

Economy of Sufficiency

Essays on wealth in diversity, enjoyable limits and creating commons

Uwe Schneidewind, Tilman Santarius and Anja Humburg (ed.)



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Content

Preface	7
Introduction	11
Chapter 1 Wealth in diversity	13
Beyond Rio: from green economy to green society <i>Ashok Khosla</i>	14
Über das Aufhören – Entwicklung ohne Wachstum <i>Marianne Gronemeyer</i>	25
Seeds of Soil – Towards a living economy <i>Vandana Shiva</i>	35
Chapter 2 Enjoyable limits	43
Escaping Economism, Escaping the Econocene <i>Richard B. Norgaard</i>	44
“Angst essen Seele auf” – Escaping the ‘iron cage’ of consumerism <i>Tim Jackson</i>	53
Chapter 3 Creating commons	69
Resilient systems and cosmopolitan localism – The emerging scenario of the small, local, open and connected space <i>Ezio Manzini</i>	70
Commons fallen nicht vom Himmel – Fünf Commons-Thesen <i>Silke Helfrich</i>	82
The authors	97

Preface



What is the best way to say farewell to someone like Wolfgang Sachs, having reached the official age of retirement with 65, but to whom you would not yet like to say good bye? A team of the Wuppertal Institute, where he has been doing research work since 1993, together with Barbara Unmüßig of the Heinrich-Böll Foundation, where he contributed with various scientific studies, tried to find the perfect farewell gift. It was obvious that it had to meet determined requirements such as to be future-oriented instead of passing in review and reminiscences, which would bore him. A further demand was the international perspective because like hardly any other, Wolfgang Sachs is capable to give people and especially his colleagues in the science community an understanding of global perspectives by overcoming the limits of national cultural experiences. This is of course not possible without the exchange between and the meeting of people coming from all over the world and who have a similar open-minded approach to the sustainability discourse.

The content was found, the forthcoming world summit Rio+20 presented the perfect time frame and it had to be realised in form of a symposium, a scientific conference with inspiring exchange and discussion, founded on mutual taking and giving. The ancient meaning of the word symposium as a get-together should also not be neglected.

However Wolfgang together with his friend and colleague Tilman Santarius should decide over the important discussion subjects and the list of issues missing on the Rio+20 agenda. They also compiled the guest list as they knew best who would contribute valuable impulses and perspectives to the joint reflecting about the way to an “Economy of Sufficiency”.

It was amazing to see the great willingness of friends and companions who came from different continents, some of them cancelling appointments, some of them scraping together their bonus miles, in order to participate on 21 and 22 May 2012 in Berlin. We would like to take the occasion to thank the more than 100 experts for their participation.

It is not possible to reproduce the cheerful and discursive atmosphere of the symposium, the breadth of ideas and reflections, of wonderful examples and intelligent concepts. The event concept focused more on the idea of giv-

ing the participant something to carry with them and to further develop. In order to at least partly reflect these conference days, we decided to publish this little volume with selected articles.

Our thanks to all the authors for the revision of their contributions and the authorisation to publish them; to Wolfgang and Tilman for the conceptual preparatory work, and to Anja Humburg for the excellent coordination and text editing.

We would like to thank the association of the friends of the Wuppertal Institute for funding the symposium and this publication. Special thanks to the Heinrich-Böll Foundation for the great cooperation with regard to the “designing” and to the co-funding of the gift.

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Environment and Energy

Introduction

Another summit of change, known as Rio+20, has passed in summer 2012, nourishing the rumours of a green economy. Building up a green economy seems to be the all over recipe for different crises of capitalism, among them climate change and resource scarcity. Yet efficiency and consistency, as their main strategies, do not suffice to reach sustainable levels, as they cause rebound effects and keep stimulating economy growth. Obviously, there are limits to green growth, too. Can we conceive an economy, and respective economic institutions, that serve human needs and wealth without a built-in necessity to grow? What kind of political, mental, and individual changes does a sufficiency economy require? And what are perspectives and policies to actually start implementing it?

Just before Rio +20 the symposium “Economy of Sufficiency”, devoted to Wolfgang Sachs on the occasion of his 65. birthday in 2011, examined these questions in three dimensions. First, to find answers to the question “what is real wealth?” from an intercultural perspective, and to outline the basics of an economy that serves wealth in diversity. Second, the question was posed of how to define enjoyable limits to tame structural driving forces of growth, and to set guardrails for production and consumption. And third, one wonders how to foster commons-based modes of production and how to help commons flourish. This collection of essays compiles the elaborations of seven well-known pioneers of change, who had spoken during the Berlin symposium. They are giving reason for an economy of sufficiency as counter pole of the green economy paradigm, indicating paths to proceed towards such a sufficiency economy and finally, cultivating it among themselves. We kept the essays in their original language and the vital form as they were held as speeches to keep each particular shade.

Wealth in diversity

Money and happiness do have a precarious relationship since time immemorial. But since finance-capitalism took control over the economy, the old relation of national income and well-being is completely going to pieces. Both have only little in common — in fact, too much income can destroy wealth and too much wealth can endanger income. More than 230

years after Adam Smith opened up the economic age with *An Inquiry Into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, the purpose of all economic activity — the wealth of nations — has volatilised. But what is real wealth? How far does wealth rest on money and goods, and how far can money and goods endanger wealth? How could we envision immaterial wealth in times of globalized “market society” (Karl Polanyi)? These are fundamental questions which are stirring numerous social movements and, in the meantime, even statistic agencies as well as parliamentary commissions. Not only in industrialized but also in countries of the global South, as for example the Andes (*buen vivir*) or in countries with a Buddhist tradition (happiness economy). They question the concepts and the practice of modern economy and aim for a different relation with regard to nature and society. Ashok Khosla describes in his contribution to this collection, *“Beyond Rio: from green economy to green society”*, shades of efficiency as certain levels of productivity and uncovers this main economic concept as one, whose far reaching practice endangers wealth in various forms, but shrinks the idea of wealth down to a very narrow understanding of more, better, faster. Meanwhile Marianne Gronemeyer creates in *“Setting a cut — development without growth”* (original: *“Über das Aufhören — Entwicklung ohne Wachstum”*) an image of real wealth within a post-fossil economy, that creates space free of power for today’s few “deserters” who refuse filling up the global garbage bin as metaphor for today’s growth economy’s overall aim. What Ashok Koshla calls a “horse jump”, Vandana Shiva is cultivating in India and beyond for the last three decades. In *“Soil not oil — towards a living economy”* she operationalizes sufficiency as wealth in cultural diversity.

Enjoyable limits

More than ever the ecological crises such as peak oil, climate change and the extinction of species demonstrate the biophysical limits of further economic growth. At the same time efficiency and consistency strategies alone are not able to credibly show that a drastic reduction of resource demand is achievable with a simultaneously increasing of national income. Instead, within the current economic framework conditions of green growth finally intensify the ecological problems. Instruments are needed that treat push and pull factors of growth alike. On the one hand, the driving forces of growth as push factors need to be domesticated in order to release the system

from growth stress and to restrict leakage and rebound effects. On the other hand, concrete limits need to be found that define sectoral and product-specific consumption — from land use to meat consumption, from speed limits to consumption of eco system services. In *“Escaping Economism, Escaping the Econocene”* Richard Norgaard argues how the current age of Econocene causes social and political distraction through commercialization, externalization of social and ecological costs, perpetual productivity increase and unlimited money creation; he questions certain guiding principles of modern, capitalistic societies and envisions social innovations and institutions in order to proceed to a new sustainable era in steady-state. Searching for absolute upper limits or “caps” perceived as a safeguard for wealth and as a chance and not as austerity and restrictions to freedom, Tim Jacksons draws the picture of “social suicide” for those trying to escape from the “iron cage of consumption” in this essay on *“Angst essen Seele auf” — Escaping the ‘iron cage’ of consumerism”*.

Creating commons

Commons are sources of wealth besides the formal economy. They rely on volutariness and cooperation — ideally combined with a pinch of entrepreneurial spirit. Their principle is the economy of sharing, although market-based, profit oriented services or governmental supply services can play a role. The variety of commons ranges from traditional associations like sport clubs, music groups or religious communities to post-modern forms like car-sharing or solar energy system run by citizens. Their level of commitment is different: they can exist as friendships, neighbourhood services or support groups but also as communal initiatives, small business or internet services. They emerge in the most diverse areas — from nutrition, nursing for elderly or sick people to services of daily needs and leisure activities like sport or theatre. Ezio Manzini localizes such creative communities as small, local, open, connected and cosmopolitan providing institutions and opportunities for a social and fair economy in his thoughts on *Resilient systems and cosmopolitan localism — The emerging scenario of the small, local, open and connected space*. He draws a picture of communality in which individualization is still possible and allows types of communities to emerge that reconcile the desire for individual freedom with the need for reliability and consistency of a social network. Finally, Silke

Helfrich examines the process of commoning, i.e. the making of commons, which is a process up to people and networks in her essay on “*Commons do not come from nowhere — five hypotheses*” (original: “Commons fallen nicht vom Himmel — Fünf Commons-Thesen”).

The essays indicate the historical development of the ideas on a sufficiency economy. Wandering through discourses of sustainable development for several decades, the authors map the range of perspectives, practices as well as barriers and bridge them between cultures, agencies and schools.

Wolfgang Sachs, Tilman Santarius and Anja Humburg

Chapter 1

Wealth in diversity

Beyond Rio: from green economy to green society

Ashok Khosla

It is for me the greatest honour to be here and to celebrate with all of you this long awaited milestone in Wolfgang's arduous journey back to full health. He and I have known and worked with each other for many many years and I feel privileged to be counted among his greatest admirers. And, of course, it is a pleasure for me to be able to share with him this platform to discuss subjects that have long been of concern to both of us: the roots of the deeper malaise — or more accurately, the systemic rot — that our civilizations face today.

In the early 1970s, the Club of Rome sounded a startling clarion, calling attention to the predicaments faced by humankind arising from the consequences of relentless economic and demographic growth on a resource base that is inherently finite. Resulting from a very rudimentary analytical model, the "Limits to Growth" thesis — which was never claimed to be a forecast or a prediction — suggested that the current development model was not viable in the long term and if continued along the "business as usual" path, was destined to lead to "overshoot and collapse" in all of the five variables it addressed: human population, industrial production, food production, resources and pollution. The time horizon for the "limits" to show up was, according to the model, roughly a hundred years, i.e., in the latter half of the 21st Century.

The study and its stunning conclusions had a very wide impact. Apart from becoming a major best seller, the book electrified a whole generation and continued influencing subsequent ones. In many ways, it can be considered the manifesto that led to the creation of the environmental movement, which has today become one of the leading forces in public consciousness and even in global politics. The book also attracted the wrath of the economics profession, which declared war on the study with its standard weapons from Economics 101 and ammunition that had long passed its expiry date, which included simplistic ideas such as "market prices can take care of scarcity", "resources can be substituted", "productivity can be improved by innovation", etc. Some even went so far as to impute statements to the Club of Rome report that it had never made, setting up straw men that could easily

be blown away but which had nothing, as is the case with most economic theories, to do with actual reality.

These critiques have been dealt with in several books and articles, including the 3rd Edition of *Limits to Growth* by the original authors, detailed analyses by Graham Turner of CSIRO, the Australian Government's research organization and by the late Matthew Simmons, the well-known authority on petroleum resources, and more recently a book by Ugo Bardi of the University of Padua. If anything, these studies show that in the light of subsequent developments over the past forty years, the warnings given in the original *Limits to Growth* book were rather conservative; the situation today is even worse than what the book dared to suggest. Some planetary boundaries, such as the global climate and biodiversity are already being transgressed, several decades ahead of the original expectations. We are heading for quite big trouble on several environmental and social fronts and if we do not do anything about it soon, we will be heading for bigger trouble. The three most recent books produced by the Club of Rome, *Factor Five* by Ernst von Weizsäcker, *The Blue Economy* by Gunter Pauli and the *2052 Report*, which refers to what one can expect forty years from now into the future, by Jorgen Randers, all make the case that our development model has to — and can — change drastically.

Science of sufficiency

We have been talking a lot over the past couple of days about sufficiency. Many valuable insights from different vantage points have been shared among us that shine light on when enough is more or less enough: from a basic human needs focus — which also highlights the corresponding role of greeds; from a social justice and economic equity angle, and from the view point of ethics and moral imperatives based on universality principles. These are powerful arguments, but we have today additional, equally compelling reasons to think about how much is enough — *the survival of civilization, if not the very survival of our planetary life support systems*. So, we need also to illuminate what have now become the pressing, somewhat eschatological issues of runaway consumption, both in the aggregate for the global economy and on an individual or community basis — and these are forcing us to deal with not just the obscene and ever-growing lop-sidedness of the distribution of power and wealth but also of demography. Greed of the few has resulted

in the unfulfilled needs of the many, which in turn has led to more and more marginalised people, perpetuating a cycle of exploding greed among some and rampant unfulfilled need and impoverishment for most.

In a very basic, crude sense, what the world desperately requires today is a new kind of social plumbing. We urgently need to raise the floors (needs), which can't be done without lowering the ceilings (sufficiency) and plugging the leaks (conservation, minimizing waste). Given the deeply entrenched commitments to the lifestyles we have or aspire to, this needs fundamental changes in mindsets — so the social plumber has also to have the skills of a transformational psychologist.

Given the many dots that need to be connected in this cyclic process, it is best handled as a systems problem. No single entry point is likely to be adequate to solve it — other than, perhaps, some kind of gigantic global catastrophe, which would solve it simply by eliminating it. What we do know from systems theory is that in most systems there are “leverage points” which can often initiate a benign process of reversing the vicious cycles and help make them virtuous. The characteristics of an effective leverage point are, of course, that it can in principle reverse the bad cycle, but it must also in practice have a critical mass of constituencies capable of overcoming the vested interests and generating the good cycle. That is what is needed for today's global problematique and in the next few minutes I hope to point towards one or two such leverage points that can hopefully help stop the systemic rot.

Over the past few days, we have heard strong and irrefutable arguments on what ails the world we live in. The heavily skewed power structures, the gross inequalities of wealth, the inherent contradictions of capitalism, the irresponsibility of corporations, the lack of assets among the poor, the hijacking of the state by the rich, the models of so-called development and several other unquestionably real issues. I, like everyone else here, happen to believe that these are fundamental problems, as are the highly criminal global financial system, deep and systemic public corruption, addiction to resource guzzling lifestyles and a thoroughgoing alienation between people and nature. The question I haven't yet heard an answer to is, how can these problems be solved? A revolution or huge catastrophe, yes, but what else? Who will start the process? How will it be sustained? How will we ensure that the solutions are less destructive than the current problems?

To see where we need to go, we will have to put aside our ideological blinkers and look cold bloodedly at the evidence.

A vast network of civil society organizations, governments, international agencies and even the World Bank have presented a huge body of evidence that half the population of the world exists in unacceptable poverty and that huge numbers suffer from hunger, lack of basic amenities and joblessness. A few, less than 1 percent, possess enormous wealth, many thousands of times greater than any reasonable definition of “sufficiency”.

Within this context, the global economy is using resources and producing wastes at a rate that is not sustainable. With growing populations, and particularly as they move into middle-class consumption patterns, the situation is further deteriorating by the day.

IPCC has presented evidence based on ocean acidification, bleaching of corals, melting of polar ice and increasingly frequent extreme weather events that our climate systems are in serious jeopardy.

IUCN has shown from its Red List and other studies that we are losing species at some 1000 times the background extinction rate.

UNEP has shown that worldwide, we are losing 50,000 square kilometres to desertification. Hundreds of other credible sources have shown how we are causing massive, irreversible damage to the precious resources and life supports of our only one Earth.

You don't need a James Lovelock, father of the Gaia Hypothesis, to know that rapid growth, either of economic activity or of the human population is not sustainable. I know that in the social research community, while economic growth can certainly be questioned, it is considered politically incorrect to put any onus on population growth, which is why it has not been mentioned in a single one of our deliberations here. I believe this is a serious mistake and I will just come back to this.

All of you know Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Let me use my own simple one.

The lowest level of sufficiency is *survival* and *subsistence*. Although there are still societies in the world that remain at this level, most would prefer to find themselves somewhat beyond. The next, slightly higher, level of sufficiency is *security*, where households and communities are able to support themselves with the resources that are available or that can be created without disrupting the natural processes that provide them. The level of sufficiency higher than this is when we can generate some surplus from our activities, so we can improve our lives by saving some of that *surplus* and making capital investments, in better living conditions, in efficient tools and in more productive methods — and of course in the future. And then there is *satisfaction*.

These are five successive levels of sufficiency, each of which implies a different meaning to the concept of sufficiency. And, indeed, there is a sixth level, which in some cultures, such as Hindu and Buddhist ones can recycle one back to the first level by choice: self-fulfilment, or *Samadhi*.

For some, like a family in Dubai, sufficiency is a concept that might include a million dollar house and several cars, each costing a hundred thousand dollars. For a family from Abu Dhabi, several such houses may be considered a minimum level of sufficiency. An oligarch's family may need several houses on each continent. They may still feel they have not got quite enough. But these are extreme cases and they do not illustrate the real importance of the concept of sufficiency. Several wonderful websites contain images by the American photographer Peter Menzel, which shows what families from around the world own and what they eat. He shows a family in Germany with food for one week laid out on the table, with a weekly food bill (in 2005) of \$ 342. Thank god, some 40 percent of the food is wasted, otherwise they would be in very serious of obesity trouble. One has to wonder whether that is really a good description of sufficiency or not.

The extremes of poverty in the world are best displayed by the old campaign glass that the UNDP put on the cover of its 1991 Human Development Report. Basically, it shows that the top 20 percent go away with 90 percent of the wealth and income in the world. The bottom half gets about five or six percent. Today, the disparity is, of course, even more extreme.

We are suffering from two horrible diseases. One disease is *affluenza*, a terminal disease but the patients don't realise they have it until it is too late. At some point it can kill. Others, mostly in the global South, have another disease, which is called *povertitis*. This condition is also terminal, but those who are afflicted know only too well what they are suffering. What is most relevant about these two diseases is they are intimately related to each other: each causes and is caused by the other. Sufficiency and efficiency are the only medicines that can cure both diseases.

Levels of productivity

To understand sufficiency, then, we also have to understand the concept of efficiency. Remember the social plumber? To raise the floors, not only do the ceilings have to be lowered but the leaks have to be plugged. Any engineer or economist will tell you, that efficiency means output divided by

input. How does one improve efficiency? Well, one increases the output or one reduces the input. Doing more with less is more efficient. Why would one want to increase efficiency? In a world that is showing signs of scarcity, basic needs can be satisfied only by cutting down on resource use, pollution generated and carbon dioxide emitted.

For whose benefit would this be done? Well, usually it is the boss, or the enterprise, or the shareholder, or even sometimes government who gets the benefits from efficiency. Improved efficiency can be achieved in technologies, in production, in the factory, in cities, in agriculture. It is very easy to be efficient, if you are making other people pay the costs. There are efficient transport systems and there is efficiency in the whole area of modern industrial economy. But while we look for and find efficiency increases all over the modern economy, why do we never seem to consider it relevant to the lives of the poor? Why cannot a pump be designed to enable a poor girl to get a drink of water with less effort? Why could a village housewife not have an efficient cook stove? Why should efficiency not be improved for the billions of people who got left behind in the modern economy?

And efficiency of what? Efficiencies are always sought for those who are employed, those who are dominated. The dominated might be labour, land, capital, nature's resources and we never talk about that. The differences of efficiencies in agriculture between Japan, the US, India and China are enormous, because some of them save labour, some save land and others save capital. The term efficiency has meaning only when the factor of production is specified. Moreover, there are different levels of efficiency, even for a given factor. The simplest, and lowest measure is "rated efficiency", which is just output over input. A higher level of efficiency than the rated efficiency, is one which we call potential efficiency. This is what *should* be the efficiency if simple, cost-less improvements are made such as closing leaks. Then there is a third level of efficiency, which we call latent efficiency. This is achieved by introducing significant improvements, which might involve some capital investment. And finally, there is the highest level of efficiency, which we call systemic efficiency, where the system that you are dealing with is structurally or behaviourally changed. All these efficiency levels have their corresponding levels in productivity.

The purpose of this rudimentary lesson in cybernetics was to connect the issue of sustainability to the twin issues of efficiency and sufficiency. On the one side, we have the hierarchy of rated efficiency, potential efficiency, latent efficiency and systemic sufficiency; on the other side we have

the corresponding hierarchy of survival/subsistence, security, surplus and satisfaction. Once everyone on the planet has climbed up these two hierarchies, using nature's resources as efficiently as possible and achieving high levels of sufficiency will that secure the world's future and make it sustainable?

