



QUEST
TO RESCUE
OUR FUTURE

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Food sovereignty

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(Read first chapters, including the definition of development in
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CHAPTER 9

FELLOWSHIP TO RESCUE OUR FUTURE

9.3 Development through survival sovereignties

Sovereignty is the materialization of development's requirement to guarantee an internal locus of command. It points to having command of one's destiny in freedom without domination, coercion or blackmail by an external agenda, either at the group, local or national level. We can translate development directly into enhancing command of destiny with a number of survival sovereignties in defense of autonomy, freedom and independence, until now blocked by imperial, colonial and neoliberal designs. That allows us to respond to envelopment by translating development into a practical agenda related to critical spheres of existence. Food, shelter, work, health, knowledge, information, communication, habitat and voice are inalienable evolutionary rights. Aware of the existence of other relevant areas for fostering development, let us focus on the following important survival sovereignties: (1) food, health and shelter sovereignty; (2) ecological and energy sovereignty; (3) educational and technological sovereignty; (4) communication and information sovereignty; (5) economic sovereignty; and (6) political sovereignty.

At the national level, the pursuit of these sovereignties is a direct response to global envelopment's strategy of producing remote-controlled trailer societies by co-opting their self-postulated elites, who kidnap people's fate and outsource control over the destiny of the community. The typical result of such a severing of the connection between production and context, and between consumption and culture, is countries that produce what they do not consume and consume what they do not produce.

Before embarking upon the elaboration of the survival sovereignties, it should be clear that seeking command of destiny is not the same as pursuing autarky, isolation, ethnocentrism or nationalism. Cooperation and solidarity at the global level are critical for all of humanity, which constitutes a single species. International trade may be highly beneficial, but only when imports complement rather

than substitute local endeavors and exports enhance rather than hamper development. Desert countries can surely pay with dates for rice imports from rainy lands, as long as exchange conditions are fair, just and respectful. With the caveat in mind that development at the local and the global level interconnect from a cosmopolitan perspective, we can now proceed to discuss the critical survival sovereignties of our age.

3.1 Food, health and shelter sovereignty

“The dignity and worth of the human person”, stressed in the preamble of the Charter of the United Nations, found its way to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which rules that everyone has the “right to life” and “the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care”.¹ These are not dead letters but part of the most authoritative ruling to date on the rights of humans.

Yet, such unambiguous principles did not make it to the human rights agenda of the powerful enveloping countries of the world. Stressing the right to food and basic economic and social rights would point the accusing finger of the majority of humanity to centuries of colonialism and economic domination by affluent countries that truncated the life chances of many societies, exploited their resources and, today more than ever, excel in global envelopment. Rather than reflecting moral principles, the strategic economic and political agendas of global powers are still dominating their human rights discourse, both from the right and the left.

Food to sustain life, basic health care for life security and shelter for physical protection, which are critical for survival and reproduction, are inalienable rights in the realm of development. A species that cannot feed its members tampers with its right to exist. Access to a minimum food basket and clean water are inalienable human

¹ Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on December 10, 1948, article 25

rights that profit-based commodification cannot eliminate by decree. No whim of elites, ruling of ideologies, legality of states, self-regulation of markets or international cartel of the rich can overrule or condition the moral obligation of communities and institutions to guarantee these rights.

Adding a price tag to the ability to survive physically or to escape death from curable diseases is an aberration that conflicts with the spirit of evolution. The idea that someone has to buy the right to live is unethical from a human perspective and unnatural from an evolutionary point of view. The existence of hungry people next to wasteful opulent elites constitutes an indictment against humanity that is hard to defend. One wonders why societies can offer free car access to millions of kilometers of highways, paved roads and bridges, while a billion people on Earth have no free lunch and go to bed hungry after a day of hard work or tedious unemployment.²

Maize and soya, as food for hungry stomachs, now have to compete with the car tank, as biofuels guarantee higher economic returns. As Oxfam has noted, “Recent evidence suggests that two-thirds of global land deals in the past 10 years have been intended to grow crops that can be used for biofuels, such as soy, sugarcane, palm oil and jatropha... The land acquired between 2000 and 2010 has the potential to feed a billion people.”³

A number of vexing questions rise. Why should humanity allow profit-obsessed corporate capital to appropriate or marginalize agricultural production processes that can provide the necessary means for a species to survive and thrive? Why should humanity tolerate the health hazard of fast-food chains that undermine food sovereignty with the imposition of unhealthy food habits that are foreign to local culture, detrimental for traditional and local production and harmful for public health? While food is the priority product that societies should provide locally, the four biggest fast-food chains have more than 100,000 stores around the world.

Subsidies for food production in rich countries and seed

² Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. Press Release 2009. See also Robert B. Zoellick, Director of the World Bank, Pursuing more growth in an uncertain world, *The Express Tribune*, September 18, 2010

³ Oxfam, *Our Lands, Our Lives. Oxfam Briefing Note*, October 2012

manipulation by global corporate giants for the sole purpose of enhancing profits at the expense of local farming have taken an alarming toll. Today's aggressive corporate appropriation of global food production and distribution constitutes an assault against the food sovereignty of poor countries and communities in the world by undermining their evolution-based local food culture. Corporate giants that feed on food invest billions in *terminator technology* that genetically modifies plants in order to produce sterile seeds, the so-called 'suicide seeds' that cannot germinate. This reduces farmers across the globe from self-supporting producers of crops to permanent consumers of seeds and peons of modern feudalism by global capital. 'Liberalization' of food production for the 'free' market has decimated and may soon destroy free farming. It has removed control over the food cycle from the hands of direct producers and consumers, undermining traditional farming techniques and adulterating longstanding cultural traditions and food habits for the sole purpose of serving the totem of 'free trade'.

All countries in the Amazon rain forest have substantial imports of bottled water, while on average every second the Amazon river pours some 209.000 cubic meters (55 million gallons) of fresh water produced by tropical rains into the Atlantic Ocean. In the meantime, the creeks and rivers of the Guianas, which in the language of the original peoples means *Land of Water*, deliver huge amounts of discarded plastic water containers to the sea.

Rather than serving parasitic moneymaking businesses, trade should represent meaningful, fair and mutually beneficial exchange between peoples. Sustainable organic local food production that a global market system is unable to monopolize constitutes a guarantor of feasible life options for humanity. Food should come in baskets, not in container ships.

The local management of food production using organic crops is ecologically friendlier than chemical-industrial agriculture for global distribution, which destroys farmers, affects the health of consumers and aggravates the ecological burden that humans place on the planet. It implies huge energy waste on the transportation of raw materials and back shipment of the final products over long sea routes.

Food sovereignty is an essential part of development. Its

absence creates severe dependence, particularly for poor countries that opt for a development route, as food boycotts can be a powerful instrument for political blackmail and economic strangulation by enveloping powers, to the extreme of starvation.

La Via Campesina, a global grassroots movement that brings together millions of peasants and landless people, has proved that practical development-prone initiatives for food sovereignty are possible. After its launch in 1993, La Via Campesina evolved into a broad international movement to stop neoliberalism's ravages in the food chain. La Via Campesina understands food sovereignty as "the right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through sustainable methods and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems".⁴ It gives "a country the right to protect its local producers from cheap imports and to control production. It ensures that the rights to use and manage lands, territories, water, seeds, livestock and biodiversity are in the hands of those who produce food and not of the corporate sector."⁵ This emblematic example, which gives a preview of the type of food production and distribution regime that humanity deserves, proves that development is not a mere utopia for the future, but a task in the here and now.

