You may say I'm a dreamer…
Essays on reimagining development

Edited by
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You may say I'm a dreamer,
But I'm not the only one.
I hope someday you'll join us
And the world will live as one.

- John Lennon, *Imagine*

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The Centre for Poverty Analysis (CEPA) is an independent, Sri Lankan think-tank promoting a better understanding of poverty-related development issues. CEPA believes that poverty is an injustice that should be overcome and that overcoming poverty involves changing policies and practices nationally and internationally, as well as working with people in poverty. At CEPA, our emphasis is on providing independent analysis, capacity building of development actors, and seeking opportunities for policy influence. We are influenced by a strong orientation towards service provision that is grounded in sound empirical evidence while responding to the needs of the market. CEPA maintains this market orientation through client requests, while pursuing a parallel independent research agenda based on five broad thematic areas: post war development, vulnerability, migration, infrastructure and environment and climate change. Ultimately, CEPA strives to contribute to influencing poverty-related development policy at national, regional, sectoral, programme and project levels.

Acknowledgements

"Imagination is more important than knowledge. For knowledge is limited to all we now know and understand, while imagination embraces the entire world, and all there ever will be to know and understand." – Albert Einstein

When a book title such as "Reimagining Development" catches the reader's eye, an immediate reaction would be to file it in the "abstract" box, often failing to understand that imagination is developed from the knowledge we gain from our lived realities. As Einstein puts it, imagination is priceless, as it leads to change, and if gained enough momentum, could potentially lead to significant transformations in individuals, in society, and in the world that we live in. But, imagination works hand in hand with knowledge, constantly questioning the possibility of 'multiple truths' and building on ideas that already exist. The ideas stemming from this compilation is a tribute to all the thinkers that imagined before our time and to those that are imagining with us now. Let us continue our journey together.

Foreword

You may say I'm a dreamer – is a collection of essays commissioned by the Re-imagining Development initiative of the Centre for Poverty Analysis.   It has no single author, no single view point, no single style of writing... it is held together by the visions of women and men, young and not-so-young, who have dared to dream of a different development trajectory, of a different world.

Why is it important to dream of a different world? During the past 100 years, the world has changed rapidly and many would agree that development has been the hallmark of the past century.Things that we now consider as part of everyday life, electricity, vehicles that enable high speed travel, the mobile phone, antibiotics, television and the internet, were invented within this relatively short period of human history. Much has also been achieved in terms of improved quality of life around the world. Since the 1970s, average global income has more than doubled and the range, amount and quality of goods and services available to people today is unprecedented. Life expectancy has increased substantially and people around the world have much higher levels of education than ever before. At the same time, the total value of goods and services produced globally has increased by close to 50 times since the 1900s to over US$60 trillion.

Yet, this seeming prosperity exists side by side with extreme and widespread deprivation. There are, still, as many as 1.4 **billion** people living in poverty or living on less than US$1.25 per day. The FAO estimates that the number of hungry people worldwide is 963 million or 14% of the world population. The UNICEF estimates that poverty claims the lives of 25,000 children a day, while many live their lives out in drudgery and social exclusion. While undoubtedly, there has been human progress in the past 100 years, this has been accompanied by widening disparities between those who have and those who do not – at both individual as well as country levels. One part of the problem is in the way we think about development: development and poverty alleviation policies and programmes are largely aimed at enabling and encouraging people to increase their consumption of goods and services. Those who consume more (be it food, education, housing or entertainment), are more 'developed', and less poor than those who do not consume as much. What this kind of thinking can do to others, our spiritual wellbeing and the planet is rarely discussed, or even acknowledged. This publication is an opportunity to stop for a moment, to reflect on what we think of as 'given' in our world view, and perhaps begin to think differently, more holistically about our world.

The essays in this volume cover a wide spectrum of subjects.   Some are reflections on the paths that our societies have taken. Paths that have taken us away from our natural environment and led us to believe in the superiority of the human species and our role in controlling and 'taming' nature. Paths that have severed us from our traditional spiritual roots, that have created endless forms of alienation, inequality, and social exclusion. These reflections call for actions to engage with the principles of Deep Ecology and to see life from the perspective

of synergy and interconnectedness and to look for a new 'core culture' that is compatible with the sustainability of our planet.

Some essays directly critique the dominant paradigm of neo-liberalism and the market economy as it manifests itself in current issues of migration, the gentrification of urban spaces, tourism or access to clean water. Others focus on the traditionally marginalised groups in our society: the elderly and those with mental health problems. Yet others are expressions of the authors' own experiences, as students, researchers and development workers and one essay focuses on women and their participation in politics. A majority of the essays situate what is happening in post-war Sri Lanka within these wider debates, forcing us to look at the issues that we confront on a daily basis with fresh eyes, and an alternate vision.

CEPA's re-imagining development initiative began more than 4 years ago, with feelings of unease and a sense of a disjunct between what we value in our own personal lives and what we were taught and what we espoused as development professionals. The idea of re-imagining development seeped into daily conversations between colleagues over tea and lunch, and reached a peak at CEPA's Annual Symposium in 2012, where a diverse group of women and men were able to discuss, without inhibition, issues of well being, environment, knowledge hierarchies, feminism, urbanisation and art and development. In 2013, CEPA continued this conversation by creating physical and virtual spaces for debate, that included an online presence, workshops on issues such as secularism, and mobilising film artists and school children to think creatively about development. This collection of essays is an outcome of CEPA's engagement with the English language print media and is one step towards recognising, in the words of Albert Einsten, that 'we cannot solve our problems with the same thinking we used when we created them'.

You may say I'm a dreamer brings together lessons from yesterday, vignettes from today, and hopes for tomorrow. It invites you, the reader, to think outside that proverbial box, and mostly importantly, to continue questioning. The world we live in is a product of our actions and thoughts, and if we want to live in a better world, the change needs to start with each one of us.

Nilakshi de Silva and Priyanthi Fernando

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1. On Protecting Mother Earth

by Vagisha Gunasekara

We live in a time of severe ecological and economic challenges. In 2012 the world crossed a dangerous limit. Monitoring stations across the Arctic recorded a reading of 400 parts per million (ppm) of atmospheric carbon dioxide[1]. This figure is at least 50ppm higher than the maximum concentration during the last 12,000 years, a threshold that granted us the privilege to develop agriculture and civilization[2]. We have already begun to experience a substantially more chaotic climate that demonstrates this altered architecture of our atmosphere. Extreme heat, dustbowl drought, stunted crops, climate change, and massive wildfires resulted in major food crop losses in Russia in 2010[3], and the U.S. in 2012[4]. In many countries in the West, increased costs for animal feed mean higher prices for milk, meat and processed foods based on corn and soy.

Price rises on the international grain market will have a major negative impact on poor countries in Africa, Asia, and South America, where many people spend most of their personal income on food. Rocketing bread prices, food and water shortages have all plagued parts of the Middle East and analysts at the Centre for American Progress in Washington say a combination of food shortages and other environmental factors have exacerbated the already tense politics in the region[5].

Recent studies in Sri Lanka indicate that predicted changes in rainfall, temperature, and the soil moisture deficit, will demand additional irrigation water to compensate for the crop water requirement now and in the coming years. Therefore the climate change effects on *maha* and *yala* seasonal rains will cause serious problems for agricultural activities, such as paddy and other field crop cultivations in the north, north central and eastern regions[6]).

Four million Sri Lankans are already malnourished and the World Food Programme cautions anything up to 200 million more food-insecure people globally by 2050[7]. Just as much we accept these hard facts about the creeping disaster of

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[1] Anderson K. & Bows A., 2011. *Beyond "dangerous" climate change: Emission scenarios for a new world.* Phil Trans R Soc A2011;369;pp 20-44.

[2] Ibid.

[3] *The Guardian*. 2013. "Climate Change: How a Warming World is a Threat to Our Food Supplies" Online. Accessed, June 2013. http://www.theguardian.com/environment/2013/apr/13/climate-change-threat-food-supplies

[4] Ibid.

[5] Centre for American Progress. 2013. "Top 5 Ocean Priorities for the New Secretary of State." Online. Accessed, June 2013. http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/green/news/2013/03/29/58266/top-5-ocean-priorities-for-the-new-secretary-of-state/

[6] De Silva, Shanthi. 2012. "Climate Change Moves Towards Extremes, Says Scientist." *Sunday Observer.* 9 September 2012. Online. Accessed, June 03, 2013. http://www.sundayobserver.lk/2012/09/09/fea15.asp

[7] World Food Programme. 2012. "How to Feed the World 2050". Online. Accessed, June 2013 http://

climate change, we must also recognise that environmental chaos represents an imminent threat to a multitude of human rights: the right to food, to water and sanitation, to social and economic development. This is only a sliver of evidence that tells us to 'care' about the environment, if not for its own sake, but for humanity's sake (a`la Nalaka Gunawardena, a renowned Sri Lankan science journalist and development practitioner[8]).

Climate injustice

The raison d'être of our consumer society – *acquisition* – is supported by polluting energy sources and guided by a pseudo-scientific principle of limitless growth. Bewitched by these ideas that run contrary to basic laws of biology, we imagine our society as above and beyond the rest of the living world. The truth, as former senior economist at the World Bank, Professor Herman Daily states, is different: "the larger system is the biosphere and the subsystem is the economy. The economy is geared for growth, whereas the parent system doesn't grow. It remains the same size. So as the economy grows, it encroaches upon the biosphere, and this is its fundamental cost"[9]. Whose wellbeing are we compromising in the name of incessant acquisition?

In *Moral Ground*[10], South African Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu argues, that it is unjust that people in Africa — who don't reap the "benefits" of the reckless burning of fossil fuel — are suffering from droughts and crop shortages as a result of the West's consumption of oil. Although some perceive climate change as people of one culture (the developed world) destroying the material basis of another[11], the issue cannot be confined to the Global South. The formation of the Earth's atmosphere affects rich and poor countries alike; and global warming, influenced by agriculture and civilisation should get everybody's attention.

Moreover, we need to realise that 'our children are our future' is not merely a feel-good phrase, and that we have shared responsibility to not to compromise "the ability of future generations to meet their own needs"[12]. As such, we have a horizontal (to others that live among us) and a vertical (to our descendents) responsibility to protect the environment. Although we know all this, why are we sleepwalking into such an unprecedented betrayal of intergenerational justice? In order to find answers, we must examine our basic way of making sense of who we are, what the world is, and our role in it.

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www.fao.org/fileadmin/templates/wsfs/docs/expert_paper/How_to_Feed_the_World_in_2050. pdf,

[8] An idea communicated at the annual Poverty Symposium of the Centre for Poverty Analysis, Colombo, Sri Lanka on December 11, 2012.

[9] Daly, Herman. 2007., *The 11th Hour*. (Documentary Film) – Produced and Narrated by Leonardo Di Caprio.

[10] Moore, Kathleen Deen & Nelson, Michael P., 2011. *Moral Ground: Ethical Action for a Planet in Peril*. USA: Trinity University Press.

[11] Ibid.

[12] United Nations., 1987. "Our Common Future: Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development". Online. Accessed, May 01 2013. http://conspect.nl/pdf/ Our_Common_Future-Brundtland_Report_1987.pdf

Constructed delusions

This is the Age of Reason, in which we have managed to bring ourselves to the verge of destruction by acting under the delusion that humans are separate from the Earth, and that we, are in control of it. The idea that 'we are the masters of the universe' stems from the belief that humans are the only beings of spirit and our adroitness grants us to rule over other 'less important' forms of life. Our hubris about human exceptionalism has even made us coin terms such as "individualism", that lead us to believe that we are exceptional rights holders, separate from one another and always in conflict or competition with each other.

Another one of our sophisticated terms – "dualism" confirms that on one side are humans with spirit and value, and on the other side is the insentient physical world that was created for the purpose of serving our needs. In the process of constructing and strengthening these delusions, we have led ourselves to believe in our ability to exceed natural limits. Since the late 19th century, Darwin's findings about the biology of the evolutionary process have been misappropriated to define industrial society. With phrases such as "survival of the fittest" (coined by the Victorian Social Darwinist Herbert Spencer), we see society as a jungle, where one must crawl over the other to survive and succeed. In other words, I can pursue my own welfare even at the expense of your (or *everyone's*) well-being. If we take a close look at what motivates multi-national corporations or nation-states, we observe a scaled-up manifestation of the same world view that prioritises success, growth, and exploitation of others.

Most of us rally behind Adam Smith's idea of the "invisible hand" of the market in our efforts to justify capitalism. This notion implies that if everyone works towards individual welfare, that will work for the benefit of the whole. There is an undeniable element of truth to this inference, as markets are profoundly efficient ways of distributing and re-distributing resources. Yet, when left completely unrestrained, they often end up being unfair. Markets need to be *tamed* within a political structure that minimises the exploitative tendencies that arise. Though we are quick to spout Adam Smith's "invisible hand" in protesting the oppressive control of the economy by the government, we are oblivious to the real motivations of the world's top 200 oil, coal, and gas companies (with a net worth of about $7.4 trillion), Wall Street, or the politicians they have bought[13]. The driving principle behind these entities is Social Darwinism: using your position to get everything you can.

Similarly, the likelihood of the world's leading emitters of carbon such as the United States or the emerging economies of China and India cutting back the main source of emissions is extremely low. China's emissions now make up

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[13] Roberts, David. 2011. "Markets and Climate Change: a Case of Cognitive Dissonance." *Grist: a Beacon in the Smog*. Online. Accessed, June 10, 2013. http://grist.org/climate-policy/2011-12-20-markets-and-climate-change-a-case-of-cognitive-dissonance/

over 24% of total global emissions[14]. The United States of America, the former world heavyweight champion of carbon pollution, is still generating 18% of the total, followed by the European Union contributing 14%[15]. India's emissions have jumped 9.4% to over two billion tons[16], placing it fourth in this game of existential "hawk-dove." None of these leading emitters has agreed to sign an international treaty that would obligate them to cut emissions. The excuse presented by the Global South is the difficulty of squaring the historic carbon debt of the overdeveloped world with the need for developing countries to accept universal emissions reductions now.

The hallmarks of our globalised society – greed, consumerism, and separation from nature, combined with the supine disposition of "democratic" governments are successfully fueling a mutually beneficial relationship that will eventually take us towards extinction. Their shared worldview thrives on limitless economic growth no matter what the long-term consequences may be.

Looking inwards – A starting point

Zen master and peace activist Thich Nhat Hanh believes that fundamental change can happen only if we fall back in love with our planet[17]. When we recognise the virtues, talent and beauty of Mother Earth, he says, love is born in us. When we reconnect with it, we naturally want to do anything we can for the benefit of the Earth, and the Earth will do anything for our wellbeing. We need to start by revisiting ecological and evolutionary science that tell us that humans are part of interconnected, interdependent systems; that the thriving of the individual parts is necessary for the thriving of the whole; and that we are created, defined, and sustained by our relationships, both with each other and with the natural world. If we come to understand that deeply, we can invent new models of human goodness. As such, what is needed is an evolution of our current worldview that starts at the individual level and transmutes into the structures of society. What we need is a new ethic, derived by a community of diverse "mindful" people that can reimagine our place in the world.

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[14] United Nations Statistics Division. 2012. Online. Accessed, June 10, 2013. http://unstats. un.org/UNSD/MDG/Data.aspx

[15] Ibid.

[16] Ibid.

[17] *The Guardian* 2012. "Beyond Environment: Falling Back in Love with Mother Earth." Online. Accessed, June 20, 2013. http://www.theguardian.com/sustainable-business/zen-thich-naht-hanh-buddhidm-business-values

2. Culture, Development and Human Futures
by John Clammer

In one of his major books, the well-known critic of corporate capitalism and its associated globalisation, David Korten, wrote that "To create a just, sustainable, and compassionate post-corporate world we must face up to the need to create a new core culture, a new political centre, and a new economic mainstream"; this is in the pursuit of what he calls the shift to "a new integral culture that affirms life in all its dimensions"[1].

And I think that he is very right. The problem is that, like many other writers in the field of what might be called "alternative development", while indeed discussing in detail the political and economic dimensions of a sustainable future, he does not in fact elaborate on what this "new core culture" might look like.

But any discussion of "development" must surely raise this question, not only of the political changes desirable (democratisation and participation), and the economic ones (social justice, solidarity and environmental sustainability), but also of the cultural forms that might accompany and indeed support such political and economic initiatives - for neither exists in a social vacuum and both are deeply informed by cultural values.

Some would even argue that the roots of our current crisis - persisting poverty, conflict, ecological degradation on an unprecedented scale, loss of both biological and cultural diversity, and a cascading multitude of other problems - are to be found in our dysfunctional culture (s) and "civilisations". They are out of touch with nature, have in many cases severed themselves from their traditional spiritual roots, created endless forms of alienation, inequalities and social exclusion amongst their own members, and seem to be committed to the blind belief that endless "growth" and consumption can be sustained forever.

But let us stand back from this situation for a moment and question the role culture should actually play in development. Development being the process designed in principle to bring about human and ecological security, meaningfulness and well-being for the greatest number. What might a new "core culture" compatible with the sustainability of our planet look like? Very fresh and interesting questions arise, and with them potentially new methodologies for approaching development in general.

In the past, "culture" has often been seen as a way of delivering "development" (as a body of knowledge often derived from anthropology, useful in understanding how best to implement a set of policy decisions on the target population) whether these be in agriculture, health, population planning, etc.

This is legitimate up to a point. Reasonable policies do indeed need to be

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[1] Korten, David S., 1999. *The Post-Corporate World: Life After Capitalism.* West Hartford CT and New York: Kumarian Press.

implemented. But it also has fundamental weaknesses. The purely instrumental approach to culture, ignoring the intrinsic value of the particular culture in question, easily leads both to the subtle denigration of that culture, as well as the failure to recognise that there is a feedback loop between new policy initiatives and changes in culture.

For instance, a new health system in a village does not just "deliver" new therapeutic and pharmacological goods. It also changes conceptions of illness, and its appropriate treatment. It alters the links between religion and illness, and profoundly changes what the medical anthropologist Arthur Kleinman has called the "narratives of illness". That is, the ways in which people make sense of their own illness and explain it both to physicians or health-care professionals and to others in their own community[2].

Cultural change is, as a consequence, often driven not by direct assault from other cultural forms (although of course this happens with the advent of TV, foreign movies, new fashions, the spread of alien popular cultures, for example), but by changes in the *context* of the original culture. Its relationship to itself is now refracted through wider national, governmental, or developmental policies designed to "uplift" it. The old meaning systems of the original culture - belief systems that created meaning in peoples life attributing them to situations - no longer quite make sense or seem "old fashioned" when compared with the new world views being promoted, and which are of course often collectively called "globalisation".

One quite natural response to this is to jump to the defense of "traditional" cultures and to try to shield them from the erosive effects of globalisation. This is not only difficult, but overlooks the fact that "traditions" themselves are constructed and have a history.