Unfortunately, no it will not. The reason is that we still have the 8 ton elephant in the room, which seems to have remained invisible. How will the 7 billion people on the planet — the 8 billion expected in a decade and the 9 billion by mid-century — be maintained at those levels of “sufficiency”?

The population overshoot

Half the people on our planet today are outside the mainstream economy. They have virtually no impact on the ecosystem. Yet, the ecological footprint of humanity is already 1.6 earths. We are using 60 percent more than the earth produces sustainably. James Lovelock, in his book *The Revenge of Gaia* estimates the earth in 2100 will not be able to support more than half a billion people at a reasonable standard of living. Perhaps he is wrong; maybe the limit is four times as many as he suggests: 2 billion. At today's levels of efficiency, but at sufficiency levels for all akin to that of the poor village woman in the picture — subsistence level — the world might at a rough guess be able to maintain four or five billion people. No matter how one looks at the numbers and what assumptions one bases the calculations on, the end of the 21st century is likely to see a significant reduction in the world's human population.

For this transition to be orderly and reasonably painless, the most pressing priority, on a par with reduction of resource consumption and waste generation is the demographic transition from high birth rates to low birth rates that must now be completed as rapidly as possible. And for this, the two most effective leverage points appear to be meaningful livelihoods for women and education for girls.

Our own work at Development Alternatives has shown that improving the prospects for people, particularly young women, is quite possibly the strongest incentive for smaller families. For example, the all-women workforce at one of our paper recycling units in central India showed that, over a twenty year period, the number of births to the women in the factory was

down by a factor of more than ten compared with the control group outside. This reduction in fertility, achieved voluntarily, demonstrates that equitable development is indeed one of the best contraceptives available.

Future courses

Let's define our goals and strategies to a sustainable economy a bit more clearly. How do we get there? It is not enough that we identify pathways that are possible, feasible or even in principle desirable. Approaches that will be adopted and could succeed must also be widely acceptable. They must have a broad constituency supporting them and some strong champions propelling them forward. And we will need messages that convince people on a large scale to follow the new and somewhat unfamiliar path to sustainability. The metaphors of efficiency and sufficiency are strong communicators and, properly used could be persuasive, at least for the vast majority who have not cornered the wealth and power niches of society.

The proximate causes that could accelerate the transition to sustainability, efficiency and sufficiency, are generally desirable and acceptable. Desirability is about human fulfilment and we can define that or even change our expectations over time. The little country of three quarters of a million people which neighbours mine, Bhutan, has undertaken a valiant effort to define what is genuine human fulfilment. It does not see any future in following our way of thinking. It sees happiness and wellbeing as the bases of true progress, not material or monetary possessions. Despite all the criticisms of this approach, I believe their insight has truly solid value.

Whichever way we define a desirable future, it must see progress as means of improving lives without transgressing the limits of the biosphere. For those who find the term limits offensive, we can offer them, after the work of the Stockholm Environment Institute, the new substitutes, staying within "planetary boundaries" or "safe operating space". Either way, any "progress" must recognize the finiteness of our home, the planet Earth. We are fooling ourselves if we act as though we can go on raping Mother Earth with ever more people and ever growing consumption without her protesting in a real and direct way. Sufficiency and efficiency are deeply related to these problems of population growth and depleting resource base.

The future is ours to choose. We have four simple options and whether we have a sustainable future or not depends on which one we take.

LCDs	Developed Countries	Cybernetic Efficiency	Resource Productivity	Technology Basis	Societal Choices
Copy Cat	BAU	Rated Efficiency	20%	Physics Mech	Technology
Piggy Back	Incremental Change	Potential	Factor 4	Chemistry	Strategies
Leap Frog	Deep Change	Latency	Factor 10	Biology	Objectives
Horse Jump	Structural Transformation	Systematic Capacity	Factor 50	Lifestyle	Values

Future scenarios. Source: Koshla 2013

The first, which I call “*copycat*” is that we can continue the way we have been going in the recent past. For the global North, this would mean *business as usual*. For the global South, it would imply imitating the development patterns of the North: ever increasing consumption, waste and exploitation of nature. In terms of efficiency parameters, the rated efficiency would aim at small intermittent improvements of perhaps a few percent. The basis of the economy would be industries based on physics and mechanics. This is a dead-end pathway with no more than a few decades before overshoot and collapse bring progress to a grinding halt.

The second option, which could be called “*piggyback*”, is one where a society selects the best practices available from different sources: renewable energy from Germany, water management from Israel, forest management from Korea, biodiversity conservation Canada, etc. Piggyback entails switching its production systems over to more chemistry-based industrial methods and this leads to incremental change, which creates a jump to the domain of potential efficiency, i.e., what should be. In this regime, a society can achieve reductions in resource consumption and environmental impact of up to factors of five. This is doable today, essentially with technology and strategy.

Then, the third option is “*leap-frog*”. As the name implies, leap-frog entails a deeper change, it gets society into the arena of latency and what could be. Relying increasingly on biological processes, it can improve

resource efficiencies by factors of ten, maybe more. This is the minimum level of transformation needed in development praxis for staying within the safe operating space of our planet.

Finally, we have the fourth choice, which could be termed “*horse jump*”, which is where we really have to aim for. Horse jump means structural change, based on entirely different objectives for society and growth. It implies not only systemic change, but it can provide significant reductions in material and energy usage and major improvements in community and citizenship.

Given the magnitude of the crises we are facing, the current global agenda is akin to fighting over deckchairs on the Titanic. We know that there is an iceberg ahead. Half the people, among them the most influential, say: “No, there isn’t.” Many others, including the Club of Rome recognize the need to change course but don’t yet have the power to bring about the change in mindset needed. It is now time for all our networks to pool their resources and work together make this happen.

Let me end with my story of the three minesets. Some people call them paradigms, some call them mindsets. Perhaps it is because of my poor spelling skills, but I have always called them the three minesets. We have been living with them for the past forty or fifty years. The first mineset, predominantly in the 19th and 20th Centuries, is “mine and plunder the Earth as fast as possible”, because nature is there to be exploited. The second mineset, which took root after the World Wars, is, “what is mine is mine and what is yours is up for grabs”. And the third mineset, which is reflected in today’s militarized geo-politics is, “mine and bomb the natives until they give us what we want”.

I believe that we have to be very careful, when we go forward. The term green economy has turned most of the people, the negotiators as well as the NGOs and the governments off. The colour green represents for many people a heavy and unacceptable bias towards the environment and away from people. We also need to emphasize the need for a just society. There does not appear to be a suitable colour to describe this. Since we need to nurture the health of both nature and people, we need a neutral colour that can transparently represent the interests of both. Would Ultraviolet work — for both efficiency and sufficiency?

Whatever colour we choose for describing the future we want, it is clear that both efficiency and sufficiency must be clearly reflected in it. They are the necessary conditions for empowering people; and without them we can-

not decouple resource consumption or environmental destruction from human wellbeing. This is what you, Wolfgang, have devoted a lifetime of work to demonstrating and why I was glad to journey half way across the world to join the others here to thank you.

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Über das Aufhören – Entwicklung ohne Wachstum

Marianne Gronemeyer

Nichts als Müll

Globalisierung sei vor allem „Monokultur im Denken“, sagt Vandana Shiva (2009). Fast ist es noch zu freundlich diesem Denken überhaupt den Begriff der ‚Kultur‘ zu gönnen, und sei es den der Monokultur, von der wir nichts Gutes erwarten. Tatsächlich haben wir es dabei mit schierer Unkultur zu tun: Das monokulturelle Denken kreist um nichts als Müll. Es ist vom Müll wie behext und besessen. Ehe ich über das ‚Aufhören‘ sprechen kann, ist also vom Müll zu reden und zwar nicht von dem in die geordneten Bahnen der Müll-‘Entsorgung‘ und Müllverwertung gelenkten, gewinnträchtigen Müll. Auch nicht von den schwimmenden Inseln aus Plastikunrat, die, immer mächtiger werdend, auf den Ozeanen treiben; nicht von dem nach Millionen Tonnen rechnenden Kohlendioxid-Ausstoß, der das Klima kollabieren lässt, nicht von den Giftstoffen, die im Boden lagern und das Wasser verseuchen, und nicht von dem gänzlich unverwüstlichen atomaren Müll, der gar nicht zum Verschwinden gebracht werden kann. All das ist äußerst besorgniserregend, aber heute nicht mein Gegenstand.

Auch will ich mich nicht bei dem Skandal aufhalten, dass der Müll ja nicht einfach anfällt oder abfällt bei Produktion und Verbrauch, dass er vielmehr mit einem enormen industriellen Aufwand und mit enormer Verschwendung von Stoffen, Energie, Wasser und Areal produziert wird, damit Waren von einem Ende der Welt an das andere transportiert, werbeträchtig verpackt und verführerisch an die Käufer gebracht werden können. Damit wird enormes Geld verdient, weshalb die Verpackungsindustrie ausgesprochen gereizt reagiert, wenn über Müllvermeidung gegrübelt wird. Der Müll, über den ich sprechen will, ist nicht die in Kauf genommene schädliche *Nebenwirkung* industrieller Produktion, sondern deren *Hauptzweck*.

Man kann von nahezu allen Industrieprodukten, die unter der Vorgabe fabriziert werden, dass Wachstum sein müsse, sagen, dass ihr eigentlicher Daseinszweck darin besteht, Müll zu sein. Sie werden hergestellt, so fordert es die Wachstumslogik, nicht um ihrer Brauchbarkeit und Tauglichkeit willen, sondern um ihrer möglichst schnellen Unbrauchbarkeit und Untauglichkeit willen. Die Tatsache, dass immer weniger Industrieprodukte überhaupt

noch reparabel sind, liefert für diesen geheimen Daseinszweck einen offenkundigen Beweis. Sie werden als Müll produziert, das heißt sie sind bereits Müll, bevor sie in Gebrauch genommen werden. Sie werden dazu nicht erst durch Verschleiß, Ausmusterung oder Verschrottung. Haltbarkeit, Durabilität und Reparabilität sind längst keine Markenzeichen mehr, mit denen für ein Produkt geworben werden kann. Beworben wird seine Müllhaftigkeit: der Superlativ des Attributs ‚neu‘ annonciert den Wert eines Produktes. Er ist der entscheidende Werbeträger und verrät, auch wenn er im Gestus des Unschlagbaren auftritt, wozu das Ding, das als das allerneueste angepriesen wird, ausersehen ist, nämlich dazu, in Nullkommanichts alt auszusehen.

Wenn der Wert eines beliebigen Gegenstands darin besteht, brandneu zu sein, der letzte Schrei, die Überbietung alles bisher Dagewesenen, dann ist er in demselben Moment, in dem er auf den Plan tritt, bereits im freien Wertverfall begriffen. Er ist ja nur die Vorstufe des neueren Neuesten, das ihm folgt. Er trägt den Makel des Überholten und Defizienten bereits in sich, bevor er zum Zuge kommen kann. Wir leben in einer Gesellschaft, die sich der Produktion von Müll verschrieben hat, die ihre rasende Dynamik dem Müll verdankt, die ihre besten Kräfte dem Müll widmet und für die die Vermüllung konstitutiv ist. In unseren geordneten Verhältnissen sind wir Müllbewohner, denn wir wohnen inmitten von Dingen, Ideen, Erfahrungen und Fähigkeiten, die kaum, dass sie das Licht der Welt gesehen haben, schon zum alten Eisen gehören.

Unter Profitgesichtspunkten ist nichts so lohnend wie die Herstellung von Müll, mit nichts Dauerhaftem oder Brauchbarem ließen sich derartige Gewinnmargen erzielen, denn alles Brauchbare trägt sein Genug in sich. Wollte man die moderne industrielle Gesellschaft auf einen Begriff bringen, dann könnte man sie als müllgenerierende Gesellschaft bezeichnen. Das, was wir gedankenlos ‚Fortschritt‘ nennen, ist die rasant beschleunigte Umwandlung unserer Welt in Müll, der dann seinerseits das einzig Beständige ist. Nicht nur die sachlichen Produkte, sondern auch Dienstleistungen aller Art tragen in dem Maße, in dem sie gewinnträchtig sein sollen, ihren Teil zur Vermüllung unserer Verhältnisse bei. Auch sie sind nicht dazu ausersehen zu helfen oder Abhilfe zu schaffen, sondern dazu, die allgemeine Hilflosigkeit zu mehren und Versorgungsbedürftigkeit zu schüren.

Die warenförmigen Produkte, die die Industriegesellschaft unter der Maßgabe, dass Wachstum sein müsse, ausspuckt, leiden ausnahmslos an einem eklatanten Mangel an Brauchbarkeit und Haltbarkeit. Nun ist aber

gerade Haltbarkeit, die Fähigkeit, zu überdauern und hartnäckig der Zersetzung und der Wiedereingliederung in die Naturkreisläufe zu widerstehen, eine hervorstechende Eigenschaft des Mülls. Es ist gerade seine Zähigkeit und Unvergänglichkeit, die uns besorgt. Wir müssen unterscheiden zwischen der Haltbarkeit, die einem Gegenstand als Gebrauchsgut eignet und ihn für eine möglichst lange Dauer gegen Verfall und Unbrauchbarkeit resistent macht, und jener, die ihm als Müll anhaftet. Was an den Dingen des Gebrauchs ein hohes Gut ist, nämlich Haltbarkeit, ist am Müll verhängnisvoll.

Der modernste Müll ist demnach nicht der, der auf Deponien lagert, sondern in den Regalen der Kaufhäuser und in den Werbebroschüren der Dienstleistungsindustrie feilgeboten wird, als Müll unkenntlich und deshalb durchaus Objekt der Begierde: „Abfall ist das finstere, schändliche Geheimnis jeglicher Produktion. Es soll vorzugsweise ein Geheimnis bleiben“, schreibt der Soziologe und Philosoph Zygmunt Bauman (2005).

Selbstverständlich ist der real existierende Müll *kein* Geheimnis; er macht sich sogar drastisch bemerkbar: er stinkt, ist hässlich, ekelerregend, er stört. Er muss weg.

Deshalb ist man auf das ‚ressourcenschonende‘ Verfahren des Recycling verfallen, das in der Realität viel mehr dazu dient, das „finstere, schändliche Geheimnis der Produktion“ zu hüten. Damit etwas recycelt werden kann, muss es zuvor aus einem Zyklus entwichen oder entnommen worden sein. Es trägt die Spuren der Verwüstung bereits in sich. Mehr noch: Recycling ist seinerseits nur eine Etappe in der Produktion weiteren industriellen Mülls, die denselben Gesetzen folgt wie die Produktion selbst: den Gesetzen der Überproduktion und des zerstörerischen Wachstums, der Ersetzung aller Tätigkeit durch Waren, der Verwandlung der Welt in eine globale Deponie im Kampf gegen Langlebigkeit, Brauchbarkeit und Konvivialität. Recycling ist Vermüllung mit gutem Gewissen, es hat seine Unschuld längst verloren. Ich habe den dunklen Verdacht, dass wir auch dem finsternen Geheimnis der ‚Nachhaltigkeit‘ noch lange nicht auf der Spur sind. In der Nachhaltigkeitsdebatte werden wir regelmäßig aufgefordert, verantwortungsvolle Konsumenten zu werden. Aber Konsumenten können nun einmal nicht verantworten. Solange der Konsumismus als solcher wird nicht in Frage gestellt wird, werden wir nur zum besseren Konsum ertüchtigt.

Wie lebt es sich in einer müllerzeugenden Gesellschaft? Was wird aus Menschen, deren Arbeit nicht nur zu nichts nütze ist, sondern schweren Schaden anrichtet? Wie wirkt sich die Tatsache, dass wir uns in einer Welt

aus Müll einrichten müssen, auf unser Weltempfinden und unser Befinden aus? Zunächst einmal so, dass wir uns in ihr überhaupt nicht einrichten können. Das, was Hannah Arendt (1978) als den Lohn des „Herstellens“ erkennt, dass nämlich dabei eine Welt aus Dingen entsteht, die dauerhafter sind als wir selbst und in der wir deshalb Halt und Haltung finden können, gilt nicht für die industrielle Produktion. Die erschafft eine Welt, in der das Allerneueste am erstrebenswertesten ist. In ihr kann man sich guten Gewissens für nichts mehr entscheiden, weil jede Entscheidung *für* etwas mich nötigt, mich mit Defizitärem zu begnügen, und mich um die Möglichkeit bringt, dem demnächst Allerneuesten den Zuschlag zu geben. Selbst die unschuldig geglaubten Ökoprodukte entgehen dem Gesetz der Vermüllung nicht: ist es nicht voreilig oder unvernünftig, die heute die am weitesten entwickelte Solaranlage auf mein Dach zu setzen, wenn morgen die Entwicklung darüber hinweggegangen sein wird und ich meine finanziellen Ressourcen für etwas hoffnungslos Veraltetes ausgegeben habe? Ist es nicht unsinnig, meine Entscheidung auf ein Wissen zu gründen, das morgen überholt sein wird? Jede *ergriffene* Chance ist eine Niederlage, jede *getroffene* Entscheidung ist eine Entscheidung für Müll. Sie verwandelt eine Verheißung in eine Verfehlung und Enttäuschung. Es gibt immer mehr Dinge, die nicht vergehen können. Müll ist ‚unverweslich‘. Aber noch beharrlicher als der Müll selbst ist die Monokultur der Müllgesinnung.

Monopole und Monokulturen

Monokulturen und Monopole bedingen sich gegenseitig, sagt Vandana Shiva (2009). Es sind mächtige Monopole, die dafür Sorge tragen, dass das ‚schändliche Geheimnis‘ der Wachstumsgesellschaft – dass sie Müll produziert und konsumiert – nicht aufgedeckt wird und dass das ‚Weiter-So‘ seinen ungehinderten Lauf nimmt. Es sind jene treibenden Kräfte, die den Fortschritt garantieren: die Naturwissenschaft, die Ökonomie, die Technik und die Bürokratie. In seinem Geltungsanspruch ist dieses Quartett so gebieterisch wie einst die apokalyptischen Reiter, die allerdings ganz andere Namen trugen und die mittelalterlichen Menschen in Angst und Schrecken versetzten: der Hunger, die Pestilenz, der Krieg und der allgewaltige Tod. Dieser Vergleich scheint unerhört und völlig entgleist, denn die modernen Mächte gelten als die tragenden Säulen der Menschheitszukunft und haben mit den fratzenhaften Schreckensgestalten, die wir auf alten Bildern ver-

derbenbringend und verwüstend über den Erdkreis jagen sehen, offensichtlich nichts gemein. Tatsächlich muss man wohl zugestehen, dass ihnen an und für sich nichts Verderbliches anhaftet. Es ist im Gegenteil doch aller Mühen wert, die Natur zu erforschen, die Vorräte zu bewirtschaften, die Arbeit zu erleichtern und das Gemeinwesen zu ordnen. Dennoch bilden die glorreichen Vier eine unheilige Allianz, die wie einst ihre archaischen Vorgänger einen großen Teil der heute lebenden Menschen mit Hunger, Krieg, Krankheit und Tod bedrohen. Ihre zerstörerischen Kräfte entfalten sie erst dadurch, dass sie in ihrem jeweiligen Geltungsbereich eine Monopolstellung behaupten. Die Naturwissenschaft beansprucht das Monopol der Weltdeutung, die Ökonomie das der Weltverteilung, die Technik, das der Weltgestaltung und schließlich die Bürokratie das Monopol, die Welt zu regeln. Zusammengeschlossen und miteinander vernetzt bilden sie eine Supermacht, die ihren Anspruch auf Weltherrschaft weitgehend durchgesetzt hat. Sie tendiert dazu, alles in sich einzuschließen.

Monopole sind dazu da, sich in praktizierte Macht umzusetzen. Jedes der vier Monopole ist insbesondere zuständig für eine Handlungsmaxime, die nicht nur das große Weltgeschehen steuert, sondern bis in den Alltag der Menschen Gefolgschaft erzwingt. Der Naturwissenschaft obliegt es, *Konsens* in Fragen der Welterklärung herzustellen, die Ökonomie sorgt dafür, dass die *Konkurrenz* alle menschlichen Beziehungen prägt. Die Technik richtet die Welt auf Konsumierbarkeit aus und erhebt den *Konsum* zur ausschließlichen Form der Daseinssicherung. Die Bürokratie schließlich stellt *Konformität* dadurch her, dass sie alle menschlichen Handlungen nach dem Vorbild maschinellen Funktionierens ausrichtet. „Du sollst mit mir eines Sinnes sein und meiner Evidenz trauen“, sagt die Naturwissenschaft. „Du sollst Deinen Nächsten besiegen wollen“, sagt die Ökonomie. „Du sollst die Maschinen statt deiner selbst arbeiten lassen, lass dich bedienen und versorgen“, sagt die Technik. „Das kostet natürlich eine Kleinigkeit“, wirft die Ökonomie ein. „Vor allem sollst du nicht stören“, sagt die Bürokratie.