The lack of food sovereignty undermines health, which itself has become a marketable commodity, except in some exceptional communities and countries that protect it as a sacred ritual in the hands of tribal healers or as a human right with free access. Cynically, the pharmaceutical industry produces more medicines for the healthy than for the sick. In its urge for multi-billion profit, its push for massive and even inappropriate global use of antibiotics in humans and livestock has led to resistant bacteria that are undoing the wonderful discoveries that have saved millions of lives over the centuries, turning simple infections into untreatable hazards.

It is all about soaring profits, when tobacco companies lure people into smoking themselves into tumors, for which pharmaceutical companies will readily invent treatments with expensive patented drugs. In a similar vein, there seems to be no end to the proliferation

⁴ Via Campesina, <http://viacampesina.org/en/index.php/organisation-mainmenu-44>

⁵ Ibid.

by food giants and global food chains of harmful obesity-creating dietary habits that have skyrocketed medical costs. In 2009, as far as it could be traced, life and health insurance companies invested \$1.9 billion in five fast-food chains.⁶ This may surely incite researchers to check if, and how much, the pharmaceutical industry, which is more interested in sick than in healthy people, has invested in tobacco production.

The perspective of development requires the pursuit of food, health and shelter sovereignty as part of peoples' wellbeing and security, rather than to allow market considerations to outsource production that local potentiality can cover. Genuine global development initiatives should promote sovereignty in these realms, if necessary with the support of high duties or bans on imports of locally producible goods. The prohibition of the import of bottled water in the Amazon region is not a bad idea to start with. Many provisions of the World Trade Organization do exactly the opposite of enhancing food sovereignty by sacrificing food, health and shelter sovereignty to profit generation by global corporations.

Fluctuations and uncertainties due to climate deregulation, conflicts and wars make the lack of food sovereignty even more precarious, threatening hundreds of millions with famine. Potentially vulnerable countries now need to look beyond direct satisfaction of needs by creating buffers of strategic communitarian food reserves in such natural environments as lakes with fish, ponds for shrimps, sustainable local agriculture, healthy oceans and protected forests. The best guarantee for sovereignty in food, health and shelter is the de-commodification of those spheres of life and their de-monetization into inalienable assets of human dignity, removing them from the inventory of profit-generating commodities. The diagnosis is not difficult to make. Humanity is facing an irrevocable moral obligation toward its own kind. No ethical argument can justify food giants making trillions, while billions lack basic foodstuffs and tens of millions are starving.

⁶ Arun V. Mohan et al., Life and health insurance industry investments in fast food, *American Journal of Public Health*, April 15, 2010

3.2 Ecological and energy sovereignty

Planet Earth is not in existential danger. It can thrive with or without dinosaurs and humans. The so-called ecological crisis is nothing less than the fallout of humanity's objective of dominating nature. Much like pain, the planet warns us today against the disproportionately high burden that humanity is recklessly placing on its environment. This ecological assault has separated economic life from evolution.

Culture as the heart of social life is the body of responsive adaptive answers to the challenges of the environment in a route to survive and thrive. This makes the creation and maintenance of a livable, healthy, beautiful and respected environment, with an undisturbed capacity to continue humanity's evolution, a non-negotiable demand.

We are too close to the edge to have room for further concessions in extended negotiations about environmental protection, biodiversity and a viable future. Time is up to experiment with surrogate solutions that perpetuate envelopment at the local and global level. Parallel to global action, every country and community should stand up for its ecological security to guarantee a livable and healthy environment for its people for generations to come. Although the global ecological problem has no local remedy, repairing faults and removing threats at the local level can contribute significantly to its solution.

The starting point for harmony between economy and ecology is to learn to live with what is available, rather than with what one wants. The basic principle is to adapt to what the planet provides, instead of blaming nature for failing to offer more resources to satisfy outrageous demands. Humanity has deviated from nature's rule that physical growth stops at maturity, opting for a parasitic system of insatiable growth that leads to energy overuse, energy waste and energy abuse in a global market economy driven by profit generation rather than need satisfaction (see Chapter 7). Only a fraction of global energy use addresses need satisfaction. The rest serves greed satisfaction by inflating demand through the intentional reduction of product life expectancy and induced obsolescence, and by providing new styles, fashions and gadgets that discard products that are still in a perfect state.

The tenet that the level of energy use is an indicator of progress and development is a perversion that creates false aspirations, false 'development' strategies and false crises, such as the energy crisis. Alarming energy demand projections, under the logic of global envelopment, fall apart when recalculated from a development perspective, building on genuine human needs.

Earth's ecological health is in conflict with market fundamentalism, which requires permanent growth that outdoes the planet's repair capacity and fatally leads to eco-cataclysm. Insatiable energy hunger has already driven humanity to excessive demands for environmentally destructive mineral fuels, hazardous nuclear power plants and hydroelectric dams, which have destroyed numerous ecosystems.

Humanity does not need more energy. It needs the responsible rationalization of energy use, calibrated according to genuine human needs. Without targeting energy waste and abuse as a first step, the obsession to increase energy production with green sources is pointless. Clean energy is, obviously, recommendable over fossil fuels, but there is no point in producing huge volumes of alternative energy, when the biggest consumers are energy waste and energy abuse. No green solution exists for insatiable greed because no amount of energy can saturate the absurd demands of endless economic growth. Clean energy for a dirty system takes us further down. When economic activities primarily serve human needs instead of profit enhancement, the current use of fossil fuels will show a steep fall without affecting the level of human needs satisfaction. The biggest polluter is not need but greed, not human necessities but profit.

Since the growth of clean energy sources could not keep pace with the insatiable energy demands of global envelopment, the ecological impact has reached catastrophic levels. In its despair to maintain an unsustainable energy-devouring project, the dominant system even considers outrageous outlandish solutions that may turn out worse than the use of fossil fuels. Without previously considering the danger it can pose to our existence on Earth, some experts advocate solar geo-engineering by injecting sulfate aerosols high into the stratosphere to reflect a portion of sunlight back into space as a technique to reduce global warming. Measures to cool the planet

in this mechanical way without meticulous research and assessment of the impacts can be as thoughtless and dangerous as using icy showers as the solution for high fever.

It is impossible to gauge the impact of such extraterrestrial experiments, because they preclude any pilot project. Nobody has a clear idea where such a huge anthropocentric gamble of dimming the sun will take our planet. Poker-faced scientists tell us that the sky will become a little whiter and sunsets more dramatic, without having a clue of the possible impacts of such a risky interference with the energy allocation pattern of our solar system. Will the Amazon forest also become a little less green and less capable of managing its complex water and rain cycle? Who cares about the unease of sunflowers in the dimmed light? A world commanded by global envelopment will, then, definitely leave the door wide open for weather manipulation by solar geo-engineering aimed at creating favorable climatic and economic conditions in powerful countries at the expense of others. How long will it take to put regulations in place that forbid the reflection of heat in other countries? This may add ecological imperialism as a new scourge to the already unbearable human troubles of longstanding economic, political and cultural envelopment schemes.

Humanity should reject the false discourses building on quasi-scientific findings of part of Academia in support of abusive governments trying to co-opt social movements that are protesting the imminent ecological disruption that has become visible to the naked eye. In terms of ecological and energy sovereignty, humanity needs a radical transformation in its dealing with nature. The moral reserves of humanity will need to have a number of key action points high on their ecological agenda.

A first action point in resolving today's ecological crisis boils down to protecting Mother Earth's ecosystem from energy abuse that serves corporate profit rather than human necessity. It is worrisome that the recipe of the International Monetary Fund in times of severe crisis is to create more demand to prevent "the" economy from collapsing, which is tantamount to targeting the ecology to save the economy. One wonders whose economy is "the" economy, which can so readily target the environment.

