

Is economic globalization contributing to intensified urbanization in developing countries?

The process of globalization has a distinct spatial specificity. The outcomes of globalization also show particular geographic patterns. For example, though it has certainly affected rural areas, global forces of exchange are centered in cities. The result is that globalization has facilitated urbanization in many developing countries through a number of different factors.

For example, improvements in communication technologies have facilitated the location of industries in developing country cities, by "abolishing the tyranny of geographical distance."

These industries can now be managed globally from developed countries. We also know that as industries move to the cities of developing countries, with comparatively lower labor costs, it has changed the structure of employment. *This has also further facilitated the "bright lights"*



syndrome that lies behind rapid rural-to-urban migration. Such migration is now often across national and continental borders to cities perceived as offering good personal advancement opportunities.

Even as globalization has facilitated urbanization, our research shows that it has not been equally beneficial. For example, we know that the development of global real estate markets, a process that has brought increased investment to developing country cities, has also often increased land costs beyond the reach of local people. *At the same time, it is clear that the investment patterns within the local economy have been skewed toward high-tech infrastructure investments in order to attract international capital. The result has been increasing disparities between the poor who live in slums and the rich who often live in gated communities and work in high-rise buildings with every modern convenience.*

In other words, the benefits attributed to globalization have not accrued to everyone alike. Indeed, while the conditions of many have improved, others have seen their situation deteriorate. In many countries, real incomes have fallen, the costs of living have gone up and the number of poor households has grown, especially in cities.

**Are there sizes at which cities are too big to be sustainable?
Are there alternatives?**

In the 1950s, New York was the only mega-city with a population over 10 million; today there are about 19 and the figure is set to rise. Many of these cities will be in developing countries. For example, Lagos, which is currently the sixth largest city in the world with a population of 13.4 million,



will in the medium term become the third largest city in the world with a population of 23.2 million. Mumbai which currently has 18.1 million people will have 26.1 million and will be the second largest city. Such large cities clearly create problems of urban governance both in terms of environmental sustainability and social sustainability.

For example, it should be noted that in most of the cities in developing countries, up to 50 percent of the population live in slums and squatter settlements without adequate shelter and basic services. This is clearly unsustainable.

If we are to have truly sustainable cities, we have to prioritize a number of important strategies. *First, as our Campaign for Good Urban Governance points out, cities have to become inclusive. Better urban governance means that local authorities must be democratically elected and accountable to their citizens. At the same time, and most importantly, the concerns of all citizens, rich or poor, must be included in plans for urban development.*

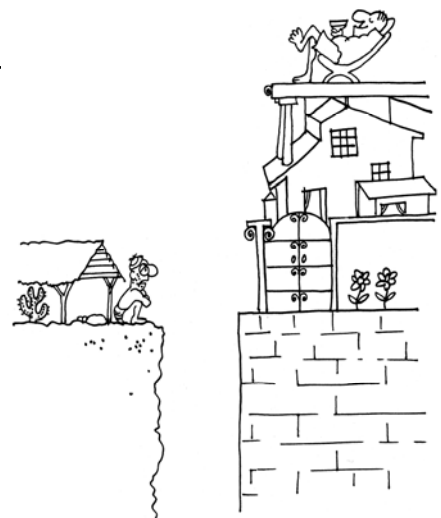
At the same time, we believe in integrated regional urban planning both for better environmental management and also to help control migration. *This does not mean that you can stop rural-to-urban migration, but one solution to the rise of mega-cities is comprehensive urban planning that encourages the development of smaller urban centers that provide jobs and economic incentives for the immediate rural areas.*

What kind of community rights should be given in slums? How important is land tenure?

Fifty percent of the world's population lives in urban areas this is about 3 billion people. Of this 3 billion people, about 1 billion live in slums and squatter settlements without adequate shelter and basic services. According to the latest Global Report on Human Settlements: The Slum Challenge, this figure may well increase to 2 billion by 2030.

It is one of the tragedies of our time that the urban

Politics of sprawl



poor are totally disenfranchised. They have no rights and live in constant fear of eviction. The lack of secure tenure discourages even the poorest of the poor from investing in improving their immediate environment. There are numerous best practices from around the world that indicate that if the poor are given some form of security, it acts as a catalyst for considerable investment from donors, the private sector and poor themselves.