Another danger is to accept an implied uniformity in Korten's conception of a new core culture. Note that he uses the word 'culture' in the singular. What he is no doubt implying is not a new and subtle form of cultural colonialism, but the identification of a set of core *values* held across a wide range of cultures. These *values* would be compatible with a wide range of actual cultural expressions, which when applied would result in a sustainable and socially just future for the majority of humanity.

Assuming this to be the case, I would like to discuss what these values might be. But I would like to do so within a certain framework, which is that culture is the source of our collective and social imagination. It is the depository of historical experiences, but also a tremendous resource for conceiving and mapping humane and viable futures for the planet.

Culture then is not just *what is* but also *what can be.* One piece of very empirical evidence for this is that with our looming ecological crisis, almost all religious traditions have begun to explore their own scriptures and practices to begin the process of re-orienting themselves in a more ecologically responsible direction.

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[2] Kleinman, Arthur, 1988. *The Illness Narratives: Suffering, Healing and the Human Condition*. New York: Basic Books.

So what are these values? I would suggest the following to begin the debate:

- The search for non-violent cultural expressions (development has often been very violent in its effects, and a high percentage of popular culture most certainly is).

- The promotion of positive relationships between humans and nature and seeking a notion of human identity that transcends anthropocentrism.

- The recognition that culture contains and often conceals inequalities, hierarchies of power and domination, traditionally justified patterns of gender, age or ethnic discrimination and that these need to be confronted and overcome.

- That culture cannot be separated from economics, but must overcome the strange contemporary situation in which economics has become the master of culture, rather than its servant.

- The promotion of a culture of responsibility rather than of rights and entitlements.

- The encouragement rather than the suppression of cultural and linguistic diversity.

- The recognition that in a very real sense culture means life and that if ultimately development means the enhancement and protection of life, then it is through culture that this will be achieved.

Development has come to be regarded as a technical process, and one furthermore dominated by economics. I would prefer to argue that development is an art, one that involves a continuous balancing act between preserving existing cultural and biological diversity, drawing upon them and their component parts - in the case of culture for example, religion and modes of spirituality - in the attempt to conceive better, more humane and sustainable futures, and developing culture itself as the actual content of our everyday life-worlds. We may overcome material poverty, but without overcoming our cultural poverty, our future in a state of "affluence" may be simply another form of spiritual poverty.

A patient of the anthropologist and medical practitioner Arthur Kleinman (mentioned above) clearly stated in words that are as applicable to development as to medicine, "We have powerful techniques, but no wisdom. When the techniques fail, we are left shipwrecked".

John Clammer is Visiting Professor of Development Sociology at the Institute for Advanced Studies in Sustainability at the United Nations University in Tokyo. His many interests centre on questions of the interface of culture and development, including art, religion and ecology. His most recent book on these subjects is "Culture, Development and Social Theory: Towards an Integrated Social Development" (Zed Books 2012).
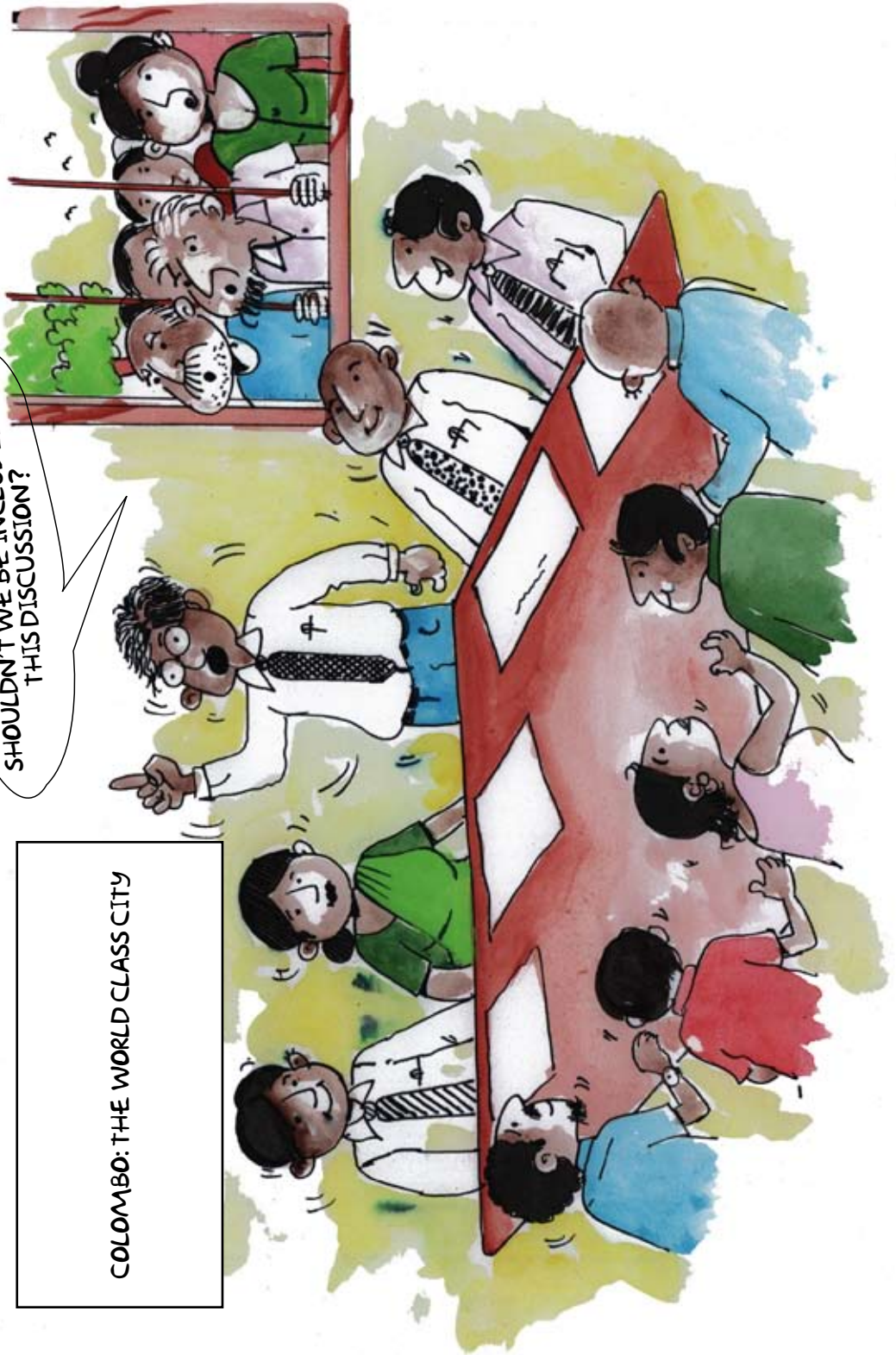
SHOULDN'T WE BE INCLUDED IN THIS DISCUSSION?

COLOMBO: THE WORLD CLASS CITY

3. Towards a World-Class Colombo: Development Without Democracy

by The Collective for Economic Democratisation

Colombo's urban development is driven by the idea of transforming it into a "world-class city" and a "preferred destination for international business and tourism", according to the Secretary, Defence and Urban Development. Therefore, many of the Urban Development Authority's (UDA) initiatives, apart from those related to flood control or road improvements, have focused on enhancing the image of Colombo by building urban landscapes and spaces for elitist consumption that are 'world-class', such as the Dutch Hospital and the Race Course complex. The UDA is also providing sweeping incentives to real estate corporations and investors to build luxury apartments and hotels.

A key question that arises is what is, the place of the poor in a world-class metropolis? Currently, the Western Province, the most urbanised in Sri Lanka, is not only the most prosperous but is also home to the highest proportion of Sri Lanka's poor. The spiraling costs of living and lop-sided and non-inclusive growth will provide Colombo with more cheap labour to serve the elite. This is already evident from the number of the city's poor and elderly who now work long hours for private contractors under adverse terms keeping the streets clean.

Over the next few years around 70,000 families, largely from poor, low-income communities residing in inner city areas, are to be displaced and relocated into towering apartment blocks, freeing up prime land for commercial exploitation. There has been little public discussion and scrutiny, let alone the active participation of these communities, to decide on the need for, or the goals and terms of relocation, which will have profound implications for their rights and well-being.

Bringing the UDA under the Ministry of Defence was indication enough that the urban development agenda did not include democratic and accountable local governance. Rather than address shortcomings on the accountability and effectiveness of the Colombo Municipal Council (CMC) by deepening democratic participation, the UDA, backed by the enormous human and technical resources of the military, has effectively sidelined the CMC, and with it, local democracy itself. When the military does the work of the municipality, it is not just the physical, but also the political landscape that is altered.

While hundreds of millions of dollars of loans are being contracted with multilateral and bilateral donors, including for projects that are merely of symbolic value, like the Lotus Tower project, bordering the Beira Lake, there has been little investment in substantially enhancing public transport, upgrading low income settlements or providing quality low-cost social housing. The latter more often than not, comes with forced relocation and is driven not by a vision

of safeguarding rights and entitlements, but of freeing up lands for commercial exploitation and investment.

Current development plans under the Mahinda Chintana propose to create a market for "pro- poor" loans. The attempts to resettle communities are to be matched by offering collateral and housing loans to displaced residents. These loans tie into the broader attempt to incorporate the poor into official banking institutions. While a seemingly benign goal of development, such transformation of housing finance is also connected to removing land market restrictions for commercial developers. The state tenancy and land development laws are being revoked or reshaped in order to promote the private market. In a context of pre-existing inequalities, the market differentially benefits those with access to power and privilege. Thus, in a certain sense the poor are being asked to participate in the very mechanisms of their dispossession.

The spate of high profile land deals involving global investors and capital is being touted as a sign of development and a promise of prosperity to come. However, it is well known that urban real estate is but a temporary parking place for speculative capital, which in the long run creates instability and potential for crisis. Successive financial crises, including the most recent one of 2008, assumed global proportions, and have been connected to the bursting of real estate bubbles. Moreover, even market insiders are expressing skepticism over possible oversupply of high-end real estate in Colombo with a number of overpriced projects coming on the market at the same time. Even if demand is borne out, the crucial question is whether this is a sustainable path to inclusive urban development?

The current trajectory of urban development in Sri Lanka cannot be disconnected from the military-market nexus, which is narrowing the space for rights while expanding the footprint of market and financial interests. In such a context, claiming the right to the city – which is each individual's common right to make and remake the cities and ourselves, or the right to change ourselves by changing the city as described by David Harvey[1]- is central to the struggle to reclaiming social and economic democracy in Sri Lanka.

None of this, of course, in a certain sense is "new." Historically, from colonial times to the recent neoliberal decades, problematic political and economic transformations have had a major impact on the development of Colombo. In 1978, the Greater Colombo Economic Commission (GCEC) was created along with the National Housing Development Authority and the Urban Development Authority. Under the GCEC, Sri Lanka became one of the first countries in South Asia to establish Export Promotion Zones (EPZs), which promoted tax incentives for foreign companies in the interest of capital and to the detriment of labour rights. The EPZs emerged against the background of the Jayawardena regime's attack on trade unions in 1980, which some economists innocuously refer to as

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[1] David Harvey, 2008. "The Right to the City." New Left Review 53: pp. 23–40.

"labour market flexibility."

To return to the present, what we are arguing is that current urban development in Colombo is not a neutral exercise to reorganise space and beautify the city. It reflects definite political interests and is implicated with powerful mechanisms of accumulation and exploitation.

Needless to say, the influence of powerful global actors, such as the World Bank or UN Habitat, cannot be ignored. Relying on narrow functionalist claims and driven by ahistorical ideas about the spatial dimensions of economic changes in different regions of the island, along with static "poverty" indicators, they obscure the political economy behind urban development. Thus, while the World Bank does propose mechanisms for consultation or supporting displaced residents, it fails to address the vested financial interests and the undemocratic nature of state policies that cause dispossession and help reconfigure the economic geography of urban spaces to suit metropolitan elite and finance capital.

It is important, in conclusion, to re-emphasise the importance of vigilant critique and struggles in advancing the right to the city and guarding against undemocratic urbanisation driven by real estate and speculative finance.

Benedict Anderson made his name coining 'imagined communities', a term describing the mutually-imagined social relations that bind diverse populations and together inculcate a sense of nationhood[1]. These relations are 'imaginary' because "members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion"[2]. Crystallised with the advent of mass media, this vision of communion has roused millions to participate in military sacrifice and other cherished nationalist past-times, of which none is more abhorrent or enthusiastically pursued than colonialism.

Reflecting on this intersection between nationhood and colonialism, Anderson proffered that inequitable class relations within the imagined communities of Europe were legitimised by entitling the (then subordinate) bourgeoisie to emulate aristocratic privilege via imperialism – "the colonial empire... permitted sizeable numbers of bourgeois and petty bourgeois to play aristocrat off centre court: i.e. anywhere in the empire except at home"[3]. No matter their subordinate status at home, the meddling classes of imperialist Europe found in colonial spheres an opportunity to exercise an imagined superiority, wherein an inflated sense of self-worth and entitlement – ordinarily kept in check by taut class relations – was derived explicitly from the degradation and dehumanisation of colonial 'subjects'. Despite the crumbling of empires and the severing of colonial ties (at least in their more tangible aspects), this same dynamic continues unabated. Burgeoning North-South tourism facilitates an 'imagined colonialism', in which the relative clout of currencies enables Northerners of varying privilege to transcend their domestic class relations and wield faux-aristocratic superiority over Southerners of varying disprivilege. It permits the performance of a dormant colonial fantasy entrenched with greater or lesser degrees of consciousness in the Northern psyche: an urge to recreate *the Orient* and smother its population into subservience with the end of constructing and experiencing self-importance through a sheer disparity of means.

I term this 'imagined colonialism' because, like Anderson's concept, it too is a mutually-imagined social fiction, one where unacquainted populations of the North and South together harbour the image of their *disunion* on the grounds of presupposed superiority/inferiority. This is not to slate the South's participation in an imagined colonialism as ubiquitous, nor to overlook the very real and continuing mechanisms of economic colonialism that exacerbate material inequities between North and South; what it does contend is the existence

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[1] Anderson, Benedict R. O'G., 1991. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism.* Rev. and extended ed. London; New York: Verso.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid.

of a dominant narrative that willingly caters to the performance of Northern superiority. Nowhere is this narrative more apparent than in Sri Lanka's great developmental hope: tourism. Landmark 'colonial heritage hotels' like the Mount Lavinia, the Galle Face and, perhaps most explicitly, the Grand Oriental are all complicit in a celebration of colonial aesthetic and tradition that betrays a virulent internalisation of racial subordination that was experienced during colonialism and is now being reconstituted and sold to fulfill foreign colonial fantasies. Rather than being burnt as symbols of oppression or nationalised for public use, these colonial relics are centrepieces of the tourist industry left to proudly extol their imperial history. In unison their proud locutions voice a palpable experience of Stockholm syndrome: "Reflects the grandeur of a bygone era" boasts the Galle Face; "step into colonial romance" beckons the Mount Lavinia; "solid roots and a bright future" chimes in the Grand Oriental. Sri Lanka's burgeoning tourism sector appears to rest upon a paradoxical relationship with historical memory. With the one hand it whitewashes recent ethnic conflict to construct the fragile image of an island paradise, but with the other it celebrates a more distant period of violent oppression in order to choreograph a grotesque historical re-enactment that Northerners readily pay to participate in.

Crucially, it is the very profitability of this re-enactment that sustains its institutionalisation in the form of imagined colonialism. More so than bureaucratic legacy or enduring soft-power, the prevalence of colonial nostalgia is accounted for by the active cultivation of a local capitalist elite. All imperialists engage collaborators and turncoats to ease the process of conquest and in Sri Lanka the British found such allies in a nascent, multi-ethnic class of merchant capitalists whose political and economic interests were developed in return for information and unswerving loyalty – the two quite literally as thick as thieves[4]. As put in Kumari Jayawardena's *Nobodies to Somebodies,* "the Sri Lankan bourgeoisie was the product of a specific colonial form of capitalist production. It was an appendage of imperialism, a 'dependent' as opposed to an 'independent' class, whose creation and continued existence was based on protection and opportunities provided by the colonial state"[5]. For the depoliticised majority the colonial narrative speaks of racially-motivated oppression, dispossession and violence; for the drum-beating *lumpenbourgeoisie* it is a tale to be pantomimed in homage to their own upwards mobility.

Little surprise, then, that it is the same capitalist class that formed and thrived under colonialism that now owns and operates the hotels complicit in manufacturing colonial fantasies. Yet the profundity of imagined colonialism extends beyond mere sentimentality, it is a means of waging class warfare against the labouring precariat who staff and service the tourist industry. Colonial nostalgia is mobilised to press workers into degrading positions where the internalisation of displayed subservience ("yes sir, no sir") is an inalienable precondition of the job itself. In the context of scarce employment opportunities, anyone not willing to submit to such fawning is replaced from a reserve army of labour ready to play the part,

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[4] Jayawardena, Kumari. 2000. *Nobodies to Somebodies: The Rise of the Colonial Bourgeoisie in Sri Lanka.* Colombo: Social Scientists' Association and Sanjiva Books.

[5] Ibid.

and thus eager servility becomes fundamental to job security. With the ingraining of inferiority key to finding work, the footsoldiers of 'tourism development' are placated and taught to embrace their own subservience as a survival strategy. Just as Anderson claimed that colonialism allowed British elites to establish class order by exporting the practice of aristocratic privilege to colonial spaces, so too do the elites of former colonies draw upon imagined colonialism as a means of suppressing subordinate classes and entrenching their own socio-economic standing.

The Rajapaksa government has clearly slated tourism as one of Sri Lanka's few developmental crutches and this, in-turn, demands a critical re-evaluation of the sycophantic colonial symbolism in which the industry is steeped. Perhaps it is too optimistic to hope for the 'colonial heritage hotels' to be nationalised and re-opened as museums documenting colonial atrocity, á la Vietnam's War Remnants Museum (formerly the Exhibition House for US and Puppet Crimes), but if not a physical deconstruction of these bastions of colonial nostalgia then certainly a conceptual one. If colonialism can uncontroversially be understood as the systemic conduct of racially-motivated oppression and thievery, there is only a short jump to understanding its misappropriation by Sri Lankan capitalists as an attempt to transpose that same system of social relations to facilitate class-motivated oppression and thievery. Let us dismantle imagined colonialism, firstly by problematising the vernacular and iconography of colonial 'grandeur' and 'civility' to expose imperialism for what it really is, and secondly by critiquing the exploitative distortion of history as an instrument of class warfare being branded in an already polarised economy.