Available advanced technology can triple the life expectancy of

commodities, from digital devices to automobiles, which would drastically reduce production volumes. Erstwhile durable consumer goods have become disposable products because, in case of malfunction, replacement is a better option than repair. A global standard of a guaranteed five-year life expectancy of all small digital devices would significantly drop production volumes, reduce energy waste and diminish today's ruthless pillaging of consumers' wallets. Centering necessary innovations and improvements in digital devices primarily on software and accessories rather than on hardware could prevent billions of functioning devices from landing each year prematurely in junkyards.

Unfortunately, we see the exact opposite. Quick shifts in fashion, lifestyle and hype, and the promotion of 'new' marketable products destroy the use value of products that are still in perfect condition. To achieve this, corporations squander trillions of dollars in the design, production and promotion of new marketable products that do not respond to real needs and another trillion in mass self-advertising that praises the virtues of their products, while systematically suppressing their flaws. Profit rather than need, as the persistent policy for the organization of humanity's economy, is an invitation to collapse.

As a second action point, a community should protect itself against the harmful acts of expansionist modernity and market fundamentalism by privileging context-based, energy-friendly and culture-related formulas. Culture, as the materialization of valid responses to survival challenges, represents achievements that have worked best over time to respond to environmental challenges and to serve the desire to thrive. A case in point is energy-friendly, traditional farming that has been more capable of securing continuity, sustainability and social reproduction of healthy foodstuffs than environmentally harmful modern industrial agriculture by global corporate giants.

As a third action point, a community needs to reject ecological prostitution by refusing to lend its territory for the dumping of toxic waste from other countries, including the shipment of used radioactive materials, against payment. Such purchases will backfire, in the end, by undermining public health, reducing production output and enhancing poverty. Conversely, when countries are responsible

for handling their own soaring levels of waste, they will be forced to opt for ecologically healthy production processes.

As a fourth action point, societies under economic hardships should refrain from slackening ecological regulations just to create a favorable investment climate to attract more foreign capital by offering them better prospects for profit generation. Capitulation to the pressure of giant corporations to waive necessary regulations can have severe ecological consequences for health, security, life and reproduction. Numerous examples of below-standard regulations on pollution and hazards prevention in poor countries, for the sake of profit enhancement, remind us of the dangers that transnational corporations can pose to life and property. The largest industrial disaster on record in Bhopal (India) comes to mind, where a poisonous gas escape in a Union Carbide plant killed thousands and injured half a million. A decade of warnings, previous security accidents and labor movement protests against environmentally dangerous conditions in the plant had been to no avail in curtailing the reckless, profit-driven corporate strategy. Below-standard ecological regulations and control are not limited to poor countries. The Chernobyl and Fukushima accidents vividly remind us of the high risks involved in capital investment in nuclear plants with a deficient security regime.

As a fifth action point, humanity should find a strategy for carbon emission reduction different from the commodification of carbon credits. The curious logic that we have the right to damage nature and that we can claim compensation for refraining from doing so has led to the proliferation of carbon credit trade by countries and companies that reduce their level of net pollution or do not make full use of their quota. This allows ecologically harmful corporations to overstep their responsibility by purchasing carbon credits at a fraction of the rehabilitation costs of the elimination of harmful production processes in their plants. Cynically, the neoliberal market economy legitimizes ecological destruction by transforming it into a profitable commodity and a bargaining chip.

As a sixth action point, rather than falling prey to stillborn global summits for system maintenance orchestrated by the governments of global powers, corporate capital and mainstream science, human-

ity should unmask their persistent reluctance to avert a life-threatening temperature rise and organize its own summits. Global warming is an artificial natural disaster, an oxymoron that finds its explanation in humanity itself becoming a natural disaster. Encompassing twenty years from Rio 1992 to Rio 2012 and onwards, frequent Earth summits have revealed that life-saving ecological action will not come from stakeholders within the system, who care more about corporate wealth than species-wide health and more about their economy than about our ecology.

The shared euphoria by presidents of the biggest polluting countries about the agreed framework at the global summit in Paris in 2015, an unenforceable optional document that does not reach beyond a statement on intentions, was no exception.⁷ More than two decades of inactivity and a rapid decline on a dangerous slope toward the abyss of no return made the meagre results of this global gathering more worrisome and irresponsible than the string of previous summits.

The most important feat of the summit in Paris was the non-binding intention of “holding the increase in the global average temperature to well below 2°C”. This would demand a level of carbon emissions in 2030 of 40 gigatons, beyond which damage could become irreversible. It is alarming that the agreement itself acknowledged that the “intended nationally determined contributions”, which each country had to decide for itself, added up to 55 gigatons for the target year, which is the equivalent of a catastrophic rise of 3°C. In fact, the real figure will be considerable higher, because it is unlikely that countries will comply with their expressed intentions. Such a self-refuting, voluntarist and toothless agreement without any sanction, amounts to a negotiated path to catastrophe. Instead of caring for the planet, the summit legitimized the dominant system that is accountable for our ecological quagmire.

The real environmental problem humanity is facing is imminent anthropogenic eco-cataclysm, which comprises a series of imbalances such as harm to biodiversity, the acidification of oceans, dangerous pollution of the habitat, deforestation, desertification, assault

⁷ United Nations, Framework Convention on Climate Change. Convention of the Parties, Twenty First Session, December 12, 2015

against marine life, global warming, smog hazards, severe health perils and the exacerbation of natural disasters such as hurricanes, heat waves, droughts and floods. One wonders why a global summit of all countries in the world concerned about the health of our planet left aside all those severe threats, just to single out global warming, even using the questionable term ‘climate change’. The climate does not stay the same over time. This makes climate change a normal natural phenomenon. The real pathology in the realm of climate that demands all our attention is disruptive anthropogenic global warming, as one of the expressions of an imminent eco-cataclysm.

Rather than the empty rhetoric of sustainable development in summits of the perpetrators and envelopers who lack the legitimacy to address the imminent eco-cataclysm, the time has arrived for a tribunal by the moral reserves of humanity to hold perpetrators accountable for their heinous ecological crimes. The moral reserves of humanity need to enter in a state of high alertness into a permanent session of monitoring, detecting and sanctioning ecological felonies as criminal assaults against life on Earth.

As a seventh action point, countries and companies that wittingly put the ecological stability of the planet and human survival in danger by their stubborn persistence in profit-based economic strategies, should be the object of severe sanctions. Forces that are destructive for the planet and endanger the existence of life on Earth should be denied the right to be a legitimate part of the human community. We need to honor, in the first place, the higher cause of humanity’s stay on Earth, beyond the private interests of states, big corporations and vested hierarchies. National integrity, territorial sovereignty and freedom of enterprise are subordinated to global survival. The unwillingness of countries and corporations to stop damaging our planet irreparably should have dire consequences for their abusive economic practices, no matter what it may take.

These seven key ecological actions – among many more – make the case for abandoning the catastrophic environmental pathology engendered by powerful entities that claim to be ‘too big to fail’. Far from a regressive act, such a drastic change of course represents a forward-looking sign of wisdom. The truly green solution is targeting energy waste and eliminating energy abuse at the service of a system of insatiable energy demand for profit enhancement.

This requires an end to the ecologically unsustainable policy of eternal growth, the lifeline of the modern market-based system, which constitutes a direct threat to our very existence. Our ability to thrive and survive depends on the big unknown of whether humanity will find a way to succeed in overthrowing the pathology of today's ecologically predatory system with a development model, or else succumb under its weight.

3.3 Educational and technological sovereignty

Social evolution builds on finding useful practical knowledge that enhances the ability to overcome challenges. Education is a critical institution for the transfer of useful insights to subsequent generations to secure social and cultural reproduction. But as much as education is crucial for development, under a regime of paralyzing envelopment it can easily become a key institution for mental enslavement and system maintenance.