It should be noted that though it is absolutely critical that land tenure systems be formalized, it is not always possible to give the poor individual title deeds. ... encourage innovations in community land tenure and, given that most of the poor are in fact tenants, legalize the whole rental market. At present, because many slum dwellings are not legally recognized, it is not possible to take the landlord to court for failing to deliver the necessary services. ▶

Anna Kajumulo Tibaijuka, executive director of UN-HABITAT, served as associate professor of economics at the University of Dar-es-Salaam. She has undertaken extensive research on agriculture and human settlement policy.

The Real Free Markets

The history of capitalism exposes its manipulative role in replacing the spontaneous coordination and balance of the market with rigid planning and managerial hierarchy that gives rise to the effects of 'Antimarkets'. Significant lessons in returning to the natural interactivity and coordination are drawn from living systems and institutional ecology which is the closest to multi-stakeholder economics or network economics.

Knowledge and information are the key ingredients of the new age industries. Electricity, computers and the internet, separate inventions in their own right, are the force behind this revolution.

Do we understand enough about the potential of this revolution to address issues of inequity and access or the risks of greater marginalisation and benefits to a few?

Manuel de Landa, a contemporary Mexican philosopher, raises the need for a set of new economic theories. He questions the extreme positions of Right wing and Left wing theorists and attempts to arrive at a model in between based on insights from certain philosophers of economics and from live examples of enterprises from the ground.

Markets, Antimarkets and Network Economics, by *Manuel de Landa*,

This essay was originally posted at <http://www.janvaneyck.nl/enlightenment/Pages/delandamanuel.html> [C.ELDOC6008725]

Civilization and Capitalism 15th-18th Century by *Danny Yee*. 1995,
<http://www.riseofthewest.net/thinkers/braudel03.html> [C.ELDOC6008825]

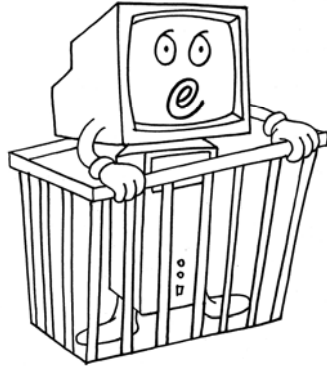


Markets, Antimarkets and Network Economics

Manuel de Landa

Looking back to look forward

It is a very important task for today's intellectuals to create realistic scenarios of the world of twenty-first century economics. One of the several problems faced is that intellectuals on the right, center and left sides of the political spectrum are all trying to predict what a



twenty first century economy will be like on the basis of theories devised to explain the working of nineteenth century England. Whether one is using the conceptual machinery of Adam Smith or of Karl Marx (or of any combination of the two), whether one sees in the recent commercialization of the internet a new invisible hand that will magically benefit society, or whether one sees in this commercialization the commodification of the Net which will magically ruin

society, one is still trying to understand what is a radically new phenomenon in terms of obsolete categories belonging to bankrupt systems of thought.

It is time to go beyond both the invisible handers and the commodifiers and to attempt to construct a new economic theory that not only gives us a clearer picture of the future, but almost as important, of the past, since it is impossible to know where we are going unless we know how we got where we are. It is not as if we would need to manufacture a new theory out of thin air.

Alternatives such as the institutionalist school of the followers of **Thorstein Veblen** have existed in the past and new theories are flourishing today, such as the neo-institutionalist school and the growing field of non-linear economics. Also,

economic historians like **Fernand Braudel** and his followers have given us a fantastically detailed account of the development of Western economies in the last eight hundred years, and this research has generated a wealth of empirical data which simply was not available to either Adam Smith or Karl Marx when they created their theories.

Furthermore, the new data contradicts many of the foundations of those two systems of thought. Finally, not just economists and economic historians will be involved in developing the new ideas we need, philosophers will also participate: in the last twenty years the discipline of the philosophy of economics (that is the philosophy of science applied to economics) has grown at a tremendous pace and is today a very active field of research.

Main concepts of past economic theories

Perhaps the most dramatic new insight emerges from Fernand Braudel's history of capitalism. Unlike theorists from the left and the right who believe capitalism developed through several stages, first being competitive and subservient to market forces and only later, in the twentieth century, becoming monopolistic, Braudel has shown with a wealth of historical evidence that as far back as the thirteenth century, and in all the centuries in between, **capitalism has always engaged in anti-competitive practices, manipulating demand and supply in a variety of ways**. Whenever large fortunes were made in foreign trade, wholesale, finance or large scale industry and agriculture, market forces were not acting on their own, and in some cases not acting at all.