Erst dadurch, dass die Monopole zu einem umfassenden System zusammenwachsen, werden ihre Forderungen zu Diktaten, deren Logik so zwingend ist, dass sie gegen nahezu jeden Widerstand immun sind; ja mehr noch: dass sie den Widerstand im Keim ersticken; oder noch genauer: dass der Gedanke, man könnte ihnen widerstehen, verrückt, abwegig oder närrisch erscheint. Sobald sich die Naturwissenschaft mit der Technik liiert, gibt sie jede Zurückhaltung und Selbstbeschränkung auf. Sie begnügt sich nun

nicht mehr damit, alleingültig über die Welt Bescheid zu wissen, sondern will maßgeblich daran mitwirken, die Welt zu verändern. Die Ökonomie, die das Duo komplettiert, steuert den Gesichtspunkt der Profitabilität bei. Sie will die Welt verwerten und macht aus der wissenschaftlich- technischen Maschine eine Geldmaschine. Die bürokratische Gleichschaltung aller Machenschaften schließlich erzeugt jene unwiderstehlichen Sachzwänge, gegen die aufzubegehren so nutzlos ist, wie den Mond anzubellen.

„Man kann von der Klaustrophobie der Menschheit in der verwalteten Welt reden, einem Gefühl des Eingesperrtseins in einem (...) netzhaft dicht gesponnenen Zusammenhang. Je dichter das Netz, desto mehr will man heraus, während gerade seine Dichte verwehrt, dass man heraus-kann“. Adorno (1998) hat darin recht: wir sind eingesperrt. Aber er hat Unrecht in der Annahme, dass diese Verbarrikadierung mehrheitlich Fluchtimpulse auslöst. Die Klaustrophoben, die ‚nichts-wie-raus-hier‘ wollen, sind eine Minorität. Die Mehrheit der Ambitionierten will nicht raus, sondern rein und hält sich etwas darauf zugute, bestens ‚integriert‘ zu sein. Der Moloch erfährt viel Zustimmung und Bejahung. Und nicht die Furcht, von ihm verschlungen zu werden, sondern die Furcht, von ihm ausgespien zu werden, beherrscht die Systeminsassen.

Vom Aufhören

Die Betreiber des *laufenden* Irrsinns sind übermächtig. Woher könnten angesichts dieser Übermacht Impulse zum *Aufhören* kommen? Mit dem ‚Aufhören‘ hat es in der deutschen Sprache eine eigentümliche Bewandnis. Dasselbe Wort steht für zwei scheinbar ganz verschiedene Tätigkeiten. Gewöhnlich benutzen wir das Verb ‚aufhören‘ in der Bedeutung von beenden, Schluss machen. Aber auf-hören meint auch ‚auf etwas hören‘, aufhorchen. Das mag verwirren. Das ‚Aufhören‘ scheint kraftvollere, entschlossenerere, aktivere Maßnahmen zu erfordern, als unsere Ohren sie zuwege bringen, die nur etwas empfangen, aber nichts machen können. Die Ohren erscheinen uns vielleicht als die schwächsten Sinnesorgane und doch haben unsere sprachschöpferischen Ahnen, gerade ihnen das Aufhören-Können anvertraut. Wenn wir uns aber die Gebärde des Auf-Hörens, des Lauschens vergegenwärtigen, dann erfordert sie tatsächlich ein Innehalten. Wer lauscht, bleibt wie angewurzelt stehen, ist wie vom Blitz getroffen. Er ist, alle Geschäftigkeit unterbrechend, ganz Ohr. In der deutschen Spra-

che können wir also, ohne tautologisch zu sein, sagen: Um aufhören zu können, muss man *auf*-hören.

Wenn wir diesem Satz trauen, dann käme es nicht darauf an, es besser zu machen, sondern darauf, es besser zu lassen, es bleiben zu lassen. Aufhören zu können bedeutet nicht die Kunst des Bewirkens immer weiter zu raffinieren, sondern die Kunst des Unterlassens zu üben, denn das Auf-Hören ist an sich bereits eine Unterbrechung der Gewalt.

Worauf müssten wir also hören, um aufhören zu können? Auf das, womit aufzuhören wäre. In unserem Fall: auf Müll. Aber was würden wir zu hören kriegen, wenn wir auf den Müll hören? Wir würden hören, dass Müll nicht sättigt, nicht nährt und nicht zufriedenstellt. Auf diese deprimierende Botschaft gibt es zwei mögliche Reaktionen. Die eine ist die sattsam bekannte. Wenn das, was die Industriegesellschaft als ihren Reichtum hervorbringt, ein Fehlschlag ist, dann müssen die Produkte verbessert, optimiert und raffinierter werden, also Besseres vom Gleichen produzieren, nach dem Grundsatz: „Wir irren uns empor“. Die andere Reaktion ist radikal: Wenn das, was die Industriegesellschaft produziert, Müll ist, dann ist es der Mühe nicht wert. Der Müll wird entzaubert und diese Entzauberung entlässt uns in eine unerhörte Freiheit, die Freiheit, etwas nicht zu gebrauchen.

Der Unterschied zwischen der ersten und der zweiten Lehre des Mülls ist der Unterschied zwischen Effizienz und Suffizienz. Nun hat sich ja herumgesprochen, dass wir beides brauchen, die höchstmögliche Wirksamkeit und die bescheidene Genügsamkeit. Fraglich ist nur, ob wir beides gleichzeitig haben können, ob nicht das Streben nach Effizienz das Genug kategorisch ausschließt. Und umgekehrt, ob nicht die Genügsamkeit auf Freundschaft und Vertrauen basieren muss und nicht auf maximaler Wirksamkeit, kurzum ob nicht die beiden Haltungen unvereinbar sind.

Resümee

Um aufhören zu können, müssten wir uns

1. der Einsicht stellen, dass die Wachstumsgesellschaft unfähig ist, etwas anderes als Müll zu produzieren. Das, worauf sich alle Rettungsbemühungen richten: die unablässige technische und bürokratische Innovation, müsste als der Kern des Übels erkannt werden. Die moderne Gestalt des Bösen ist nicht dämonisch, aber auch nicht nur banal, wie Hannah Arendt feststellt, sie ist innovativ.

2. müssten wir uns der Erkenntnis stellen, dass das Kartell der großen Vier jeden Versuch, ihm etwas entgegenzusetzen, mit unerbittlicher Strenge und freundlichem Gesicht durch Integration unschädlich macht. Die heute korrekte politische Forderung in allen möglichen gesellschaftlichen Bereichen lautet ‚Integration‘, im soziologischen ‚Uniquak‘ (Ivan Illich): Inklusion. Welch eine willfähige Zuarbeit für ein alles verschlingendes, gefräßiges System. Ich plädiere für eine andere Bewegungsrichtung: Desintegration oder genauer noch Desertion.

3. scheint mir die Sorge um die Weltrettung nicht hilfreich, wenn wir uns in der Kunst des Aufhörens üben wollen. Niemand kann die Welt retten. Wer sich auf diesen Weg begibt, wird zwangsläufig frustriert. Die Empörung über die Freiheitsberaubung, die uns in den reichen Gesellschaften tagtäglich im Namen von Konsens, Konsum Konkurrenz und Konformität und mit dem Versprechen von Sicherheit, von Zeitersparnis und von Bequemlichkeit angetan wird, ist ein weit besserer Ratgeber. Gegen die Freiheitsberaubung kann ich opponieren mit einem unmissverständlichen ‚Es reicht!‘ Diese knappen beiden Worte, die zugleich vom Genug und von einer unerträglichen Zumutung sprechen, sind das beste, was wir im Gepäck haben, wenn wir aufhören wollen.

4. „Es gibt immer Orte zu finden, die leer von Macht sind. Die institutionelle Umklammerung des Lebens ist zu Anteilen Schein“, schrieb der Sozialpsychologe Peter Brückner (1982) sogar über die Zeit des Nationalsozialismus. Man müsste die Stirn haben, die Allmacht des Systems zu ignorieren. „Bange machen gilt nicht!“ war eine Art Zauberformel unserer Kindheit, mit der wir einen übermächtigen Gegner ‚entwaffneten‘ und uns selbst Mut zusprachen. Wenn wir – und sei es in kritischer Absicht – die Totalität des Systems beschwören, sind wir ihm genauso verfallen, als wenn wir uns willig darein fügen. Es käme darauf an, seine enorme Macht zu erkennen, ohne sie anzuerkennen. Aber wie geht das? Womöglich sind heute Nischen, leer von Macht, nicht mehr zu *finden*, sondern erst zu *gründen*. Das Abseits ist ein Ort für Deserteure. Der Deserteur ist der ‚Nicht-mehr-Mitmacher‘ par excellence; er ist Befehlsverweigerer, er entzieht dem Machthaber seine Mittäterschaft, indem er sich heimlich still und leise, vor allem aber unerlaubt von der Truppe entfernt. Er gilt darum als feige, aber das kann ihm egal sein. Was sind das für Orte, die leer sind von Macht? Es ist nicht von Ungefähr, dass sich nichts Genaueres darüber sagen lässt. Denn Orte, leer von Macht, entstehen erst dadurch, dass da Menschen sind, die sie

mit ihrer Anwesenheit füllen. Sie sind so unterschiedlich wie die Menschen, die sie besiedeln. Sie werden aus einer tiefen Abneigung gegen Gleichmacherei, Vereinheitlichung und Reih und Glied erschaffen. Es sind Stätten, in denen Menschen so zusammenwirken, dass nicht alles, was man zum Leben braucht, Geld kostet. Was umsonst ist, hat dann einen größeren Wert, als das, was man kaufen muss. Fürsorge ist wichtiger als Vorsorge. Kooperation und Teilen sind existenznotwendig, ebenso wie das Zusammenspiel verschiedenster Könnerschaften und Talente. Das, was das Abseits aus dem Blickwinkel derer, die um Integration kämpfen, bedrohlich macht, erscheint den Systemdeserteuren, gerade als das Rettende. Ihre Nicht-Zugehörigkeit verheißt ihnen ein Stück Freiheit, Ohn-Macht – jene Haltung, die nichts begehrt, von dem, was die Macht verwaltet, am allerwenigsten die Macht selbst – gilt ihnen als radikale Form des Widerstandes. Sie fordern ein Recht auf Armut inmitten einer vom Immer-Mehr gepeitschten Gesellschaft. Zeit ist im Abseits nicht Geld, sondern Zeit. Und Arbeit ist nicht Lohnknechtschaft, sondern *Eigenarbeit*.

Die Schriftstellerin Birgit Vanderbeke (2011) hat einen Roman geschrieben, dessen Titel schon eine Rebellion gegen die Allmacht des Systems ist: ‚Das lässt sich ändern‘. Das ist eine wiederkehrende Aussage des Protagonisten angesichts auftretender Schwierigkeiten in den Alltagsroutinen. Von Adam, so heißt er, wird schon gleich auf der ersten Seite gesagt, dass er „immer schon draußen“ war. Eigentlich müsste man ihn einen Langzeitarbeitslosen nennen, wenn er nicht so unglaublich viel zu tun hätte. Der ganze Roman liest sich wie eine Anleitung zur ‚allmählichen Verfertigung des Abseits beim Tun‘. Adam wusste ziemlich genau, worauf es dabei ankommt: Man muss – erstens – strikt darauf achten, nicht zu „vertrotteln“. Das ist gar nicht so einfach, denn „du wirst sehen, in zwanzig Jahren haben sie uns alle so weit verblödet, dass wir nur noch Knöpfe drücken können(...) und zu blöd zum Kartoffelschälen wären und nicht einmal mehr einen Knopf würden annähen können.“ Man muss – zweitens – eine Art Sperrmüllgesinnung ausbilden, gute Dinge, solche die brauchbar, haltbar, nicht elektronisch verseucht und keine Energiefresser sind, bewahren und sich in ihrem Gebrauch üben: „Er konnte an keinem Sperrmüll vorbei, ohne nachzusehen, ob etwas drin wäre, ein Werkzeug, ein Hobel, ein Ersatzteil, eine angebrochene Rolle doppelseitiges Klebeband (...) irgendwann würde er es bestimmt brauchen können.“

Man muss – drittens – den Kindern behilflich sein, nicht zu verblöden, indem man sie am Ernst des Lebens teilhaben lässt, statt sie in den Schon-

raum einer verschulden Kindheit abzuschieben. Und – viertens – muss man sich von Menschen in dem, was man kann, beanspruchen lassen und sie im Gegenzug seinerseits beanspruchen: verschiedene Vermögen verschiedener Menschen sind zu gegenseitigem und gemeinschaftlichem Nutzen in Umlauf zu bringen. Lauter Attitüden, die in modernen Lebenszuschnitten nicht sehr populär sind und eben deshalb konstitutiv für die Kultur des Abseits.

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Soil not Oil — Towards a living economy

Vandana Shiva

I remember first working with Wolfgang on the “Development Dictionary” (Sachs, 1991). Just three days ago I was training the Indian Civil Service on issues of sustainability and, of course, the typical questions would come up. “But isn’t there a contradiction between development and environment?” And: “Isn’t development more important than environment?” I could not believe after having debated for twenty years, the discourse is still there. I said there is one book they need to read to understand, that is the development dictionary. I hope every future civil servant of India will have been educated by Wolfgang. He has raised multidimensional aspects of sustainability over many years. Constantly he connected the social world with the natural world. As I think of the sustainability economy and the sufficiency economy, partly because of my background in quantum theory, for me sufficiency is an interconnected concept. It is not sufficiency to look into an isolated place, a group of people or a physical ecosystem only. I would like to think about sufficiency as follows:

Development as Sufficiency

The first is of course the sufficiency of the earth, her ecosystems, her species and beings to be able to meet all their needs and perform all their functions. So every river needs sufficiency of water flow, for example. I was with the big movement that we have built to defend the Ganges river which is supposed to be sacred and yet the Government is planning more than 200 dams in the upper regions of the tributaries of the Ganges. This means, you will have a concrete beginning and a concrete ending of the river. There will no river. Already now, with about 30 dams and hydro projects there are areas where the Ganges is not flowing anymore. And the blasting of the mountains with dynamite has made the mountains vulnerable to landslides. The dumping of debris from the excavation of the tunnels on the river beds has led to a rise of the river bed. This is a recipe for flooding and disasters. (In 2013 the disaster that was waiting to happen in our region of Uttarakhand happened. 20,000 people died in landslides and floods. Homes, fields, schools, roads, bridges were washed away.)

The second aspect of the sufficiency economy is to leave enough for others. We have a very beautiful ancient text in India, the Isha Upanishad. It puts it very clearly. Gandhi was very inspired by this, when he said: "The earth has enough for everyone's needs, but not enough for a few peoples greed." The Isha Upanishad says, that this universe is a creation for the benefit of all beings. Every being has its right to a share of the earth's gifts. Anyone being, anyone person taking more than their share is a thief, because it means taking someone else's ecological space. The issue of poverty is very clearly an issue of inequality and injustice based on depriving people of their right to adequate resources. Since we approached Rio +20 this gets more intense, because the green economy is very much about the ultimate resource grab and the ultimate commodification of every function of nature. Even though again and again we have seen the financial system collapsing under its own weight of fabrication, the advocates of the green economy would like to apply that fabrication to REDD, the United Nations Collaborative Programme on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation in Developing Countries. But, how do you allocate a financial allocation to the carbon absorption capacity of forests? How do you trade in that and how do you speculate in that?

There was a fascinating article in the Financial Times. This is a review of the book "What money can't buy" by Michael Sandel. The author wonders, if commercialization and obsession with growth have blinded us to what really matters. What is most interesting in this to me, is when the Economist and Financial Times ask these questions and start to shift. I think we can say Wolfgang has had a contribution in making this shift. One example given in the book is how there is an industry that buys the life insurance policies of the sick and the elderly in the hope that they will die sooner rather than later. Investment banks are busy bundling such policies into securities.

The idea of sufficiency is limiting this kind of thinking, showing that there are limits of what cannot be commodified. When we went to Seattle, the slogan of the anti-globalization movement was very simple: "Our world is not for sale!" We believed that there are certain things of such high value to life and to human welfare that they have to be kept on the commons and in the public domain. Whether it will be water, air, biodiversity or the public system like health, education or anything else that weights the conditions of life and well being in the natural world or the social world. The final version and understanding of sufficiency is to know what is enough for ones own satisfaction and well-being.

Every day India is supposed to be shining and booming. Even though our growth in 2012 is down below seven percent, our planing commission vice chairman expects ten percent of growth for the next twenty years. But the pressure this is putting on young people is amazing. Every second day I meet a young person who feels that earning anything less than a hundred thousand rupees is not enough. You get dependent, if you have build up a high expenditure model, a high consumption model and a high waste model and if you build up malls where the the simplest pair of shoes costs two thousand rupees and a boring T-shirt costs five thousand rupees. Even though its made cheap by slave factories in Bangladesh ,India and China, it is sold at high cost because it has got some silly logo.

The difference between soil and oil is the “s”. It is about sufficiency. It is about sustainability. I wrote “Soil not Oil” largely to make the connection between agriculture and climate change, which — at that point when I was researching and writing it — had not been made clearly enough. This was of course a nice and easy title. At least in English. But I increasingly feel that these are also two key words which are symbolic for both: the real world as it is organized as well as organizing principles of our future world. The oil economy is based on the stuff that is fossil fuel. But it is also based on the mental stuff that is called the fossilized paradigm. Just like all that organic matter over millions of years turns into petroleum and gas that runs the oil economy, I think over centuries the ideas that came up within the industrial revolution and the beginnings in fossil fuel dependance have got fossilized in the same way. And the two feed on each other.

Framework of the oil paradigm

Of course there is enough evidence that the oil economy is not working anymore. Peak oil and climate change indicate it, but even more the framework of fossil fuel oil paradigm explains it. The first aspect of that framework is that it assumes non-renewability. It totally forgets about renewability, because it ignores the basis of energy, food production, buildings and along with it the society itself. For the last three decades or more I focussed a lot on agriculture, but I think we could apply this to every sphere of life, not just to agriculture and food production. The oil framework is also based on linearity, a linear input-output-system, that replaces the regenerative systems based on cycles of renewal of water and of nutri-

ents. The very intensive extraction is typical of the linear flows of the oil economy: You go and drill, take out the oil, go and mine, take out the minerals and in the case of non-sustainable fossil fuel based agriculture you take out the soil fertility and transform it into commodities which leave the farm and the ecosystem, giving nothing back to the soil, or the farmer who works the soil. Basically, you take everything out. But to make that system work, you have to make it dependent on very high external inputs. So you get the entire package of fertilizers, pesticides and monocultures, but this external input is not brought into the calculation. It is left as an externality. 10 units of inputs in an industrial agriculture system produce only one unit of food. This is negative productivity system when all inputs are taken into account. So, we have a very convenient system, where less becomes more and we are repeatedly told that without such a system we can not meet our food needs. And this framework is applied again to every area of life. The contradiction of this model is that of the billion people hungry today half of them are growers of food. But they are not able to eat what they grow, because they have to buy such costly inputs on debt, so that they are selling what ever they have produced, to pay back the debt. Further, because of the financially driven economy the value of what the farmer grows and the value of what the consumer pays is getting polarized all the time. This is why in Europe you see the dumping of milk and in India the difference between what a farmer is earning as a producer and what a consumer (including the farmer himself) is paying for food is four times more. This is a four hundred percent difference in the last few years. So you take a former sufficiency economy ,convert it into a commodity economy and if you just look at the growth incomes, cash flows are increasing. One can easily say:

“Oh, people are earning more.”

Even farmers are brainwashed into this:

“I am earning more!”, they say.

We sit with them and say:

“Ok, lets see how much you spent, because earning is really the net income. So, how much did you spend?”

And by the time they finished doing that exercise, they are always earning less. But they have been made to not put the expenditure of this high external input and high dependence model into their balance sheets.

This is then combined with another aspect of the violation of the suf-

efficiency principles, which is the enclosure of the commons and the privatization of that which is common, whether it is water or seed. This happens through intellectual property rights and patents. What was accessible for free to be shared, now becomes a patented commodity to be bought every year by paying a high royalty. Let me just give you an example of what this means in reality.