Knowledge means power. This is the reason why projects of global envelopment make exceptional efforts to appropriate the educational sphere, from kindergarten protocols to international accreditation of universities, as part of a structure of dominance by self-proclaimed centers of excellence. Claims of superiority of the globally dominating system in the field of science and knowledge seldom have sounded as loud and clear as it did in the Magna Charta Universitatum, adopted in 1998 by the rectors of prestigious European Universities gathered in Bologna for the ninth centenary of the oldest university in Europe.

What immediately grabs attention in the Magna Charta Universitatum is a unilateral proclamation to the world stated in absolutist terms. "The undersigned Rectors of European universities proclaim to all States and to the conscience of all nations the fundamental principles which must, now and always, support the vocation of universities."⁸ Among its fundamental principles is "A university is the trustee of the European humanist tradition; its constant care is to

⁸ Magna Charta Universitatum, Observatory Magna Charta Universitatum, <http://www.magna-charta.org/>

attain universal knowledge; to fulfill its vocation it transcends geographical and political frontiers, and affirms the vital need for different cultures to know and influence each other.”⁹ The rectors of European universities committed themselves “to do everything in their power to encourage each State, as well as the supranational organizations concerned, to mould their policy sedulously on this Magna Charta”.¹⁰

It is difficult to understand how 802 universities from 85 countries around the world could sign such an overtly Eurocentric Bologna manifesto that proclaimed to the conscience of all nations that a university is *the* trustee of the European humanist tradition. This shows deep disregard for other experiences in search of knowledge and wisdom in the world and a denial of historical facts. On the list of Unesco’s world heritage sites appears the city Fez in Morocco, home to the oldest university, the University of Al Quaraouiyyine established in 859, which predates the University of Bologna more than two centuries.

The Magna Charta Universitatum revives the colonial logic of the civilizing mission and its ensuing project of global envelopment with its implicit claim that science is a unique achievement of the West, the locus of legitimization of knowledge. Under the pretext of “the vital need for different cultures to know and influence each other”,¹¹ more and more universities around the world have become part of strategies of subjugation, dependency and tutorship by ‘big sister’ institutions with asymmetric cooperation, scholarships, internships and, most of all, focused conditioned funding. Little has it to do with altruism, when – in the spirit of Magna Charta Universitatum’s goal to fulfill its vocation by transcending geographical and political frontiers – the one who pays the piper calls the tune.

Expanding free online education, offered to poor countries as cross-border programs by Ivy Leagues universities and other institutions of high prestige, has not been exempt of the dangers of direct, unfiltered, context-alien education that bypasses national and cultural goalsetting and monitoring by relevant local criteria. It is

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

similar to your neighbor educating your children without your consent. Pre-established yardsticks and profiles that fitted well in the concept of society, economy, ideology and culture of the facilitating university have become the global standards of science and peer review.

Knowledge as a source of power turns technological domination into the pillar of economic might. The most powerful postcolonial substitutes for an outdated traditional colonialism have been precisely control of science, legitimization of knowledge and technological domination. The dominant system in control of the market economy consolidated knowledge colonization with the appropriation and monopolization of 'new' technology and knowhow by means of a system of patent laws that has eliminated the millennia-old right to free use of publicly available information. It simply decreed that knowledge was tradable private property, which the owner could keep under monopolistic conditions for a sizeable period or sell on the market as a commodity.

The invention of patent law inaugurated the era of technological domination as a new mode of envelopment. By legally preventing others, even the weakest, from making use of existing knowledge and current production techniques, patents could hamper and even endanger their survival options. The huge impact of patents, along with the bizarre term 'intellectual property', which provided an effective institutional instrument to secure technological domination, makes it imperative to delve into the origins, objective and implications of patent law, since it became one of the main economic pillars of today's global envelopment.

Patent law is questionable on evolutionary, social and ethical grounds. As a troop of hungry gorillas stared clueless at a ripe bunch of bananas high in a fragile tree, one monkey maneuvered an old trunk under the tree, grabbed a long stick and stepped on the wood to drop some ripe bananas. Before reaching for the delicious fruits scattered on the ground, he severely warned the other monkeys "None of you is supposed to do this. This banana knowledge is my invention and my property." Only mentally enslaved humans buy such a fairy tale. Monkeys have a better understanding of how evolution works.

In the spirit of survival and development, members of a species

embark on a search for solutions to deal with challenges posed by nature and history. Even building on all previous knowledge makes finding clues for a solution difficult. Some die in daring efforts, which allow others to learn from their mistakes. The one who finally comes up with a feasible solution automatically invites the species to adopt the successful device and pass it on to posterity to enhance the survival chances of next generations. Patent law is a breach of this evolutionary principle and undermines development's requirement to mobilize inherent potentialities to enhance command of destiny. Just imagine someone appropriating an obvious life-saving solution to an existential challenge, which others would have found autonomously in their own evolutionary rhythm. This deprives others of the evolutionary right to look for natural solutions for challenges. Patents do just that. They block the natural right of people to find solutions, even to survival challenges, as the case of life-saving medicines reminds us. Indeed, the reigning system has even legalized patents on cures for life-threatening diseases, appropriating the life vest of sick people who cannot afford high-priced treatments, causing the death of millions from curable diseases.

Appropriation of knowledge is a relatively recent abuse, which started when early modernity challenged the longstanding principle that knowledge is a shared asset belonging to the common good. Some two centuries ago, an abrupt end came to the ancient vocation of wise men, sages, gurus, sadhus, philosophers and scientists to seal victory over ignorance by bringing practical knowledge – for which some of them even risked their lives – to the attention and disposition of all.

Patents do not stem from 'natural' laws, ethical principles, religious commands or imperatives of development. Patent law found its origin in capitalism appropriating technological knowledge, which had constituted the prime driver since the origin of our species, as a common support to survive and thrive. Soon, fierce competition in pursuit of patentable devices derailed the traditional joint synergetic search with mutually fertile endeavors into secret selfish research veiled in non-cooperation and isolation, which even debased and impoverished the scientific enterprise.

Patents have a relatively recent origin, with the first laws dating

back to 1790 in the United States in 1791 in France, after some rudimentary expressions that went back to the monopolistic privileges in Venice in 1474. It was only with the Paris Convention of 1883 that patents received international validity. Ha-Joon Chang mentions the laudable temporary exception of the Netherlands, which “abolished its 1817 patent law in 1869 on the ground that patents are politically-created monopolies inconsistent with its free-market principles – a position that seems to elude today’s free-market economists – and did not introduce another patent law until 1912”.¹²

Patents are the institutionalization of technological domination by appropriation of the creative products of the human mind. Outlawing patents will hugely serve humanity and enhance social equality. It will reduce much of the immoral wealth discrepancies in the world, which serve the elite to the detriment of the majority of our species. How much better would the fate of poor countries be if they could freely access all available knowledge and production techniques instead of paying royalties or exorbitant prices for products manufactured elsewhere under monopolistic regimes?

While the economic motive was the real ground for the commodification of knowledge in patent law, a sophisticated system of discourses rationalized patents as indispensable incentives for innovation, warranties of freedom and creativity, or rewards for intellectual work. This diverted attention from the real motives behind patent law, which in practice helped secure envelopment by technological domination, as a powerful instrument to undermine development by curtailing the free use of knowledge and technology.

As an outgrowth of extreme individualism and a negation of solidarity, patent law constitutes a strategic resource for system maintenance and capitalist expansionism under the aegis of global envelopment. Even more incongruous is corporations, rather than the actual inventors, owning the majority of patents.