In short what Braudel shows is that we must sharply differentiate between the dynamics generated by many interacting small producers and traders (where automatic coordination via prices does occur), from the dynamics of a few big businesses (or oligopolies, to use the technical term), in which prices are increasingly replaced by commands as coordinating mechanisms, and spontaneous allocation by the market replaced with rigid planning by a managerial hierarchy.

These new historical findings suggest that all that has existed in the West since the fourteenth century, and even after the Industrial Revolution, is a heterogeneous collection of institutions, some governed by market dynamics and some others manipulating those dynamics, and not a homogeneous, society-wide capitalist system. In the words of **Fernand Braudel**: "*We should not be too quick to assume that capitalism embraces the whole of western society, that it accounts for every stitch in the social fabric...that our societies are organized from top to bottom in a 'capitalist system'. On the contrary, ...there is a **dialectic still very much alive between capitalism on one hand, and its antithesis, the 'non-capitalism' of the lower level on the other.***"

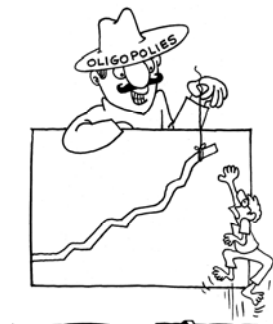
And he adds that, indeed, *capitalism was carried upward and onward on the shoulders of small shops and "the enormous creative powers of the market, of the lower storey of exchange...This lowest level, is the one readiest to adapt; it is the seed bed of inspiration, improvisation and even innovation, although its most brilliant discoveries sooner or later fall into the hands of the holders of capital. It was not the capitalists who brought about the first cotton revolution; all the new ideas came from enterprising small businesses."*

Insidious ideological manoeuvre

These days generally, an ideological manoeuvre is performed through several operations.

First one uses the word competition as if it applied both to the anonymous competition between hundreds of small buyers and sellers in a real market (the only situation to which Adam Smith applied his invisible hand theory) as well as to the competition between oligopolies, say, General Motors, Ford and Chrysler.

The problem is that, these two forms of competition are completely different, with the competition between oligopolies involving rivalry between opponents which must take each other's responses into account when planning a strategy. As economist John Kenneth Galbraith has shown, oligopolies are structures as hierarchical as any government bureaucracy, with as much centralized



planning, and as little dependency on market dynamics.

Unlike the small buyers and sellers in a real market, who are price-takers (that is, they buy and sell at prices that set themselves), oligopolies are price-makers, that is, they create prices by adding a mark-up to the costs of production.

In short, when one confuses these two types of competition one fails to distinguish between markets and antimarkets.

Then, oligopolies, and their power to absorb smaller competitors through vertical and horizontal intergration, are eliminated from the picture, and the landscape now contains only markets and the government, with monopolies being now the only antimarket force left, but one that can be easily dismissed.

Thus it is agreed that there are such things as monopolies, like those of the Robber Barons of the nineteenth century, but the enormous profits that these monopolists generate are seen as transitory, and therefore the menace they represent is dismissed as largely imaginary. Microsoft is today playing a similar role as the Robber Barons.

In short, the core of the ideological manoeuver is to lump together small producers and oligopolies in one category, and to call that the market, and to focus exclusively on government regulation as the only real enemy, dismissing monopolies as chimerical.

Markets – Antimarkets

Several things follow from Braudels' distinction between **market and capitalist institutions** (or as he calls them **antimarkets**).

- For people on the right and center of the political spectrum all monetary transactions, even if they involve large oligopolies or even monopolies, are considered market transactions.
- For the Marxist left, on the other hand, the very presence of money, regardless of whether it involves economic power or not, means that a social transaction has now been commodified and hence made part of capitalism.

Braudels' empirical data forces us to make a distinction which is not made by the left or the right: that between market and antimarket institutions.

In fact, we can already see the kind of dogmatic responses that the lack of this distinction promotes on discussions in the internet. As it became clear that digital cash and secure crypto-technology for credit card transactions were going to transform the Net into a place to do business, some intellectuals became euphoric about the utopian potential of digital free enterprise, while others began to denounce the internet as the latest expression of international capitalism or claim that the Net was becoming commodified and hence reabsorbed into the system.