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5. Squeezed by the Global Economy

by Naomi Hossain

Why do Bangladeshi garment workers feel compelled to work in hazardous factories? People have been asking this question since the Savar factory collapsed and crushed 1,129 people to death near Dhaka, in April 2013. The answer lies in the place of these young people within the global economy: at work, they are precariously at the bottom of the global garments value chain; at home, they face steep cost of living rises from unpredictable global food and commodity prices. For instance, Halima, a 33 year old Bangladeshi garment worker and mother of three, told researchers in 2012:

> *"There is no guarantee for our job stability. What will happen tomorrow only God knows ... we cannot make any plans to save ... I need nutritious food for my health. But because there is not enough nutritious food in my diet, my working capability is decreasing day by day ... working with needles doing garment work causes a severe headache ... If I concentrate to see something, everything seems dim-sighted to me and my eyes fill with water. In fact, I don't have the education for a better job."*

People like Halima are being squeezed by their place in the global economy, and this is why they 'choose' to work in death-trap factories.

Since 2009, Dhaka garment workers have been among the people on low and precarious incomes, talking to researchers about how global economic volatility plays out in their lives.

In 2012, as part of the Oxfam-Institute of Development Studies *Life in a Time of Food Price Volatility*[1] project, with fears of price spikes still live following the US drought, teams spoke to people in 23 communities in Latin America, Sub-Saharan Africa and South and Southeast Asia.

The sense of a squeeze was widespread. Food, fuel and other costs of living have risen since 2007, in some cases, by double, triple or more. How well people eat is the single best indicator of their wellbeing. People on low incomes, like Halima are not satisfied with what they eat: few delicious and nutritious foods, no protein to speak of, possibly contaminated fish or vegetables, cheap additives for taste, and for the worst off, small or no meals at all. Famine-type behaviours – gathering wild vegetables, eating what is in effect livestock feed, and relying on 'hunger' recipes – are common.

Earning cash is pushing out other priorities. People take on higher risk jobs, in garment factories notorious for poor safety records, or in gold mines such as in Burkina Faso. More women are out trying to earn cash to add to the family budget than before, even where women traditionally stay at home, as in Pakistan. Samina Mansoor, a 27 year old, who is a worker in a brick factory in Pakistan, shares a debt with her husband of Rs. 300,000 (£1,800). Her story

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[1] http://www.ids.ac.uk/project/life-in-a-time-of-food-price-volatility

is just one example of the thousands of women in Pakistan who are forced to work to pay off such debts[2].This is having important but often overlooked social costs that further squeeze the lives of people living in or near poverty. The unpaid care work necessary for wellbeing at home is turning into a juggling act, with grandparents and older children being drafted in to help with cooking and childcare, where possible. Food shopping has become a marital battle zone: hard work does not guarantee a decent meal, and men who fail to meet their families' most basic needs feel emasculated. As a result of this situation people can afford to help each other less, as they depend heavily on earning a daily wage.

The good news should have been that wages and earnings are also rising. Yet progress is illusory: in real terms, people feel their wages are not keeping pace with five years of food price rises. They are in fact worse off. Many worry they can no longer save or plan for the future. Farming has become so uncertain that neither parents nor young people see it as their future – most avoid it as they feel it is a risky, unrewarding, hard and dirty livelihood.

Policymakers are unlikely to worry that women are juggling paid and unpaid work, or that men feel like failures; but they will want to pay attention to what these changes ultimately add up to. Unchecked food price rises are pushing out all other priorities: the importance once paid to the invaluable work of caring for families and the social cohesion built through socialising and helping neighbours are being replaced with calculations about daily wage incomes and the cost of living. This is social change by stealth, with people being dragged into the ever tighter coils of the global economy.

The hidden costs of food price rises on individuals and communities will worsen with time. Governments cannot indefinitely rely on the 'resilience' of individuals or the ability of families to absorb extra unpaid care responsibilities.   The assumption that communities will take care of each other in times of stress will no longer hold.

Poor people expect their governments to stabilise food prices and listen to their concerns about the cost of living. Yet their worries about food price rises affecting the things that matter in everyday life – how they care for and live alongside each other – are not heard in global food policy debates. Until they are, the pressures of life in a time of food price volatility means that we are unlikely to have seen the end of workers being squeezed into dangerous factories.

Naomi Hossain is a political sociologist with nearly 20 years of development research and advisory experience. Her work focuses on the politics of poverty and public services, and includes research on elite perceptions of poverty, governance and accountability of education and social protection, and women's empowerment. Naomi has conducted primary research in Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Indonesia, and cross-country research in Latin America, sub-Saharan Africa, and South and Southeast Asia.

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[2] *The Daily Mail,* 2014. The only way out is death: The women of Pakistan forced to spend their lives working in slave labour after inheriting their relatives' or husbands debts. Online. Accessed, March 2014. http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2575437/

6. Reimagining Healthcare: Addressing Mental Illnesses

by Shilohni Sumanthiran

'For too long we have swept the problems of mental illness under the carpet... and hoped that they would go away[1].

Richard J. Codey

Mental illnesses are a reality that has to be dealt with. One in four people suffer from mental disorders. Four of the six leading causes of 'years lived with disability' are mental illnesses. Depression is the second highest global disease burden[2].

What causes mental disorders? Society has progressed from the days when we believed that mental illnesses are the result of our own wrong doing, witchcraft or evil spirits. Medicine is now able to pinpoint various factors that result in mental disorders; genetics can cause people to be susceptible to diseases such as schizophrenia and alzheimer's while environmental and psychological factors can decide if these irregular genes evolve into an illness or not. Infections and toxins can cause diseases like dementia and obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD), while prenatal damage and chemical imbalances can result in disorders like autism and depression respectively. As in the case of physical illnesses, a greater understanding of mental illnesses can only be achieved if medical professionals and states commit their time and resources to research.

It is in the state's mandate to uphold a citizen's right to life by means of quality healthcare. The state also benefits from doing so, as healthy citizens actively contribute to society whereas sick and dying citizens are a burden to the state. Therefore, healthcare is already considered a vital component of development and every year countries pour resources into combating any illness that is a threat to public welfare.

Mental illnesses are as big a threat to the public's welfare as any physical sickness. Suicide is one of the leading causes of death in most countries. In the last 40 years, suicide rates have increased by 40% worldwide, with one person committing suicide every 40 seconds. 90% of suicides are the result of a mental illness such as depression, schizophrenia, bi-polar disorder and anorexia[3]. The

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[1] Brainy Quotes. Online. Accessed, February 2014.
    http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/keywords/mental _illness.html

[2] National Alliance on Mental Illness of Greater Chicago, 2013. "Mental Health 2013: A Important Public Health Issue." Online. Accessed, February 2014. http://www.namigc.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/MentalIllnessFactSheet-July-2013.pdf

[3] *The Republic Square,* September 2013. "World Suicide Prevention Day: Why Sri Lanka still needs to worry about mental health." Online. Accessed February 2014. http://www. therepublicsquare.com/briefs/2013/09/10/world-suicide-prevention-day-why-sri-lanka-still-

mentally sick are not only a threat to themselves but - as seen in incidents such as the Navy Yard tragedy in the United States[4] - they can also be a threat to others. Considering that mental disorders have the same consequences as physical illnesses, should they not be given the same weightage?

Even the world's most developed and well-resourced countries have yet to combat mental illnesses adequately. In Canada, 1.2 million children are affected by mental illnesses, yet only 25% of them get appropriate treatment[5]. In Europe, 50% of the mentally ill do not get treated for their sickness and in many developing countries this statistic can be as high as 90%[6].

Culture exacerbates the problem in countries like China, where there have been reports of psychiatric wards being used as political prisons and patients abused with beatings and electric shocks[7]. Resources are a serious problem in many countries; at the end of 2013, Laos had only two psychiatrists for a population of approximately six million people and there were no psychiatric nurses, clinical psychologists, social workers or occupational therapists working in the country at all[8]. However, even in the poorest of countries, steps such as equipping communities to deal with common mental illnesses can be taken to lessen the impacts. This particular method has proved successful in countries such as Uganda, Pakistan and India[9].

Sri Lanka has one of the highest suicide rates in the world. The 2004 tsunami and the civil war are two major contributors to the prevalence of mental disorders in Sri Lanka. Over thirty years of brutality and violence have cost our country countless lives and left many people wounded and disabled. However, the war has left more than just physical scars. According to the *Daily News* of September 10th 2013, 106,000 Sri Lankans committed suicide between 1985 and 2000;

needs-to-worry-about-mental-health/

[4] *The Washington Post,* September 2013. "Navy Yard shooting underscores how mental illness can be misdiagnosed among black men." Online. Accessed, February 2014. http://www.washingtonpost.com/local/navy-yard-shooting-underscores-how-mental-illness-can-be-misdiagnosed-among-black-men/2013/09/24/e1ded664-2554-11e3-b3e9-d97f-b087acd6_story.html

[5] *National Post,* October 2013. "Michael Kirby: Canada's two-tiered mental health care." Online. Accessed, February, 2014. http://fullcomment.nationalpost.com/2013/10/28/michael-kirby-canadas-two-tiered-mental-health-care/

[6] *Ted Talks,* Jun 2012. "Mental health for all by involving all." Online. Accessed, February 2014. https://www.ted.com/talks/vikram_patel_mental_health_for_all_by_involving_all

[7] *Human Rights Watch*, May 2013. "China: End Arbitrary Detention in Mental Health Institutions." Online. Accessed, February, 2014. http://www.hrw.org/news/2013/05/03/china-end-arbitrary-detention-mental-health-institutions

[8] Huffington Post, October 2013. "The Need to Train Psychiatrists in Lao PDR." Online. Accessed, February, 2014. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/basicneeds/the-need-to-train-psychia_b_4176704.html

[9] *Ted Talks,* Jun 2012. "Mental health for all by involving all." Online. Accessed February 2014. https://www.ted.com/talks/vikram_patel_mental_health_for_all_by_involving_all

this is double the number killed due to the war within the same period[10]. In the aftermath of the war, our focus on physical casualties and on rapid 'development' has evidently overshadowed the great need for psychological care. Despite the widespread mental trauma, *Basic Needs*, a humanitarian organisation that works in developing countries, stated that Sri Lanka has only one psychiatrist for every 500,000 people, most of whom are concentrated in urban areas[11]. Furthermore, while psychiatric help is vital in extreme cases, counselling is a solution for those who suffer from mild mental illnesses. In fact, counselling may help to deter the deterioration of mental illnesses to a state where it is disabling. Unfortunately, this solution is not given enough credit by our healthcare system and there is a lack of counsellors available to the public.

It is important to keep in mind that development means more than simply increasing the economic capacity of a country. Increasingly - in addition to a country's GDP - other indicators, such as the Human Development Index and Gross Happiness Index are also being given prominence when measuring a country's development. Why? Because the world has recognised that social development, mortality rates and general satisfaction of citizens are as important indicators of development as the economic status of a country.

Therefore, development must take place in many spheres; the acceptance of those with mental disorders is social development. Aesthetic development can take place if society creates room for the mentally sick to thrive in the fields that they are adept in. After all, Beethoven suffered from bi-polar disorder, Michelangelo had OCD and Pablo Picasso suffered from clinical depression[12] . Literature benefitted greatly from men like Charles Dickens, Ernest Hemingway and John Keats, who all suffered from depression. Even in politics, men like Abraham Lincoln[13] suffered from depression. However, social stigma restricts many people from engaging in these fields and from embracing their different abilities.

A country's economy will also benefit from better mental healthcare; mental illness costs the Canadian economy more than $50-billion a year and research shows that such illnesses hit people hardest in their prime years of work. As Michael Kirby, a former Canadian senator and advocate for better mental-healthcare pointed out, combating mental illnesses will help governments avoid a "lifetime of problems and costs"[14] .

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[10] *The Daily News,* September 2013. "Today is World Suicide Prevention Day." Online. Accessed February, 2014. http://www.dailynews.lk/?q=local/today-world-suicide-prevention-day

[11] Basic Needs, 2014. Online. Accessed February, 2014. http://basicneeds.org/sri_lanka/srilanka.asp

[12] *psychundergrad,* April 2012. "Famous artists who suffered from mental illness." Online. Accessed, February, 2014. psychundergrad.wordpress.com/2012/04/18/famous-artists-who-suffered-from-mental-illness-psychology-meets-art-1/

[13] Listverse, November 2012. "Top 10 Awesome Men with Mental Illnesses" Online. Accessed, February 2014. http://listverse.com/2012/11/03/top-10-crazy-men/

[14] *The Globe and Mail,* October 2013. "Exposing Canada's Ugly Mental-health Secret" Online.

Evidently, the attitudes of states and people towards mental illnesses severely hinder the overall development of countries.

Thomas Insel, who has led the National Institute of Mental Health, in the United States of America, since 2002, stated that one in every twenty people becomes disabled by their mental disability. He feels that considering the fact that 75% of mental illnesses manifest by the age of 24 - the answer to this problem is early detection and intervention. This will prevent mental illnesses from disabling people to the point where they have no quality of life and cannot continue to work. This has worked with heart diseases, which have reduced by 63%, reducing the mortality rate by 1.1 million deaths a year and with AIDs where an average of 30,000 deaths are averted a year[15] . He says that the knowledge to cure many mental illnesses exists, and that the main problem is stigma. Therefore, to see similar results with mental illnesses, they need to be approached in the same manner as with physical illnesses. The common perception is that people who are mentally ill cannot contribute to development and this stigma makes it difficult for those with a mental illness to get jobs and be an active part of society.

For decades, countries and organisations have focused on creating awareness and an environment of acceptance for those with mental disorders. Unfortunately, people's perceptions seem to be unaffected by campaigns and speeches. The arts on the other hand have a strong influence on culture and views. Instead of simply giving people the information they need, books like 'the perks of being a wallflower' spark empathy in them.

We may think that we do not conform to these archaic notions and biases against the mentally ill. Yet, unfortunately, this culture is ingrained in all of us. You would have no reservations in telling people that your mother suffered from a heart attack, or that you have diabetes. However, if your mother suffered from schizophrenia or you suffered from depression, would you make that knowledge public?

Governments have a role to play in re-thinking their approach to healthcare; prioritising the combat of mental illnesses in their development policies; advocating acceptance through the arts and other effective means; and empowering communities on how to deal with mental disabilities.

However, it is our tendency to treat mental illness as a forbidden secret that remains one of the biggest barriers to progress. Therefore, changing our own perceptions should be the first step. If we can openly and shamelessly admit when either we, or those close to us, have psychological problems, we will begin

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Accessed February 2014. http://www.theglobeandmail.com/life/health-and-fitness/health/exposing-canadas-ugly-mental-health-secret/article14828590/

[15] *Ted Talks* January 2013. "Toward a new understanding of mental illness" Online. Accessed, February 2014. https://www.ted.com/talks/thomas_insel_toward_a_new_understanding_of_mental_illness

to oust the stigma within our own social circles. The domino effect is stronger than most people give it credit for; you start treating mental illnesses like you would any physical illness, and others around you will begin to do the same.

Shilohni Sumanthiran is a past student of CMS Ladies' College. She is interested in the social sciences and humanities and hopes to enter university over the course of the next year. She is currently working with CEPA on the 'Re-imagining Development' initiative.

7. Making the Elderly Count

bY Thahira Cader

The Tokyo Institute of Gerontology in Japan is currently developing a 'Smart City' for about 400,000 older people. It is inbuilt with all the support facilities needed for them to continue living a life within the community, despite their increasing frailty. Another project of the institute is to find work for people in their 70s – second life careers – such as running a cafe or growing vegetables[1]

Hogeway[2], also referred to as 'the dementia village', is a similar facility operating in the Netherlands where elderly residents can live a seemingly normal life. Although they don't realise it, they are being watched all the time by caretakers and staff at restaurants, the grocery store, salon, theater etc. The simple goal in both these cases is to provide a normal environment that is reminiscent of each individual's former years, and to guarantee they receive the highest quality of life.

The actions of these two countries are significant in the context of today's world - in a society that has increasingly less time to extend basic compassion and sensitivity to one another; that labels the elderly as an 'economic burden'; and discards them when they are no longer contributing towards development.

These attitudes are further inflamed in light of the rapidly ageing population across the globe.

The imminent challenges of a rising elderly population

For the first time in history people over 65 years of age will outnumber children below 5 years[3] . Between the years 2000-2050, the number of people above 60 years will escalate to a mammoth 1.4 billion. In Japan alone, life expectancy has increased by 35 years within a mere 7 decades[4] .

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[1] *Asia News Network,* October 2013. "Lessons from Japan on an ageing population." Online. Accessed, April, 2014.
http://www.asianewsnet.net/Lessons-from-Japan-on-an-ageing-population-52516.html

[2] *Cable News Network,* December 2013. "'Dementia village' inspires new care" Online. Accessed, April 2014. http://edition.cnn.com/2013/07/11/world/europe/wus-holland-dementia-village/

[3] *National Institute on Ageing,* March 2007. Why Population Ageing Matters: A Global Perspective. Washington DC: USDepartment of Health and Human Services. Online. Accessed, April 2014. http://www.nia.nih.gov/research/publication/why-population-aging-matters-global-perspective

[4] *Asia News Network,* October 2013. "Lessons from Japan on an ageing population." Online. Accessed, April, 2014. http://www.asianewsnet.net/Lessons-from-Japan-on-an-ageing-population-52516.html

While high life expectancy implies that medical advancement and economic development has trumped injury and disease, the increasing rates of age-related poverty, non-communicable disease (NCD) and disability worldwide reflect another story. In fact, the ageing population poses a multitude of economic, social and health challenges for the future.

Sri Lanka is facing similar prospects. It is currently the fastest ageing country in South Asia[5]. Life expectancy at birth is 74[6] years and based on future trends in mortality, fertility and international migration, it is projected that between the years 2010-2041 the elderly population will double from 2.5 to 5.3 million[7] .

Due to lifestyle changes taking place in the country – urbanisation, industrialisation, the rise in living costs, the increase in female labour participation – the extended family structure which traditionally supported the elderly, is beginning to crumble. According to a poverty brief published by the Centre for Poverty Analysis, 'Sri Lanka is showing a growing trend of nucleation and urbanisation of families that is leading to more elderly people living on their own'[8]. Individualistic attitudes inherently linked to the neoliberal paradigm are creeping in as the double-earner system leaves little room for nuclear families to take care of the older generation. The majority of the aged are being marginalised and dumped into elders' homes as a result. In Vavuniya, there are approximately 13,000 elderly citizens in need of care. Yet, there are only four elderly homes to cater to these needs[9] .