History records that humanity successfully survived and thrived during tens of millennia without reducing knowledge to private property. The absence of patent laws never discouraged inventors – such as Leonardo da Vinci – and never stopped the extraordinary

¹² Ha-Joon Chang, Kicking away the ladder, *Post-Autistic Economics Review*, 15, September 4, 2002, article 3, http://www.btinternet.com/~pae_news/review/issue15

efforts of humans to find solutions to difficult problems. No patent prospect lured people into discovering the wheel, designing ships or elaborating agricultural techniques on mountainous slopes. Knowledge and technology have always been shared property for the common good of humanity to deal with multiple challenges and hardships. Even the argument that absence of patents will turn knowledge into production secrets does not hold, since one can reverse-engineer most commodities. When secrecy offers the permanent prospect of profit, as in the case of the recipe of Coca-Cola, businesses will discard a patent application anyway and opt for a timeless monopoly.

Patent law has nothing to do with fairness, morality, justice or the good of humanity, but actually undermines all of that by enhancing already grave inequalities. Patents find no support or justification in ethical principles or religious systems, which typically codify deep-rooted human values and principles of justice. None of the existing holy texts even hints at the idea of the private property of knowledge. They rather concur on their underlying adage to enlighten the neighbor: “Go tell it on the mountain.”¹³

Social evolution has inherent rhythms, which one cannot break without serious consequences. Patents are a major threat against the quintessence of sharing in evolution, because their rationale is to please the whims of dominating elites, while they undermine the needs of others to thrive and, in some cases, even their options to survive in interactive response to the environment. Patents constitute an institutionalized assault against solidarity, development, freedom, evolution and human dignity.

The appropriation of knowledge by patent law as a powerful envelopment vehicle seems to have no limits in the era of globalization. In 1995, the United States Patent and Trade Mark Office awarded a patent for a period of seventeen years on the human cell line of an indigenous person from the Hagahai tribe of Papua New Guinea.¹⁴ It took four years of protests by indigenous people around

¹³ This is the title of a famous negro spiritual in the USA from 1865.

¹⁴ US patent no. 5,397,696, awarded on March 14, 1995 with property rights until March 14, 2012. Described by Linda Tuhiwai Smith in *Decolonizing Methodologies. Research and Indigenous Peoples*. London, Zed Books, 1999, p. 100

the world against bio-colonialism and identity theft to have the patent officially reverted and eighteen years for the Supreme Court of Justice in the USA to rule that human genes cannot be patented because, as a product of nature, they cannot be claimed as a human invention.

The inconsistency of free market's appropriation of free technology is a major envelopment strategy to secure unequal competition and economic domination from traditional capitalism all the way to modern neoliberalism. A revealing historical similarity traces back to the use of similar monopolistic provisions to legalize theft in the open sea. Privateers received a letter of marque – *patente de corso* in Spanish – an official authorization by a state to attack ships and populations of 'enemy nations' and to confiscate their assets. In a similar vein, modern patents constitute the legal basis for confiscating the right to use knowledge from the public domain and to turn it into a monopolistic tool for production and profit.

Patents are monopolies, a fact that the advocates of intellectual property reject vehemently. Indeed, they are the purest of monopolies, since it gives the owner legal protection to decide the price of products arbitrarily and unilaterally without accountability or external control, and even without the corrective influence of demand. The pharmaceutical industry can sell patented medicines for life-threatening diseases at a price that bears no relation with real research costs, production factors and a fair profit, taking advantage of the willingness of people to pay whatever they can afford to safeguard health and even spend a fortune for an alternative to death. This allowed a pharmaceutical company in 2015 to purchase an AIDS drug and raise the price the next day with 5000%.¹⁵

An appropriation similar to patent law took place by restricting access to intellectual products that used to be free. It started with the British Statute of Anne of 1710, the first copyright act in the world, which initiated a long battle that the free market elites of the world finally won in the course of the twentieth century. Originally, copyright typically granted protection for a period of fourteen years, as was the case of the Constitution of the USA. Lack of uniform

¹⁵ Martin Shkreli announces turnaround on 5,000% price rise for drug, *The Guardian*, September 23, 2015

international rulings led to such extreme cases as perpetual copyright in Germany, Norway and Sweden, while other countries offered only the option for a single extension of the period of validity.

The Berne Convention of 1886, the first international agreement governing copyright, extended intellectual copyrights to fifty years after the owner's death, which has become the minimum term for copyright validity in the world. A lifetime plus fifty years can easily add up to depriving humanity of free access to the best information and to the dearest trophies of intellect for a full century.

Some countries offer a longer period of copyright protection. Copyright in the United States is valid for 70 years after the death of the author, or of the last surviving author of a joint publication, while Mexico has the longest copyright protection in the world that lasts until 100 years after the author's death. Curiously, the alleged rationale of 'rewarding' the intellectual work of the author even extends to hereditary rights of illiterate offspring.

The ravages of current copyright regulations as a virtual monopoly beyond the lifetimes of owners are devastating for development. The dominant envelopment system rules that poor students who have no other options to satiate their hunger for knowledge than by using rusty copiers or downloading digital files are pirates in breach of criminal law. Without the massive free use of licensed software, people from impoverished countries would have a hard time to keep track of the digital era. Today, information technology giants owning the computer and tablet market annually drain hundreds of billions of dollars from impoverished countries and poor sectors of societies with arbitrarily set prices for their hardware and software monopolies. The lack of free access to intellectual assets blocks education and undermines development among hundreds of millions who do not even have enough money for a minimum food basket.

Undoubtedly, intellectual work constitutes painstaking labor that deserves acknowledgement and fair compensation for the author's creativity and ingenuity, especially when it adds to the wellbeing and life enhancement of humanity. Writers, creators, artists and thinkers merit generous rewards for innovative work that serves humanity or contributes to its happiness. Yet, better solutions exist to honor and compensate their work in a fair and just way than thwart-

ing social evolution, humanity's wellbeing and its development aspirations by blocking free access to the products of the mind.

Knowledge is a cultural product. Culture is social by nature and not subject to appropriation. No single person is the full creator of new art or knowledge, because inventors are highly indebted to the community for their birth, enculturation, education, culture, language, transmitted knowledge and feedback. Most so-called new creations or inventions just add marginally to the existing body of insights in ongoing progress in search for practical knowledge, adapted technology and creation in art.

Instead of today's envelopment-based patent system, we need a new model to compensate intellectual workers in a fair way. One may think, for example, about a standard sliding scale up to a one-dollar price for downloading a book at one's own cost and time from a global library. If that would become the accepted general rule, it could increase the audience tenfold and allow a fairer reward to authors than the meagre royalties many receive today. This would globalize access to communication, catapult education and, at the same time, save trees and energy. Publishing houses and editors can then gain from quality assurance, desk editing, peer-reviewing, professional design and layout and book promotion, without forcing the creator to outsource her work to a low bidder.

With regard to development, it is not difficult to conceive of a tax-based international regulatory body to pay authors and creators their due reward for expanding humanity's access to information. A less warmongering United Nations could surely take on this role to redirect resources used for destructive purposes to the fields of health, education, life chances and the democratization of knowledge for all, including the billions below minimum living standards.

Educational and technological sovereignty addresses inalienable evolutionary rights that belong to the common good of humanity. This leaves no room for patent and copyright laws, which undermine development by appropriating the common good. The outrageous origin of patents, their deep embedment in envelopment and their blatant appropriation of what belongs to all leaves no room for compromises with 'pragmatic' solutions or piecemeal reforms like the shortening of patent duration.

The abolition of patents and a redefinition of copyright are imperative to advance educational and technological sovereignty. It should not be difficult to find a fair system of reward that matches the labor and efforts of inventors, creators, thinkers and authors, and honors their contribution to our social evolution, while at the same time offering humanity universal access to liberating knowledge and technological advancements. Patents, intellectual property and copyright constitute obstacles for humanity's reconnection with evolution and need to be outlawed in a project to rescue our future.