It is clear, however, that if we reject these two dogmatic positions, our evaluation of the economic impact of the Net (its potential for both decentralization and empowerment of the individual producer and for centralization of content production by a few large firms) will have to become more nuanced and based on more complex models of economic reality.

Network Economics and Institutional Ecology

Besides the distinction between markets and antimarkets our models of network economics must take advantage of recent discoveries in **non-linear science** and **theories of self-organization**. Basically, these theories may be used to explain the emergence of wholes that are more than the sum of their parts. Real markets are, in a sense, such synergistic wholes since they emerge as a result of the unintended consequences of many independent decision makers. In this sense, *markets are quite similar to ecosystems in many respects.*

The internet is one such self-organized entity, despite its origins in the hands of military planners.

One thing markets, ecosystems and decentralized networks have in common is that their synergistic properties emerge spontaneously out of the interactions among a variety of elements, plants and animals, sellers and buyers, or computer servers and clients.

To understand the processes that lead to such emergent, synergistic wholes, we need to create new ways of modeling reality. In particular, instead of beginning at the top, at the level of the whole, and moving down by dissecting it into its constituent parts, we need to *create models that proceed from the bottom up*.

For example, instead of creating a computer model of a market, ecosystem or computer network, by using a small set of mathematical functions (that capture the behaviour of an idealized whole), we need to create virtual environments in which we can unleash a population of virtual animals and plants, buyers and sellers, or clients and servers, and then to let these creatures interact and allow the self-organized whole to emerge spontaneously.

In this way the bottom-up modeling strategy compensates for a weakness of the top-down strategy.

The emergent properties are of complex interactions between heterogeneous elements, but top-down analysis dissects and separates elements, that is, eliminates their original interactions, and then adds them back together. This operation necessarily misses any property that is more than the sum of the parts. Hence analysis needs to be complemented with synthesis, as is done today, for example, in the discipline of Artificial Life and in the branches of Artificial Intelligence known as connectionism and animats.

This switch in modeling strategy would have a significant impact on the shape of the new paradigm of economics. Instead of postulating a whole, a capitalist system, for instance, and then attempting to capture in some mathematical formulas its basic dynamics, we would unleash within a virtual environment a population of institutions, including virtual markets, antimarkets and bureaucratic agencies. Only if we can generate from the interactions of these virtual institutions, something like a capitalist system, would we feel justified in postulating an entity like that.

Heterogeneity may be crucial not only when thinking about network economics but, more generally, when analysing the oppressive aspects of today's economic system, that is, those aspects that we would want to

change to make economic institutions more fair and less exploitative.

We need to think of economic institutions as part of a larger institutional ecology, an ecology that must include, for example, military institutions. Only this way will we be able to locate the specific sources of certain forms of economic power, sources which would remain invisible if we simply thought of every aspect of our current situation as coming from free enterprise or from exploitative capitalism.

In particular, many of the most oppressive aspects of industrial discipline and of the use of machines to control human workers in assembly line factories, were not originated by capitalists but by military engineers in eighteenth century French and nineteenth century American arsenals and armouries. Without exaggeration, these and other military institutions created many of the techniques used to withdraw control of the production process from workers and then exported these techniques to civilian enterprises, typically antimarket organizations.

Not to include in our economic models such processes occurring within this wider institutional ecology can make invisible the source of the very structures we must change to create a better society, and **hence diminish our chances of ever dismantling those oppressive structures.**

Left and Right are wrong!

But we would be wrong to think that the only ones to be ideologically biased in this debate are right-wing invisible handers. Left-wing commodifiers are equally simplistic in their assessments, although perhaps disguising their methodological biases a little bit better.



My conclusion is that neither side of the political spectrum can be trusted any more in their economic analyses, and that a new economic theory, one that respects the lessons of economic history and that assimilates the insights from non-linear dynamics and complexity theory, should be created.

As I said in my introduction, the elements for this new theory are already here, not only from institutionalist economists and materialist historians, but from philosophers of economics that are now more than ever participating in dispelling the myths that have obscured our thought for so many centuries. ▶

Civilization and Capitalism 15th-18th Century

Danny Yee

Braudel's magnum opus is an economic history of the four centuries during which the modern world was shaped. The emphasis is, very much on social and economic history wars, treaties, kings and popes only feature incidentally. Braudel takes a very broad view of his subject, however: temporally *Civilization and Capitalism* looks both backwards to earlier civilizations and forwards to the present; geographically it covers the whole world, though the focus is on the "civilised" parts of it, and particularly on Western Europe.