From the elderly perspective, 'loneliness' is an escalating factor that is disrupting social wellbeing and peace of mind. The Manager of an Elders' Home in Kotte expressed that despite all the facilities provided for the elderly, they were unhappy because they missed their children[10] . Moreover, a growing body of studies reveals that 'loneliness is linked to a host of other problems and in itself can kill, typically by raising blood pressure and increasing risk for heart disease and stroke'[11]. It suggests that a supportive social network is strongly connected

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[5] Taylor, S., Perera, L. & Storey, P., 2012. Poverty and the Challenges of the Elderly, Poverty Brief No. 12, Colombo: Centre for Poverty Analysis. Online. Accessed, February 2014. http://cepa.lk/library/Cepa_publication_details-6-4011.html

[6] World Bank, 2014, : Data. Online. Accessed, February 2014. http://data.worldbank.org/country/sri-lanka

[7] World Bank, November 2012. Sri Lankan Population Change and Demographic Bonus Challenges and Opportunities in the New Millennium, Discussion Paper Series, Report 37, pp 21-26. Online. Accessed, February 2014.
http://www-wds.worldbank.org/external/default/WDSContentServer/WDSP/IB/2012/12/05/000356161_20121205014059/Rendered/PDF/NonAsciiFileName0.pdf

[8] Taylor, S., Perera, L. & Storey, P., 2012. Poverty and the Challenges of the Elderly, Poverty Brief No. 12, Colombo: Centre for Poverty Analysis. Online. Accessed February 2014. http://cepa.lk/library/Cepa_publication_details-6-4011.html

[9] *The Sunday Times,* August 2009. "Old and Abandoned." Online. Accessed, February 2014. http://www.sundaytimes.lk/090809/News/nws20.html

[10] Ibid.

[11] *Cable News Network,* December 2012. "Loneliness, not living alone, linked to dementia". Online. Accessed, February, 2014. http://edition.cnn.com/2012/12/12/health/loneliness-dementia/index.html

to attaining positive health outcomes, whether psychological or physical. It is clear therefore, that many of these problems are intrinsically linked and often serve to trigger the other off.

NCDs have already become the largest contributor to disease burden in Sri Lanka, accounting for 85% of ill health, disability and early deaths[12]. Furthermore, a regional study proved that South Asians suffer their first heart attack six years earlier than people in other regions, worldwide[13]. It is possible then, that many of these ill effects stem from an overall atmosphere of unhappiness and negativity.

Rethinking the way forward

Although elders' homes and day centres appear to be an easy solution, they are a far cry from being the answer to the problem. Merely providing for the material wellbeing of the elderly does not ensure that they are well taken care of.

The initiatives taken by Japan and the Netherlands look beyond the mere provision of material benefits. The two systems have been designed to make the elderly independent and empowered; to allow them to actively participate and be part of a vibrant community life. Sri Lanka may not have adequate funding to develop such advanced facilities, yet this shouldn't avert us from drawing inspiration from the notion of placing the overall wellbeing of the elderly at the centre of our agenda.

As expected, with an increase of the ageing population, a whole new dimension of health problems have arisen and huge costs must be borne. Yet, in Sri Lanka there is little prominence placed on a specialised geriatric care system – with every patient being treated in a common ward. Even more noteworthy is the fact that there are no specialist geriatricians and health care workers in the country, with the skills to manage elderly complaints; as a result delirium, depression and dementia often goes overlooked[14] .

Dementia is a condition which affects an estimated 150,000 elderly in Sri Lanka but only 15% of patients ultimately seek medical help[15]. There are numerous policies and schemes in place – the National Health Policy, the Public Assistance Scheme, the Ministry of Social Services – that provide general facilities to cater to the needs of the people. Yet, it is perhaps more important to establish specialised organisations that target the specific problems likely to heighten with

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[12] World Bank, July 2011. "Tackling Non-Communicable Diseases in Sri Lanka." Online. Accessed, February 2014. http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2012/05/16/non-communicable-diseases-sri-lanka

[13] Ibid.

[14] Balasuriya, A., 2010. *Elder Population in Sri Lanka: Current Status,* Presentation, College of Physicians Srilanka. Online. Accessed, February 2014. http://ceycollphysicians.org/images/aas_2010/day_2/achala_elder_population_ppt.pdf

[15] *Sunday Times,* December 2011. "A crucial step towards awareness about dementia." Online. Accessed, February 2014. http://www.sundaytimes.lk/111225/Plus/plus_24.html.

the passing of time.

For instance, Alzheimer Europe is a non-governmental organisation (NGO) that has created a mechanism for co-ordination between Alzheimer organisations throughout Europe[16]. This type of support system that assists families to cope and handle lifelong illnesses such as Alzheimers is severely lacking in Sri Lanka. In fact, Help Age Sri Lanka is the only (NGO) in the country that provides leadership to improve the lives of the elderly and help them "claim their rights, challenge discrimination and overcome poverty"[17].

When balancing out the country's future prospects, the mechanisms already in place seem far from sufficient. It is critical that additional schemes are developed to support the unprecedented rise in the ageing population that is looming ahead.

Although the Protection of the Rights of the Elderly Act was passed in 2000, it has been slow in implementation. One of the clauses of the act is that children shall not neglect their parents. Another clause emphasises the non-discrimination of people based on age[18] . Through the years, our cultural values of respecting and caring for elders have strongly embodied these ideologies. Yet, at the turn of the century, a majority of us have lost touch with basic sensitivity, patience and compassion – and these age old practices have slipped out of our lifestyles.

From the context of reimagining development, one of the motivations should be to safeguard the long-term physical, mental and social well-being of the elderly. Regardless of whether they are rich or poor, their fundamental rights must be upheld. In order to achieve this, an overall change in attitude is required. To purge out the negative mindset prevalent in the country we need to begin viewing the elderly as a source of knowledge and experience as opposed to marginalising them and confining them because of their age. Instead of proliferating negative attitudes that will result in the continuation of a vicious cycle of illness and unhappiness among the elderly – Sri Lanka needs to channel a rush of positive energy into the system.

It is only by looking at the issue subjectively, through fresh eyes, that we can begin to reverse our attitudes and create an environment that allows the elderly to play a more active role in the community and ultimately aim to achieve development for ALL.

Where do we start? Perhaps, by accepting our own mortality and the idea that we will never be younger than we are today. It is inevitable that by the year

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[16] Alzeihmer Europe, 2014. Online. Accessed, February, 2014. http://www.alzheimer-europe.org/

[17] HelpAge Sri Lanka, 2014. Online. Accessed, February, 2014. http://www.helpagesl.org/

[18] Taylor, S., Perera, L. & Storey, P., 2012. *Poverty and the Challenges of the Elderly,* Poverty Brief No. 12, Colombo: Centre for Poverty Analysis. Online. Accessed, February 2014. http://cepa.lk/library/Cepa_publication_details-6-4011.html

2035, one out of five people will be a part of the ageing population[19]. It could be any one of us.

We must then ask the question: when it is our turn, how would we want to spend the 'winter' of our lives?

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[19] Transgenerational Design Matters, 2014. "Characteristics of our Ageing Population." Online. Accessed, February 2014. www.transgenerational.org/aging/demographics.htm

CENTRE FOR BRILLIANT MINDS
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Defining education

According to Bloom's taxonomy, a comprehensive education should encompass three key aspects: knowledge, skills and attitudes. A person's knowledge is reflected in his desire to constantly seek information, and in the way he reflects on and responds to his discoveries. Simple skills such as analytical skills and teamwork should be developed to enhance individual character and personality; enabling people to think on their feet and tackle the challenges of the twentieth century.

Yet, in a world that is obsessed with 'educational qualifications', we have lost sight of the fundamental purpose of education itself. Common perceptions are that education ends when a person transits from childhood to adulthood and begins to work. We view education as a means to an end. The reality however, is that the process of learning is a continuous one. A progressive education demands that we stay up to date with the views and methodologies of our rapidly evolving world. It should ceaselessly challenge intellect and curiosity, and drive people to push at its boundaries; innovate; create; imagine.

A glance at Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka is partially steeped in a system of Free Education that was introduced in the 1940s. Its fundamental aim was to ensure that every child had an opportunity to learn, irrespective of their social and economic backgrounds.

Regrettably, as Sri Lankans, we have applauded this feat and in our complacency overlooked the need to review and question the relevance of such a system in the modern world. The average gross enrollment rate for primary and secondary education in the world is 87.4%[2]. Sri Lanka surpasses other Asian nations such as Malaysia (83.9%) and India (87.2%) with a percentage of 98.9%[3]. Evidently, our focus on achieving the Millennium Development target of universal primary education has laid predominant emphasis on 'quantitative' targets. Unfortunately,

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[1] This article was compiled by selecting facts from an array of sources: interviews with teachers and students, personal anecdotes and recent statistics. We have identified several structural problems in the Sri Lankan education system and highlighted the scope there is for improvement and reform.

[2] Factfish, 2014. Online. Accessed January 2014.
http://www.factfish.com/statistic/gross%20enrolment%20rate%2C%20primary%20 and%20secondary%2C%20total

[3] Ibid.

this has overshadowed the significance of a qualitative education. It has created a society that learns about climate change and pollution, yet does not think twice before casually dropping their used plastic cups on the ground while they walk along Galle Face Green. The escalating rates of crime and corruption in the country further showcase this.

The big syllabus problem

Many teachers and students expressed that one of the main problems with secondary education, especially Advanced Levels (A' Levels), is the exhaustive curriculum. The presumption is that the larger the syllabus, the more difficult the exam, and that a higher degree of difficulty translates to a more enhanced education.

The workload confines some students to their books and discourages many from engaging in extra-curricular activities that contribute to personal development. When students have so much content to absorb within a limited timeframe, their ability to think critically about what they are learning is stifled. Instead, they resort to cram, memorise and regurgitate knowledge as they practice past papers just to pass an examination.

The local system leaves little room for practical learning. Chemistry teachers have told us that there is no time to do experiments and language teachers expressed that subjects like French are lacking a spoken dimension. Moreover, in a fast digitalising world where a basic knowledge of computer operations is vital, General IT is not compulsory and computer practicals are excluded.

In contrast, the London A' Levels, which is broken up into units, covers the same themes as the Sri Lankan A' Levels without burdening students with unnecessary content that cannot be applied. These examinations tests a different kind of skill; the ability to reason, to use common sense, to apply knowledge gained from textbooks to practical situations and they include open-book examinations for subjects like literature that involve the need for verbatim reproduction of study material.

The examination problem: What are they testing?

Undoubtedly, the education system in Sri Lanka is examination-oriented. This affects the teaching-learning process in its entirety.

The A' Level Examination is a case in point. For the past decade the Economics papers have followed a pattern of the 'learn and reproduce' type. However, last year's paper posed questions such as "why is this theory true?" instead of 'state the theory'. Many A' Level students that we conversed with admitted that the paper was unusually difficult. This was reflected further when the 'A' percentage in a leading private school in Colombo, dropped from 50% in 2012 to 12.5% in 2013.

In the words of Margaret Mead, "Children must be taught how to think, not what to think"[4] . If everyone was programmed to think the same way, society would have stagnated decades ago. It is important that an education system nurtures creative thinking and debate, which will generate new ideas and propel the development of the country.

The teaching-learning process: Changing the mindset

These problems determine how teachers manage their classroom; often spoon-feeding students and rushing through the syllabus. The time factor sucks out the creativity in their teaching techniques. While the Student Based Assessment approach, introduced in 1999 (most recently revised in 2003)[5] , allows students to engage in creative learning, it has not been applied to full capacity[6] .

Our cultural ideologies act as a significant barrier in this instance. From a young age, students are taught in black and white and are discouraged from exploring the shades of grey. To question teachers and elders or to challenge authority is considered disrespectful. Thus, the fear of being 'wrong' is ingrained in their minds.

While some students thrive in such an environment, others might feel constricted because there is no freedom to think out of the box. Ultimately, it is the creative child: the late developer, the one who perceives situations differently who gets left behind because he or she would not conform or could not score that perfect 'A' grade. Einstein summed up in essence that schools kill creativity when he said, "Everybody is a genius. But if you judge a fish by its ability to climb a tree, it will live its whole life believing that it is stupid"[7] .

'Attitude is a little thing that makes a big difference.' - Winston Churchill

On many occasions papers have included sections that are not in the curriculum; the Greek and Roman Civilisation paper in 2012 had a question from the old syllabus, and according to French teachers, the Ordinary Level (O' Level) French paper is constantly testing A' Level grammar. Further, the indifferent attitudes of those who set the examination papers was reflected in the 2013 A' Level English Literature paper, which had grammatical errors that made questions incomprehensible.

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[4] Goodreads, 2014. Online. Accessed, January 2014. http://www.goodreads.com/quotes/122996-children-must-be-taught-how-to-think-not-what-to

[5] Gonzales, R D L C., January 2009. "School Based assessment Program in Sri Lanka: An Overview" in *Educational Assessment Practice.* Blog. Online, Accessed January 2014. http://measurementandevaluation.blogspot.com/2009/01/school-based-assessment-program-in-sri.html

[6] *The Island,* May 2009. "school based assessment a failure?" Online, Accessed, January 2014, http://www.island.lk/2009/05/23/satmag1.html

[7] Goodreads, 2014. Online. Accessed, January 2014. http://www.goodreads.com/quotes/101458-everybody-is-a-genius-but-if-you-judge-a-fish

The reluctance to invest in resources is another issue which unnecessarily burdens students and teachers alike. For instance, the grade 10 English History textbook lacks the content found in the Sinhala textbook and the A' Level Geography teacher's manual was published four years after the syllabus was designed.

Honesty is a forgotten virtue. Cheating at public examinations is now a norm. Many students have witnessed invigilators ignoring, and sometimes aiding the cheating process. Integrity is lacking even while setting papers, for example, the 2011 O' Level Science paper that was leaked[8]. What is the point of 'educating' the next generation if the system condones such malpractices?

Pushing for reform

Many of these problems have sensible solutions. Extracting outdated topics from large syllabuses and allowing students to pick specific modules that interest them, will serve to ease their burden. Likewise, the SATS (Scholastic Aptitude Test) and the Edexcel Advanced Levels are good formats to model when re-thinking our approach to examinations.

According to statistics released by the Department of Examinations, at the 2011 O' Level English examination 57% of the candidates scored less than 30% of marks. This rate of failure does not pertain to English alone - out of the 270,000 students who sat for the examination in 2011, 55,000 of them failed mathematics[9]. While it is commendable that the State plans to include a spoken component at the O' Level English examination from 2015, steps need to be taken to make such strategies effective and to address the root of some of the problems first. For example, more time and money needs to be invested in teacher training, in the provision of resource materials, in the opening up of libraries to encourage reading, and by organising workshops across the country. These efforts will make a significant difference to the quality of education a student receives.

Bangladesh, a developing country, has taken innovative strides to overcome obstacles that hinder their education process. This is demonstrated by the solar powered floating schools equipped with computer facilities that were put in place to combat floods. Similarly in Malaysia, the Deputy Prime Minister expressed that "In order to compete with the best in the world, our education system must develop young Malaysians who are knowledgeable, think critically and creatively, have leadership skills and are able to communicate with the rest of the world"[10]. The country is making visible progress in this light, and their "Education Blue Print: 2013-2025", elaborates these creative strategies and endeavours. Moving forward, we can learn from our counterparts in the developing world and tackle

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[8] *The Nation,* 2012, 'O'Level Science Paper Leak: Tuition Master Further Remanded.' Online. Accessed January 2014. http://nation.lk/edition/breaking-news/item/13998-o-l-science-paper-leak-tuition-master-further-remanded.html

[9] *The Island*, April, 2013. "Maths examination results show a need for improvement." On-line. Accessed, January 2014. http://www.island.lk/index.php?page_cat=article-details&page=article-details&code_title=76464

[10] Government of Malaysia, September 2012. *Preliminary Report, Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2025.* p 8. Online. Accessed, January, 2014. http://www.moe.gov.my/userfiles/file/PPP/Preliminary-Blueprint-Eng.pdf

our own barriers through such similar approaches.

In Sri Lanka, education policies have been formulated based on quantitative data such as the number of students being enrolled in school, the percentage of 'A' grades etc. These statistics don't reflect the qualitative problems within the system. For example, teachers lacking the qualifications required for the job; students cheating at examinations; the blatant elimination motive of the A' Level examination; and the obvious lack of parity between those who set the syllabus and those who set examination papers, although not captured in existing data, are issues that we know to be true. Students experience these trials on a daily basis. Thus, in our attempt to re-imagine the education system, who better to turn to than the students themselves? Getting continuous feedback from them via surveys will help policy makers gain insight into the nature of these issues and take them into account when designing policies and educational reforms for the future.

Through education we have the power to forge our destiny. If children indeed are the future, shouldn't they be a dynamic force in fashioning this transformation?

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9. Regaining Consciousness

by Vagisha Gunasekara

At the 2011 World Economic Forum in Davos, the U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki Moon warned that "our model of economic growth has become not merely obsolete, but a global suicide pact"[1]. We have drilled our way to growth, burned our way to prosperity, and staunchly adhered to our faith in consumption without consequences.

In 2013, all resources are depleting before our eyes; the clock is ticking even faster; and we must wake up in time to build a new sustainable economic model for survival.   We are on the cusp of a new era in which only a radical change of our current worldview can save us from plunging down to mass extinction.

A flawed core

The anthropologist Gregory Bateson argued (in his 1972 book *Steps to the Ecology of Mind*) that the basis of the environmental crisis of the modern age lay in the realm of ideas. Humankind suffered from an "epistemological fallacy"[2]. We have constructed an erroneous dualism - that mind and nature operate independently of each other. The way we perceive the world can change that world, and the world can in turn change us. He wrote: "when you narrow down your epistemology and act on the premise 'what interests me is me or my organisation or my species,' you disconnect from other loops of the interconnected web of life. An example would be the disposal of industrial waste into lakes. We do this, because we forget that the "ecomental" system which the lake is a part of, constitutes our wider ecomental system, and that if the lake is driven insane, its insanity is incorporated in the larger system of your thought and experience[3].

Our inability to see this truth, Bateson maintained, was becoming egregiously apparent. "Purposiveness" has become the prerogative of human consciousness. We believe that it is our right to get what we want, when we want it. This condition, spread mass scale, produces some disturbing effects: vanishing forests, smog, global warming. "There is an ecology of bad ideas, just as there is an ecology of weeds," Bateson wrote, "and it is characteristic of the system that basic error propagates itself"[4].

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[1] *The Guardian* UK, 2011. "Ban Ki-Moon: World's Economic Model is Environmental Suicide." January 28. Accessed, August,01, 2013. http://www.theguardian.com/environment/2011/jan/28/ban-ki-moon-economic-model-environment.

[2] Bateson, Gregory. 1972. *Steps to an Ecology of Mind: Collected Essays in Anthropology, Psychiatry, Evolution, and Epistemology.* Chicago: University Of Chicago Press.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid.

How do we rectify this flaw in our consciousness? Bateson believed we need to correct our errors of thought by achieving clarity in ourselves and encouraging it in others — reinforcing "whatever is sane in them." In other words, to be ecological, we needed to *feel ecological* [5]. His emphasis on the interdependence of the mind and nature influenced the likes of George Sessions and Arne Naess, who proposed the "principles of Deep Ecology", hoping to shape the attitudes and behaviour of individuals coming from different philosophical and religious positions[6].

Deep Ecology moves beyond the duality and refutes the idea that humans are a "superior" species, which the rest of the ecosystem should support in an obsequious manner, or that nature is for humanity to master and control. Rather than accepting the Social Darwinian concept of the survival of the fittest, deep ecology sees life from the perspective of synergy and interconnectedness.