3.4 Communication and information sovereignty

We live in a misinformation age that manipulates humanity's views, opinions and attitudes through media of mass excommunication. A privatized free press allows corporate media giants and tycoons to control global mass communication with a legalized, monopolistic grip on transmission channels at the service of local and global envelopment. Their power to suppress information and create virtual realities constitutes a mighty system maintenance tool by overwriting facts with discourses in support and defense of the regime of truth of the dominant system. Mainstream mass media are the guardians of the dominant system to allow the reigning order to thrive with envelopment discourses in politics and economy, while marginalizing and even persecuting people who disseminate facts that matter for the community.

Freedom of expression is incompatible with the private ownership of communication channels. One may wonder why people who ferociously reject political dictatorship put up with information dictatorship that is just as harmful, with its tyrannical capacity to mold and control the mind to the extreme of mental slavery. Rather than the 'free press' being a sign of democracy, the appropriation of mass media by economic, political and ideological elites constitutes a deadly assault against democracy. Without a democratic press, there can be no democratic freedom.

Liberal democratic regimes have silenced people's voices by reducing freedom of speech to a free press, which capital has easily

dominated through powerful national and global monopolies that marginalized alternative voices. Equating freedom of expression to freedom of enterprise has led to equating corporate ownership of the media to corporate ownership of the message. The resulting commodification of information has turned press freedom into the legal appropriation of production and distribution of information, propaganda, advertising and entertainment. In our days, this has turned communication into a capital-intensive, profit-maximizing business, against which alternative media can hardly compete.

Such a dictatorship of the free press conflicts with the spirit and text of article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. “Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.”¹⁶ The appropriation and monopolistic control of effective channels of communication, which prevents the vast majority from hearing what the vast majority has to say, obstructs this fundamental right.

The lack of instruments for transmission to an audience leaves the voices of people dying in the air. Free speech on CNN is different from free speech in the desert. It rather recalls the welcoming message above a prison’s front gate, ‘You have no rights, except freedom of speech, since nobody will hear you.’ Free speech deprived of a transmission channel is speechless. This urges us to change the term ‘freedom of speech’ into ‘freedom of communication’, which includes both the right to speak and the right to an audience.

Main media outlets function as monopolistic corporate assets that are ready to defend the dominant system regardless of its injustices. Beyond mere propaganda bastions, they loyally echo official government positions rather than representing an inquisitive journalistic voice that takes into account the concerns of the majority of the people and principles of justice.

When channels of communication that actually succeed in reaching the mass of the people are under the control of institutions

¹⁶ Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on December 10, 1948

that support the dominant system, the free press becomes a powerful ideological instrument for system maintenance and even a compliant propaganda channel. This is particularly the case when neutrality of the media means that the official voice of envelopment is a source of unassailable authority. Control of communication by means of appropriating the powerful microphones, monopolizing the airwaves and monitoring the digital highways leads to an information dictatorship that is capable of disseminating ignorance and manipulating people into the canons of the reigning regime of truth.

International communications expert Cees Hamelink has raised an important dimension of the freedom of the press discussion by warning that unrestricted press freedom can severely escalate conflicts and have devastating consequences for peace, to the extreme of triggering war and genocide. Hamelink, who sees conflict as part of human life, advocates the modest but attainable peace mission to “direct our efforts to understanding and preventing conflicts from escalating into irreparable damage”,¹⁷ rather than investing our time and energies in futile efforts at prevention or resolution of deep-rooted historical conflicts within the contours of the reigning system. Hamelink proposes an International Media Alert System as an early warning instrument of the degree of media complicity in conflict escalation through creating unwarranted fear and agitation that depicts the other as a dangerous non-human who is bound to attack if he is not neutralized quickly.

Hamelink’s innovative proposal to break the sacred quarantine of press freedom by submitting it to ethical scrutiny through a critical examination of media’s responsibility in conflict escalation triggers further reflections on the general ideological role of media outlets at the service of envelopment. In the light of mainstream media’s ideological support of legitimizing global envelopment’s agenda, the responsibility, accountability and complicity of global media in humanity’s imminent downfall come to the fore as a wider ethical problem.

Corporate media’s sophisticated role in absolving the status quo of envelopment forms part of a broader policy of erasing the real

¹⁷ Cees Hamelink, *Media and Conflict. Escalating Evil*. London, Paradigm Publishers, 2011

culprit by *exoneration of the perpetrator*. This forms part of a strategy to divert accountability for injustice, social ills and ensuing crises toward ungraspable, amorphous forces that nobody can identify, let alone control or target. As the real culprits disappear from sight, cynically, the system of envelopment itself tends to claim to be a victim of unfathomable forces.

The history of envelopment is replete with media discourses of exoneration of the perpetrator, including some widely supported tenets that set the culprits free. An example is the narrative that liberal democracy itself is good, but, unfortunately, it falls prey to human selfishness and the lust for power of a small group of bad people. In reality, liberal democracy is a structurally biased and flawed system of appropriation of power and outsourcing of rule.

On another note, media depict international capitalism and the corporate system as a force that transcends the responsibility of individual actors, the state and even international pacts. In reality, no amorphous capitalism constitutes the cause of our economic troubles, but powerful economic centers of globalized capital rule so-called international capitalism, which is accountable for global injustice and poverty.

A third example of mainstream media's system support is their blind acceptance of the invisible hand that rules economic life through the self-regulating market. The alleged self-regulating corporate world feeds on the state with bailouts of a system that has failed fatally, while corruption is just an endemic pathology of envelopment systems. One wonders why media that are so obsessed by verifiable 'facts' readily accept the mythological belief in an invisible hand that rules economic life.

The result of the strategy of exoneration of the perpetrator is that nobody, and definitely not the dominant system, is at fault or accountable, since an ungraspable, amorphous force stands at the root of the problem. Such a strategy, which reminds us of the many variants of determinism, divert the attention from the real culprit, which is the envelopment system, and leaves social action for a better world in limbo, without an identifiable target and a motivating cause.

More directly, the field of mass communication exonerates the perpetrator by its policy of underreporting genocidal conflicts and

turning a blind eye to illegal imperial wars, even they are justified by fabricated lies and traceable misinformation. Mainstream media's 'neutrality' and tolerance in the heydays of the illegal Vietnam and Iraq wars immediately comes to mind when one recalls the millions of forgotten dead, who should have merited Nuremberg-like tribunals for the perpetrators. Rather, they allowed the defendant to become the plaintiff.

The assumption that prestigious media and their journalists generally respect ethical standards, which prevents them from wittingly reproducing false information, is naïve. The corporate media tycoons who manage the powerful media outlets hardly differ from the tycoons of other corporate branches. Beyond mere system maintenance, mainstream mass media have typically been the means for envelopment, expansionism and militarism, and the agents inciting wars that served private agendas. Historically, the mass media – the crown jewel of the civilizing mission – have typically supported and defended colonial and imperial designs and the superiority claims of the dominant global model. Today, corporate media constitute an ideological and political arm of system maintenance and one of the main instruments of mental enslavement, while online media moguls function as the global advertising agent for a predatory market fundamentalism and readily embrace all-encompassing mass surveillance.

Global media talk for you, think for you, digest for you, manipulate your mind, your mood and your action, and even control your imagination. They may also serve as undercover political organizations specialized in selecting, manipulating and creating information in a truth-fabricating ideological project aimed at induced consent. A candid confession of this political role has been 'embedded journalism' in the second Iraq war, where high-profile reporters traveled to war zones under army protection to report on a war where losing the battle could mean losing their lives. It does not make it easy for the enemy to decide whether such battle-dressed journalists crossing into war zones in armored vehicles are civilians, enemy troops or information drones. But such journalism was nothing new and only made explicit what has been the nature of mainstream mass media on both sides of the main ideological divide, which in a systematic way have been embedded media serving system maintenance.