At the heart of Braudel's account is a three-level hierarchy:

- at the base is ordinary economic life, an all-embracing sea of subsistence agriculture, village barter, and production for local consumption;
- above this is the market, a world of towns and trade, of markets, fairs, currencies, transport systems, bills of exchange, and workshops; and
- finally there is capitalism, with its monopolies, attempts to control complete trade networks or even entire world-economies, and stress on flexibility above all else.

The perspective of the world of *Civilization and Capitalism* roughly reflects this hierarchy. While Braudel's work is an attempt at synthesis rather than at summary or popularisation, you don't need a lot of technical knowledge to appreciate it. Each of the three volumes can stand alone: if you are predominantly interested in social history then you may just want to read *The Structures of Everyday Life*; if you are after the broad sweep of world-systems theory and global capitalism then *The Perspective of the World*.

The Structures of Everyday Life, subtitled "The Limits of the Possible", deals with the everyday constraints of material life; in it Braudel sketches what is almost a social history of the

Civilization and Capitalism 15th – 18th Century, The Structures of Everyday Life, Braudel Fernand, Orion Publishing Co., 2002, p. 628, £ 14.62
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world. He begins with a chapter on demographics, which he sees as fundamental to understanding history. Two chapters are devoted to food: one to

basic subsistence, in the form of the three great cereal crops – wheat, rice and maize – that feed most of the world's people; the other to the "luxuries" – such things as table manners, salt, meat and spices.

The shifting boundary between luxury and necessity here is also apparent in houses, clothes and fashion, and Braudel suggests it was significant that only Europe had rapidly changing fashions. Two chapters cover energy sources, metallurgy, transportation, and the critical technological innovations – gunpowder, printing, and above all sea navigation – which contributed to Europe's dominance. The final chapter surveys the growth of towns, which Braudel considers both an instrument and a clear marker of change.

The Wheels of Commerce moves on to trade and the market economy. Braudel begins with the material culture of exchange, from shops, markets, and pedlars to fairs and stock exchanges. He then explores the higher levels of commerce: networks of merchants, trade circuits, bills of exchange, supply and demand, trade balances, the relationship between gold and silver currencies, and so forth. Two chapters deal with capitalism. The first explores its scope and its relationship with agriculture and early forms of industry, and in particular why it failed to take hold in these domains. The second considers capitalism on its home ground in finance and international trade, in a world of partnerships and companies, of monopolies and control, with an influence vastly disproportionate to its relative size. A final chapter places economic life in the context of society seen as a "set of sets", connecting it with social hierarchies, the state and the broad dynamic of cultural change.

Civilization and Capitalism 15th – 18th Century, *The Wheels of Commerce*, Braudel Fernand, Orion Publishing Co., 2002, p. 688, £ 14.62

The Perspective of the World takes a global, world-systemic approach. Braudel begins by arguing for the existence of multiple "world-economies" and describing their geographical and temporal dimensions. He then traces the development of the

Civilization and Capitalism 15th – 18th Century, *The Perspective of the World*, Braudel Fernand, Orion Publishing Co., 2002, p. 699, £ 14.62

European world-economy and of the "world cities" which successively ruled it: Venice, Antwerp, Genoa, Amsterdam and finally London.

This is followed by an analysis of the emerging national economies and their relationship with international capitalism, with a detailed comparison of France and England. Braudel then turns to the rest of the world – the Americas, Black Africa, Russia, Islam, the Far East – and its relationship with Europe, before returning for an analysis of the industrial revolution in the light of the previous analysis of capitalism. ▶

Engagement with the Real World

It not only takes all kinds.. but it also has all kinds. The problem is that the different approaches don't seem to be working in tandem, or even towards something.

The Land Institute is working on germ plasm because they believe that in a 25 to 50 year time frame, it's possible to build an agriculture based on the way natural ecosystems work. But some people in the 'movement', may look down upon this as 'non-activism'.

Wes Jackson, co-founder of the Land Institute feels that even though they are marginal, one reason that they are still alive as a viable organization is not only that they have an alternative paradigm but there is pollen being transferred on behalf of that paradigm.