Monsanto came to India in 1995 and started to control the market. In 2002, they were allowed to sell GM- Bt cotton seeds. Now, they control 95 percent of the seed market on cotton. When they entered with their BT-cotton, the seed cost jumped up eight thousand percent. The technology does not really work as we described in our report called the "GMO Emperor has no clothes": The pesticide use increased thirteen times for a crop which is supposed to be a pest control crop. So Monsanto is now bringing the second generation of GM-seeds, BT-2, on the markets. The result: high costs of pesticides and high costs of seed to be bought every year, not just once a year, very often three times, because it keeps failing. Farmers get into debt. Unpayable debt. As a consequence, we have an epidemic of something we have never seen in India: farmers suicides. A quarter million farmers have taken their lives since 1995. Most of them concentrated in the cotton belt. In the region of Vidharba in Maharashtra, which is the capital of Bt cotton, but also the capital of farmers suicides, in 2001 there were 52 suicides. In 2002 it double to 104. In 2004 it was 447, in 2006 1148 farmers committed suicide, in 2008 it was 1248.

The privatization of the commons is moving very rapidly through what is termed Public Private Partnership. Recently an official of the Agriculture Research Agency said: we have four hundred thousand collection of seed in our public gene bank (India is one of the richest biodiversity countries), it should be handed over to corporations, because we are incapable of innovation. Corporations are, he said. But the corporations will have the patents. What we have seen with cotton would happen in every crop in every field.

It is fascinating that in this period of European crisis the debate is between austerity and growth. But for the ordinary people austerity is imposed externally to have growth for the financial system, that created the crisis. Austerity is an undemocratic sacrifice and only one source of extraction of profits exists, which is privatize the public goods and services and the common goods of society. Make them pay! This means, life

becomes costly, because you have taken away peoples jobs, their pensions and then give them more expensive electricity, education and health care. This is an unworkable future. We need to show, that there are not two separate paradigms of austerity and growth, but in each of them there is austerity and growth and we need to move to sufficiency and chosen simplicity. With the deep awareness of all the limits that have been repeatedly raised by Wolfgang.

A lubricating paradigm of oil

Another aspect of the oil paradigm is that it must be based on a paradigmatic structure of power and control, both political and economic. As soon as oil started to lubricate the economy, there were oil companies. Before that and after this phase — in the decentralized renewables, whether it is decentralized solar or decentralized biogas — you do not have to have five oil companies anymore and then you do not have decisions just shaped by the five oil companies or other concentrations of power miming this centralized control. Whether it may be over seed or it be over water. The green economy debate is very significant and important to watch, because it shows a convergence of all these different sectors of the oil industry, the biotech industry, the plastic industry, the chemical industry, IT-industry and related to them the tools they use for the super extraction. Whether it may be biotechnology or converting biomass into biofuel turn it into oil. Referring back to the oil paradigm, the green economy in the official corporate agenda, which sadly many governments are adopting, is basically turning the planet into oil, literally. If that means go grab the land of Africa, they engage in land grab. If it means enclosing the commons of Rajasthan for jatropha plantations, than take the commons away from the people. The big resource grab, that we are seeing, is really in the period of peak oil and exhaustion of non renewable fossil fuels, taking the renewable and making it non renewable. If you look at the language of the green economy, they are saying, 75 percent of the bio mass of this planet is not used. But instead I say: it is used by nature, for example. I do not see a bit of bio mass not being used. It is being used to regulate our rivers up in the catchments, fire wood, fodder, healing, all kinds of things.

A strong metaphor of soil starts shifting

How does the soil metaphor shift to the idea of a sufficiency economy? First, it should replace the linear thinking with the cyclical thinking. You cannot have cycles without diversity. If you and I are identical in every thing, there is nothing I can share with you, that you do not have. But if I am a plant and you are a cow, as a plant I can give you fodder and as a cow you can give me soil fertility. The cycle carries on, never ending. Out of that sufficiency then comes the sustainability, but it also means, new paradigms of thinking. Because the linear system only works to make less being more by hiding costs the old issue of externality, and by hiding both the environmental and health costs as well as the financial costs of additional inputs. System thinking is what a system of mutuality and diversity gives you, which the emergent paradigm of agro ecology will support. It replaces the centralized pyramid of power which as Gandhi said, crushes the bottom that supports it. With another very powerful metaphor of Gandhi — “Life does not have to be a pyramid, it can be an ever expanding, never ascending oceanic circle of mutual support. Where the outermost circumstance gives support to everything within.” — this is the opposite of the pyradimatic structure. So far the growth model has been an every ascending, but constantly shrinking at the level where it really matters: nature, health, social well being. What we need is an ever expanding health of nature, health of society. This is what basically created the living economy, in which the currency is life not money. It is focussed on laws of maintaining, rejuvenating and growing life. It is based on ecological and social commons, the ecological being the natural gifts and the social being that which we share and create socially. And this is where Wendell Berry’s idea of a community economy is powerful. He writes, that a community economy is not an economy in which well placed persons can make a killing, it is a economy, in which the aim is generosity and a well distributed and safe guarded abundance.

Like the community economy, the idea of an sufficiency economy will work for all, for all beings and all beings everywhere and working for all does not mean uniformity and sameness. Diversity will be its strength. We are entering into that new period, in which the fossilized paradigm will run for a few years longer, it will crush a lot, extract a lot, terrify a lot, but ultimately no system based on “external” power and control is sustainable. We know that from history.

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Chapter 2

Enjoyable limits

Escaping Economism, Escaping the Econocene¹

Richard B. Norgaard

Coevolution to the Econocene

We, the global population of more than seven billion people, are having a major influence on planet Earth's basic biogeochemical processes. Some natural scientists argue that the earth's history is now in a new phase, dubbed the Anthropocene, a phase when people are the dominant drivers of change. But what do we mean by "people"? Population growth during the 20th century has been important: increasing population levels threefold. Global market economic activity, however, increased 50 fold, or more than 16 fold per capita. Our economy is clearly the most important driver of change. We can be more prescient and informative, setting the stage for action, by labeling this new geological era the Econocene.

Until as recently as two centuries ago, most of the globe's people lived in multiple, fairly distinct, predominantly agricultural, societies. People had long transferred a few plants, exchanged ideas about the origins of the universe and the meaning of life, and traded a few practical items, such as salt and spices, over considerable distances. Overall, however, interconnections between societies were still relatively few, and consequently diversity between them was considerable. Indeed, a modest level of transfers between patches can enhance diversity within each patch and overall.

Change was slow for the vast majority of human history. Then the invention of agriculture and its expansion and intensification through learning by doing, with a few transfers of knowledge between cultures, facilitated a 500-fold increase in human population. This occurred over a period of some 15,000 years with modest increases in well-being, especially for those at the top of the hierarchical societies that an agricultural surplus made possible. The process of change within the relatively separate cultures can be portrayed as coevolutionary between people and nature. In biology, *coevolution* is the change of a biological entity triggered, through natural selection, by the change of one or more interrelated entities. Coevolution can occur at

1 This paper largely draws on my book of nearly two decades ago. Obviously some ideas are more recent, and so this paper also reflects two decades of further thinking.

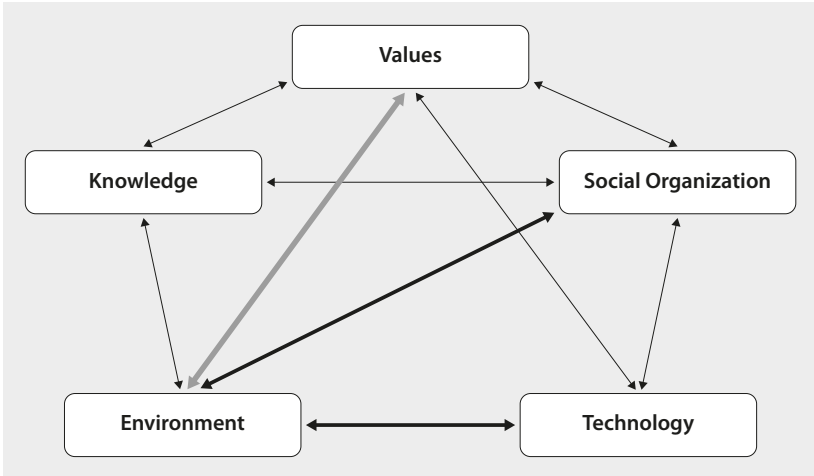
many biological levels: it can be as microscopic as correlated mutations between amino acids in a protein, or as macroscopic as covarying traits between different species in an environment. Each entity in a coevolutionary relationship exerts selective pressures on other entities, though some more strongly than others, thereby affecting each other's evolution. It is important to stress that coevolution occurs between entities in a system, for example, species in an ecosystem. Note that entities in a system interrelate with each other, displaying system processes, responses, and dynamics that can be thought of as being separate from coevolutionary processes. For example, within ecosystems we can see predator-prey relations, mutualism, and whole food webs, relations that are often portrayed as being almost mechanical. Coevolution occurs in the midst of these mechanical connections through evolutionary processes. In biological systems, some entities change quickly, others slowly, and even within species, some traits change more quickly than others (Thompson 2013).

The belief that evolution is a slow process is still embedded in the public consciousness. This is surely because of the importance of evolutionary reasoning in explaining the earth's long fossil history. Similarly, evolutionary thinking has been most famously applied and contested to human history. In both cases, explanations with much briefer histories were overturned .

In *Development Betrayed* (Norgaard 1994), I portray the social system more thoroughly by breaking it into four subsystems: values, knowledge, organization, and technology. I envisioned a process wherein each system interacts with the others in direct (mechanical) ways while they also coevolve together, selecting on current characteristics as well as innovations and introductions in each other, while also interacting and coevolving with the natural system (see figure 1).

About 500 years ago or so, as boats improved, people carried plants from one continent to another more frequently. Soon colonization and migration, the exchange of goods over the great oceans, and the arrival of the slave trade began to more tightly connect the coevolving patchwork quilt, beginning the process of reducing the diversity between cultures.

Nevertheless, for the billion or so people on the planet until two centuries ago, their sense of the economy was dominated by how their own labor worked with soil, rainfall, sunlight and modest amounts of human-produced capital, mostly tools and fences, to produce food, fiber, and shelter for family and others, predominantly locally. A small percent of the world's population



Coevolution. Source: Noorgard, Richard

engaged in light industry, international commerce, and banking, predominantly in Europe, but even these privileged few understood the economy pretty much in “real” terms. We also need to note that traditional religions gave meaning to life, explained where people fit in a cosmos dominated by nature including the sun, moon, and distant galaxies that kept people in perspective, and instructed us with respect to right and wrong.

People’s sense of the world and their place in it begins to change slowly with the Renaissance, but change really quickened and became much more noticeable only two centuries ago. We began to equate freedom with individual choice, sensed a control over nature through technology, the idea of progress lost its moral base and switched toward the possibility of material abundance for all, and, perhaps most of all, we saw the rise of markets and specialization, not only in fact, but as an increasingly dominant understanding of social organization. These changes, however, were greatly facilitated by a dramatic increase in access to energy through the mining and combustion of fossil fuels. Rather than coevolving with our environment, our social organization, technologies, and to some extent even our way of understanding began to coevolve around fossil fuels.

This coevolutionary process combined with direct changes gives rise to economism and the industrial order we know today. With our cosmos being the modern industrial order supported by a complex financial system, econ-

omism has emerged as the dominant secular religion, an eclectic package of beliefs that explain our place in the system, our relation to other people and nature, and how we should behave to have a meaningful life. Economism consists of an evolving, eclectic interweaving of diverse theoretical economic arguments, values, and popular assumptions, indeed deeply held beliefs. Economism is partly fostered by economists who have argued for the superiority of individual over collective choice, markets over democracy. The rise of economic discourse in public life relative to other forms of moral discourse, elevates material possessions over other measures of a meaningful life. People performing specialized tasks are now so interdependent through markets that if people do not believe in markets and their larger purpose, all markets would collapse, as financial markets have, and most of our population of seven billion people would very quickly starve. Economism is necessary to sustain the economic cosmos in which we live.

While our institutions were coevolving around fossil hydrocarbons, however, the global environmental system did not go away. Rather, it was changing on a different time scale, accumulating the CO₂ and other greenhouse gases that have led to climate change, sea level rise, and the extinction of species. The Econocene is a period of rapid collapse. The economism that drives the Econocene must be replaced with a new “ism”, a new ideology that is sustainable.

Economism as global religion

How should we think about the economy and how it relates to the Econocene? How should we understand our economy in order to escape the Econocene? With one of Einstein’s many good dictums in mind — “We can’t solve problems by using the same kind of thinking we used when we created them” — I argue against the approach of environmental economics. Improving the economy, simply bringing effects that were not balanced by markets into the market system so that prices better reflect true costs, will improve the economy but likely thrust us faster into the Econocene. Why perfecting an economy that is on the wrong path, that does not adequately address: 1) justice within or across generations, 2) social and environmental complexities, and 3) the meaning of life? Surely simply internalizing externalities can’t be the right thing to do before we better understand how to prevent their emergence in the first place. We need to go back into history and try

to rethink how we got into this whirlwind of physical, ecological, and social change, indeed change in our whole way of understanding who we are and how we relate to each other and nature.

Most religions date to the beginnings of agriculture. However, we no longer live in the cosmos of shepherds under a starry night sky. We no longer pray for abundant grain in the Fall and many lambs and good pastures in the Spring. Rather, our cosmos is now the economy. We awake to stock market reports from financial capitals several time zones to our East, work in hierarchical structures while praising markets, and are absolutely dependent on others working for the global economic machine in distant places. City lights and polluted air curtain us from the starry heavens, few are even aware of the phase of the moon. Our cosmos consists of things people have built, much of it private property, some of which we hold in common but largely ignore.

Let me be more specific about the nature of this dominant secular religion. Economism consists of the shared beliefs that bind the market order on which we depend. Laborers, white collar “technocrats”, entrepreneurs, capitalists, financiers, and specialized scientists including economists work together through shared economic beliefs that:

- Explain the nature, including the emergence, of the economic cosmos,
- Explain and rationalize one’s place in the economic cosmos,
- Rationalize the dominant way in which we interact with each other and nature,
- Rationalize how “greed is good” in opposition to earlier religious/secularly-based moral teachings with respect to care for others
- Rationalize growth of GDP as progress
- Rationalize transcendence through consumption, the meaning of life is to consume more than thy neighbour.

Yet the industrial order sustained by economism is not sustainable itself. We are in the Econocene. At the same time, we must accept that any new social organizational system that is sustainable and just would also need its “ism” to keep it going. And this raises the central question of this paper. How can we have a new system of beliefs/values and social organization emerge, a new ism, without crashing the market machine on which we temporarily depend during the transition?

Acknowledging limits and yelling “basta” at the market machine, are

necessary, but not sufficient. Capping economic growth will not establish a steady-state. Nature changes, so will social systems. An economy of sufficiency needs to be more than the present economy “shrunk and leashed” to stay within planetary bounds. Somehow, we need to get out in front of the dynamics of the Econocene to ride it safely into a better era. A new era will continue to evolve, but hopefully it will not lead to human extinction quite so quickly. The natural theology that evolved into natural history and then into the environmental natural sciences still evokes a nature that is “out there” and unchanging rather than a nature undergoing rapid change driven by our economy. We are in the Econocene and need to factor in the dynamics of the process driving our changing relations with a changing nature. We need a dynamic story of our past, present, and future to get ahead of and ride the Econocene while we try to tame it too.

We need to comprehend what went wrong and envision a whole new system of shared beliefs to support a new comprehension of the meaning of life, all life, and how people as individuals fit in that system. Impossible? How did we get the economism we have, and how does this system change over time? How did it go from an economism that supported mixed national economies that strived to address social problems after World War II to an economism that supports a global economy of individual greed? Economism changes. Can it change again smoothly or will the transition be difficult to violent?

What was missing as we returned to Rio 20 years later was a deep acceptance of how far we have gone wrong, how systemic the problem is, and how its systemic nature includes how we thought we understood who we were and would become, the very meaning of life. Concentrating on the “economy” is important, but it is more important to concentrate on all social systems and build them up as we shrink the economy. While this may be too comprehensive, abstract and philosophical of a question to convey to the “public”, I argue that a “new mythology” to commonly situate people’s diverse frustrations and provide an umbrella for the multitude of good efforts underway to do things differently could be of great help.

A global narrative for a just and sustainable future

Just as a coevolutionary framework helps explain how we got into this mess, I think it can help us see how we might get out. It is “ecological” and

“evolutionary”, it incorporates ecological interactions and the selective processes of evolution, showing how things tightly fit together. It incorporates the “good” aspects of postmodernist understanding. Social organization, technology, values, and even science, are all “socially constructed”, indeed even nature is increasingly being socially constructed, but none are *only* “socially” constructed. Nature — its coevolving components and processes — matter just as human history matters.

In this coevolutionary framing, understanding is strongest when it is *recursive*, incorporating its earlier self, our history of prior understandings and actions taken, into how and what we understand, and thus what will be the more probable effects of our actions, today.

For example, historically we understood soils mostly as physical and chemical systems. While we now understand soils more as biological systems, or biogeochemical systems, our understanding of modern agricultural soils is more complete, and thus better, when we incorporate how we had historically transformed these biogeochemistry systems through our earlier, dominantly physical and chemical, understanding of soils. How we thought and acted upon our thoughts historically is important for understanding agricultural soils, but it is even more important for understanding our economy. The economy and the problems we have today reflect our past understanding that has been dominated by neoliberal thought on markets as self-regulating. People, with the help of the economics profession, have come to worship markets and condemn the supposed inefficiency of governmental “command and control”. Yet we ignore the phenomenal rise of the large corporations that employ us and provide us, supposedly efficiently, with our daily goods and services, corporations that are also organized by command and control.

With the shrinkage of other ways of thinking about systems, market terminology has become critical to how biologists explain nature to the public. Nature, like other forms of wealth, can be thought of as capital that pays dividends in the form of ecosystem services. Saving nature has become a process of designing economic incentives for individual actors to invest in nature in order to reap her ecosystem services. In turn, biologists now frame their research around market terminology to give stronger scientific back up to the biological conservation efforts designed around the concept of ecosystem services.

The most important questions we face are moral questions. Faith in

human progress, a narrative that has long been embedded within economism has allowed us to ignore questions of our moral responsibilities to future generations. Yet climate change as well as the broader social and environmental implications of the Eocene suggest a human future few would choose. Economics, at least to be consistent with its own theory, must work with moral reasoning and politics, but economics in practice has excluded both of them in order to meet legislators' and the public's expectations and need for "objective" answers. Hence we talk of economic efficiency when moral issues are at stake. This shriveling of our ability to think and discuss values to economics is the essence of economism.

Coevolution, like evolution, explains the emergence of species as well as their extinction. The early coevolutionary literature expressed the concern that coevolution could lead to such strong interdependence among species that each species would be increasingly vulnerable to any change in the others such that eventually all would be at great risk to even a minor perturbation (Schemske 1983). Surely the tight coevolution between fossil fuels, social organization, and economism has dramatically reduced humankind's resilience to perturbations. Resilience is good; market specialization has costs just as important as the gains identified by economic reasoning.

We are absolutely dependent on this tightly coevolved system of beliefs and social order.

If people did not believe in markets, if economism were not equivalent to a religion that frames each person's very existence and *modus operandi*, all markets would collapse, as financial markets have, and seven billion people would starve. How can we have new systems of values, of knowledge, of social organization, and of technology emerge, systems that will coevolve without crashing over the long run, without crashing during the transition?

Fortunately, capitalist economic order has proven very malleable, changing quite significantly every quarter century or so. Evolution and coevolution also can occur rapidly for things that have short regeneration cycles. Coevolution explains change, including the evolution/emergence of wholly new properties, even while it explains "interlockedness". So, it explains how tightly interlocked things change as well. This is the good news.

The bad news is that the story of progress has been very strong for several centuries. While capitalism has indeed changed, it has continually increased specialization and material/energy consumption while also increasing the separation of people, and their experiential knowledge, from each other

and nature. We need to replace the story of progress that has been captured by economism and re-portrayed as economic growth with a new story that addresses the possibilities again of living with other species, moral progress, and being social and wise.