Malcolm X warned against the huge manipulation capacity of mass media. “If you’re not careful, the newspapers will have you hating the people who are being oppressed, and loving the people who are doing the oppressing.” In Latin America, this capacity of the privatized ‘free press’ to decide what 99% reads, sees and hears gained the label of *latifundismo mediático*, media landlordism. The media landlords did not hesitate to join the agro-industrial landlords in their support of military coups and the repression of liberation movements.

Mainstream media do exactly the same at the global level. In 1997, retired US Army expert on future warfare Ralph Peters put matters bluntly. “Information is at once our core commodity and the most destabilizing factor of our time. Until now, history has been a quest to acquire information; today, the challenge lies in managing information.”¹⁸ This augured difficult times. “One of the defining bifurcations of the future will be the conflict between information masters and information victims”,¹⁹ a conflict that will easily pave the way for war. “The de facto role of the US armed forces will be to keep the world safe for our economy and open to our cultural assault. To those ends, we will do a fair amount of killing.”²⁰

Communication giants support the system by repeating the message that no alternative exists for the spiteful version of the world into which we were born. These global agents of domination of the mind disempower people into inactivity and apathy by postulating that corruption, envelopment, injustice, war and tyranny by the wealthy are inevitable vices that constitute the natural conditions of human existence rather than anomalies from the perspective of evolutionary progress.

The information battle goes to the heart of the system of envelopment, which has upgraded its media strategy against dissidence from a reactive to a preemptive strategy, from a tool for brainwashing to a tool for assertive mass surveillance. Today’s communications technology monitors and registers almost everything we do,

¹⁸ Ralph Peters, Constant conflict. *Parameters*, Summer 1997, pp. 4–14. *US Army War College Quarterly*, 1997

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

and reads us more carefully than we read media. “We do not own the media; the media own us”, as law professor Eblen Moglen put it.²¹

The only free press in the corporations-dominated ‘Free World’ seems to be graffiti. Fortunately, on the virtual wall of the internet, graffiti can reach an unexpectedly large audience, which explains the desperate surveillance attempts of the dominant system to control, colonize and illegally monitor the digital space to silence independent thought and communication – to ban globalized graffiti, as it were. The system of global envelopment will do whatever it may take to dominate the internet, because losing the battle for communication is losing its core pillar of support.

Genuine free speech comes with democratization of the media, which offers a channel to people who have something important to share with their community and fellow humans. This is the opposite of today’s instrumental reduction of media to the economic, political, religious, ideological and cultural private property of elites. Ninety-nine percent of humanity keeps listening to the preferred tales of the 1% that holds 99% of power and wealth. This exiles the authentic voice of the people to a message in a bottle thrown into the open sea for a hypothetical audience of future generations, who may wonder why their forebears did not just publish it in the free press they enjoyed.

Part of the strategy to reach information sovereignty is listening less to what the corporate global media offer, and if possible not listening or viewing at all, in order to block access to our minds of their envelopment discourses aimed at justifying the perpetual reign of global envelopment. Losing the audience is losing the battle for control of the minds, which undercuts the discursive power of the status quo and opens the path to information sovereignty. Blocking the bombardment of fabricated messages endows us with the silence to listen to our own heartbeat as its echoes through alternative channels that we can construct to communicate with the souls of our fellow humans.

Free speech inserted in an uncensored democratic press is the

²¹ Eblen Moglen in video presentation on the internet in 2012

voice of participation and a pillar of development. The tough information and communication challenge ahead is to establish democratic mass media on a national and global scale, transcending existing traditional envelopment media by creating autonomous and independent channels of communication and publishing houses at the service of development.

Humanity now counts on the enormous power of the digital era, which it should defend at all costs, to establish direct alternative information channels to regain command of its destiny. This can remove the power of the mass media to hijack the communication channels between people and give us back our unfiltered communitarian force and social response capacity to act from the perspective of development. Freedom of thought, safe from mass surveillance and mind enslavement, lies at the center of communication and information sovereignty, as a critical condition for emancipation from mental slavery.

3.5 Economic sovereignty

Economic life, which provides the conditions to survive and thrive, constitutes the heartbeat of the social evolution of humanity. Processes of producing, sharing, exchanging and distributing foodstuffs, goods and services stand at the core of life and development. They comprise the body of activities that our species undertakes to respond to environmental challenges to secure survival and enhance comfort and happiness.

In a negative envelopment expression of all those activities, the economy has fallen prey to appropriation, piracy, theft, submission to labor slavery, and wealth amassment of small groups at the expense of the life chances of others. This complicated the fate of humanity and the cause of justice enormously over the years. The extreme expression of such a derailment is the so-called modern *casino capitalism*, which in fact is modern usury, practicing monetary speculation, financial machination and stock market manipulation in a bazaar economy that evolves around frantic selling and buying. Such a pathological economic system that reduces the lifeline of evolution to private money-making has become a general predatory practice

at the service of local and global envelopment. While money has become a powerful tool in economic life, in itself it is not an indispensable part of the economy but rather constitutes a lubricant for economic transactions for wealth amassment.

“The worship of the ancient golden calf has returned in a new and ruthless guise in the idolatry of money and the dictatorship of an impersonal economy lacking a truly human purpose.”²² These words of Pope Francis neatly express the need for the rehumanization of the economic realm by restoring the social role of production and distribution. The tyranny of the golden calf, *moneytheism*, rules the world today. Indeed, it rules without a truly human purpose. Rather than a vehicle for progress and liberation, money lays at the heart of contemporary devastating envelopment.

As the supreme goal in life and the ultimate aspiration for many, it has become the measure for everything. In the perspective of moneytheism, the only merit and significance of nature is its monetary value. Even time has become money.

Money rules and destroys in a way that even transcends the capitalist system. Capitalism – not to be confused with capital – has never been the predominant system in any country or age. As we elaborated before (see Chapter 7), rather than capitalist appropriation of surplus value, accumulation by dispossession has always been the most important source of amassment of wealth. This is the reason global envelopment has not been the reign of capitalism but the dictatorship of money.

Economic sovereignty offers a response to the widespread anomaly of the tyranny of money that disconnects economy from society. Simple abidance of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights would actually demonetize key realms of humanity’s social organization and undermine the abusive power of money. Article 25 of the Declaration prescribes in unequivocal terms that, “Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services.” If those spheres are well attended, one needs little money to survive. Free education, free

²² Pope Francis, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, The Vatican, 2013

basic food, free health care, free housing, free transport, along with free utilities, undermine the power of money, since it could allow people to leave their house without having a wallet with them. The more money can buy, the bigger the tyranny of money will be. This explains why market fundamentalism has always been so adamant in privatizing state institutions that take care of basic needs. Monetization of human society has been a core instrument of global envelopment.

Neoliberal privatization is a double-edged sword that appropriates the common good and boosts the tyranny of moneytheism. Money is a source of poverty. Poor bees do not exist in a hive, because they have no money that make them poor and no banks to kidnap the wealth of their community. Life should be all-inclusive, like some big hotels. In a world where the majority is poor and many others have severe problems to make ends meet, an important condition to end the tyranny of money is economic sovereignty.

This poses the difficult challenge of overcoming the two pathological economic systems that have ruled the planet in the last centuries, based on generating profit for private free-market entities or to strengthen the centralized state. Rather than capitalism, the first one was lumpen-capitalism, whose primary source of wealth has been accumulation by dispossession instead of the appropriation of the surplus value in the capitalist cycle (see Chapter 7, section 2.3.2). The second was lumpen-communism, whose prime route to abolish the state was, paradoxically, the building of a strong, repressive state (see Chapter 7, sections 2.1 and 2.2). Economic sovereignty is an important step to escape the ruins that these two devastating systems of envelopment have left behind.