The Land Institute aims to pursue a long-term solution to the problem of agriculture, delving into both the scientific and cultural aspects. The goal, articulated in the Land Institute's mission statement, is agriculture that will allow people, communities, and the land to prosper in sustainable fashion

The truth is when you build, it is politics – at least a statement of your politics! Whether you build for yourself, your immediate friends' circle. Or society at large.

Similarly, in building alternative social, economic and political structures one can follow the lonely (but satisfying) path of splendid isolation; one can follow the sometimes ascetic, often glamorous, militant (and satisfying) path of resistance; or one can follow the path of constructive engagement (also very satisfying) also sometimes glamorous and high profile.

Sustainability demands that each of these paths is taken by some element or the other in society.

The interview with **Wes Jackson** by **Robert Jensen** (a non-war collective journalist) reminds us that the path to alternatives cannot be built solely in ascetic isolation or rejection. He also warns that when one is engaged in an alternative or in direct politics, one should do what one enjoys doing, not just that which is billed as being 'noble'. Whichever path one chooses, one needs to constantly engage oneself with the system, not being overwhelmed or seduced by it, but to promote the alternative that will become the norm, that will be the mainstream.

And we need to keep talking among ourselves – 'preaching to the choir' – we need to constantly deepen our own understanding and practice of what alternatives, sustainability, equity mean in living in the real world, a world peopled by ordinary decency and values.



Where Agriculture meets Empire: Interview with Wes Jackson 

by Robert Jensen Posted on Alternet, July 1, 2003.

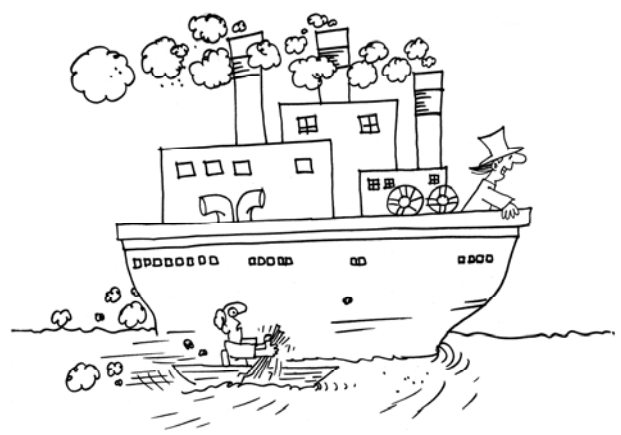
<http://uts.cc.utexas.edu/%7Erjensen/freelance/wesjackson.htm> [C.ELDOC6008723]

Where Agriculture meets Empire

Robert Jensen interviews Wes Jackson

At the 25th anniversary celebration you offered three aphorisms that seem to turn conventional political wisdom on its head – “If we walk our talk, we won’t get there,” “We need to spend more time preaching to the choir,” and “We’ve got to quit meeting people where they are.” Explain what you meant.

“If we walk our talk, we won’t get there” is the easy one. Look, I ride jet planes. I drive. My household is tied into the grid. We’re all dependent on the extractive economy. If we were to “walk the talk” – if we were to really live within the limits of a renewal life-support system with no subsidies from coal



or portable liquid fuels or the poison of nuclear power – we would have trouble making our voices heard in the culture.

Another way to put it is that there’s no life outside the system. So, I think we should ask two questions about endeavors that involve us in the extractive

economy. One is, “How can I use this non-renewable resource in a strategic way?” Two, “Is it so much fun that you can’t say no to it?” That second one is just a way of not taking ourselves too seriously.

What about the people who say that it’s important to create alternatives that are, to the degree possible, outside the system? Should people sacrifice involvement in a political movement to create a model of something else?

We do need those good examples, and people have to work in the area of their passion. When I look at people I start with the question, “Have they joined the fight?” If they have, then you have to be careful in critique, because we don’t know enough about what’s going to be most effective in the long run. If someone wants to be the good example, then fine. *But I think they should be doing it out of intrinsic interest, not out of sense of nobility.*

What about, “We need to spend more time preaching to the choir”?