Many efforts are underway to portray and promote aspects of a better future; the movements for local markets, local currencies, urban gardens, vegetarianism, organic farming, communes and cooperatives, rebuilding the commons, and supporting alternative lifestyles generally. Yet the many good efforts lack a unifying story that explains how we got into the Econocene and how separate efforts might better work together to get us out. Might a “new narrative” on the rise of economism and the dominance of economic order provide an umbrella to protect — a sufficient rationale to more broadly support — the many efforts already underway to build an understanding of a just and environmentally sustainable world? The coevolutionary story of how we got into the Econocene provides the historical explanation and helps us see why conventional economic solutions will not work. The coevolutionary advantages of a patchwork quilt of not-so-tightly coevolving societies supports de-globalization. The coevolutionary narrative’s emphasis on all forms of social organizing and all forms of knowing, from traditional and experiential to academic, opens the possibility of reducing hierarchy and power, much as markets were once advocated for this purpose. I do not know if this particular story will work, but surely it will work better than trying to “cap and trade” are problems away.

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*Angst essen Seele auf*² — Escaping the ‘iron cage’ of consumerism

Tim Jackson

Society is faced with a profound dilemma. To resist economic growth is to court economic and social collapse. To pursue it relentlessly is to endanger the ecosystems on which we depend for long-term survival. For the most part, this dilemma goes unrecognised in government policy. It is only marginally more visible as a public debate. When reality begins to impinge on the collective consciousness, the best suggestion to hand is that we can somehow ‘decouple’ growth from its material impacts. And continue to do so while the economy expands exponentially.

The sheer scale of action implied by this strategy is daunting. In a world of 9 billion people all aspiring to western lifestyles, the carbon intensity of every dollar of output must be at least 130 times lower in 2050 than it is today. By the end of the century, economic activity will need to be taking carbon out of the atmosphere not adding to it. (Jackson 2009, Chapter 5)

Simplistic assumptions that capitalism’s propensity for efficiency will solve all the problems of ecological damage and resource scarcity are almost literally bankrupt. We now stand in urgent need of a clearer vision, braver policy-making, something more robust in the way of a strategy with which to confront the dilemma of growth. This is the challenge to which Wolfgang Sachs has dedicated his remarkable energy and much of his life’s work.

My aim in this short article is to address one aspect of this challenge: the role that anxiety — and our responses to it — play in consumer society. To make sense of this mission, I need first to sketch briefly the crucial dynamics of consumerism and to show how anxiety plays a role in it.

The iron cage of consumerism

As I have argued in more detail elsewhere (Jackson 2013), nature and structure conspire together to create an ‘iron cage’ of consumerism. On the

2 ‘*Angst essen Seele auf*’ (‘Anxiety eat soul up’ in English) was the title of a 1974 film by the celebrated German film director Rainer Werner Fassbinder. The grammatical incorrectness of the title was deliberate.

one hand, the profit motive stimulates a continual search for newer, better or cheaper products and services. On the other, our own relentless search for social status lock us into an escalating spiral of consumerism. Novelty plays an absolutely central role in this dynamic.

Novelty has always carried vital information about status. Having a faster car or a bigger house alerts others to our place in the world. Having the latest mobile phone or Ipad or HDTV conveys the vital message that we are ahead of the crowd, or at the very least that we move with the herd. The language of cool is conveyed through a vocabulary of the new. Novelty even allows us to explore the wider aspirations we hold for ourselves and our families. Our dreams of the good life are cashed out through a kaleidoscope of clever toys and sparkling ornaments.

Amongst those to whom we signal our importance, we must count ourselves. Confidence in our place in the social world hangs or falls on our ability to participate in consumerism. Nowhere is this more evident than in the peer pressures to which teenagers are today increasingly exposed. The 'shopping generation' is instinctively aware that social position hangs on the evocative power of stuff. Just listen to the ubiquitous iPhone conversations played out by 11-15 year olds on train journeys home from school.

There is nothing accidental about these conditions of course. On the contrary, we created them. And there are some clearly identifiable reasons for that. Perhaps the most telling point of all is the rather too perfect fit between the continual production of novelty by firms and the insatiable appetite for novelty in households. The restless desire of the consumer is the perfect complement for the restless innovation of the entrepreneur. Taken together these two self-reinforcing processes are exactly what is needed to drive economic growth forwards. As Victor Lebow (1955) once pointed out, our enormously productive economy requires that we "convert the buying and use of goods into rituals, that we seek our spiritual satisfactions, our ego satisfactions, in consumption".

Despite this fit, or perhaps because of it, the relentless pursuit of novelty stirs up a spirit of anxiety that undermines social wellbeing. Individuals are at the mercy of social comparison. Firms must innovate or die. Institutions are skewed towards the pursuit of a materialistic consumerism. The economy itself is dependent on consumption growth for its very stability. Governments who preside over instability soon find themselves out of office. The 'iron cage of consumerism' is a system in which no one is free.

Ontological insecurity and the 'sacred canopy'

That a sense of anxiety pervades consumer society is scarcely a new insight. It was Adam Smith who first highlighted the role of shame in the social life of the consumer. "A linen shirt, for example, is, strictly speaking, not a necessary of life," wrote Smith (1776/1937, 821) in *The Wealth of Nations*. "But in the present times, through the greater part of Europe, a creditable day labourer would be ashamed to appear in public without a linen shirt, the want of which would be supposed to denote that disgraceful degree of poverty which, it is presumed, nobody can well fall into without extreme bad conduct."

As Amartya Sen (1984) later pointed out, this social dynamic is part of what motivates a continual striving for the latest consumer goods in modern society. The richer the society, the more extensive is the set of goods needed for a 'life without shame'. Perhaps ironically, this relentless striving doesn't necessarily make people happier. Indeed it may even have made people less happy. Seeking to explain rising rates of suicide in Europe, the sociologist Emile Durkheim (1903/2002) suggested over a century ago that capitalism had undermined our sense of meaning and purpose and left us undefended against a profound anomie.

It is tempting to conclude from these remarks that consumerism — or perhaps capitalism itself — provides the source of this anomie. But this would contradict the abundant evidence that some form of anxiety at least is endemic to the human condition; that human beings are prone to what Anthony Giddens (1991) — following Freud — has described as a pervasive 'ontological insecurity'. A kind of existential angst about ourselves, about our loved ones, about the fate of our society, about existence itself.

Just because anxiety is inherent in the human condition, does not however absolve consumerism and capitalism from their role in responding to it. What is at stake here is not so much the source of this insecurity as the success or failure of each society, of each form of social organisation in managing anxiety. This more nuanced view has been beautifully articulated by the sociologist Peter Berger (1967). In Berger's view, *every* society is faced with the problem of constructing and maintaining its social world, or 'nomos'. This socially-constructed framework can be thought of as the set of assumptions, understandings, rules, maxims, norms, taboos and rituals which together bring order and meaning to human lives.

Berger's principal interest is the role that religion plays in this process. He shows in particular how religion allows us to make sense of our existence in relation to a higher 'sacred' order (cognitive meaning). It also provides a framework for moral governance (moral meaning). Finally, by offering a transcendent reality, it allows us to confront the question of our own mortality and the loss of those we love (emotional meaning).³

Berger called this overarching framework of meaning a 'sacred canopy'. And he suggested that this sacred canopy was a vital function in every kind of society. The 'sacred canopy' is all what keeps us from despair, from anomie, from the dark chaotic and meaningless void that threatens constantly to overturn us.

Secular and religious theodicy

Central to this task of 'world maintenance' is the task of 'theodicy'. Theodicy (which means — literally — the justification of god) has its roots in medieval theology. So it might seem odd that I should call on such an idea in a discussion of consumerism. But as I hope to show, it is quite precisely this task that consumerism has usurped in modern society. And it is noteworthy that we have no better, more familiar terminology with which to confront one of the most fundamental dynamics in human society.

Broadly speaking, theodicy is the attempt to come to terms with the existence of 'suffering' and 'evil' in our lives. In religious language, theodicy asks the question: why should a caring God allow evil to prosper and the innocent to suffer? Religious theodicy was for a long time associated quite precisely with the need to reconcile belief in an omnipotent and benevolent god with the existence of evil and suffering in the world.⁴

But as Berger convincingly argues, theodicy can be construed as a more generic concept in the sociology of religion. It can even be framed in non-theological terms. Specifically, Berger defined theodicy as the (religious) legitimation of 'anomic' phenomena — that is to say, as the attempt to defend the existing 'nomos' or world view against the ever-present threats to meaning that assault it. These threats arise in particular as a result of suffering, loss and our own mortality. Put differently, theodicy attempts to cope with the

3 This typology of meaning mirrors one set out in Campbell 2003.

4 See for example Hick 1968; and more recently Astley et al. 2002.

discrepancy between our ideals and visions and the reality of the world with which we are daily confronted.

In ordinary laymen's terms, theodicy can be construed as the attempt to 'make sense of' our lives. Faced with persistent injustice, the prosperity of ill-doers, the persecution of the righteous, how should we seek to live? What kind of morality are we to live by? Confronted with our own mortality, the persistence of suffering, the sorrow of bereavement, where should we turn for solace? How are we to protect the authority of compassion and the promise of love? Where, in short, are we to find meaning in our lives?

The broad argument I am going to make is that consumerism, ironically, has become a kind of secular theodicy. In some quite precise ways, consumerism has grappled and continues to grapple with foundational questions about our destiny. About social progress. And if we want to counter consumerism, I shall argue, we have to understand that. And offer some other less damaging ways of grappling with them. But first I want to illustrate the problem of theodicy a little more clearly. And in order to do so I'd like to take you back to the middle of the nineteenth century — to the year 1851.

Why do bad things happen to good people?

I want you to imagine if you can a windswept, stormy day in middle England. I know it goes against everything you've ever heard about England. But I want you to imagine it's raining like it's never rained before.

My story concerns a young girl named Annie. Before she reaches her 10th birthday she is already suffering from stomach pains, headaches, dizziness and difficulties in breathing. It's clear to her parents that something has to be done. So one day in late March her father prises the tearful Annie from her mother's reluctant farewell embrace and together with her sister Henrietta and their nurse, Fanny, they undertake the arduous journey north to Dr James Gully's famous water cure establishment in Malvern.

Her father's trust in the water cure is supreme. Only a few months previously he himself has been a patient in Malvern. What was wrong with him we're not entirely sure. Probably some kind of nervous dysfunction. Something that was treatable by a water cure. At any rate, he is so confident that a water cure will be effective that, he heads back to London to get some work done — more on the work later — leaving Annie in the care of her nurse and the good Dr Gully.

Two weeks later, he was summoned back to Malvern. Annie had taken a turn for the worse. Poor Henrietta was dispatched to nearby relatives. Charles — the father's name was Charles — took up a constant vigil by Annie's bedside, and wrote every day to his wife Emma to report on the almost hourly 'struggle between life & death' that Annie endured.

Racked with violent stomach cramps, losing strength by the day, writhing in agony on her sick bed, Annie would occasionally make pathetic attempts to sing her favourite hymns. But it was becoming obvious to everyone that she was losing the fight. By the morning of Wednesday the 23rd April, the girl lay motionless on her bed, wasted but tranquil, as the storm clouds gathered outside.

Her father sat by the window, staring into the dull grey Malvern hills, weeping quietly, waiting for the inevitable. A little time later, as Charles' biographers later describe the scene:

"The wind picked up. Charles and Fanny moved closer to the bed. Annie lay still, unconscious. It was just twelve o'clock midday. Thunder began to sound, great peals far above them — the mighty knell of Nature. They edged nearer and heard the breathing stop. She was dead."

The story of Annie's death is one of ordinary human tragedy. An unhappy but not uncommon tale; certainly not in the mid nineteenth century; or even today, when a child dies through poverty every three seconds and almost every single human life is crossed at some point by personal tragedy. Annie's death also serves to illustrate the subject matter of this paper.

The personal is historical

Theodicy, in a very personal and quite precise way, was the challenge facing Charles and Emma in the aftermath of Annie's death. Each of them reacted very differently to the challenge. When no word came from Malvern on the day of Annie's death, Emma realised immediately that the struggle was over. So that by the time Charles's letter arrived she was able to bear the knowledge 'sweetly and gently', crying 'without violence... as if it had all happened long ago'. A devout Christian, she turned to her faith for support, hoping to 'attain some feeling of submission to the will of Heaven'.

For Charles, Annie's death achieved an almost cosmological significance. Hours after her death, he was found still by the bedside, weeping inconsol-

ably. What he later described as an ‘insufferable grief’ served to shatter his belief in a moral and just universe and convince him of the underlying cruelty of nature. The horror of Annie’s suffering also sounded the deathknell for his already teetering belief in Christianity.

In the wake of her death, he threw himself with ever greater fervour into his life’s work: the formulation of one of the most influential scientific theories of the last two hundred years; a theory in which suffering and cruelty became the engine of evolutionary progress; a theory in which, as some latter-day philosophers have declared, there was no longer any room for God.

It is a very personal story. But the divide between Emma and Charles also serves to symbolise the changing role and status of religion in human affairs. In Emma’s world, the appropriate place to search for consolation over the loss of Annie was still her faith. For Charles, and for an increasing proportion of the Western world in the intervening 150 years, things had changed.⁵

The world after Darwin — yes, you’ve guessed it, the girl’s father was Charles Darwin — became an increasingly secular place. God was dead, trumpeted Nietzsche; religion was ‘knocked to pieces’, said George Bernard Shaw: “and where there had been God, a cause, a faith that the universe was ordered, and therefore a sense of moral responsibility as part of that order, there was now an utter void. Chaos had come again. The effect at first was exhilarating,” wrote Shaw. “We had the runaway child’s sense of freedom before it gets hungry and lonely and frightened.”

The functions of theodicy

The demise of God left open the question of meaning, the function of theodicy, in the modern world. My argument here is that some part of this function has become ‘internalised’ within consumerism itself, in some more or less precise ways. This isn’t to suggest that religious theodicy is no longer relevant, or that a consumerist theodicy is even remotely successful. But if this substitution of secular for religious theodicy is happening, if this fundamental task of world maintenance has really been handed over to consumerism, then it’s a pretty important thing to face up to.

5 For further historical details of the story recounted here see eg. Desmond/Moore 1991.

To be effective in its role of legitimation or sense-making, a theodicy must possess certain key characteristics. I want to distinguish six inter-related aspects of theodicy justice, reward, consolation, ontological security, transcendence, and eschatology.⁶ There are clear links between these different functions and they work together to defend us against anomie and protect the sacred canopy.

Together they have to demonstrate that the sacred order does not discriminate arbitrarily between different individuals (*justice*). A key element in maintaining this sense of justice is to ensure that some form of mechanism exists which dispenses compensations consistently in relation to 'good' and 'bad' behaviours (*reward*).

This compensatory mechanism is challenged by two specific conditions in the real world. The first of these is the persistence — and sometimes even the flourishing — of wrong-doers. The idea that 'evil' may prosper is deeply disturbing to the set of moral meanings established in society. Nonetheless it can, with some effort, be legitimated within broadly secular moral codes and practices.

A more intractable challenge is presented by the sometimes arbitrary incursions of suffering and loss with which we are always confronted (either individually or collectively) at some point in our lives. These have two specific forms: one is related to the loss of our loved ones; the second arises from our awareness of our own mortality.⁷ A credible theodicy must therefore offer plausible compensatory functions in the face of bereavement and suffering (*consolation*). It must also provide us with a working defence against the pervasive anxiety engendered by awareness of our own mortality (*ontological security*).

Some of the compensatory mechanisms established through theodicy may operate within the constraints of this world. But the challenge of providing an entirely secular compensatory mechanism is immense, particularly in the face of loss and existential anxiety. Most theodicies draw in part on compensatory mechanisms which operate in some other realm (*transcendence*), perhaps at some future point in time (*eschatology*).

6 Religious eschatology is the 'study of last or final things.' In secular terms, it is concerned with the question of 'how things turn out in the end.'

7 For discussion of the importance of these 'anomic phenomena' even in modern society see for example Giddens 1991; Becker 1973; Berger 1967.

The importance of the functions of transcendence and eschatology to theodicy is quite precisely to establish and maintain the authenticity of this other compensatory realm. A response from a participant in a study carried out at the University of Surrey illustrates how theodicial functions operate even on a day-to-day level for religious people (Jackson/Pepper 2010):

“You know, sometimes, something that really opened my eyes the other day driving on the M3 motorway. Traffic terrible, and my husband is not going to go this Sunday to church, or my eldest daughter baptise my grandchildren, and that makes me very, very sad, very unhappy. And on the motorway near Winchester, going past and these grey skies, a horrible time, raining. And there is this little bit of light, and there on the motorway there is a cross somewhere on a hill, and the light was shining on this cross and I was sitting down there under the rain, I have a meeting at nine o’clock, and I am sitting down there watching and this light shining on this cross and I say, yes you are there.”
(Female, Roman Catholic, 50s)

This response suggests a number of different theodicial functions. For instance it suggests access to consolation for life’s woes. The curious other-worldly quality of the light on the cross has elements of transcendence; and the symbolism of the cross as a metaphor for the redemption and future salvation of ordinary sinners also evokes a kind of eschatology.

Given the declining role of religion (especially in Western Europe) and the importance of religion and theodicy in world maintenance, it is an obvious question to ask: how does modern society maintain its world view? How does it defend itself against anomie? What structures and devices allow it to establish cognitive, moral and emotional meaning in the world? And how are these meanings legitimated in the face of suffering and loss? In other words where is the consumerist theodicy?

I want to argue of course that modern society has internalised a number of specific functions of world maintenance within the dynamics and organisation of consumerism. Since every society needs a sacred canopy, and since every sacred canopy must be defended or legitimated, it would be quite surprising if this were not the case for the consumer society as well.

The language of stuff

At first sight, the idea that material commodities play any particular role in the establishment of a socially-constructed nomos is an odd one. From a functional perspective, one thinks of material goods mainly as fulfilling certain essential physical or physiological tasks in the world. Psychological and social tasks are more obviously construed in terms of less material constructs: thoughts, conversations, norms, institutions perhaps. How is it that goods themselves can be asked to do this work?

This is one of the key lessons from the sociology of consumption. It is now broadly accepted that material things are deeply implicated in the social and psychological fabric of our lives. This role depends heavily on the human tendency to imbue material artefacts with symbolic meaning.⁸ And this ability provides an extremely influential ‘osmosis’ between the physical and the cultural world, between material and ‘non-material’ aspects of our lives.⁹

Consider this wonderful example from one of the respondents in Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton’s (1981) delightful study on the construction of meaning through everyday domestic objects. It illustrates my point perfectly. The respondent, an 8 year old North American boy, is asked by the interviewer: “What do all your special objects, taken together mean to you?” He replies:

“They make me feel like I’m part of the world.”

“How do they do that?”

“Because when I look at them, I keep my eyes on them and I think what they mean. Like I have a bank from the First National, and when I look at it I think what it means. It means money for our cities and our country, it means tax for the government. My stuffed bunny reminds me of wildlife, all the rabbits and dogs and cats. That toy animal over there reminds me of circuses and the way they train animals so they don’t get hurt. That’s what I mean. All my special things make me feel like I’m part of the world.”

It is probably easy to supply plenty of personal examples of the ‘evocative power’ of material goods. Broadly speaking the view of consumer society

8 The literature in support of this point is enormous. For a summary see Jackson 2011.

9 For a fuller discussion of this point, see Jackson 2006.

which emerges from this literature can be summed up by acknowledging with Mary Douglas (1976, 207) that:

“[a]n individual’s main objective in consumption is to help create the social world and to find a credible place in it.”

Material goods, in other words, are deeply implicated in the task of world maintenance, in a social, as much as in a physical sense. But the question remains: how does the consumer society address the critical question of theodicy? In particular, can we find evidence of the key functions identified in religious theodicies?

Consumerism as theodicy

Let us consider first the function of justice. Perhaps strangely, we find that concerns about justice in the distribution of consumer goods run like a constant refrain through modern society. It is evident in the language of consumer sovereignty, equal opportunity, fair trade and freedom of choice. The importance of fairness is also uncovered in qualitative studies of consumer attitudes.

Why should only the privileged few have access to the delights of fast cars, big houses and holidays in the sun? The consumerist ideal must allow everyone the possibility of this access if it is not to be condemned from within. At the macro-economic level, the entire ethos of consumerism is ‘legitimated’ by allegiance to the idea that consumption growth is a ‘rising tide’ that will (eventually) ‘raise all boats’.

The idea that consumerism offers to reward people for ‘good’ behaviour is also very widespread. A meritocratic society heralds high consumption lifestyles and celebrity status as the pinnacle of social achievement. And the discourse around consumption as a reward for good behaviour is also evident in consumer studies as the following quote illustrates (Csikszentmihalyi/Rochberg-Halton 1981):

“My Cadillac has become to me a thing I deserve. I wonder if others say things. I’ve had comments: ‘You’re rich,’ from customers. They may even resent it — I don’t care. It shows you make so much more money. It represents my right to own something associated with successful people.”