It questions whether the global culture, with its model of continued economic and material growth, is ethically or environmentally sustainable. Is it ethical that we strive to fulfill our needs and desires at the expense of unprecedented species depletion, pollution, and destruction of natural habitat—as well as engendering a climate change that is bringing the Earth into a dangerous state of imbalance? And if we are part of an interdependent whole, how long can we all endure this present ecocide?

The most telling feature of the principles of Deep Ecology is the promotion of an unusually strong sense of interconnectedness and a deep awareness of the multiple interacting factors that compose a healthy environment. According to Australian philosopher Glenn Albrecht, this is *soliphilia*, "the love of and responsibility for a place, bioregion, planet and the unity of interrelated interests within it"[7]. This is the psychological foundation for sustainability. For those of us that see the necessity of radical change, we must acknowledge the obvious need to work on ourselves as well as the social system. If we have not begun to transform our own delusions, our efforts to address their institutional manifestations are likely to be useless. It is simply due to this absence of a critical mass of *awakened* individuals (or *soliphiliacs*) that we are currently unable to see a collective transformation which in turn can sufficiently challenge the existing sociopolitical order. Only then, would we truly make an effort to implement pragmatic ideas such as "sustainable production and consumption", "carbon tax", "restructuring renewables", and "cutting down fossil fuel subsidies" in any meaningful way.

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[5] Ibid.

[6] Naess, A. and Sessions, G.. 1984. "Basic Principles of Deep Ecology." Online. Accessed, July 31, 2013. http://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/arne-naess-and-george-sessions-basic-principles-of-deep-ecology

[7] Albrecht, G. 2005. "Solastalgia, a new concept in human health and identity", *Philosophy Activism Nature* 3: pp 41-44. Melbourne: Australia.

Sustainable production and consumption

The Oslo Symposium in 1994 proposed a working definition of Sustainable production and consumption as "the use of goods and services that respond to basic needs and bring a better quality of life, while minimising the use of natural resources, toxic materials and emissions of waste and pollutants over the life cycle, so as not to jeopardise the needs of future generations"[8].

Commentators on this topic highlight that the main thrust of Sustainable production is on the supply side of the equation, focusing on enhancing environmental performance in key economic sectors. Sustainable consumption approaches the demand side, examining how the goods and services required to meet basic needs and improve quality of life - such as food and health, shelter, clothing, leisure and mobility - can be provided in ways that reduce the burden on the Earth's carrying capacity.

As noble as the intentions of the sustainable production and consumption framework may be, we must question the fundamentals of the current consumer models, before attempting to 'bend' these ideas to fit the existing model of continuous material growth. Does consumption *define* us? Do we live to shop or do we shop to live, or in order to fulfill our individual purpose? Answering these fundamental questions is crucial. Progressive activists and environmentalists have gone down the path of incremental reform and 'change within the system' for decades to no avail. As the American environmental statesman James Gustave Speth points out, the roots of our environmental and social problems are deeply systemic and thus require transformational change—the shift to a new, sustaining economy ushered in by a new politics[9].

A new measure of growth

We could start by developing an alternative to the current measurement of growth – Gross Domestic Product (GDP). GDP offers no comparable monetary estimation for the costs of environmental degradation or human health impacts that result from economic growth. For instance, GDP does not account for pollution; neither does it factor in leisure nor unpaid child care. Furthermore, it does not provide a sense of inequitable distribution of a country's wealth; and does not capture the quality of life or happiness in any given society.

Several countries and organisations have derived various alternative measurements of growth and development, such as Gross National Happiness, Happy Planet Index, and Genuine Progress Indicator that attempt to capture natural and social capital of communities.

Our collective 'fetish' with GDP has resulted in dangerous negligence of the

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[8] Oslo Symposium. 1994. "The Imperative of Sustainable Production and Consumption." Online. Accessed, July 29, 2013. http://www.iisd.ca/consume/oslo004.html
[9] Speth, G. 2010. "Towards a New Economy and a New Politics." *Solutions.* 1 (5): pp 33-41.

value of the priceless: clean water, , wetlands, etc – all that are referred to as "externalities" in economic models. This lack of an all-encompassing cost structure leads citizens to associate economic activity with wellbeing, and subsequently demand that policymakers make heedless decisions based on economic calculations. The next time we protest a carbon tax policy or cutting down fuel subsidies, both of which are likely to increase fuel prices, we ought to reflect on whether we are part of the problem or the solution.

A bottom up transformation

The establishment of state banks, co-operatives of various types, and development corporations at the local, grassroots level is key to transforming the future from the bottom up. For example, at the heart of Europe's renewable energy bonanza are community-owned energy projects. In Denmark, about 80% of installed wind capacity is individually or co-operatively owned; in Germany it is about 51%. In the United States, groups like the Business Alliance for Local Living Economies (BALLE) are focusing on locally rooted, locally committed, environmentally sustainable enterprises, and community revitalisation through that means[10].

Then, there are Transition Towns, a brand of environmental and social movements, based on the principles of Bill Mollison's seminal work, *Permaculture, a Designers Manual*, consisting of communities striving to live in a sustainable manner (i.e. reducing fossil fuel usage, reducing dependence on long supply chains, community gardening, etc.)[11]. These examples make compelling cases for local level transformation, which in turn could lead to larger structural changes.

What we need right now is a new inclusive social and political movement. The best hope for such a dynamic is a fusion of those that understand the interconnectivity of life systems, social justice, and political democracy into one progressive force. George Bernard Shaw famously said that all progress depends on not being reasonable[12]. It's time for a large amount of civic unreasonableness.

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[10] Balle: Be a Localist. Online. Accessed July 2013. https://bealocalist.org/
[11] Mollison, B. 1988. *Permaculture, a Designers Manual.* Australia: Tagari Publications
[12] Shaw, G. B. 1903. *Maxims for Revolutionists.* Cambridge, Mass.: The University Press

10. Sri Lanka's Development Debate and the Role of Non Governmental Organisations

by Sarath Fernando[1]

When we look at Sri Lanka over the past 36 years and observe the changes that have taken place in the country from post independence decades to the present, we see that some crucial issues around the development debate have emerged. The process adopted by all Sri Lankan governments, irrespective of which party was in power, was that of following the guidance given by International Financial Institutions (IFIs) such as the World Bank, International Monetary Fund, and the Asian Development Bank. However, this has led to new issues for the country.

The development processes adopted by early post-independence governments gave priority to social welfare. These processes were in turn, influenced by the political process in the country particularly that of the leftist parties who educated and informed people about their rights. Food at affordable prices was a right, and food subsidies was the outcome; education was a right, so free education became a policy; health was a right, and a free health system became a policy; and exchange between producers and consumers was a right, therefore trade through cooperatives and government intervention became state policy.

All this changed drastically after 1977, under the guidance of IFIs. Privatisation of trade, education, health and other essential services created tremendous problems. Trade liberalisation became a policy which affected domestic production in industry and agriculture. Indebtedness has significantly increased and further debts are incurred to build massive infrastructure, not because the people needed them, but in order to make the country attractive for foreign investment. These changes, inevitably, give rise to new policy debates and new struggles for social and political justice. The government's response to these struggles has so far been repression and curtailment of democratic rights. Yet, democracy and the people's participation in planning, is an essential part of these struggles, and Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs) have a right and a responsibility to join in these debates and struggles. However, exercising that right has lead many NGOs veer into disagreement with the government in power and its plans.

In disagreeing with the government's approach to development, NGOs in Sri Lanka have come to be criticised and labeled as "anti-government". This is particulary the case where disagreement with the government has arisen resulted in an NGO taking a pro-people stance. The private sector on the other hand also has reasons to oppose NGOs since the NGOs are often critical of the

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[1] This essay reflects Mr. Sarath Fernando's retrospective perspectives on the role of non-governmental organisations in Sri Lanka's development process. As a pioneer of a 44 year old social movement advocating agricultural reforms, Mr. Fernando has been witness to many changes in the way policy influence takes place in the country.

private sector's destructive use of the country's natural resources. When the Eppawela Phosphate deposits were to be sold to a US and a Japanese company, NGOs were among the opponents of the move which was ultimately halted.. When water was to be declared a commodity and sold for profit the move was opposed by NGOs. In both these instances, the NGOs supported the struggles of the people. Criticism of the NGOs by IFIs arise because the NGOs are seen as undermining their agenda. The main accusation leveled against NGOs by the state, is that they garner foreign funds to instigate opposition development processes adopted by elected governments.

In examining the accusations it is quite clear that the governments are the main recepients of foreign funding and subsequently the implementers of the agendas of the IFIs, which are ultimately destructive, anti-people particularly against the interests of the poor. What of the NGOs? Do they then need not be accountable to the poor, or is it is sufficient that they only be accountable to the donors? Since all NGO funding is obtained in the name of the underprivileged and marginalised members of society, they do need to be accountable at all levels. NGOs also have a responsibility to be accountable to their governments and donors.

Accountability does not meant they are under obligation to obey them. However, structures need to be put in place so that they are answerable to the people, and planning takes place in consultation with them. One important task is to help citizens plan strategies that can be presented to the political parties when they formulate their election manifestos, and assist in setting up structures to make the politicians accountable to these manifestos. This role cannot be described as anti-governmental. It is pro-people and pro-governmental with Transparency, accountability and participation being essential components of the process.

Local/ village based non governmental organisations

There is another wide category of NGOs based at village level in Sri Lanka. These are formed by the local communities to meet some of the limited specific needs of a village or community. The most common example is the maranadhara samithi, -societies that assist at funerals in villages. Members of the community join these and make a specific monthly contribution. When someone dies in the village, and if she/he is a member of the organisation, the family is assisted with a fixed sum of money and the community undertakes certain functions associated with the funeral ceremony.

Other examples are the rural development society, which oversees the developmental activities of a village, cooperative societies, praja mandalas (community councils) and sports clubs. There are, also, thrift and credit societies, outfits adopted to undertake small scale savings and which offer credit facilities during emergencies.

All of these local level NGOs do not receive any external funding assistance. They run on membership contributions according to rules and regulations formulated by them. These are active programmes and are very useful in establishing collaboration within the village community. Thrift and credit societies such as "Sanasa" and Women's Banks, have national scale links and a large collection of funds. These organisations could be useful instruments in building the active participation of people in the political processes in the country. A combination of national and internationally linked NGOs that share understanding and vision at global and national level could improve democracy and political participation tremendously.

The role of foreign donor agencies

Donor agencies have a responsibility to ensure that funds donated by them are not abused; and to ensure that when these donations are given, the recipients adopt appropriate accountability principles. Part of this is to ensure that decisions are taken by the right people in the right way and there are mechanisms to facilitate this. Since funds for donations are raised in the name of the underprivileged, the donors too, have a responsibility to be accountable to the poor and underprivileged.. These funds belong to the poor segments of society in the poorest countries. Since many of their problems can only be solved through collaborative means, the implementers of programmes alsocarry aresponsibility of collaboration. The donors too need to collaborate with each other; to avoid exercising a divisive influence.

It is easy for donors to get collaborative partners to agree with their priorities, but both parties have to understand that the former have less knowledge of the ground situation than some of their partners. Thus, it is necessary for the donor to be guided by the partner, and develop their own collaborative strategies.

Most donors get a bulk of their funds from their respective governments. These governments too, have their own agendas in giving development assistance to poor countries. They sometimes prefer to channel their funds through donor NGOs, since they are often more effective and efficient. However, the purposes for which governments give development assistance are not the same as the purposes for which NGOs build partnerships. There are tendencies to influence donor NGOs to grant funds that meet the intentions of governments and donor NGOs may have a tendency to request receivers to undertake projects for which it is easier to get government funds. These are called back donor funds – when funds are passed on from one organisation to another, the original donor is sometimes referred to as the back donor.

One way of deciding whether a country is moving in the right direction is to understand that the whole world is being pushed in opposite directions by two opposing forces. One force wants the world to continue moving in its present trajectory and stick with the status quo. This is because this group will benefit from it and make profits. The other force is attempting to push the world in the

opposite direction because they know that they will not survive unless the status quo is reversed. Therefore, the easiest way to judge if a country is heading in the right direction is to see on which side of the fence one is on and in which direction one is pushing the world. For instance, there are very strong international NGOs such as the OXFAM which are strong global networks. When they become powerful, they have a bigger responsibility to see that they are on the right side and push the world in the right direction.

Sometimes it is difficult to get the citizens of a country to understand these issues correctly. But since donor NGOs have access to information and visit the recipients of their aid regularly, they have a tremendous responsibility to communicate the situation to their constituency and explain why specific actions need to be taken. This is a major responsibility of donors since they are the best communicators across the globe.

Mr. T. M. J. Sarath Fernando's career path reflects a life committed to marginalised sections of society and ecology. In 1978 he became the research hand of SEDEC (Social and Economic Development Centre) followed by an eleven year stretch at the Devasarana Development Centre after which he founded the MONLAR (Movement for National Land and Agricultural Reform) where he currently works. Sarath now has 40 years of experience as an activist in the peasant movement. He urges the peasants of the world to continue their struggle for land and feed humanity as they have a fundamental and moral right to do so.

11. On Knowledge Hierarchies of Development

by Aftab Lall

I explore the relationships inherent in the production of knowledge within Southern Think Tanks (STTs) – think tanks operating in developing countries - as an attempt to understand how, and in what ways local and independent organisations, their initiatives, and their staff of researchers are linked to global processes of knowledge and power.

Knowledge and power

Renowned social theorist, Michael Foucault, in his analysis of power, demonstrated how power and knowledge are closely related. Simply put, power is capable of producing forms of knowledge that dictate social relations at a particular period in time. Conversely, power draws on knowledge to appropriate and legitimise itself[1].

Hans Weiler, Professor of Education and Political Science, Emeritus, at the Stanford Department of Political Science points out four facets of the relationship between knowledge and power as described by Foucault, that help us understand knowledge creation in STTs and the inevitable donor-recipient relationships that surround them. These are:

1) Established knowledge hierarchies; 2) the relationship of reciprocal legitimation between knowledge and power; 3) the transnational knowledge system of the international division of labour; and 4) the political economy of commercialisation of knowledge[2].

Different forms of knowledge are endowed with varying status

Most STTs give preference to research that is situated within a positivist framework where research is founded on the principles of empiricism, objectivity and rational thought as compared to research that may be more subjective or that follows alternate belief systems. This benchmark within STTs - and Northern Think Tanks (NTTs) - reflects the hegemony of western thought and philosophy over the global knowledge system. The hierarchy of North over South manifests

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[1] Rabinow, P (1991) *The Foucault Reader,* Penguin Books, London.
    Gould, J (2008) 'Thinking outside development, Epistemological explorations 1994-2008',
    http://www.academia.edu/2302357/Thinking_outside_development
[2] Weiler, H (2009) 'Whose Knowledge Matters? Development and the Politics of Knowledge',
    in Hanf, T., Weiler, H., and Dickow, H (eds) 2009. *Entwiklung als Berruf*, Baden-Baden:
    Nomos.

in multiple ways. The institutional arrangements tend to favour knowledge produced in the North. Even with the rise of Southern institutions, it is Northern-based institutions that are widely accepted as the leading knowledge producers. Development theories and methodologies that shape Southern research are also derived from Northern institutions. In addition, the financial, political and military hegemony of the North determines the hierarchy in terms of prestige, resources, and influence of knowledge institutions in the North over their Southern counterparts.

Hierarchies within STTs also illustrate the North's influence over the South. The overall organisational set up of STTs is adopted from a Northern model of institution building. Hierarchies play out as clear distinctions between management and staff, and, between researchers and administrators; as such the end product (such as a publication) is negotiated through the power plays that exist within research institutions. These hierarchies also reflect the credibility attached to qualifications earned from Northern institutions. In a large number of STTs, staff that have received their higher education from Northern institutions tend to occupy senior or management level positions. It is these persons who have greater control over research agendas which in turn reinforce the Northern-positivist outlook to local knowledge production.

Knowledge legitimates power and, conversely, knowledge is legitimated by power

In the case of Northern donor funded research, locally generated knowledge by STTs is used as the rationale by donors to fine-tune their interventions and shape future aid policy. Conversely, donor organisations in the North tend to set the development agenda for the South thereby deciding which areas need further research, and subsequently which think tanks should receive funding. That is, donor interventions gain legitimacy from locally generated knowledge, and, in turn, locally generated knowledge derives its legitimacy from its acceptance by donors who accord special standing to one kind of knowledge over another. In order to attract funds from donors, the type of knowledge generated by STTs, is largely shaped by the needs and requirements of Northern institutions.

International division of intellectual labour

This is the division of labour where 'key intellectual tasks' such as setting the theoretical agendas and methodological standards are held by a relatively small number of 'institutions…located in the economically privileged regions of the world' [3].

Most STTs are bound by Northern donors' Terms of Reference (TOR). These guidelines provide the methodological and theoretical frameworks that STTs are

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[3] Ibid

expected to follow. Apart from ensuring research that is deemed 'high quality', adherence to these guidelines can determine the STTs' reputation amongst donors and access to subsequent funding.

One of the perks of being an awardee to research related grants from Northern donors is that STTs get free access to otherwise very expensive, *high quality* research papers. The high costs are usually a barrier to access for relatively under resourced STTs. Paradoxically, recent moves to provide free access to information by Northern institutions entrenches the hegemony of the North over the South by facilitating wider dissemination of North-generated information and further strengthens the positivist discourse. The recent Open Access initiative of the World Bank[4] to provide all World Bank published information free of charge is a case in point. It would be interesting to know why the Bank has decided to provide *free access at this* point in time.

The 'knowledge market'

The economy today is more reliant on knowledge production than it has ever been. Access to high quality knowledge largely determines an organisation's ability to compete in the market economy.

To survive, most think tanks need continued access to funds, which in Sri Lanka, are largely from foreign donors, including Multi National Corporations (MNCs) and philanthropist foundations. These institutions ascribe to the neo-liberal framework in which the 'politics of production and profit are arguably the most powerful dynamics' [5], which means that knowledge outputs that are labeled *independent* and *objective* research are in many cases influenced at a pre-natal stage of knowledge production. The situation is compounded when knowledge production takes place within political environments that also have little tolerance of an alternative perspective.

These observations illustrate how development theory, methodology, practice and work culture in STTs are significantly influenced by Northern institutions and constrain the ability of STTs to challenge the dominant development discourse of positivism and neo-liberalism.

The rise of the south

Resistance from Southern development institutions against a largely North influenced development agenda is taking place at two levels.

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[4] For further information: http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/NEWS/0,,contentMDK: 23164491~pagePK:64257043~piPK:437376~theSitePK:4607,00.html

[5] Weiler, H (2009) 'Whose Knowledge Matters? Development and the Politics of Knowledge', in Hanf, T., Weiler, H., and Dickow, H (eds.) 2009. *Entwiklung als Berruf,* Baden-Baden: Nomos.