That’s meant to suggest we need to deepen the discussion. The modern environmental movement really began in 1962 with Rachel Carson’s *Silent Spring*. Before that, environmentalism was mostly about wilderness advocacy, with some focus on soil erosion and water conservation. ... we have to fight the idea that nature is to be subdued or ignored. In that older view, wilderness was seen as the sacred, and we could afford to allow other parts of the world that served human needs and desires to be profane. Now we realize the planet is seamless and that wilderness is really an artifact of civilization. *So, we haven’t had a long enough time to deepen the discussion, and that deepening is best done with members of the choir, rather than with people who are just catching on that the planet is in trouble.*



There’s a lot of work for the choir to do, too. *For example, we have to learn to be better numbersmiths, to understand science and statistics. I’m going to be 67 this month, and in my lifetime people have burned 97.5 percent of all the oil that has ever been burned. That’s an important statistic. We*

have to face the fact that we are not going to find a technological substitute for the high-density energy that comes out of a gas or oil well. It is thermodynamically implausible. We have not attended to these numbers and realities. So, we have people running around rather glibly saying that, “We have alternatives. We just need to get solar and wind and thermal insulation and this, that and the other.”

What do you say to those who contend that there are energy alternatives that will allow Americans to continue to consume at the current level?

I say that’s nuts. That’s where the discussion needs to deepen. Take the example of a photovoltaic array and look at the energy that the array will produce in its lifetime and the energy it takes to make it. It’s assumed, because scarcity is always said to be the mother of invention, that when things get scarce we will find the alternative. Well, I’m saying there simply is no alternative to the density of high-energy carbon coming out of an oil well.



Do you think there is a need to preach to the choir in other movements, such as the antiwar or anti-corporate globalization movements?

I think so. It’s clear that war and racism, poverty, sexism, the growing gap between the rich and the poor, are all connected. And when we hit a brick wall, it turns out that brick wall is capitalism. We’re going to have to face that. *But people want to believe it is possible to design around capitalism, through regulation and progressive legislation. But that won’t work, and we need some consciousness-raising on that.*



What about the third slogan, “We’ve got to quit meeting people where they are”?

If you meet people where they are, you’re going to meet them in Wal-Mart, where things are cheap and things don’t last. We keep trying to meet people on the grounds of economics: Are they going to have more money so they can eat out more often and buy more breakables? In that framework, the ecology message is reduced to hoping that the EPA does a better job of enforcing the Clean Water Act and the Clear Air Act. But the planet could still go down the tubes with clean water and clean air, and with wind generators in place. We’ve not talked about a society that, at the rate it’s going, it is going to require four planets to keep up with consumption.

The day after 9/11, I wrote a piece suggesting that what George Bush should say is, “My fellow Americans, from this day forward we will evaluate our progress by how independent of the extractive economy we have become.” *I think that kind of speech would resonate with a lot of people. But if it resonates, then they have to roll up their sleeves and say, “What does that mean for me, for us?” That would not be meeting people where they are.* George Bush is meeting people where they are.

One possible conclusion from all this is that, given where the culture and most people are, a mass movement around sustainability isn’t possible today. Is that your view?

Let me be more positive. A mass intellectual engagement on these issues is possible and is necessary. I don’t know if is possible right now. My hope is that when the resource base declines and we are caught – and it will appear to be unawares – there will have been going on in smaller circles an adequate deepening of the conversation that has the potential to spread among the larger population.

Any thoughts on how to go forward with that?


One thing to avoid is getting too overloaded with abstractions, without any of the particulars. *This struggle that we're involved in is not going to be won with the bumper sticker. It's going to be won across the ecological mosaic of the country; it's going to be the particularities. I'm worried about our willingness to so readily embrace the abstractions without the particularities.*

Now, some of the people in the environmental movement, some who are my friends, think that they are change agents and are out there networking, going off to another conference. *I don't object to people doing those kinds of things – I do some of that myself -- but what I do object to is the marginalization of an organization like ours because we say it will take 25 to 50 years before we have something to offer the farmer. My question for almost any group is, "What does this translate into in a material way?"*

We need to be saying, "Listen folks, capitalism is inherently destructive." How do we get from where we are to where we need to be, keeping in mind that we can't just try to tame that son of a bitch. We have got to get rid of capitalism.

Do you have any thoughts on what an alternative to capitalism would look like?

I think that if we don't get sustainability in agriculture first, it's not going to happen. We have some disciplines standing behind and, potentially, helping agriculture – ecology, evolutionary biology. So that is where it seems to me the discussion has to start.

Robert Jensen, is a founding member of the Nowar Collective (www.nowarcollective.com), a journalism professor at the University of Texas at Austin, and author of "Writing Dissent: Taking Radical Ideas from the Margins to the Mainstream." 