Even those with religious backgrounds tend to use the metaphor of reward to legitimate consumption behaviour, as the following response from our qualitative study of religious groups illustrates (Pepper et al. 2006):

“But I find myself standing in the middle of a shop and actually praying, having an argument with God, I really don’t need that. No you don’t need it, but you’re allowed to treat yourself sometimes.”

The link between consumption and ontological security — the management of deep underlying uncertainties about mortality and our place in the world — is also well-supported by the evidence.¹⁰

“The human animal is a beast that dies” said Big Daddy in Tennessee Williams’s play *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*. “And if he’s got money he buys and buys and buys. And I think the reason he buys everything he can is that in the back of his mind, he has the crazy hope that one of his purchases will be life ever-lasting.”

And what precisely are we to make of President Bush’s epoch defining call to arms in the wake of the 9/11 tragedy. ‘Mrs Bush and I would like to encourage Americans everywhere to go out shopping.’

A particularly telling contribution to the evidence comes from something called terror management theory which has its roots in Ernest Becker’s groundbreaking book ‘The Denial of Death’. Modern psychological experiments show that when people are exposed to cues that make them more aware of death — heightened mortality salience, it’s called — they tend to act to enhance their own self-esteem and protect their cultural world view. In a consumer society, self-esteem striving typically has profoundly materialistic outcomes. Just like George Bush asks them to. People go out shopping. Fascinatingly, however, there is also evidence to suggest that this urge is moderated in people who express strong allegiance to some particular faith.¹¹

Our apparent addiction to material things cannot entirely be construed in hedonistic or materialistic ways. Yes, perhaps there is something pathological about the intensity with which we cling to material goods. “Hollow hands clasp ludicrous possessions”, wrote Ernest Dichter in 1964. “Because they are links in the chain of life. If it breaks they are truly lost” (Dichter 1964).

10 Key contributions to the literature include the following: Giddens 1991; Baumann 1998, Campbell, 2003.

11 Becker 1973. See also: Arndt et al. 2003.

But material goods also facilitate consolation. Sacred goods remind us of those we love, of dreams we hold, of our hopes for the future. At a more mundane level the seemingly endless availability consoles us for the temporary nature of our lives, for our disappointments and failures. It assures us that society holds out the promise of better lives (for us and for our descendants) in the future.

Transcendence also runs like a current through our relationship to consumer goods. From Colin Campbell's concept of 'hedonic dreaming' to Russell Belk's explorations of sacredness and consumer desire, the evidence suggests that we use commodities both to dream of higher things and sometimes quite literally to escape or get away from it all.¹²

The evocative power of material things allows us to protect our ideals from the harsh scrutiny of daylight by offering us continual hope for a better world. But for goods to serve the cause of hope, as Grant McCracken (1990) has pointed out, they must be inexhaustible in supply. And it is precisely their continual failure truly to embody our ideals that makes them so successful as a strategy in the never-ending pursuit of 'displaced meaning'.

As for a consumer eschatology, the final state of affairs is not final at all. Rather it is a continually increasing flow of goods, making the world a better and better place. Not just for us but for our descendants. The endgame played out by consumerism is one in which the ability to go on consuming for generation after generation is the ultimate goal. A kind of heaven on earth, if not for us, then for our descendants. Vincent Miller has argued that consumer desire has completely 'derailed' eschatology by allowing desire itself to become the object of human striving.

"Consumer seduction is constituted against a horizon of possibility" he writes. "It is constantly looking beyond the present for more fulfilling alternatives. Expectation is endlessly aroused. But ... this expectation is as shallow as it is broad. Joy is sought in desire itself. Consumer anticipation is at heart a way of accommodating the endless repeat of the same, of finding pleasure in a world without hope." The consumer eschatology in this view is a kind of anti-eschatology — a study in denial of the fear that things will ultimately turn out badly — for all of us.

12 Campbell 1987; Belk et al. 1989; Belk et al. 2003.

Beyond Denial and Rapture

What I have tried to show in this short discussion is that consumerism has appropriated the functional importance of theodicy through the role that material commodities play in our lives. As I have already indicated, this theodicy is not entirely pathological. But it is clearly flawed.

Its conceptualisation of justice is tenuous, its framing and disbursement of rewards is iniquitous. It is deeply but perhaps perversely seductive in offering a rather fleeting kind of ontological security, one that needs continually to be reinforced by engaging in yet more consumption. But the material and environmental implications of this consolation are profound, even as its success as a psychological strategy is short-lived. It does offer a form of transcendence, but the degree to which this facilitates any real hope or consolation for our losses is suspect. Far from creating a credible eschatology, consumerism appears to be a continuous exercise in denial of our own mortality and of the widespread suffering in the world.

One thing is abundantly clear from this analysis. If consumerism is so profoundly implicated in world maintenance — a core element in the sacred canopy of modern capitalist society — any attempts to counter it through exhortation are bound to failure. If consumption plays such a vital role in the construction and maintenance of our social world, then asking people to give up material commodities is asking them to risk a kind of social suicide. People will rightly resist threats to identity. They will resist threats to meaning. They will ask quite legitimate questions of the motives of the moral persuaders.

Instead, we might usefully conclude, countering consumerism must start from more robust secular (or religious) theodicy: the building of meaning structures, communities of meaning, that lie outside the realm of the market; and that offer credible answers to the deep foundational questions that continue to haunt us. In a sense this response brings us back full circle to the starting point for this article. The growth-based society is predicated on the relentless desire for material stuff. But this perverse dynamic is deeply destructive and in the final analysis has little or nothing to do with meaningful prosperity. Worse it is now in danger of undermining the conditions on which future prosperity depends.

At the end of the day, prosperity goes beyond material pleasures. It transcends material concerns. It resides in the quality of our lives and in the

health and happiness of our families. It is present in the strength of our relationships and our trust in the community. It is evidenced by our satisfaction at work and our sense of shared meaning and purpose. It hangs on our potential to participate fully in the life of society. Prosperity consists in our ability to flourish as human beings — within the ecological limits of a finite planet. The challenge for our society is to create the conditions under which this is possible. It is the most urgent task of our times.

Ultimately, this analysis serves to remind us of the fragility of consumer society. Of the emptiness of consumerist lives. Angst essen Seele auf. Our systematic failure to address existential anxiety robs society of meaning and blinds us to the suffering of others; to persistent poverty; to the extinction of species; to the health of global ecosystems. The consumerist theodicy offers no answers to any of these challenges. And as the theologian Kenneth Surin has remarked:

“A theodicy is not worth heeding if it does not allow the screams of our society to be heard.” (Surin 1986, 52).

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Chapter 3

Creating commons

Resilient systems and cosmopolitan localism — The emerging scenario of the small, local, open and connected space

Ezio Manzini

Landscape of development

“The historical conditions which catapulted the idea (of sustainable development) into prominence have vanished: development has become out dated. But above all, the hopes and desires which made the idea fly, are now exhausted: development has grown obsolete.”

(Wolfgang Sachs, 1992)

I first came across the work of Wolfgang Sachs in these lines from his beautiful book “The Development Dictionary” (Sachs 1992). Since then, his thoughts on development and well-being have become one of the major reference points for my own work. Now, more than 20 years later, if we go back to that statement we can see that what he wrote is more true than ever. The image of development as “a ruin in the intellectual landscape” is no longer just the view of a particularly enlightened thinker but illustrates the tangible experience of a growing number of people on this planet.

In fact, 20 years ago, discussion of the catastrophic impact of multiple, interlinked crises (environmental, economic, and social) was still mainly driven by worried “visions of the future”: of what would have happened to our Planet 20 years later, if we did not change the way we lived and behaved. Now these dystopian visions are becoming our shared present: the crisis in mainstream economic models, with their associated systems of production and consumption, is clearly here to stay. The planetary boundaries have become tangible in people’s everyday lives, and green technologies are consequently becoming driving forces for both local policies and international competition. This process reveals not only their possibilities but also their limits. The implications of globalization and connectivity are becoming evident, and are affecting social, economic and political organizations at every scale.

However, something else has also been happening in these two decades, something that shows the positive side of this picture: a wave of social

innovation has begun to set free more and more social resources, such as networks of active and collaborative people, peer-to-peer organizations, diffused knowledge and skills.

The result is a dynamic picture in which the “old world” is transforming under pressure. How this transformation will proceed and what its final results will be is of course an open question. We know that economic and social crises can bring forth political monsters (as has happened at other moments in history), and that environmental problems can result in all kinds of disasters (as we have begun to learn). However, we also know that crises may take unexpected and even positive directions. In fact, something that offers hope is happening all around the world today: millions of people, driven by different combinations of wishes and needs, are starting to think and act in a new and sustainable way. Consciously or not, these people are laying the foundations for what is desperately needed in today’s uncertainty: a resilient, sustainable society.

Resilient systems in a risky society

Whatever else our future society will be, it will be a “risk society” (Beck 1992): a society likely to be affected by different kinds of traumatic events — from natural catastrophes, to war and terrorism, to financial and economic crises. The precondition for any conceivable sustainable society is resilience — its capacity to overcome the risks it will be exposed to and the stresses and breakdowns that will inevitably take place (Walker and Salt 2006). Today, the implications of this risk society are no longer only future projections. They are becoming evident all around the world in our daily life experiences and in the fragility of our socio-technical system. As a consequence, the notion of resilience has become part of the vocabulary of an increasing number of people and organizations. Resilience means the system’s capacity to cope with stress and local failures without collapsing. It urgently needs to be adopted onto the agendas of those concerned with the formulation and implementation of policy.

How do we design a resilient socio-technical system? Let’s look at natural systems. We can see that their tolerance of breakdown and their adaptation capacity, meaning their ability to withstand the test of time, may point a way forward (Fiksel 2003; Manzini 2012). Long-lasting natural systems result from a multiplicity of largely independent sub-systems and are based on a

variety of life strategies. In short, they are diverse and complex. These diversities and complexities are the basis of their resilience — their adaptability to changes in their environment. And it ought to be feasible to devise something similar for man-made systems. If we take this approach, these systems should be made up of a number of different interconnected elements, making them capable of adapting and lasting over time. Even if one or more of their components were to break, the whole system — given their number and diversity — should not collapse (Johansson/Kish/Mirata 2005).

How far are we from this complex, resilient, man-made system? In my view, this question has no single, simple answer: contemporary society demonstrates a contradictory dynamism that forces us, on this point as on many others, to describe what is happening as a double trend: a mainstream one, carried over from the last century, and a new, emerging one. The two trends coexist and compete. In this competition we can see, on one side, the big dinosaurs of the 20th century, promoting large production plants, hierarchical system architectures, process simplification and standardization. Their result is the reduction of biological and socio-technical diversity and a consequent increase in the overall fragility of the system. On the other side, we can see the small and connected creatures of the new emerging world moving in the opposite direction, towards light, flexible, context-related distributed systems.

Resilient distributed systems

In recent decades, a new generation of distributed systems (i.e. networks of different interconnected elements) has emerged, driven by the power of technological networks and by the enthusiasm of a growing number of people who try to adopt such systems wherever possible (Biggs/ Ryan/Wisman 2010). This trend emerged and spread in three [successive] waves of innovation.

The first of these waves of innovation occurred when the architecture of information systems shifted from the old hierarchical structure to new, networked ones (distributed intelligence). This was accompanied by radical changes in socio-technical organizations made possible by this structural shift. The result has been that, as new distributed forms of knowledge and decision-making have become more common, the rigid, vertical models that were dominant in industrialized society have started to melt into fluid, horizontal ones (von Hippel 2004; Bawens 2007). The success of this innovation has been such that today networked architecture is assumed to be a

“quasi-natural” state. Of course, this is not the case: before laptops and the Internet, information systems were based — consistent with the mainstream model at the time — on large mainframe computers and their consequently hierarchical — and therefore fragile — architecture.

The second wave of innovation has affected energy systems. Here, a cluster of converging innovations has emerged to offer a new perspective for the energy sector: small, highly efficient power plants, renewable energy systems and the “smart” grids that connect them have made it possible to move towards distributed solutions (distributed power generation). These solutions are challenging the as yet mainstream systems, with their large power plants and hierarchical (stupid and fragile) grids. They now constitute a major field of investment and competition as part of the strong, ongoing “green technology” trend. So it is reasonable to assume that these technologies will have a big impact on the whole system and that eventually the whole energy system will evolve along a similar trajectory to that of information systems, moving from a hierarchical architecture toward a distributed one (Pehnt et al. 2006).

The third wave of innovation toward distributed systems challenges the mainstream globalised production and consumption systems. The signals of this trend include a variety of initiatives, ranging from the rediscovery of traditional craftsmanship and local farming to the search for small-scale, high-tech, fabrication systems capable of supporting new forms of networked micro-factories, such as the ones proposed by *Fab Labs* and by the *makers movement*¹³.

Although this trend is still in its initial phase, we can see that it is following a new principle of localization. The trend will grow stronger and the whole production system will move in this direction — that of designing fabrication processes so that their products can be made as near as possible to where they will be used. In the spirit of distributed production, this principle can be implemented mixing different logics of design and fabrication ranging from those of traditional industry (e.g. creating networks of small-medium enterprises) to supporting a craftsmanship revival and the application of high-tech, miniaturised production systems. Similarly, there may be differing rationales driving these different logics. One of them can

¹³ *Fab Labs* are small-scale workshops offering personal digital fabrication; the makers movement is a subculture representing a technology-based extension of DIY culture.

be seen as an almost linear evolution of the lean production approach (a manufacturing model that has dominated industrial sector innovation for the last thirty years). In fact, distributed systems can be seen in general as the lightest and most flexible of fabrication systems, able to create products for specific clients not only when they are needed (customized and just-in-time production), but also where they are needed (or, at least, as near as possible to the place where they are needed): “point of use production”.

A further driver is the desire to optimise the benefits from the use of local, renewable resources. Given that these are, by definition, highly context-specific, it follows that their best use is also by definition very context-specific. In other words, renewable resources “naturally” call for local uses. What is new today is that local production plants can be intelligently connected, creating what we call distributed systems.

A third driver is a growing interest in “the quality of proximity and self-sufficiency”. That is, the value that a growing number of people recognize in local products: the search for “zero miles” food and the success of local microbreweries are well-known examples of this attitude (Petrini 2007; Petrini 2010). This philosophy is now being extended to encompass other crafts and small-scale industrial activities, driven by both the recognition of local qualities and a political choice to support local economies and/or local self-sufficiency (in food, energy, water, and products) in order to promote community resilience to external threats and problems (Thackara 2005; Hopkins 2009).

Social innovation and creative communities

Distributed systems are the result of complex, innovative processes in which technological components cannot be separated from social ones. While centralized systems can be developed without regard to the social fabric in which they will be implemented, this is impossible when the technological solution in question is a distributed one. In fact, the more a system is scattered and networked, the larger and more connected is its interface with society and the more the social aspects of innovation have to be considered. In other words, and with regard to our discussion here: distributed systems cannot be implemented, nor can resilient systems be realized, without social innovation.

But the good news is that social innovations are spreading all around the world (Mulgan 2006; Murray/Caulier-Grice/Mulgan 2010) and that the

emerging ways of living and producing they generate are largely convergent with the trend toward resilient distributed systems. In fact, in its complexity and with all its contradictions, contemporary society is incubating a growing number of experiments in new and more sustainable ways of living (Meroni 2007). For example, we are increasingly seeing groups of families sharing services to reduce economic and environmental costs while also improving their neighborhoods; new forms of social interchange and mutual help, such as time banks; systems of personal mobility offering alternatives to individual ownership and use of cars, such as car sharing, car pooling, and the rediscovery of bicycles; and the development of productive activities based on local resources and skills linked to wider global networks, e.g. products emblematic of a specific place, or the fair and direct trade networks between producers and consumers established around the globe. Because they are localized, small, connected and open to others' ideas, culture and physical presence, these promising social innovations actively contribute to the realization of resilient, distributed socio-technical systems. And vice versa: distributed socio-technical systems may become the enabling infrastructure of a society where these kinds of social innovations can flourish and spread (Manzini 2011).

Behind each of these promising social innovations there are groups of creative and entrepreneurial people who have invented, enhanced and managed them. We can call them creative communities: people who invent and enhance solutions to everyday life problems by recombining factors that already exist, giving them new functions and meaning and achieving results without waiting for wider changes in the system such as in the economy, in institutions or in large infrastructures.

These creative communities are challenging traditional ways of doing things and introducing behaviours that often demonstrate unprecedented capacities for bringing individual interests into line with social and environmental ones. In doing so, these communities generate not only solutions to their everyday life problems but also new ideas about society, production and well-being. They can therefore be seen as promising social experiments in line with the distributed systems we introduced in the previous paragraph: initiatives that, in linking the technical opportunities of distributed systems with the wider socio-cultural trends associated with local-global interactions, become practical examples of a new kind of globalization: *the cosmopolitan localism* described years ago by Wolfgang Sachs (Sachs 1992).

Cosmopolitan localism

Observing contemporary society leads us to conclude that the joint phenomena of globalization and networking have given a new meaning to the local. The expression 'local' now refers to something very different from what was meant in the past — the valley, the agricultural village, the small provincial town, all isolated and relatively closed within their own culture and economy. Indeed, the term local now combines the specific features of places and their communities with new phenomena generated and supported worldwide by globalization and by cultural, socio-economic interconnectivity. These phenomena are often characterised by extremely negative tendencies, ranging from traditionalist stances that support local interests (including different forms of fundamentalism) hidden behind the protecting veil of traditions and identity (Bauman 1998; Beck 2000) to turning what remains of traditions and landscapes into a show for tourist purposes. This is also called a 'Disneyfication' of the local (Bryman 2004).

But luckily the overall picture is healthier. Creative communities, driven by social innovation, are creating a variety of locality-oriented initiatives: from the rediscovery of neighbourhoods and local food and crafts to strategies to enhance the self-sufficiency of the local community. In other words, by inventing and enhancing new socio-cultural and economic activities, these creative communities are also generating a new sense of place and a new idea of locality.

The emerging cosmopolitan localism can therefore be seen as a creative balance between being rooted in a given place and community and being open to global flows of ideas, information, people, things and money (Appadurai 1990 and 2001). But the balance can be upset and can tip over either into a hermetic closure to the outside world or, on the other side, into an openness to outside influences that destroys the locally specific features of the social fabric. Nevertheless, when this balance is successfully achieved, it creates a new idea of place that, in my view, is truly contemporary: a place which is no longer an isolated entity, but which becomes a node in a variety of networks. Short networks generate and regenerate the local social and economic fabric at the same time as long ones connect that particular place and its resident community with the rest of the world.

Moreover, cosmopolitan localism produces a new model of well-being: a well-being in which a major role is played by the recognition of how much

socio-cultural and environmental contexts can contribute to people's quality of life and to the resilience of the overall society. The contexts I refer to may be a lively social fabric, a healthy environment, a beautiful landscape or, last but not least, the richness of diversity that the place can express. With regard to the value of natural and socio-cultural diversity, an observation by Wolfgang Sachs seems to me to be particularly meaningful: "After all it is only from places that variety crops up, because it is in places that people weave the present into their particular thread of history" (Sachs 1992).

In my view, the reason why cosmopolitan localism is becoming a viable project is because distributed systems have changed the meaning of "local" and "small". Thanks to them, in fact, we can say today that "the small is not small" and "the local is not local".

The small is not small

Small-scale is an important quality for cosmopolitan localism for two sets of reasons. Firstly, it enables the actors involved to understand and manage complex social-technical systems in an open and democratic way. Secondly, it enables individuals to carry out their activities, to fulfil their needs and to build their desirable futures from within organisations where human relationships remain lively and personal (see Taylor 1989).

Of course, writing about smallness immediately calls to mind E.F. Schumacher's book *Small is Beautiful* (Schumacher 1973). At the time, forty years ago, Schumacher advocated the small and local on cultural and ethical grounds as a reaction against the prevailing trend toward the large scale, toward standardization and the loss of a sense of place which he saw around him. Today, we can turn to Schumacher for the same reasons and for new reasons as well. However, at the same time, we have to recognize that in these four decades things have changed profoundly. What in Schumacher's day was only a utopia is today a concrete possibility being offered to us in the most positive and concrete way by the convergence between networked systems and creative communities us.

Forty years ago, the "small" that Schumacher referred to really was small. And being so small, it had little chance of influencing things on a large scale. Something similar can be said for his concept of "local": in Schumacher's day, the local was more or less isolated from other locals. It must be added that, at the time, technological and economic models driven by economy of

scale and the belief that “the bigger the better” still seemed to be in very good health., The prevailing thinking therefore discounted any possibility that, if economy and effectiveness were taken into account, the small could be both beautiful and at the same time viable.