At the think tank at which I work, a number of conflicts have risen in negotiating the research agenda with a Northern think tank that is also the 'leader' of a Northern donor funded global research consortium. I would like to highlight one observation in particular.

As part of the international division of labour in the transnational knowledge system, it is the 'Northern Think Tank that takes responsibility for the 'global study'. Southern partners are limited to being local experts, without the space to engage directly with the global discourse. The conflict arises when local researchers attempt to address local knowledge gaps that don't fit in with the partner's need for information that is comparable across multiple countries; or vice versa. Subsequently, research methodologies developed by the Northern Think Tank (to fit the global study) are contested by the local organisation that (in the local context) sees fit to use an alternate methodology.

I notice that there is a concerted effort from within the local organisation to contest for applying methodologies that they believe would better suit the context. In addition, there is a gradual attempt from within the organisation to influence the Northern donor and therein the global discourse.

At a global level, with the emergence of the BRICS Countries (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) there has been a push for the South to have its own development agenda. This agenda is to be championed by the setting up of a BRICS development bank (by 2015) that will seek to address issues of development, poverty and inequality within the South that Northern institutions such as the Organisation for Economic Coorperation and Development (OECD) bloc and the World Bank have largely failed to tackle.

However, the Southern agenda, at both the level of BRICS and the think-tanks, seems to exist within the same discourse that is espoused by its Northern counterparts.

It will be interesting to see the extent to which the BRICS bank parallels the World Bank in terms of its mandate, policy design, and organisational structure. Its seems likely that even if the BRICS bank hails a 'new paradigm' for development in the South it will still derive its power and legitimacy by conforming to the hegemony of positivism and neo-liberalism.

Similarly, the aspiration of people within the think tank to influence the global discourse is partly dependent on the organisation's ability to produce high quality research. In order to assess the quality of its research the organisation prescribes to the globally accepted standard, which is measured in terms of the 'validity, reliability and generalisability' of the research, all of which are proponents of the positivist framework.

A stronger, more consistent resistance to the dominant discourse comes from feminist critiques, subaltern literature, violent protests, hunger-strikes and *dharnass* (a type of fast that takes place at the door of an offender). However, the resilience of the positivist and neo-liberal paradigm and its ability to co-opt contradicting and alternate voices within its highly elastic framework, implies the need to persist with alternate interpretations and new possibilities.

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12. Reimagining the Relationship between Development and Religion

by Rasika Sumudu Jayasinghe

For many decades now, the concept of development has been a goal sought after by countries around the globe. Though this concept strives to improve human welfare, quality of life and social wellbeing in a region or community, development's first and foremost emphasis in Sri Lanka, appears to be that of economic growth and infrastructural enhancement. While these can certainly add to human welfare, quality of life, and social wellbeing, perhaps it is worth questioning whether they can also be a deterrent to the achieving of these outcomes.

Development as we know it, given its roots in the rational scientific method is often at loggerheads with religion. Most Western governments and development agencies, particularly in the post-World War II era, have seen religion as part of the development problem, rather than as a potential solution. Moreover, according to Jeff Haynes, Senior Lecturer in the Department of Politics and Government, Guildhall University[1], the idea of modernisation and development has been greatly associated with urbanisation, industrialisation and to a rationalisation of "irrational" views, such as religious beliefs. Therefore, technological development and the application of science to overcome persistent social problems of poverty, hunger and disease, soon replaced any room for religion in development discourses.

In the South Asian region, this leaning towards a 'material' and 'rational' development idea seems to have been further compounded by concerns over rising levels of religious fundamentalism; whether Buddhist, Evangelical, Hindu, Islamic, or other. However, too much emphasis appears to be placed on the ways in which religion can stymie the process of development (a point which is acknowledged, but not the one focused on, for the purpose of this article), rather than on how, when and why development antagonises religious thought and beliefs.

Development certainly includes material and tangible outcomes such as the construction of railways and roads, and the raising of buildings and bridges. While such construction serves practical purposes, alongside this comes the aspect of urban beautification; cleaning up of parks, restoration and renovation of structures and among others, erection of sculptures and statues. The question though is, when the construction of railways and highways results in the displacement of people and houses; when the raising of buildings leads to the relocation of a religious site; and when the erection of statues incites the

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[1] Haynes, Jeffrey. *Religion, Fundamentalism and Ethnicity: A Global Perspective.* Geneva, Switzerland: UN Research Institute for Social Development, 1995. Print.

outrage of communities, *at what cost do these 'advancements' come?*

As long as development remains exclusionary, rather than inclusive, only a fraction of society will continue to develop, while the rest will remain marginalised and impoverished. The lives and livelihoods of the displaced are disrupted as they struggle to reintegrate into both the economic and social fabric and functioning of society. When religious sites are relocated, for the purpose of development, communities are provoked, for it is important to note that a nation's cultural and spiritual development cannot be compartmentalised as separate from its economic development.

Meanwhile, the blatant exhibition of certain religious markers, over others, can only add to a sense of exclusion to communities. This not only creates wounds spiritually, but adds to feelings of animosity as well, impacting those communities psychologically. It is often argued that as a result of such triggers, minority communities may turn towards mechanisms of solace, such as religion. In fact, regardless of specific religious tradition, religious faith forms an important identity marker for many among the poor and marginalised in the developing world according to economist Amartya Sen[2]. However, this hardly means that of this number, many who practice religion will adopt a hard-line approach. Rather, it adeptly highlights why development discourses need to acknowledge religion when creating and implementing development policies, practices and programmes, rather than allowing it to be an 'elephant in the room', particularly in developing areas, where religion is prevalent and prominent.

Perhaps to some, pointing out why development practices should be inclusive and not focus solely on economic development is easy enough. However, history has always shown cases where exclusion has been promoted in certain societies, if not by the State, by influential parties, particularly in South Asia.

Pakistan, for instance, since its inception has exuded a dynamic interplay of various strategic agendas among political actors and different interest groups. During Zia's regime, Islam symbolised the 'supreme source of legitimacy'[3] . Appearing to lend morality, political conservatism, and further an evolving national ethos, Islam has since enabled the ruling elite to advocate their ideas through a state-wide ideology and identity which straddles political, social and economic development, while giving the military legitimacy, and marginalising mainstream political parties and minority communities.

It remains important to question who the development is for, and by whom it is being carried out. To think that development, and even solely economic development, stands alone from political and social factors would be an error. In areas such as South Asia, where religion and nationalism become strongly entwined, social unrest has been equally instigated by majority communities, in

[2]   Sen, Amartya. *Development as Freedom*. New York: Knopf, 1999. Print.
[3]   Waseem, M. "Causes of Democratic Downslide", *Economic and Political Weekly,* 2-15 November 2002, pp. 4532-4538

response to moves which would have seemingly encouraged inclusivity.

India in the early 1970s experienced continued division within the populace and the administration over the caste issue. Efforts to extend reservations (a process of setting aside a certain percentage of positions belonging to the Scheduled Castes, the Scheduled Tribes and Other Backward Classes, who are otherwise socially and economically marginalised groups) in the fields of education, employment and political representation made a move towards abolishing all communal distinctions. However, this imparted each group with a new political relevance as well as prompted a backlash that threatened the unity of the 'Hindu family'. "The core supporters of Hindu nationalism are dominant caste and class groups whose interests lie in strengthening social hierarchies"[4]

While the reservations system is a heavily debated mechanism in itself, this move to 'empower' certain communities; thereby developing human welfare, quality of life, and social wellbeing, induced just as much religious fundamentalism. Caste tensions were further politicised, as the upper castes felt their social and economic positions were being not only encroached upon, but also, threatened.

When religious fundamentalism can stem from minority and majority communities alike; exclusionary practices and steps towards inclusive practices alike; explicit focus on economic development, as well as holistic approaches to development, it becomes questionable whether any clear policy design exists for the incorporation of (or dismissal of) religion in development. Perhaps what becomes clear instead is that both 'secular' and clearly 'religion-biased' development trajectories which often aim to exclude religion (or certain religions) from development discourses can be detrimental.

Increasingly, there has been a stronger involvement of religious actors in human development sectors, ranging from health and education to relationships and empowerment. 'Human development' can be characterised in several ways and Haynes[5] states that the idea of human development is a broad category focusing on societal stability, security and relative prosperity, with political, economic, social, moral and psychological dimensions.

 Development, of course does not stand alone from any of these focuses, and therefore needs to take into account each strand, by recognising the complexities and the pervasiveness of religion in the political, economic, social, moral and psychological fabric of a nation; and particularly so, within the South Asian region.

Let us move towards a development, which is not limited in scope, which is

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[4] Basu, Amrita, The Dialectics of Hindu Nationalism in Kohli, Atul (ed.), *The Success of India's Democracy.* 2001. pp.163-190. Print

[5] Haynes, Jeffrey. *Religion and Development: Conflict or Cooperation?* New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007. Print.

'human' rather than material, and which constantly engages and creates discussion between all stakeholders involved. Providing educational opportunities to all religions can promote tolerance and acceptance. Ensuring that health opportunities are available to all, irrespective of traditional social attitudes and cultural norms (while leaving room for choice), can deter religious fundamentalism and unrest. And, encouraging inter-religious relationships in social settings such as teams and committees fosters understanding and communication between communities.

While parks and bridges, railways and highways, sculptures and structures remain functional and often aesthetically pleasing, let us strive for human development which will truly increase the people's welfare, quality of life, and social wellbeing within a nation, and across communities.

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LOCAL GOVERNMENT COUNCIL
PRADESHIYA SABHA

MALE

FEMALE
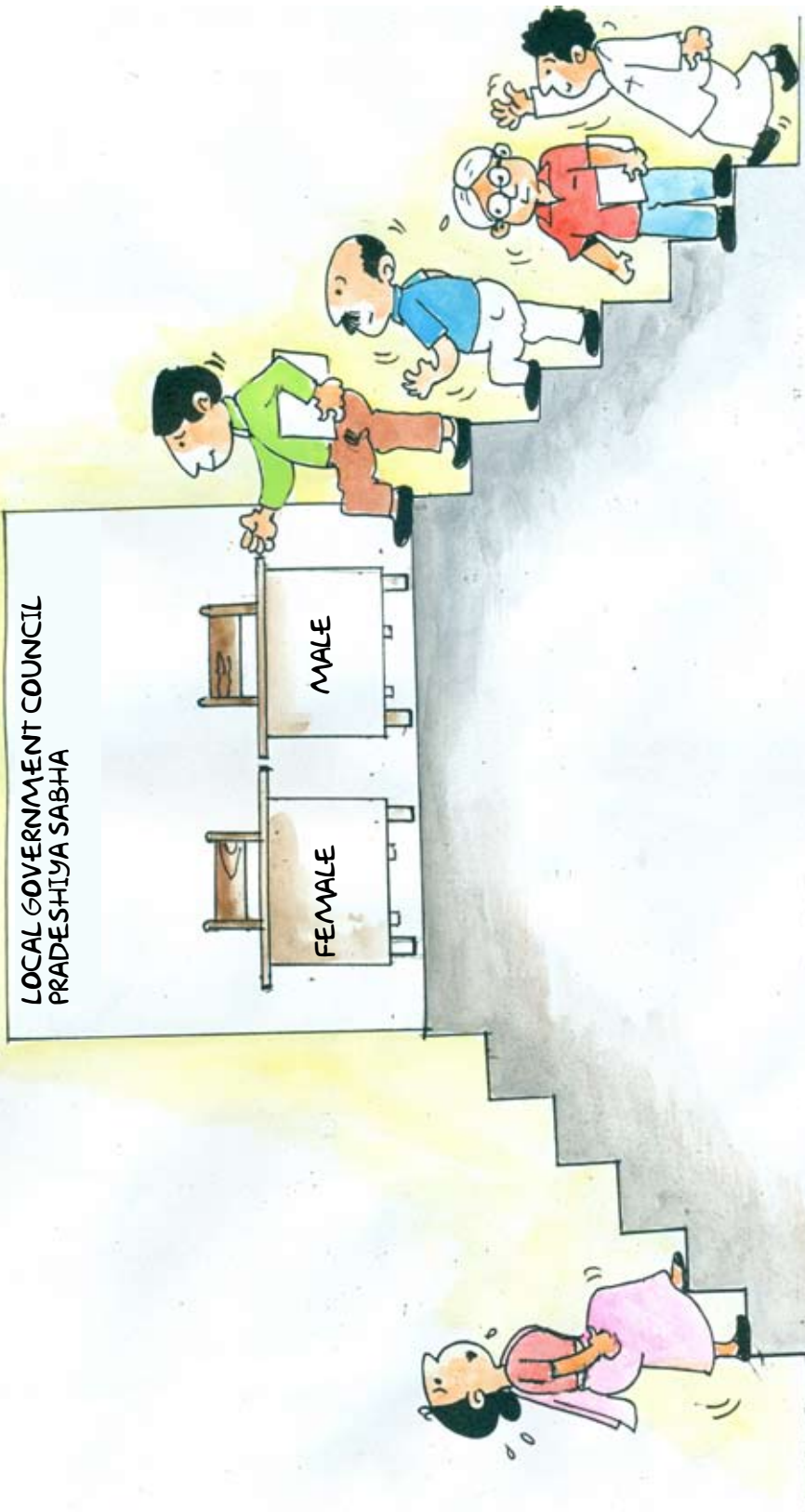
13. Local Government without Women[1]

by Chulani Kodikara

Following the 2011 round of local government elections, for the first time in more than two decades, all Local Authorities (LAs), barring two, comprising Municipal Councils, Urban Councils and Pradeshiya Sabhas, across Sri Lanka have been constituted. LA's form the lowest tier of elected government in Sri Lanka and have a range of functions, from provision of vocational training and recreational facilities to primary health care and solid waste management. In addition, Pradeshiya Sabhas have powers in relation to local level development in terms of Sec. 19 of the Pradeshiya Sabha Act No. 15 of 1987. Their potential to be a force in relation to local development however has always been hampered by the lack of financial powers, skills and capacities; excessive powers of and dependency on the central government; the use of political office to promote narrow interests and to instrumentalise LAs, etc.

In this article, however, I focus on women's under representation in local government as an impediment to local development and also as an indictment of the state's commitment to gender equality in post war Sri Lanka.

Women in elected political bodies

Women in Sri Lanka won the right to vote in 1931, seventeen years before independence and since then have made rapid progress in relation to health, education and employment. Their human development indicators are considered a model in South Asia and beyond. However, positive socio-economic indicators have not translated into political empowerment and women's representation in elected political bodies remains abysmally low. Currently, women account for only 5.8% in Parliament, 4.1% in Provincial Councils, and a negligible 2.03 % at local level, which is amongst the lowest in the world, certainly in South Asia. The staggered elections for LAs held between 2008 and 2011 returned 4,466 members for 333 local authorities in the country, of whom only 91 were women.

A shift to an electoral system based on proportional representation in 1989, elsewhere proven to be more favourable to women, has not significantly impacted the numbers of women elected over the years. Some political leaders are now claiming that a return to 'first past the post ward system' – a system by which the candidate that has received the most votes is elected to represent

[1] The article has been based on the following:

Kodikara, Chulani 2012. *Women in Local Government From 2006 to 2011: A Comparative Analysis of Representation of Women and Nominations for Women,* ICES Working Paper No. 3, Colombo: International Centre for Ethnic Studies.

Where are the Women In Local Government? *Open Democracy,* 7 March 2011. http://www.opendemocracy.net/5050/chulani-kodikara/sri-lanka-where-are-women-in-local-government

the constituency or ward - will increase representation. There is no evidence, however, to suggest that this will be the case.

A major reason for this under representation is the low number of nominations given to women by the major political parties. Gatekeepers of electoral processes, wielding considerable power to either advance or inhibit women's representation, political parties have shown a remarkable lack of commitment to recognise women as worthy candidates or work towards strengthening women's roles as political leaders.

Nomination forms for local government elections do not record the sex/gender of candidates, and therefore, official sex disaggregated data in relation to nominations for local government elections are not available. Nevertheless nomination statistics compiled through a scrutiny of nomination forms indicates that at the 2011 local government elections, nominations for women by the major alliances/parties – the United Peoples Freedom Alliance (UPFA) led by the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP), the United National Party (UNP) and the Janatha Vimukthi Perumuna (JVP) — ranged from approximately 3.5% to 7%.

An increase in overall nominations for women under the proportional representation system of elections is due to fringe parties and independent groups - who seldom win - filling their lists with women. Major political parties with stronger electoral fortunes do not nominate women in any significant number. As a result, even an overall increase in their nominations does not translate into electoral gains for women.

Patronage politics and networks of exclusion

At the 2011 elections, many female party activists from the SLFP and the UNP, traditionally content to take a back seat and work loyally for their parties, stepped out of the shadows and sought nominations. Nanda, an SLFP activist from Badulla, told me "for years, we have been working to get votes for male candidates. This time we wanted to go canvassing for ourselves."

Echoing Nanda's thoughts, Janaki, a fellow party-member from Badulla observed that as soon as men got their nominations, they came to the women for assistance to organise their elections campaigns, but once they won, they didn't even remember their names.

Some women had been preparing for their candidature. Paduma, a long time SLFP activist from Moneragala, not only studied the local government law but observed her LA meetings in order to familiarise herself with its functioning.

Yet many of these women failed to get nominations. There appears to be too much at stake. Political power in Sri Lanka is sustained through elaborate and well-entrenched patron – client relationships from the national to the local

levels. These relationships play a central role in the transmission of socio-economic and political benefits, opportunities and positions. Nominations, then, are opportunities to bestow rewards on party loyalists and those with access to power.

To be considered a 'winnable' candidate, money and muscle are important, as is the active involvement in maintaining and supporting the chains of patronage between the party and the constituency. Most women lack both money and muscle power and are passive 'clients' on the margins of these networks, except if one is a wife, widow or daughter of a politician. Some of the women who failed to secure party nominations came forward to contest as independents. But independents have little chance given the patron – client political culture and dominance of the major parties.

The need for quotas

Evidence from across the world suggests that politics is one of the most difficult spheres for women to enter. Even with strong socio-economic indicators, affirmative action - the policy of providing special opportunities for and favouring members of a disadvantaged group that are subject to discrimination - especially quotas, is often necessary to increase women's representation in elected political bodies.

Experiences of women applying for nominations for local government elections in Sri Lanka make it even clearer that the only way to address this gender gap in representation is through a legally enforceable quota for women. However, attempts to obtain such a quota in party nominations even at local level have met with stiff resistance from most political parties and the judiciary. This, is in stark contrast to global developments, where more than 90 countries now offer some form of affirmative action for women in electoral processes.

After years of lobbying for a mandatory quota for women, the Local Authorities Election Amendment Act 2012 only made provision for a *discretionary* quota of 25% for women and youth. This provision is far from adequate.