Throwing away the Problem with Water

Sudhirendar Sharma

The proposal to import food in order to conserve water has dangerous consequences for countries of the South.

It could not have come at a better time. With water scarcity looming large as ambient temperatures soar in most of the densely populated south, a recent report warns that if water productivity is not enhanced the world's poor will suffer most.

The report presented at the meeting of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development in New York has warned that if the present food production trends continue the Millennium Development Goal of halving the number of undernourished people by the year 2015 will remain a dream.

Expectedly, the report plays with statistics to present a gloomy scenario. Not without reason as 840 million people across the world are currently undernourished and some two billion will join them in the next two decades.

The report argues that enhancing water productivity through influencing consumption patterns and restrictive trade policies may help to meet the increasing global food demand. But what such reports hide is more vital than what they tend to reveal.

Throwing away the problem with water. *Sudhirendar Sharma*, Deccan Herald, April 27, 2004. <http://www.deccanherald.com/deccanherald/apr272004/edst.asp>
[C.ELDOC6008557]

Structural reform – Import Food, Save Water!

By suggesting that food imports may ensure food security in countries that are water scarce, the report may eventually favour the structural reform process unleashed by World Bank and IMF. These reforms have sought to decide what a country in the South must grow!

The Central American debt crisis of the 1980s was conveniently used to shift cropping pattern in these countries in favour of the supermarket shelves in the US. Having replaced their staple crops with melons, berries and broccoli, the countries had to import food from the US by eventually spending the dollars they earned through exports.



Presenting Egypt's case that had saved 11 cubic kilometre of water by importing 8.6 million tonnes of grains in 1995, might be justified. But spreading the logic of virtual water to conserve national waters at the cost of protecting food surplus of powerful countries may be contentious.

With global food trade increasingly being on an uneven turf, countries of the South rightfully wonder if this will be yet another imposition on them! Otherwise why should 550 litres of water to produce flour for one loaf of bread be of greater concern than 7000 litres for producing 100 grams of beef?

Increasing irrigation efficiency may be paramount, as 70 per cent of developed water resources are diverted for irrigated agriculture. But if 40 per cent of the world's cereal output of 2.6 to 2.8 million tonnes is likely to end up as animal feed in 2025, a sizeable human population that sustains at \$ 2 a day will continue to remain underfed. And if that is the justification to increase area under genetically modified crops in the developing countries from 4.3 to 63 million hectares, then the report is clearly serving hidden interests!

Despite some contradictions, the whole range of issues afflicting the food production sector are listed. It is written by a team of well-known water experts. The authors couldn't ignore the specific case of India, which is

increasingly becoming water scarce despite no change in its annual receipt of 4,000 billion cubic metres of precipitation.

Currently, India is producing grains at an average of 2.7 tonnes per hectare for which about 600 cubic km of water is diverted for irrigation uses. But *if the grain requirement of 2025 were to be met by sustaining the present production average, the country would need to double the current level of diversion for irrigation with the risks of environmental damage.*



This seems to be the core argument in favour of the interlinking of rivers proposal. However, the report presents an interesting alternative scenario. It says: "If grain yields increase by 70 per cent, no more increases in water diverted for irrigation will be required." The country only needs to tone up its agricultural research system to match China's current production average of 4.6 tonnes/ha.

Meeting Demands through Realistic Savings

Any savings at the farm will help meet the increasing industrial demand, sustain river flow to maintain the minimum ecological services criteria and help contain salinisation and water-logging.

Further, increasing water productivity makes economic sense at the global food market too. While India exports grains at a productivity level of 0.34 kg per cubic metre of water, the US does the same at 1.26 kg per cubic metre. At equal

cost prices, this means that India is incurring significant ecological losses by exporting more water per unit of grains.

Undoubtedly, increasing irrigation efficiency holds the key to managing food demand and controlling grain prices. Israel's 75 per cent and Iraq's 45 per cent irrigation water use efficiency are worthy examples.

However, it may need strong political commitment and a significant shift in the supply-side orientation of water managers. Though the report acknowledges hydro-climatic realities, it underplays peoples' wisdom in developing strategies under rainfed conditions.

Unless peoples' water wisdom is mainstreamed into policy thinking, the per capita per day yardstick will continue to present a gloomy scenario. ►