Today the context is very different. Not only is the crisis of the dominant model evident at every level (in academic research as well as in everyday life experiences), but we can also see in practical terms that the small can be not only beautiful but also economically viable; that it can be influential on a large scale because of the fact that it acts as a node in a global network. In other words, our practical experience tells us that in a networked society the small is no longer small because small-scale organizations can together weave large distributed systems that point to a new concept of globalization: a global distributed system, which from a socio-cultural point of view becomes the cosmopolitan localism I introduced in the previous paragraph.

In my view, cosmopolitan localism based on distributed systems has several advantages over the globalization we have known until now. To put it in a nutshell, we can say that it is a globalization based on interconnected localities, where many important decisions are made locally by the people directly concerned, and more importantly, where for each step of the process of production and consumption, much of the decision-making, know-how and economic value remains in the hands, minds and pockets of the local community.

The emerging scenario and the need for new stories

Resilient systems and cosmopolitan localism are two sides of an emerging scenario. I will call it the SLOC scenario, where SLOC stands for Small, Local, Open, Connected. These four adjectives outline the main characteristics of this scenario. Individually, each one of these adjectives and its implications are easily understood, but together they generate a new vision of how a sustainable, networked society could take shape. In my view, this SLOC scenario could become a powerful social attractor, capable of triggering, catalysing and orienting a variety of social actors, innovative processes and design activities (Manzini 2010; Manzini 2011).

More precisely, on the basis of what I have introduced in the previous paragraphs, we can see that the SLOC scenario is neither a dream nor a prediction. It is a motivating vision of what the future could be if a large number

of social actors operated to reinforce and synergize existing trends (Manzini/Jégou/Meroni 2009). The SLOC scenario holds out the prospect of a possible future, but one which requires many converging efforts to become real.

In particular, the SLOC scenario calls for focussing and developing an array of themes outlining a possible applied research program. Some of its research questions are clear (and some answers have already been found). For instance: how to create favourable environments and develop collaborative platforms to trigger and support social innovation; how to promote traditional and high-tech craftsmanship within the framework of a network society; how to support a territorial ecology, i.e. the sustainable valorisation of the physical and social resources of a given place or region.

The full list of questions is even longer, but I would like to add a final one that seems to me crucial but little considered: if the present wave of social innovation is the early expression of a new civilization (and not merely a constellation of interesting, but limited, cases), what are its cultural foundations?

In our search for answers to these questions, Wolfgang Sachs' reflection on sufficiency offers fertile ground for further discussions and questions. For instance: how does the idea of well-being based on the sufficiency principle translate into positive everyday life experiences? What are the benefits people are looking for when moving in that direction?

We started answering these questions by looking again at the mounting wave of socio-technical innovations being driven by creative communities who are going beyond the invention of new organizational and economic models. They are also building a new set of (sustainable) guidelines for everyday life and proposing an idea of well-being that is totally coherent with the sufficiency principle. In fact they seem happy to reduce their consumption of goods and physical spaces because they compensate for that reduction with something else that they consider more valuable. This "something else" is made up of the multiple pleasures offered by their physical and social environments: the improved qualities of relationships and time; of places and scale; and of work. It is the mix of practical and cultural activities on which they build their own identity.

In my view these emerging qualities tell a beautiful story about sufficiency. The only problem is that their voice is still very soft; to understand what they are saying we must listen very, very carefully.

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Commons fallen nicht vom Himmel – Fünf Commons-Thesen¹⁴

Silke Helfrich

Jedes Commons ist sozial – oder: Über die Güterkrücke, die wir an den berühmten Nagel hängen sollten

Manch ein Gedanke brütet im Gehirn. Mitunter über Jahre. Plötzlich erschließt ihn jemand mit einem Satz, so dass er zu Ende gedacht werden kann. Wolfgang Sachs teilte vor etwa einem Jahrzehnt solch einen Schlüsselsatz mit uns. Gerade wurde das Abendessen in einem typisch, mexikanischen Hotel neben den weltberühmten Pyramiden von Teotihuacán serviert. Entnervt vom fruchtlosen Kreisen in eigenen Gedanken baten wir Wolfgang um Rat. Jörg Haas und mir war es in endlosen Zwiegesprächen nicht gelungen, den Kern der sogenannten Commons zu fassen. Worin genau bestand der Unterschied zwischen Gemeingütern (im Englischen »Common Goods«) und dem, was nur der englische Begriff Commons auszudrücken vermag?

„Commons“, so befand der von mir sehr geschätzte ‚deprofessionalisierte Intellektuelle‘ Gustavo Esteva aus Oaxaca, könne man am ehesten mit *espacios de comunalidad* ins Spanische übersetzen. Zu Deutsch etwa: „Räume der Gemeinschaftlichkeit“. Ein Gut als Raum? Ging es gar nicht um Güter? Wolfgang Sachs schlug eine Bresche in das Kreisen der Gedanken. „Man kann Gemeingüter nicht ohne Gemeinschaft denken“, gab er zu bedenken und schloss unsere Gedanken auf. Der Gemeinschaftsbegriff klebt an den Commons (und die al(ge)meinde an der Allmende) wie seither dieser Satz in meinem Kopf. Mir war ein Licht aufgegangen. Es geht tatsächlich nicht um Güter. Es geht um uns!

Nach Teotihuacán hatten wir eine Gruppe von mittelamerikanischen Agrarexpertinnen und -experten eingeladen, um gemeinsam über die Zukunft der Landwirtschaft nachzudenken. Auch auf diesem Treffen war die Rede von Gemeingütern (spanisch: *bienes comunes*). Damit bezeichnete man üblicherweise Dinge, die es zu teilen, zu schützen und zu behüten galt.

¹⁴ Dieser Artikel basiert auf einem (stark bearbeiteten) Text, der erstmals auf dem Blog commonsblog.com sowie in gekürzter Fassung im Oya Magazin (Mai 2013) erschienen ist.

Die Ökos, die besonders zahlreich um uns versammelt waren, verstanden darunter Wasser und Wald, Atmosphäre, Biodiversität und Saatgut. Kurz: unsere Lebensgrundlagen. Sehr oft habe ich in den folgenden Jahren genau diese Konzeption zum Ausgangspunkt der Gemeingutdefinition genommen: „Wasser ist Gemeingut“, sagte ich bisweilen. „Das ist Unsinn!“, sage ich heute. Wasser ist, was es ist. H₂O. Aber es wird zu dem, was wir daraus machen: Entweder Ware (Privatgut) oder öffentliches Gut oder Gemeingut. Es kommt darauf an, wie wir mit dem Wasser umgehen. Es geht nicht um die Güter. Es geht um uns und darum, wie wir uns zueinander in der Nutzung dieser Güter verhalten.

Auch ich habe also in den vergangenen Jahren die Commons filetiert, habe sie aufgeteilt in degoustierbare Häppchen, so dass sich jede/r das Passende herausgreifen kann. Die Wasseraktivisten das Wasser als Gemeingut. Die Menschenrechtsaktivisten die Menschenrechte als Gemeingut. Und die Softwareaktivisten die Software als Gemeingut. So lässt sich recht bequem in der je eigenen Community und im je eigenen, überschaubaren Aktivismus verharren. Der Commons-Debatte wird deshalb nicht ganz zu Unrecht vorgeworfen, sie glänze unrühmlich durch begriffliche Unschärfe und Beliebigkeit: Was früher als Recht oder als Öffentliches bezeichnet wurde, würde jetzt flugs Commons genannt. So würden Commons zur Kontaktsprache oder Neudeutsch: zum Buzzword.

Commons als Gut zu denken und darauf einzudampfen hat einen weiteren Nachteil: die Klassifizierung der Gemeingüter in „natürliche Gemeingüter“ einerseits und „kulturelle oder digitale Gemeingüter“ andererseits. (Es gibt weitere Kategorien, aber der Übersichtlichkeit halber belassen wir es bei diesen beiden, schließlich sind es die grundlegenden.) Diese Kategorisierung schafft Orientierung, doch sie trennt, was zusammen gehört. Selbstverständlich haben Wasser und Wissen unterschiedliche Eigenschaften. Wasser wird für den Einzelnen weniger, wenn wir es teilen (jeder bekommt tatsächlich nur einen Anteil und nicht das Ganze). Wissen hingegen wird mehr, wenn wir es teilen. Doch die essenziellen Fragen der Commons, nämlich: ‘Wie teilen wir fair und selbstbestimmt, wie bleiben Wasser und Wissen in sozialer Kontrolle? Wie behandeln (und reproduzieren) wir Wasser und Wissen als Commons und nicht als Waren?’ – diese Fragen sind für Wasser und Wissen die gleichen!

Im Laufe der Jahre verstand ich, warum Gustavo Esteva den Begriff der „Güter“ (bienes) vollkommen aus der spanischen Übersetzung von

Commons herausgehalten hatte. Es war ganz einfach: Zwar kreisen diese „Räume der Gemeinschaftlichkeit“ (Commons) um gemeinsam zu nutzende Dinge, die so unterschiedlich wie Wasser und Wissen sind, aber das Eigentliche tritt erst dann zum Vorschein, wenn wir uns (gedanklich) von den Dingen lösen. Der Commons-Begriff entfaltet erst dann seine emanzipatorische Kraft, die die verschiedenen Kulturen und Diskurse verbindet, wenn man Folgendes begreift: die Kategorisierung in natürliche, kulturelle, digitale und sonstige Gemeingüter ist eine Krücke, die wir aus Gewohnheit und Orientierungsliebe nutzen, weil wir bei Commons immer an Güter denken, statt an den Umgang miteinander.

Wir sollten diese Krücke an den berühmten Nagel hängen, damit das Gemeinsame offenbar wird: Gemeingüter sind ohne Gemeinschaften – ob es sich nun um Netzwerke, Gemeinden, Teams, Gruppen oder Wohngemeinschaften handelt – nicht denkbar. Der Fokus liegt auf dem „uns Gemeinen“, nicht auf den Gütern. Deshalb spreche ich heute nur noch von *Gemeingütern*, wenn ich tatsächlich jene Ressourcen bezeichne, die gemeinschaftlich genutzt werden oder werden sollten. Selbst der offenerere, englische Begriff Commons ist nicht ideal, denn das Eigentliche, das Gemeinsame ist ein „Verb und kein Substantiv“, wie der US-amerikanische Historiker Peter Linebaugh sagt. Daher ist auch in deutschen Texten immer häufiger von „Commoning“ die Rede – dem Gemeinschaffen. Denn jedes Commons ist ein sozialer Prozess – für oder gegen den wir uns aktiv entscheiden können. Anders gesagt: Commons fallen nicht vom Himmel. Sie sind nicht, sie werden gemacht.

Commons will etwas beschreiben, das Dinge, Akteure, Institutionen und Prinzipien zugleich umfasst. Dabei mögen Wasser oder Wissen im Zentrum stehen, entscheidend ist, ob wir wissen, es als Commons zu nutzen und zu reproduzieren. Denn jedes Commons ist ein Wissens-Commons. So wie jedes Commons einer materiellen Grundlage bedarf. Man kann sich das Ganze geschichtet vorstellen. Das Wissen klebt auf einer materiellen Schicht so wie die Ideen auf den Buchseiten oder die Programmierleistung des Softwareprogrammierers auf der von ihm verschlungenen Pizza.

Die Trennung in natürliche und kulturelle Commons ist demnach obsolet.

Commons-Institutionen sind schützende Hülle, aber nicht der Kern

Beides – Wissensproduktion und die konkrete Nutzung natürlicher Ressourcen – geschehen nicht im neutralen, machtfreien Raum. Sie sind sozial

definiert. Sie brauchen Regeln, Normen und Prinzipien, aber kein Dogma und kein Patentrezept. Die vielfältigen sozialen Prozesse, die mit dem Commons-Begriff verbunden sind, lassen sich nicht in eine institutionelle Form gießen. Institutionen wie wir sie kennen (lat. institutio, „Einrichtung, Erziehung, Anleitung“) sind schlicht Systeme von Regeln, die uns Rechte und Pflichten zuschreiben, um unser Handeln zu steuern und zu koordinieren. Sie sind Ausdrucksformen der jeweiligen gesellschaftlichen Verhältnisse, die sie zugleich sichern. Institutionen prägen uns oft bis ins Mark, so wie die Eigentumsrechte – eine Vielfalt von Institutionen, über die gern und intensiv gestritten wird. In diesem Streit stehen meist die Argumente für oder wider Gemeineigentum jenen für oder wider Individualeigentum gegenüber. Dabei ist, und das ist wichtig für die Commons-Debatte, der Unterschied zwischen Gemeineigentum und Individualeigentum nur graduell. „Der Unterschied zwischen Open-Access und definierten Eigentumsrechten (gleich ob Individual- oder Gemeineigentum – S.H.) hingegen ist [...] grundsätzlich.“, so der Ökonom Achim Lerch. Beide, Individualeigentum und Gemeineigentum sind privateigentümliche Institutionen. Der graduelle Unterschied besteht darin, dass beim Individualeigentum eine Person allein über eine Sache verfügt und somit alle anderen von den Entscheidungsprozessen ausschließt. Beim Gemeineigentum tun dies mehrere Personen. Doch Ausschluss gibt es grundsätzlich auch. Und dies führt zu einer Spannung zwischen dem grundsätzlich inklusiven Anspruch (niemand soll ausgeschlossen oder von seinen Lebens-Mitteln getrennt werden) und der Notwendigkeit, Grenzen zu ziehen, damit etwa endliche Ressourcen nicht übernutzt werden. Hier wird klar, dass nicht die Institution entscheidend ist, sondern die Prinzipien, die in diese Institution eingeschrieben sind.

Natürlich ist Individualeigentum dennoch anders eingespurt als Gemeineigentum. Der Individualeigentümer hat keine Störungen zu befürchten. Er/Sie muss sich nicht mit Anderen – den Miteigentümern – über die Zweckbestimmung und Nutzungsordnung des Eigentums auseinandersetzen. Was mit dem Verfügbaren geschieht muss nicht ausgehandelt werden. Insofern ist im Gemeineigentum eine andere Form der individuellen Entscheidungsbefugnis geborgen, die die individuelle Verantwortung für die Art der Herstellung und Nutzung gesellschaftlicher Potenziale immer wieder auf die Tagesordnung setzt. Doch dem Problem des „Ausschlusses“ entkommt das Gemeineigentum dennoch nicht.

Commons sind also nicht zu verwechseln mit einer bestimmten Eigentumsform. Sie sind, das hat Elinor Ostrom (1990) unmissverständlich klar gemacht, nicht dasselbe wie Gemeineigentum, auch wenn verschiedene Ausprägungen des Gemeineigentums in Commons häufig anzutreffen sind. Doch die Unterscheidung zwischen der Ebene der Ressourcen (in Ostromscher Nomenklatur *common pool resources*) und der Ebene der Eigentumsrechte (z.B. *common property*) im Unterschied zu dem komplexen sozialen System und Prozess (*commons*), war für sie immer elementar. Distinction matters! So wie Commons nicht mit einem spezifischen Eigentumsrecht gleichzusetzen sind, gibt es auch keine für Commoning prädestinierte allgemeine Organisationsform, woraus sich eine provokante These ableitet: Wir haben im Grunde die Möglichkeit, *nahezu jede Rechts- oder Organisationsform so zu nutzen, dass sie Commoning ermöglicht und fördert* sowie die darin gemeinsam genutzten Ressourcen reproduziert und schützt.

Eines meiner Lieblingsbeispiele um dies zu illustrieren ist – neben dem so genannten Copyleft – das Freiburger Mietshäusersyndikat. Das Syndikat hat eine langjährige Geschichte des Suchens und Anknüpfens an bestehende Institutionen hinter sich. Heute beschreibt die Wikipedia das Syndikat als:

„... in Deutschland singuläre, kooperativ und nicht-kommerziell organisierte Beteiligungsgesellschaft zum kapitalmarktunabhängigen Erwerb von Häusern, die selbstorganisiert in Gemeineigentum überführt werden, um bezahlbare Wohnungen und Raum für Initiativen zu schaffen. Im Jahr 2012 ist es an 65 Hausprojekten in Deutschland beteiligt.“ (Hervorhebung S.H.)

Entscheidend ist dabei nicht die Überführung in Gemeineigentum, sondern der Zweck dieser Überführung. Das Syndikat beteiligt sich an Projekten, damit sie dem Immobilienmarkt entzogen werden. Es schreibt in seine Vereinbarungen mit den sehr unterschiedlichen im Syndikat assoziierten Hausprojekten die Grundidee ein, Wohnraum nicht nur als Gemeingut zu organisieren, sondern diesen auch als solches zu erhalten; auch dann noch, wenn die Gründergeneration der jeweiligen Projekte nicht mehr ist. Die Beziehung des Syndikats zu den Projekten ist dabei als GmbH organisiert. Ganz profan also als Gesellschaft mit beschränkter Haftung. Denn beschränkt haftende Gesellschaften können Waffen produzieren oder Wohnraum teilen. Auf den Zweck kommt es an, nicht auf die Institutionsform. Im Kern steckt die Essenz, nicht in der Hülle.

Selbst Rechtsformen, die man fast ausschließlich mit dem globalen Kapitalismus verbindet – wie die Aktiengesellschaft – kann man „hacken“, und somit für Commoning nutzbar machen. Der „Übermorgenmacher“ Christian Hiß mit seiner in der Region Freiburg beheimateten Regionalwert AG (RWAG) bewegt sich in diese Richtung. Er fragte: Warum kann in einer Aktiengesellschaft nicht die Erhöhung der Bodenfruchtbarkeit oder die Sicherheit der Arbeitsplätze als „Dividende“ gelten? Heute ist die Regionalwert AG eine so genannte Bürgeraktiengesellschaft, die ihre Eigenständigkeit zu behaupten versteht. Die in ihr zusammengeschlossenen 15 Betriebe stehen für eine wirtschaftlich tragfähige und „sozial-ökologisch vertretbare Wertschöpfungskette vom Acker bis auf den Teller.“ (Regionalwert AG 2013)

In der Unternehmensstrategie steht die „sozialökologische Wertbildung“ gleichwertig neben der wirtschaftlichen Gewinnorientierung. Die BürgerAG hat daher Kriterien erarbeitet, um neben dem Gewinn auch „die geschaffene sozial-ökologische Wertschöpfung der beteiligten Unternehmen jährlich qualitativ bewerten und [...] den Aktionären als Rendite ausweisen“ zu können.

Solche Kriterien sind: die Verwendung ökologisch gezüchteter samenfester Sorten im Gemüse-, Obst- und Ackerbau, der aktive Aufbau der Fruchtbarkeit des Bodens und der Nutztiere, Energie und Dünger aus regionaler Herkunft, die Ausbildung junger Menschen, die Integration sozial Schwächerer durch geeignete Arbeitsplätze, die Vielfalt der Arbeitsaufgaben, die Erstellung einer sozial-ökologischen Jahresbilanz und vieles mehr. Natürlich ist die RWAG kein Commons, sondern zunächst mal ein Netzwerk von Betrieben, das sich am Markt behaupten muss. Aber das Beispiel zeigt, wie eine andere Denk- und Bewertungslogik in bereits existierende Rechtsformen Einzug halten kann.

Ähnlich hielt es auch Richard Matthew Stallman, ein begnadeter Programmierer und Gründer der Freien Software Bewegung, als er vor knapp 30 Jahren den Zweck des Copyright um 180 Grad drehte. Er machte aus dem Copyright das Copyleft. Stallmans Idee war, dass jeder Mensch die Freiheit genießen sollte, copyleft-lizenzierte Werke nach Belieben zu nutzen, an die eigenen Bedürfnisse anzupassen, mit anderen zu teilen und zu verändern. Wer dies aber tut und aus dem Genutzten Neues schöpft, muss das Neue wiederum „freigeben“. Wer aus der Allmende schöpft, muss in die Allmende zurückgeben, so das Prinzip dahinter. Das Copyleft sichert ab, dass Software

nicht nur als Commons genutzt werden kann, sondern auch als Commons (als praktischer Prozess der fortwährenden gemeinschaftlichen Produktion freier Inhalte) erhalten bleibt.