The lack of representation also means a lack of entitlements. As Nanda said to me, "There are certain services provided by local councils that benefit primarily women, such as child care centres, maternity health clinics, etc. When there are no women represented in a local council, such services are rarely prioritised by the male councilors. These issues therefore tend to get postponed or neglected. Women need affirmative action. Women have for too long worked to put men into elected office. It is now time for women to enter politics in their own right and to work for their own victories."

The paradox of strong development indicators and weak political representation of women is a sign of enduring patriarchy - for instance, despite Sri Lanka having

the world's first female Prime Minister and having a female President - reinforced by political and judicial elites. The frequent reference to a 2500 year-old culture in which women are already equal, something the present regime parrots, is a fig leaf for patriarchy. It is no wonder therefore, that the President can say "domestic violence is only until the rice is cooked" and get away with it.

In essence, far from equality, women in Sri Lanka are entitled only to development as defined by a patriarchal state. When Paduma heard she was not on her party list, she asked "for how long will the men decide where the wells should be, even though it is the women who fetch the water?"

Ms. Chulani Kodikara *(MA, Institute of Development Studies) Chulani studied law at the University of Colombo, and Development and Governance at IDS, University of Sussex, UK. Her research straddles issues at the intersection of law, feminism, gender and identity politics. She is the author of Muslim Family Law in Sri Lanka (1997) Women and Governance in Sri Lanka (2002, co-authored with Kishali Pinto Jayawardena), and most recently Only until the Rice is Cooked? The Domestic Violence Act, Familial Ideology and Cultural Narratives in Sri Lanka (2012).*
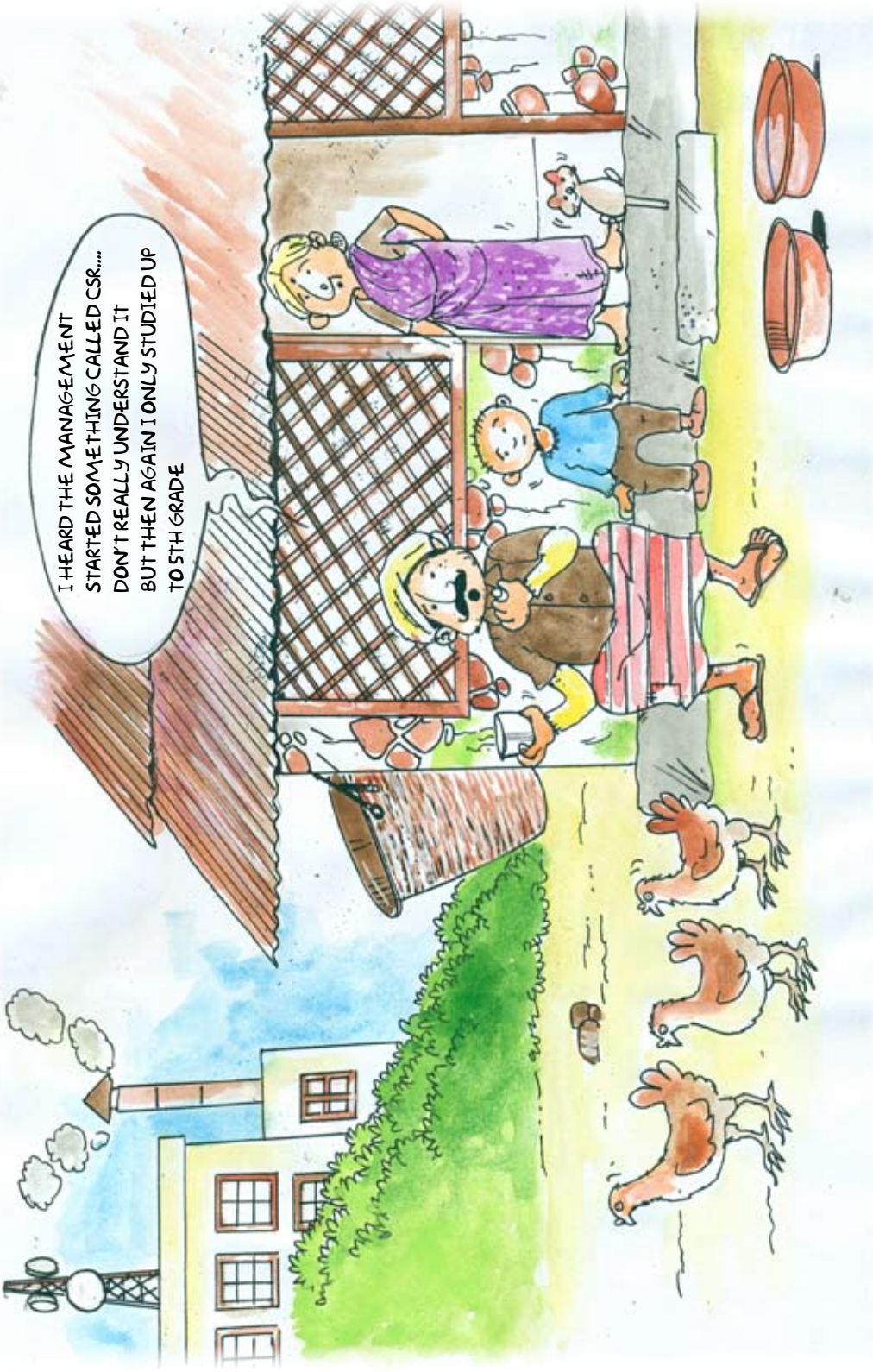
14. Rethinking Corporate Social Responsibility
by Vagisha Gunasekara

Sipping your first cup of tea in the morning, do you ever notice the faces of the women who plucked your tea leaves, their work and living conditions, or the well-being of their families? Do you, for a moment, pause to think about the irreversible environmental impact left by the producer of the cuppa that gives you that boost to get through another day's drudgery? The evolving movement of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) that dates back to the anti-corporate activism and international boycotts in the 70s and 80s (i.e. Barclays Bank investing in apartheid South Africa[1]) which is starting to make a shift in corporate attitudes towards social and environmental issues, encourages you – the consumer – to use your ethical compass and take an interest in whether you are on the right side of socially responsible business.

Evolution of the friendly face of capitalism

Although modern-day CSR dates back to the social auditing movement in the 1970s, it has only recently gained enough momentum to win over an economist riposte. CSR became institutionalised as an international norm at the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio where corporate environmentalism was favoured over regulation as a way of "halting the destruction of the irreplaceable natural resources and pollution of the planet" [2]. The climax of the anti-corporate backlash (in the mid-to-late 90s) with key events such as Shell's Brent Spar oil rig[3] (and the company's complicity in the execution of Ken Saro Wiwa and 8 other activists in Nigeria[4]) and Nike's scandal on using "sweatshop labour"[5] was highly instrumental in convincing the public that corporations ought to grow a moral compass and play a meaningful role in society. Enter CSR, the human face of capitalism. Shell became the first major company to publish a CSR report in 1998[6] and non-governmental organisations that were previously part of the anti-corporate

[1] Nerys, J. 2000. "The Campaign against British Bank Involvement in Apartheid South Africa." *African Affairs,* 99 (396): pp 415-433. Oxford:UK.

[2] Bruno, Kenny. 1992. "The Corporate Capture of the Earth Summit." *Multinational Monitor.* Vol 7 (Jul/Aug). Washinton DC: USA.

[3] Corporate Watch. 2014. "What's Wrong with Corporate Social Responsibility? The Evolution of CSR." Online. Accessed, January 02, 2014. http://www.corporatewatch.org.uk/?q=node/2682%3f

[4] Corporate Watch. 2014. "What's Wrong with Corporate Social Responsibility? The Evolution of CSR." http://www.corporatewatch.org.uk/?q=node/2682%3F Accessed on January 02, 2014.

[5] Wilsey, Matt and Lichtig, Scott. 2014. "The Nike Controversy." Online. Accessed, January 10, 2014. http://www.stanford.edu/class/e297c/trade_environment/wheeling/hnike.html

[6] Shell Oil. 1998. "Profits and Principles – does there have to be a choice?" Online. Accessed, January 11, 2014. http://reports.shell.com/sustainability-report/2012/servicepages/previous/files/shell_report_1998.pdf

movement saw new hope in market-based solutions to social issues and thus, partnered with the 'enemy'.

Skepticism over CSR

CSR has become fashionable and one would be hard-pressed to find an annual report of an international company that does not boast the firm's "service to the community". A quick perusal of annual reports and company websites in Sri Lanka gives a handy snapshot of the companies' efforts to improve society and safeguard the environment; impressive accounts of building 'green' facilities, installing in-house biomass boilers to generate steam, and implementing women's empowerment programmes creates temporary amnesia in the reader about less important matters, such as profits. Corporate Social Responsibility is an industry in its own right, with entire divisions of companies dedicated towards 'giving back'. While the unprecedented growth of CSR may lead some to feel optimistic about the power of the 'free market' to deliver social and environmental change, others are suspicious whether the corporate world has really surrendered and gone over to the other side.

Who defines "responsibility"? Critics remind us that a company's ultimate responsibility is towards its shareholders that dominate the interests of the corporate machine. "Responsibility" in this case is self-defined, rather than being socially defined. Hence, when commercial interests and broader social welfare collide in the context of short time horizons (2-4 years) of the corporate world, profit comes first. Furthermore, the corporate mind-set may drive companies to refrain from investing in social ventures that take time to bear fruit (i.e. health) and opt for short-term cosmetic treatments.

How do we measure responsibility? There is a trend among companies to compete for the coveted title in the social responsibility pageant; number of award schemes for 'good' companies, signing the UN Global Compact[7] (without necessarily having to change their behavior), and tweeting photographs of CEOs with Ban-ki-Moon are some existing indicators of the 'social responsibility' measurement. However, the fact that tobacco companies and automobile importers make the top ten award-winners in the 2013 Best Corporate Citizen Awards (Ceylon Chamber of Commerce), tells us to judge 'responsibility' by what companies do, not by what they say [8]. CSR may also distract attention from genuinely irresponsible behavior such as tax avoidance or lobbying activities of companies that limit the government's capacity to provide services such as education and health.

In the world of CSR, what is the consumers' role? Reflection on the assumption

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[7] United Nations Global Compact. 2014. Online. Accessed, January 10, 2014.
   http://www.unglobalcompact.org/
[8] *Daily News.* November 27, 2013. "DIMO Wins Best Corporate Citizen Sustainability Award."
   Online. Accessed January 04, 2014. http://www.dailynews.lk/?q=business/dimo-wins-best-corporate-citizen-sustainability-award

that 'ethical consumers will drive change' is much needed. In this brand-conscious globalised world, how many of us continue to purchase perfumes, clothing and accessories made by Hugo Boss, either unaware or ignoring the fact that the company made uniforms for the Nazis in the 1930s? [9] Ethical consumerism data in the UK shows that although 83% of consumers intend to act ethically, only 5% show consistent ethical and green purchasing[10]. According to MORI poll, fewer than 5% of consumers made purchasing decisions primarily on ethical grounds[11]. As such, consumers need to rethink ways in which we can narrow the gap between ethical consciousness and ethical consumerism, especially in this day-and-age of sophisticated information technology and effective camapaigns like "Behind the Brands"[12].

Revisiting the true meaning of CSR and intent is much needed. A starting point would be to gain a deeper understanding about how they have become such a dominant force in public life and why they function the way they do. The intention is not to demonise the entire business community and discount genuine initiatives some companies have taken towards the betterment of its employees and the community at large, but to question a company's *raison d'être* for engaging in CSR activities. Is it because CSR assists in a company's appeal to customers' consciences and desires which in turn helps build brand loyalty and become an integral part of our daily lives? The 'humane' message that a company gives through CSR often carves out in-roads to target markets, and in our overbearing media-saturated culture, businesses are always looking for the next innovative method of 'getting into our heads', subliminally taking control over our lives. To understand the true intentions of a company's CSR, it is important to look beyond its 'socially responsible' rhetoric and the battery of cosmetic indicators of 'being a responsible corporate citizen.' We must first examine whether a business has put its own house in place. For instance, why do large corporations in the garment industry justify the exploitation of low-skilled workers as "cost-cutting", but sign million dollar contracts with celebrity sportspersons to become brand ambassadors? Is that socially responsible behaviour?

Newer and improved formulas of CSR, such as the "enlightened shareholder model", which now exists under UK company law embraces the societal benefits of encouraging company directors to adopt a holistic approach towards business development – to look beyond immediate profits and to also consider the environment, employees, and other stakeholders in making management

[9] *New York Times* Archives, August 15, 1997. "Hugo Boss Acknowledges Links to Nazi Regime." Online. Accessed, January 02, 2014. http://www.nytimes.com/1997/08/15/business/hugo-boss-acknowledges-link-to-nazi-regime.html

[10] The Cooperative Bank. 2000. "Ethical Consumerism Report 2000." Online. Accessed, January 02. 2014. http://www.co-operative.coop/PageFiles/416561607/ethicalconsumerreport2001.pdf

[11] Ipsos Mori. 2000. "Ethical Consumerism Research." Online. Accessed on January 02, 2014. http://www.ipsos-mori.com/researchpublications/researcharchive/1496/Ethical-Consumer-ism-Research.aspx ..

[12] Oxfam America. 2014. "Behind the Brands." Online. Accessed, January, 03. 2014. http://www.behindthebrands.org/

decisions[13]. For example, the Companies Act 2006 (UK), Section 172 (titled "duty to promote the success of the company") states that "a director of a company must act in the way he considers, in good faith, would be most likely to promote the success of the company for the benefit of its members as a whole, and in doing so have regard (amongst other matters) to…the interests of the company's employees, the impact of the company's operations on the community and the environment…"[14] A genuine step towards implementing this clause would diminish the highly concentrated corporate power and capital at the hands of a few.

Efforts to reform corporations cannot occur in the absence of a critique of corporate power, a goal to diminish that power and a conscious effort to become ethical consumers. Otherwise, we run the risk of being dazzled by the cosmetically-enhanced world of CSR and reinforcing rather than challenging power structures, and undermining popular struggles for autonomy, democracy and sustainability.

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[13] G*lobal Positive News.* 2012. "Corporate Social Responsibility – Marketing Farce or Integral Business Consideration?" Online. Accessed May 26, 2014. http://globalpositivenews.com/2012/05/22/corporate-social-responsibility-marketing-farce-or-integral-business-consideration/

[14] Government of UK. 2006. "Companies Act 2006." Online. Accessed May 26, 2014. http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/46/section/172

15. Reimagining Dependency: an Ode to Unpopular Economics

by Matthew Withers

The relationship between migration and development has been a long-scrutinised topic of debate within developmental discourse. Understandings of this dynamic have "swung back and forth like a pendulum"[1] since first emerging as an area of academic interest in the 1950s, oscillating from optimism to pessimism and back again. Early perspectives attached to modernisation theory highlighted the potential for migration to catalyse a 'developmental takeoff' for sending nations by way of remittance and skill transfers. Later, neo-Marxist and dependency theories re-framed migration-development in a profoundly sceptical light, emphasising migration's propensity to siphon skills and labour in a way that stymies genuine economic development in sending countries. Since the 'rediscovery' of the migration-development nexus in the early millennium the tone of discussion has once again been overwhelmingly hopeful; cementing the neoliberal status quo, Fukuyama's death knell for history[2] has drowned out the radical critiques of the 70s and 80s and shrunk the contours of development until a "golden straitjacket"[3] woven of market signals is all that remains. Within this neoliberal development paradigm, the World Bank, IOM and fistfuls of Northern think tanks have promulgated the notion that temporary labour migration yields a 'triple win' scenario, in which sending countries, receiving countries and migrants all benefit from a reallocation of global labour ostensibly coordinated by forces of supply and demand. Meanwhile, alternative approaches to migration that emphasise the exploitative disparity of those 'wins' have been dismissed in parcel with the failed developmental projects with which they were ideologically aligned and are today something of a theoretical faux pas. Sri Lanka's own experience with a closed-economy highlights many of the problems of such developmental models, though it remains difficult to disentangle the culpability of economic theory from the social and productive vulnerabilities inherited from colonial occupation[4].

No matter how the past is construed, the South should remain wary of developmental fables concocted and disseminated by yesteryear's imperialist powers and their institutional mouthpieces. Of those 'winning' from migration, it is far easier to recognise the benefits for receiving countries of the North – a cheap, exploitable and ever-replenishing reserve army of ready-made labour – than it is for remittance-dependent economies of the South or, less still, for individual migrants driven to foreign employment in vacuums of jurisdiction on account of survival. Recent attention to migration as it pertains to migrant

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[1] De Haas, H., 2010. "Migration and Development: A Theoretical Perspective 1." *International Migration Review* 44 (1): 227–64.

[2] Fukuyama, F., 2012. *The End of History and the Last Man*. London: Hamish Hamilton.

[3] Friedman, T. L., 2000. *The Lexus and the Olive Tree.* London: HarperCollins.

[4] Kelegama, S., 2006. *Development under Stress: Sri Lankan Economy in Transition.* New Delhi: Sage Publications.

agency and household income strategies[5] thus obfuscates the overarching dynamic of labour migration: global patterns of capital accumulation. The global division of labour underpinning capital accumulation in the North is predicated not only on the outsourcing of production, but also the *importing* of workers for exploitative labour in care, construction and service roles that cannot be offshored. Meanwhile, adherence to migration as a de facto developmental strategy has left Sri Lanka increasingly dependent on remittances as a means of shoring up its foreign reserves (a staggering 49% of export earnings) to finance a historically impregnable trade deficit, keep the rupee afloat and subsequently finance the ongoing gentrification of urban Colombo. Where national development projects and attempts at export diversification have failed, migrants have picked up both the foreign exchange slack and the suffix of 'hero'[6]. Worse again, with remittances failing to translate into sustainable long-term livelihoods for migrant families, some of the most vulnerable portions of Sri Lanka's population are coaxed into an unsustainable cycle of repeat migration to attain a transient reprieve from poverty.

Two critical observations emerge from this picture. The first is that economic development should be conceptualised in relative, not absolute, terms; if sending countries gain from migration these modest 'wins' need to be juxtaposed with the more substantial gains enjoyed by receiving countries. In this context, portraying temporary labour migration from South to North as a pathway to 'development' is analogous to confining the poorest strata of a nation to the least-stable, worst-paying jobs and expecting them to converge upon the rich. Contrarily, deepening economic inequality between the 'developed' and 'developing'[7] only corroborates dependency theorists' concerns about the structural underdevelopment of a global periphery at the behest of a wealthy capitalist core and migration needs to be understood as a facet of this growing divide. The second observation is that we need to start questioning the assumed causality of 'migration-development' altogether: rather than migration leading to development, it appears far more tenable that underdevelopment itself leads to migration[8]. In Sri Lanka huge swaths of the rural population have found themselves starved of local employment opportunities as a consequence of Jayewardene's neoliberal revolution and the resultant concentration of economic activity in Colombo and its nearby Export Processing Zones (EPZs). Without a plan for export diversification, industrial policy or otherwise providing widespread and decently remunerative employment for all Sri Lanka, chronic rural underdevelopment is fuelling forced economic migration as a means of survival. That remittances are channelled back into the rural economy means little when there are insufficient economic foundations for investment in value-added production.

[5] De Haas. 2010.

[6] Ministry of Foreign Employment Promotion and Welfare (MFEPW). 2012. "Performance 2011". Colombo: MFEPW.

[7] Cornia, G. A., 2004. "Inequality, Growth, and Poverty in an Era of Liberalisation and Globalisation." In UNU-WIDER Studies in Development Economics, xxii, 438 p. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

[8] Wise, R. D. & Covarrubias, H. M., 2009. "Understanding the Relationship between Migration and Development: Toward a New Theoretical Approach." *Social Analysis* 53 (3): 85–105.

What is remarkable about Sri Lanka's current developmental predicament is its similarity with the woes of the post-independence economy: poor terms of trade, a precarious balance of payments and a failure to diversify away from inelastic agricultural and low value-added exports. The main difference today is that migration and garment production provide relief valves for unemployment and foreign exchange earnings, though neither are sustainable. The once-lucrative garments industry was dealt a substantial blow with the end of the Multi Fibre Agreement (MFA) and is now poised to become hollowed out by cheaper labour saturating the market, while temporary labour migration continues to violate the human and working rights of disprivileged Sri Lankans without providing viable livelihoods. Maybe, then, it is time to reimagine some old ideas in a new context. The foreign exchange earnings provided by migration and the tail-end of the garments boom offers Sri Lanka a pivotal window of opportunity to lay groundwork for a future economic direction that directly confronts its stubborn developmental hurdles. This solution will not come from 'leapfrogging' from agriculture to services. As remarkable as India's IT boom has been, it has created employment for a mere 3 percent of the total population: those with enough skills and privilege to enter the bubbles of growth forming in Bangalore and elsewhere[9]. The tertiarisation of Sri Lanka *will not* provide the decentralised, mass-employment needed to backbone the economy; it may hasten Colombo's efforts to dress itself as Singapore in drag, but projecting the developmental blueprint of a country of 716.1 km2 onto a canvas of 65,610 km2 is optimistic at best.

Instead, the government should consider the unpopular economics of a selective industrial policy that navigates from import substitution industrialisation (ISI) to export-oriented industrialisation (EOI) through the active management of tariffs, taxes and subsidies. Flirting with free market fundamentalism has left Sri Lanka in largely the same quagmire it found itself in after colonialism: neoliberalism isn't working. Taking industrialisation seriously, on the other hand, offers an opportunity to circumvent the declining terms of trade inherent to a 'comparative advantage' in tea and coconuts by fostering selective value-added industries with potential for widespread employment and significant export earnings. Granted, the path to export manufacturing is less lucrative and fraught with uncertainty in the wake of East Asia's ascent, but the success of the ISI-EOI model in South Korea, Taiwan and more recently Malaysia speaks volumes of its transformative potential. If suitably decentralised, transitioning to industrial manufacturing could provide rural populations with an alternative to migration and thus a pathway out of Sri Lanka's presently intractable dependence on the

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[9] D'Costa, A. P. 2011. "Geography, Uneven Development and Distributive Justice: The Political Economy of IT Growth in India." *Cambridge Journal of Regions, Economy and Society* 4 (2): 237–51.

exploitation of indentured labour as a source of foreign exchange earnings. Only by severing ties with this process and offering genuine employment options for the entire nation can Sri Lanka begin to entertain the prospect of a holistic development process.

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16. How much is that bottle of water?

by Thahira Cader

"Water promises to be to the 21st century what oil was to the 20th century: the precious commodity that determines the wealth of nations"

-New York Press[1] -

It is the 21stcentury and according to UNICEF statistics[2] 783 million people do not have access to safe drinking water. Each day at least 5,000 children die from preventable water and sanitation-related diseases. The world is plummeting towards a situation of extreme water scarcity. Indeed, between now and 2025, it is expected that we will need 17% more water to produce food for the swelling populace of developing countries. Meanwhile, total water consumption will increase disproportionately by some 40%. In optimal conditions, the average human being can survive up to a maximum of six days without drinking water. The rising levels of pollution, steadily expanding populations and unprecedented climate change, however, have combined to make the conditions we thrive in far from optimal. The odds are daunting. And as we summersault into a future in which access to clean drinking water promises to be uncertain, new talking points are developing. Among the many intriguing questions that are being asked today, one, "Is drinking water a commodity or a human right?" takes centre stage.

The fundamental role played by water in the sustenance of all life forms is obvious: water is life. Thus, it is natural to assume that people shouldn't have to pay a price for this basic right. Unfortunately, the real state of affairs is far from the ideal, which is that clean drinking water should not have to be bought under any circumstances.

The United Nations (UN) sustained a series of dialogues spanning multiple decades on this issue. The result was that binding resolutions were passed in 2010 declaring, "the human right to safe drinking water and sanitation is derived from the right to an adequate standard of living and inextricably related to the right to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health, as well as the right to life and human dignity." [3] Water facilitates the provision of other fundamental human rights, thus to deprive people of access to clean water is to impose limitations on their right to live.

[1] Barlow, M. & Clarke, T. 2002. *Blue Gold: The Fight to Stop the Corporate Theft of the World's Water,* New York: New York Press.

[2] UNESCO, 2013. *World Water Day 2013: International Year of Water Cooperation.* Online. Accessed, March 2104. *http://www.unwater.org/water-cooperation-2013/water-cooperation/facts-and-figures/en/*

[3] UN, July 2010: *64th General Assembly Plenary Report*. Online. Accessed March 2014. http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2010/ga10967.doc.htm

It is unfortunate, that we as human beings are not able to justly exercise our right to water. On the one hand, countries with greater wealth and access to water sources have the tendency to overuse, waste and pollute these bodies; while on the other, there are millions of people who are completely deprived of clean water. 85% of the world's population lives in the driest regions of the world, among which are some of the poorest and vulnerable African countries[4]. Due to the varying degrees of access to clean water and the resultant water conflicts, the stage has been set on a global level for water to be viewed as a commodity - a scarce economic good that must be rationed - rather than a basic human right.

The commodification of water appears to have risen significantly in the 20th century, in line with mounting fears of water scarcity and environmental degradation. Moreover, the provision of water as a public good has been found to be inefficient and ineffective in certain circumstances, leaving people with no choice but to purchase water for consumption as they do other commodities. This transition, marked in the recent past, has its roots in the neoclassical idea of giving a good or service an economic value in order to prevent their exploitation. This new market approach governs water consumption in the contemporary world. As expected, however, the shift has sparked much controversy and debate among a wide range of stakeholders.

The wave of demonstrations, police violence and public uprising against water prices in Cochamba, Bolivia in the year 2000[5], suggests the potential extent to which violence may escalate if water is to be privatised and traded as a commodity rather than a public good. Yet, some critics like K. Bakker argue that trading water leads to a more efficient allocation of the scarce resource[6]. However, the efficiency of these water markets and the impact they may have on both society and the environment can be questioned. The system undoubtedly has flaws; and this is further illustrated by self-interested profit makers, such as Nestlé[7], exploiting their powers to maximise their own gains from water selling. Nestlé's marketing campaign targeted affluent Pakistanis in Lahore, with branded 'Pure Life' water which became a status symbol for the rich. The poor were exposed to the ill effects of consuming contaminated water and left to contend with the dilemma of dried up springs in their villages. What's more, Nestle has bitten them directly by usurping the water supply and extracting water from two deep wells in Bhati Dilwan village. Thus, they too are forced to turn to bottled water. A similar story springs from Nigeria, where a single bottle of 'Pure Brand'

[4] UNESCO, 2013. World Water Day 2013: International Year of Water Cooperation. Online. Accessed, March 2104.   http://www.unwater.org/water-cooperation-2013/water-cooperation/facts-and-figures/en/

[5] The Democracy Centre, 2000. "Bolivia's War over Water." Online. Accessed, March 2014. http://democracyctr.org/bolivia/investigations/bolivia-investigations-the-water-revolt/bolivias-war-over-water/

[6] Bakker, K., 2005. "Neoliberalising nature? Market environmentalism in water supply in England and Wales." *The Association of American Geographers*. 3 95: pp 542–565.

[7] Urban Times, June 2013. "Nestle: The Global Search for Liquid Gold." Online. Accessed, March 2014. http://urbantimes.co/2013/06/nestle-the-global-search-for-liquid-gold/

is more expensive than the average daily income of a Nigerian citizen[8]. In other words, "water has become the new oil".[9]

Sadly, many companies that privatise water are driven by the awareness that the rich will buy bottled water to stay in fashion, and the poor because they need to survive. Further support for the increasing consumerism of drinking water comes from a study released in 2011 which was carried out by the Inter-American Development Bank showing that Mexicans used approximately 127 gallons of bottled water per person per year, the highest in the world.[10] A grave repercussion of the water problem is the unfair choice that many underprivileged persons are forced to make ("to buy or not to buy?"), which is a consequence of the inverse relationship that exists between health and poverty for them.

To put a price on water for conservation and management purposes is understandable. To make a commodity the defining factor in whether a person lives or dies can be, and is, greatly disputed. Depriving a person of a basic right to life because they cannot pay for it is unethical on several levels.

Treating water as a commodity and the privatisation of water will continue to yield negative effects, especially for the poor. Statistics imply that water as a commodity is, and will continue to be, manipulated by the rich, powerful or water abundant regions of the world. People living in the slums of Jakarta, Manila and Nairobi already pay 5 to 10 times more for water than those living in high-income areas in the same cities[11]; a sum that is shockingly, even more than that paid by consumers in New York or London. Women in Africa prefer to walk long distances to fetch dirty water from rivers rather than to pay for clean water, while farmers in Asia will soon be unable to sustain their livelihoods if they do not receive state-funded irrigation. Thus, instead of moving progressively forward in a struggle for survival, the majority of the world's population is being forced to step back.

While it is important to ponder over the debate on treating water as a commodity or a right, we must not shy away from asking whether water can be "owned" at all. The broader picture is that economic neo-liberalism has done a lot of damage to our commons, including water. In reality, water and property rights don't mix. Rather than talking in the dualist language of "rights" vs. "commodity", we ought to spell out our responsibilities. This is undeniable and should encourage us to seek a water-management regime around water as a commons (for humans as well as for other species in the biosphere), not as a commodity. Thinking about

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[8] Ibid.

[9] Barlow, M. & Clarke. T., 2002 Blue Gold: The Fight to Stop the Corporate Theft of the World's Water, New York: New York Press.

[10] *The New York Times,* July 2013."Bottle Water Habit keeps tight grip on Mexicans." Online. Accessed, March 2014. http://www.nytimes.com/2012/07/17/world/americas/mexicans-struggle-to-kick-bottled-water-habit.html?_r=0:

[11] The Water Project, Undated. A Closer Look: Water and Poverty. Online. Accessed, March 2014. http://thewaterproject.org/resources/twp-handouts.pdf

water as a commons is an important part of maintaining a stable and healthy environment for both humanity and biodiversity. Such an approach advocates sustainable consumption, a stable or reducing population, high levels of reuse and recycling and no net loss of soil or biodiversity. This requires a radical change in outlook and our consumption, our technology choices and our population numbers in order to live within the means of the planet. We must tackle all three, if our children and grandchildren are to have a decent life.

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17. Development as Development of the Heart: Why Are We So Poor?

by Vagisha Gunasekara

What is the biggest ethical challenge facing society today? The reality is that we have let economics guide our lives, and in doing so have devalued people and the associated virtues of respect, cooperation, empathy, and compassion. The primacy that we have allotted to economics underlies and complicates the daily challenges we face. Do the following - "stressed and tired", "juggling work and home", "surrounded by selfish individuals", "led by uncaring politicians", "in strained relationships", "constantly pressed for time", "never enough money, even for the basics" - sound familiar?

In other words, we have been carried away by the pragmatics of the "bottom line" which dominates our decision making: turning money, which is essentially a means, into an end in itself; while turning people, ethically understood as "ends in themselves" (according to German philosopher Immanuel Kant) into mere means[1].

The idea that money is a resource that should be used to serve our ethical ends—ensuring that our society functions in a way that addresses the needs of everyone—is increasingly losing its allure. Instead, due to our collective preoccupation with money, we have discarded our responsibility to individual and societal development and lost touch with our values, morals, and relationships with our community and the environment. This transition that aims to transform society as a whole into a 'market society', has not only influenced the behaviour of individuals, government institutions, NGOs, and private organisations active in the domains of development, but has also dampened the intellectual diversity of ideas about human progress.

Do we have our priorities right?

Money-making is the raison d'être of modern human civilisation. At the individual level, many of us, encouraged by parents and society, embrace wealth accumulation as our prime achievement. Though most of us cannot afford to revolt against such goals created by the market culture, we must not underestimate the lasting impact such values have on our lives and on society at large. For example, these goals induce pressure on our educational institutions to reshuffle their priorities in favor of the pragmatic goal of preparing young people for the workforce. Technical knowledge and the skills of obedience and productivity appear to be more important than history, identity, meaning, purpose, values, creativity, and vision.

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1 Immanuel Kant, 1785. *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*

In the business world, many investors do not see investing as a moral act, but as a financial one. Instead of approaching investment as an opportunity to use their extra money to support those businesses they believe are serving society the best, these investors are motivated simply to use their extra money to make even more money for themselves. They choose to invest in what they think will be most profitable, regardless of whether the values the companies they invest in line up with their own.

The market culture has reduced people to being consumers. Our addiction to consumerism is not only promoted, but also required by the capitalist economic process which is driven by an interminable desire for profits and consumption. According to the World Watch Institute, there are now more than 1.7 billion members of the "consumer class"—nearly 50% of them in the developing world[2]. A lifestyle and culture that became common in Europe, North America, Japan, and a few other pockets of the world in the 20th Century is going global in the 21st. Worldwide, the amount spent on goods and services at the household level—topped US$20 trillion in 2000, a four-fold increase over 1960 (in 1995 dollars). Between 1950 and 1990 more goods and services were consumed globally than by all generations in human history![3]

But the irony is that a high level of consumption does not necessarily guarantee happiness[4]. According to the study[5], individuals can live long and happy lives without using more than their "fair share" of resources. Data shows that many poor countries achieve levels of life satisfaction just as high as their wealthier counterparts, implying that above a minimum level, there is no apparent correlation between per capita income and life satisfaction.

In fact, a recent study "Life in a Time of Food Price Volatility"[6] shows that for most individuals in developed as well as developing countries, "home life is less harmonious, with the unpaid work of care left undone or shouldered by harassed working mothers, tired grandparents or children", begging the question as to whether we are chasing a mirage with our current model of development.

In society fashionable terms like "sustainable development" are often spouted;

[2] The World Watch Institute. 2013. "The State of Consumption Today." Online. Accessed, May 10, 2013. http://www.worldwatch.org/node/810

[3] Ibid.

[4] The New Economics Foundation. 2012. "The Happy Planet Index: 2012 Report – A Global Index of Sustainable Well-being." Online. Accessed, May 14, 2013. http://www.happyplanetindex.org/assets/happy-planet-index-report.pdf

[5] Diener E., Kahneman D., Tov W. & Arora R., 2010 'Income's association with judgements of life versus feelings' in Diener, E., Helliwell, J. and Kahneman, D. (eds), *International Differences in Well-being.* New York: Oxford University Press

[6] Institute of Development Studies. 2012. "Life in a Time of Food Price Volatility." Online. Accessed, May 10, 2013. http://www.ids.ac.uk/files/dmfile/rr-squeezed-food-price-volatility-year-one-230513-summ-en.pdf

but does our daily activity and behaviour reflect the type of "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" 7 ? Instead, we are constantly engaging in arguments about whether it is realistic to convince states to live within their ecological means, with open, localised economies and resources more equally distributed through new forms of democratic institutions, or whether it is fair to convince individuals that limits on material wealth and comfort are required to secure the environment for future generations.

What is the impediment, then? We have a structural problem: the over emphasis on economics has resulted in a de-emphasis on profoundly important things such as relationships with other humans, as well as with nature. This pandemic, in turn, has lead to an unsustainable world where everyone wants more and more - giving in to our desires at every turn, rather than exercising control and limits. Such irresponsible behavior is applauded in the current world which values consumption over restraint. This hierarchy of values, has seeped into our institutional structures (education, labor, politics, economy), through which disruptive social norms are endorsed and crystallized (Giri 2012[8]; Loy 1997[9]). Most of us take great pride in conforming to this socially-constructed hierarchy of values, defining ourselves, our worth, and success in terms of money and power, going through our entire lifetime without realising the lasting negative impact that we are leaving behind.

What is the way forward?

Traditional economic theory posits that physical resources are finite while our cravings are infinite. As such, failure to reacquaint ourselves with the idea of self-limitation is a recipe for disaster. But again, this is not an inherent or necessary problem: it is socially constructed, largely by how we have prioritised money above values and relationships. Individuals can and do transcend this constructed dichotomy, and collectively we can choose to dismantle it by changing how money and power function in society. We can start by thinking and talking more honestly about money, exposing and critically examining the mythology of economics representing the common good. There is a paradox in this mythology: on the one hand, we moralise money, associating wealth with virtue; on the other hand, we regard money as morally neutral. In this paradox, perhaps we strive to create a non-moral value system by which to run our lives, but that itself is only a clever disguise for the re-emergence of "might makes right." What gets lost is human dignity.

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[7] United Nations. 1987. "Our Common Future: Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development." Online. Accessed, May 01, 2013. http://conspect.nl/pdf/Our_Common_ Future-Brundtland_Report_1987.pdf
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Development is about the well-being of people, and so it is values, relationships, and ethics that should be the end, while money is merely one kind of means. It is not unrealistic to hold each other accountable to this standard and insist that our financial policies and social institutions uphold this ideal as well. It is imperative. There is no inherent reason why living true to our ideals or doing what is best for society, the global community, or the planet should be economically impossible. On the contrary, there is every reason to believe that our fundamental task is exactly to pool our resources, financial and otherwise, to solve these problems. Reintroducing the idea of restraint, personal limits, and spiritual growth into this highly commoditised and monetised world is an uphill battle. But we, society, have to start somewhere.

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You may say I'm a dreamer...
Essays on reimagining development

You may say I'm a dreamer – is a collection of essays commissioned by the Reimagining Development initiative of the Centre for Poverty Analysis (CEPA). Over the past 100 years our world has seen a plethora of changes and development has been the game changer of many of these over the last century. While much has been achieved through development, the world over, these achievements have also been accompanied by increasing disparities between those who have and those who do not.

The diverse group of writers in *You may say I'm a dreamer* examine the present trajectory of development and question the way we currently think of development, how it affects the planet, our values and our spiritual wellbeing. The essays, originally written for CEPA's bi-weekly newspaper column are collected here in one volume.