Doch Commons-Projekte, und das ist die schlechte Nachricht, können nicht einfach auf erfolgreiche existierende Organisations- und Rechtsformen zurückgreifen, geschweige denn sich auf sie verlassen. Sie können Ideen abkupfern (Kopieren ist ausdrücklich erwünscht!) und sich von den Erfahrungen anderer inspirieren lassen, aber sie können ihr Problem, ihre Idee oder ihr Projekt nicht in eine Modellform gießen und sich daraus die geeignete Institution backen. „Hacking institutions“ funktioniert nicht immer. Das macht die Commons-Debatte mitunter unübersichtlich. Und es erklärt, warum der meist wohlmeinende Hinweis auf Genossenschaften als prädestinierte Organisationsform für Commoning bisweilen ins Leere läuft. Schließlich stellt sich auch bei der Genossenschaft die Frage, ob tatsächlich Commons-Prinzipien in ihr aufgehoben sind oder nicht. Auch eine Genossenschaft kann zur Gewinnmaximierung einiger (in dem Falle der Genossenschaftsmitglieder) genutzt werden, so wie eine AG genutzt werden kann, um gemeinschaftlich zu produzieren und Gemeingüter zu schützen. Genossenschaft oder AG sind nur Hülle, entscheidend ist, was sie schützen und welchen Kern sie bergen.

Im Kern geht es um die Prinzipien, die in Commons verankert sein sollten, nennen wir sie korrekter *Prinzipien des Commoning*. Diese zu erkunden (und empirisch zu belegen) wird noch viel Arbeit sein, aber die Suchrichtung ist folgende: (grober) Konsens in Entscheidungen, indirekte Reziprozität, Plattformneutralität, Iteration und andere (s.u.). Der Grundgedanke ist, dass diese Prinzipien „aus sich heraus“ Nachhaltigkeit und Fairness erzeugen, so dass sich niemand über den Tisch gezogen fühlt und unsere Lebensgrundlagen auch morgen noch verfügbar sind. Deshalb sind gewissermaßen alle Commoners „Übermorgenmacher“. Doch das geschieht weder automatisch noch zwangsläufig. So ist beispielsweise nicht jedes Commonsprojekt nachhaltig im ökologischen Sinne ist (die Wikipedia beruht auf denselben Ressourcen- und Energie-verschlingenden Infrastrukturen wie Google), aber – anders als Projekte, die der Marktlogik unterworfen sind – hat jedes Commonsprojekt das Potential, nachhaltig zu werden.

Die Prinzipien: ein Aufschlag

Indirekte Reziprozität

Wer von einer Allmende nimmt, gibt etwas zurück und sorgt dafür, dass sie sich erneuern kann. Der Impuls des verantwortungsvollen Beitragens erwartet keine unmittelbare und qualitativ äquivalente Gegengabe; er schreibt einem Commoning-Prozess seine Gemeinwohlorientierung ein.

Selbstorganisation

Commoning entspringt dem konkreten Anliegen, etwas gemeinsam zu schaffen oder ein Problem gemeinsam zu lösen. Die Gruppe kann verteilte Verantwortlichkeiten zuweisen, aus denen sich aber keine Machtpositionen oder Dogmen entwickeln.

Vielfalt

Commoning bringt eine hohe Diversität an möglichen Formen der Organisation, Entscheidungsfindung und Eigentumsregelungen hervor. Entscheidend ist nicht die Form, sondern die gemeinwohlorientierte Zweckbestimmung einer Aktivität.

Schutz

Jedes gelungene Commoning entwickelt Wege, um das, was gemeinsam geschaffen wurde, vor Missbrauch und Wiederaneignung zu schützen.

Iteration

Robuste Lösungen für gemeinschaftliche Organisation finden sich am besten durch Ausprobieren, Fehlermachen, Reflektieren – und den nächsten Versuch.

Konsens

Das Konsensprinzip erfordert nicht, dass bei Abstimmungen alle »Ja« zu sagen haben. Vielmehr darf es keine Gegenstimmen geben. Dies bedingt die Bereitschaft, die eigene Meinung zurück- oder auf den Prüfstand zu stellen.

Ubuntu

Der aus der Bantu-Sprache stammende Begriff Ubuntu drückt aus, dass ich selbst nur aufgrund der Existenz anderer Lebewesen in der Welt bin. Diese Erkenntnis ist die Wurzel des für jedes Commoning notwendigen Vertrauens.

(Die Liste versteht sich als erste Annäherung.)

Commons brauchen Schutz: Jenseits von Open Access

Wasser ebenso wie Wissen als Commons zu denken bedeutet, niemandem prinzipiell (oder aus Verwertungsinteressen heraus) den Zugang zu Wasser und Wissen zu verwehren. Dieser Ansatz wird gern zu einem schlichten Gedanken verkürzt:

„Commons ist das, was allen gehört.“, worauf gebetsmühlenartig folgt:
„Was allen, also niemandem gehört, wird unweigerlich übernutzt.“

Auch hier half ein Satz, der in meinem Geiste haften blieb. Bernhard Pötter (2009) hatte in der *Monde Diplomatique* eine Rezension meines ersten deutschsprachigen Sammelbandes zum Thema „Wem gehört die Welt“ (2009) veröffentlicht. Sherwood Forest ist überall, so der Titel. Darin schrieb er:

„Für Hardin ist die Allmende ein Schlaraffenland das leergefressen wird. Für seine Kritiker eher ein gemeinsames Picknick, zu dem jeder was beiträgt und wo sich jeder in Maßen bedient.“

Pötter hatte treffend ins Bild gesetzt, dass Commons kein Niemandland sind, zu dem es immer *open access* (offenen Zugang) gibt und dass sich an Commons-Ressourcen nicht jeder – in perfekter Nichtkommunikation mit dem Gegenüber und ohne Rücksicht auf Verluste – nach Gutdünken bedient. Dabei hat genau diese Unterstellung, Commons seien gewissermaßen ein rechtsfreier Raum, da in niemandes Eigentum und jede/r labe sich an Milch und Honig solange es geht, zur Diskreditierung der Idee schlechthin beigetragen. Schlimmer noch – zu deren Nutzlosigkeitserklärung, Unsichtbarmachung und Zerschlagung. Und praktischerweise haben die Nutzlosigkeitserklärung und Unsichtbarmachung der Commons die Zerschlagung derselben legitimiert.

Doch Commons abstrakt mit *open access* gleichzusetzen greift ebenso zu kurz. Die Diskussion verlangt Konkretion: Freier Zugang wozu – zu Wasser oder Wissen? –, von wem und zu welchem Zweck? Vasilis Kostakis und Stelios Stavroulakis haben das weitverbreitete Phänomen, dass auch jene freien Zugang zu Commons haben, die die darin erzeugten Werte privatisieren und in ihre institutionellen, verwertungsorientierten Logiken einverleiben – Flaggschiff facebook – als Parodie der Commons bezeichnet, die letztlich dazu führe, dass mit der freiwilligen Arbeit der Vielen die Macht der Wenigen gesättigt wird (Kostakis/Stavroulakis 2013). Zudem hätten die freiwillig beitragenden Peer-Produzierenden oft keine Vorstellung davon, dass „seine/

ihre freiwilligen Beiträge zur Verlangsamung des Falls der Profitrate führen und dem Kapital die Möglichkeit bieten sich weiterzuentwickeln, mehr anzueignen, zu expandieren und zu wachsen.“ (ebd. S.418)

Open access ist also kein Axiom (kein Grundsatz); sondern lediglich eine (Zugangs-)Regel, die unter bestimmten Bedingungen Commons fördert und unter anderen nicht. Das ist ein entscheidender Unterschied. Die Debatte um und die Bestimmung von konkreten Zugangsregeln ist nur Erscheinungsform des Essenziellen und nicht das Essenzielle selbst. Essentiell ist die Frage, wie etwas als Commons erhalten bleibt, gepflegt und weiterentwickelt werden kann. Dafür ist prinzipiell jene Zugangsform richtig, die Commons als Commons schützt und Commoners vor weiterer Enteignung bewahrt. Zugangsrechte sind schließlich kein Selbstzweck. Aus Commons-perspektive müssen sie zum Beispiel bei rivalen Gütern (solchen, die weniger werden, wenn wir sie teilen wie das Wasser) prinzipiell begrenzt sein und bei nicht-rivalen Gütern (solchen, die mehr werden, wenn wir sie teilen wie das Wissen) prinzipiell offen. Nur dann sind sie auch geeignet, die Reproduktion und die soziale Kontrolle von Commons zu schützen. Darum geht es, wenn Elinor Ostrom (1990) in den Designprinzipien für gelingendes Gemeingütermanagement von „klaren Grenzen“ für den Zugang zu natürlichen Ressourcen spricht. Und gleichermaßen (nur mit umgekehrtem Vorzeichen), ist es das Kernanliegen eines wirklich freien/offenen Zugangs zu Wissen, Code und Information. Denn nur mit freiem Zugang zu Dingen, die mehr werden, wenn wir sie teilen, werden wir daraus das Beste für alle generieren.

Unser Leben basiert auf gemeinsam zu nutzenden Reichtümern und Räumen – den Gemeingütern. In jedwedem Wirtschaftssystem schöpfen wir aus ihnen. Die Herausforderung ist nun, aus diesen Gemeingütern Commons zu schaffen – zu gemeinschaften – und immer wieder selbstbestimmt für unser Leben nutzen zu können. Dafür brauchen wir Freiräume für Commons-Initiativen sowie Schutz für entsprechende Projekte, denn schutzlos sind sie inmitten einer marktfundamentalistischen Gesellschaft nicht überlebensfähig. Schließlich sind es nicht einfach „die Menschen“, die unbegrenzt nehmen bis alles kahlgefressen ist, es sind falsch gespürte Anreizsysteme und Gewinnmaximierungsideologien, die den Menschen dieses Handeln als „rational“ verkaufen und sie von der Mühsal gelingender und vertrauensvoller Sozialbeziehungen fern halten. Es geht also nicht (nur) um den Schutz der Ressourcen selbst, sondern um den Schutz unserer Freiheit zur Selbstorganisation und zum Commoning. Und es geht um die

Verteidigung des Gedankens, dass wir mehr sind als Kunden und wahlberechtigte Bürger: Wir sind Commoners, die kommunikativ und kooperativ ihre Potentiale entfalten – wenn man uns lässt.

Muster des Commoning sind Kristallisationskeime einer neuen Ökonomie

Dass gute Ideen epidemisch anstecken können ist bekannt. Doch kaum jemand glaubt, dass dies genügt, um unsere Produktionsweise (und mit ihr die Gesellschaft) umzukrempeln. *Ein* Grund dafür ist, dass unsere Gesellschaft durch und durch von oben nach unten oder von unten nach oben gedacht ist. Je nach Standpunkt. Fast jede Commons-Diskussion wird deshalb im Handumdrehen mit der Frage konfrontiert, wie das, was „im Kleinen funktioniert“, auf höhere Ebenen übertragen werden könne. Fachsprachlich ausgedrückt geht es um das „*upscaling*“. Manches Mal habe ich auf diese Frage – die gern als Totschlagargument benutzt wird – irritiert reagiert. Bis ich begriff, dass die Vorstellung des „*upscaling*“ selbst Ausdruck des Denkens in scheinbar unumstößlichen Hierarchien ist. Sie *kann* aus Commons-Perspektive gar nicht schlüssig beantwortet werden, denn die jeweiligen Denkschemata sind nicht passförmig.

Statt Formeln des „*upscaling*“ müsste die (im Entstehen begriffene) Commons-Bewegung die Prinzipien und Muster des Commoning analysieren (Nahrada 2012) und zeigen, dass sie sich in der Fläche entfalten – potentiell in die ganze Gesellschaft hinein. Nicht von oben nach unten oder von unten nach oben, sondern von Peer zu Peer. Von Netzwerkknoten zu Netzwerkknoten, denn Commons sind hochgradig vernetzt. Präziser: Sie müssten sie es sein. Einerseits, weil die in ihnen beteiligten Menschen und Ressourcen nicht nur an einem Commons, sondern an mehreren sowie sich überlappenden und gegenseitig beeinflussenden Prozessen beteiligt sind. Andererseits, weil erst diese Vernetzung (die uns über moderne Informations- und Kommunikationstechnologien so leicht gemacht wird wie nie zuvor in der Geschichte) im Stande ist, die bisherigen Schaltstellen der Macht zu unterlaufen. Vernetzung wiederum führt fast zwangsläufig zur Emergenz neuer Eigenschaften des ganzen Systems. Das heißt: Das Ganze entwickelt aufgrund des Zusammenspiels der einzelnen Komponenten Fähigkeiten, die den Komponenten noch nicht einmal anzusehen sind. Voraussetzung dafür, das weiß man seit biblischer Zeit, ist Kommunikation.

Bedeutet das nun, dass wir als aktiv Beteiligte, als „Komponenten des Systems Gesellschaft“ keinen Einfluss auf das haben, was künftig aus den unzähligen Commons-Initiativen und Gedanken entsteht? Heißt es, dass wir nur darauf warten müssen, dass ein zukunftsfähiges Gesellschaftssystem „emergiert“? Mitnichten!

Die durch Commoning geschaffenen Eigenschaften und Fähigkeiten eines Netzwerks, so die These des Neurobiologen Jacques Paysan, könnten „wie Kristallisationskeime in einem gesellschaftlichen Kristallgitter“ wirken. Zur Verfeinerung dieses Bildes lässt sich die Halbleitertechnologie bemühen. Dort werden die Eigenschaften eines Gittersystems maßgeblich durch einzelne Fremdatome verändert und mitbestimmt, mit denen man das System gezielt „dotiert“ (ausstattet). Für vernetzte Commoning-Prozesse gedacht: im Netzwerk strategisch platzierte Initiativen, die eine besonders hohe Innovationsstärke haben, können de facto das ganze Netzwerk stärken. Das System wächst, allerdings nicht nur von unten nach oben. Neuankömmlinge integrieren sich in existierende Organisationsformen – sofern das, was sie vorfinden, in ihnen Resonanz erzeugt. Dann beginnen sie diese Strukturen mitzugestalten und weiterzuentwickeln. Das gesamte System kann allmählich in alle Richtungen wachsen. Die innovativen Kristallisationskeime gehen zugleich im wachsenden Kristall auf, ohne einen neuen „Zentralisationspunkt“ zu bilden und ohne hierarchische Spuren zu hinterlassen.

Von der Commons Based Peer Production zur Commons Creating Peer Economy, vom Niemandsgut zum Commons

So würde auch die Ausweitung von Commons-Projekten beziehungsweise der Commons Basierten Peer Produktion zur Commons Creating Peer Economy (CCPE) vorstellbar. Denn, so fassen Kostakis und Stavroulakis den Stand der Dinge zusammen:

„Peer Produktion ist (derzeit – S.H.) ein sozialer Fortschritt im Kapitalismus mit verschiedenen post-kapitalistischen Aspekten, die Schutz, Verstärkung, Stimulierung und Verbindung mit fortschrittlichen sozialen Bewegungen [...] brauchen.“ (Kostakis/Stavroulakis 2013:413)

Sie beklagen die Vereinnahmung vieler Prozesse der Peer-Produktion im Sinne der Gewinnmaximierung. Und tatsächlich mag die freiwillige, vernetzte Ko-Produktion auf Augenhöhe (P2P) schneller und qualitativ besser

sein – doch das nützt wenig, wenn das gemeinsam Geschaffene letztlich von wenigen kontrolliert und angeeignet werden (kann), weil es nicht als Commons, sondern als Niemandsgut oder Ware produziert wurde.

Unter Commons Creating Peer Economy (CCPE) verstehe ich daher ein Wirtschaftssystem, das auf Commons aufbaut *und* vor allem Commons anstatt Waren oder Niemandsgüter re/produziert. CCPE kann und muss strukturell durch Protokolle, Infrastrukturen und freie Plattformen – nicht durch „eine Regierung“ – ermöglicht und unterstützt werden. Sie soll Menschen dazu befähigen und ermutigen, sich kontinuierlich auf eine nicht-exklusive Art und Weise zueinander in Beziehung zu setzen. Eine solche Ökonomie muss in erster Linie Vertrauen und Verbindlichkeit produzieren, nicht nur Tausch- und Handelbares. Das erfordert ein spezifisches Design des Produktionsprozesses selbst, so dass die Ressourcen, die wir teilen (Gemeinressourcen) bewahrt und erneuert werden (Nachhaltigkeit) und die Idee des Commoning in der Produktion selbst erfahrbar wird und immer wieder eingeübt werden kann.

Für die Economics and Commons Conference in Berlin im Mai 2013 habe ich mit meinem Kollegen David Bollier eine *vorläufige* und keineswegs vollständige Liste der Prinzipien von CCPE vorgeschlagen:

- Gebrauchswert geht vor Tauschwert. Wie nützlich ist etwas für unser tägliches Leben? vs. Können wir etwas verkaufen?
- Indirekte Reziprozität: Wer aus dem Commons nimmt, muss zum Commons beitragen, damit es bestehen und sich erneuern kann. Zeitpunkt und Quantität des Beitrags sind von Zeitpunkt und Quantität des Entnommenen entkoppelt.
- Selbstorganisation: Commons (als etwas konkret Nutzbares) entstehen aus konkreten Möglich- und Notwendigkeiten gemeinsam etwas zu gestalten oder gemeinsam ein Problem zu lösen. Die Gruppe/Gemeinschaft/das Netzwerk kann die Verantwortung für einzelne Aufgaben untereinander aufteilen, eine Gesamtkoordination aller Tätigkeiten ist vielfach nötig, aber die zahlreichen Interdependenzen in der Produktion erschweren Machtkonzentration.
- Freies Wissen und Wide Tech¹⁵: Das Grundprinzip ist: Teile was du kannst – an materiellen und nicht-materiellen Dingen. *Freies Wissen*

¹⁵ Im Gegensatz zur *Hightech* ‚weit und einfach zugänglich‘. Den Begriff nutze ich seit einem Gespräch mit Pat Mooney von der ETCGroup anlässlich des Weltsozialforums im März in Tunis.

bedeutet die Gewährleistung eines nicht diskriminierenden Zugang zu Wissen sowie das Recht Wissen, Information und Code zu teilen, so dass alle ihr Wissen und ihre Fähigkeiten einbringen können. Angestrebt wird die Nutzung freier, angepasster, modularer, vor Ort verfügbarer/verteilter und ressourcenschlanker Technologien.

- Schutz: Jede Gruppe/Gemeinschaft/jedes Netzwerk muss spezifische Wege finden, um den Missbrauch oder die Wiederaneignung der Dinge zu verhindern, die gemeinsam geschaffen, gepflegt oder entwickelt wurden, sowie die eigene Kultur und die (Produktions-) Praktiken schützen.
- Iteration: Prozesse der Gestaltung und Produktion von Commons kommen durch Versuch und Irrtum, Fehlerfreundlichkeit und permanente Reflexion zum Erfolg.

Ein Beispiel von Produktionsprozessen, die sich diesen Kriterien annähern bzw. ihnen entsprechen, ist das Open Source Ecology Projekt, das an einem so genannten Global Village Construction Set arbeitet und damit „Wide-Tech„ für ein marktunabhängigeres Leben produziert. Fünfzig Maschinen hat OSE identifiziert, die wir für ein Dach über dem Kopf, für die Mobilität, die landwirtschaftliche oder Güterproduktion gut brauchen können und die sie miteinander, unter Nutzung freier Webtools, mit offener Dokumentation für andere und vorwiegend für den eigenen Gebrauch sowie zum Nachbau herstellen. Vom Laser Cutter bis zum Traktor. Von der Ziegelpresse bis zum Brennofen. Ein anderes Projekt ist Cecosesola, ein solidarischer und hierarchiefreier Kooperativenverbund aus Venezuela, der schon so manchen politischen Sturm überlebt hat und insbesondere in der Lebensmittelproduktion und in der Gesundheitsfürsorge tätig ist. Cecosesola zeigt, wie das Instrumentarium hierarchischer Kontrolle ab- und Vertrauen aufgebaut werden kann – im großen Maßstab.

Commonspraxis sowie ein Haushalten, das Commons schafft, muss immer wieder neu gestaltet werden. Und wo eine Praxis ist, verbirgt sich auch eine Theorie. Das wäre – jenseits der Institutionen (die Ostrom beschrieb) – auch eine Theorie der Prinzipien nach denen Commons gestalt- und reproduzierbar sind, so dass sie in die ganze Gesellschaft hineinwirken.

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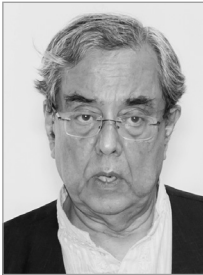
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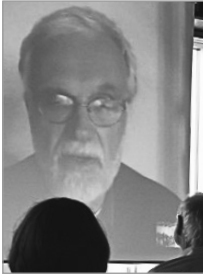
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Ezio Manzini joined the symposium via Skype

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