3.6 Political sovereignty

Politics is the locus of decision-making that affects the course of events and the fate of a group through active intervention, either for keeping realities in place or for modifying existing situations. The first requirement for political control is the possession of power to enforce decisions effectively, which the holder of authority can use for the good or the bad.

From the perspective of development, the key determinant of the health of a political system is the degree to which people have control over their destiny. The locus of command of power can be anywhere on a continuum from the community, which corresponds to development, to a vanguard, which represents envelopment.

At the extreme of envelopment, elites seize positions of authority through unilateral appropriation of power or through delegation of power in elections. In both cases, the result is people outsourcing their power to vanguards, which constitutes the main mechanism for preventing people's voice to decide people's choice. At the other end, development requires direct participation of the community in the realm of securing the mobilization of people's inherent potentialities, which prevents a divorce between decision-making and the pursuit of general interests.

Since the early twentieth century, two opposing political systems, capitalism and communism, along with their in-betweens, have characterized the social and political landscape of most societies. Each claims to be the best real alternative for rule, but in reality both display a structural democratic deficit. When the capitalist freedom discourse included people's legitimizing vote in the conquest of power but excluded most in the execution of rule, it did not differ much from the communist equality discourse of engaging people in the execution of rule but excluding them in the conquest of power. Elections-based liberal democracy and class-based democratic centralism were actually different modalities of the appropriation of power by an envelopment regime. The main objective of those forms of pseudo-democracy was to provide an institution to legitimize hijacked power (see Chapter 7, section 2).

From the perspective of development, capitalism, communism and their in-betweens are all systems of envelopment that disregard the essential characteristic of people's command of their fate. With the demise of communism, some misread the new reality as the zenith of the democratic constitution of power under capitalist rule. But, in reality, only a fraction of power is up for grabs in 'democratic' elections, which exempts the most strategic spheres of power from people's control by pre-distributing the realms of economic, military, scientific, technological, cultural, communicational and religious powers among the elites (see Chapter 8).

Not even the part of power reserved for periodical electoral processes is safe from interference from the economic, political and military complex. The “power elite”, as Wright Mills had rightly identified this elite cartel, still holds the reins firmly in our days (see Chapter 8, section 3.4)²³ to the extreme that money and lobbies make and break a president.

A glance at the political history of the last century offers a clear illustration of the responses of the left and the right in the political process. At one extreme, the neurotic Stalinist defense against powerful national and international counter-revolutionary enemies, which tried to undo the social achievements of the revolution, turned Soviet communism into a defensive totalitarian regime, which at the same time targeted any dissidence, popular response and democratic movement that could endanger the ‘correct’ ideological Party line. At the other end, the devastating global impact of neoliberal capitalism, in terms of poverty, extreme inequality, ecological destruction and the trillion-dollar bailouts of the wealthy, put an end to the myth that democracy was a constituent part of the capitalist system.

Capitalism and communism, each in its own way, sacrificed democracy on the altars of greed and ideology. The electoral hijacking of power by liberal democracy and the revolutionary takeover by an enlightened ideological vanguard in communist rule shared the same claim of serving the aspirations of society, while both marginalized the people by subjecting them to their truth. Irrespectively of whether well-intentioned paternalism or outright usurpation of power lays at its root, the idea of a vanguard deciding what is good for all drives society into the realm of envelopment.

In their struggle to survive in times of severe crises, both at the national and global levels, envelopment regimes from left and right did not hesitate to redefine their own rules of the game, including the paradoxes of delegitimizing democratic movements and of overthrowing democratically elected governments for the sake of ‘democracy’. The champions of the two opposing systems of govern-

²³ C. Wright Mills, *The Power Elite*. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1956

ance, the United States and the Soviet Union, have an appalling record of extreme repression, coups, invasions and wars for regime change in hundreds of military interventions against popular movements and democratic governments. The same justification of the defense of democracy has sounded over time in different tastes, whether it was the democracy of 'the free world' or the 'democratic centralism' of revolutionary governments.

At the global level, the fate of democracy has been no different, even more so today when the rise of free market communism in China has blurred the separation between capitalism and communism. Today, powerful national, bilateral, multilateral and international coordinating bodies and lobbies merge political projects in institutionalized and secret political, economic and military organizations and alliances that constitute the real bastions of power. They permeate billionaires' clubs, worldwide surveillance bodies, secretive private sodalities and powerful global elite gatherings such as the Bilderberg Group. They control the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and the World Trade Organization, military pacts, and national and global mass communication media. Money and capital, rather than the voice of the people, now rule the world through a plutocracy that controls the modern social, cultural, political and economic organization of humanity.

The dynamic political shifts that took place in the course of the twentieth century and the early twenty-first century, from the Cold War to the unipolar world after the demise of communism, have had a huge impact on stability, peace and development routes in the world. The historical failure of the socio-economic and political project of communism's democratic centralism and, likewise, of many hybrid systems with democratic claims point to the exhaustion of all vanguard models. The major political systems, anywhere on the continuum from capitalism to communism, are in deep trouble. Due to the proliferation of all-encompassing autocratic powers, governance in our world is in a profound crisis of legitimacy.

The idea that the 'democratic' electoral alternative could offer the solution now lies in disarray. "The consistently bad record and failure of liberal democracy to offer a viable political system in the vast majority of the countries of the globe and the unacceptably high social cost it demanded and still has in store for humanity, poses an

urgent challenge to governance and politics at a global scale, in the twenty first century.²⁴

The main cause of today's distrust in political systems is their blunt appropriation of power, combined with a fierce, often violent oppression of forces that demand corrective changes that may affect the agenda of the political elites. Political systems based on envelopment are intrinsically authoritarian, even those that display a democratic or egalitarian façade that helps sustain social stability under the rule of a hegemonic power. When their basis of support falters and their regime of truth faces decay and collapse, they tend to 'circle the wagons' in a desperate defense strategy. When authoritarian rule comes under severe threat, the ruling power responds with total surveillance and disproportionate oppression and violence, supported by new legitimizing discourses that demand sacrificing freedom for security. Actions to secure system maintenance, then, typically evolve into totalitarianism as the ultimate remedy for system survival.

Such a bleak picture urges us to shift the focus from vanguard models to alternative 'rearguard' socio-political systems, which, rather than outsourcing power, build on people's political sovereignty achieved by their inherent social response capacity through genuine democratic practices. But what are the chances of modifying the system from within through democratic transformation?

The answer is discouraging, both at the national and the global level. The guiding principle of envelopment regimes is to tolerate democracy until it becomes democratic. When democracy really starts to function as a tool of development in the hands of the people, it becomes dysfunctional for the dominant system. The classic case is the military coup that claims the right to use undemocratic means to restore 'democracy' that has slipped out of the hands of traditional elites. The system will simply not allow people to enhance command of their destiny beyond the margins of tolerance of the

²⁴ Glenn Sankatsing, People's vote compatible with people's fate. A democratic alternative to liberal democracy. In: Jack Menke (ed.), *Political Democracy, Social Democracy and the Market in the Caribbean*. Paramaribo, Democracy Unit, Faculty of Social Sciences, Anton de Kom University of Suriname, 2004, p. 22

status quo. The evidence lies scattered in centuries of political blackmail, economic coercion, politburo purges, military coups and wars for regime change. The success of the 'democratic' road always triggers its demise.

The envelopment nature of the whole gamut of institutionalized systems of governance raises the question of whether democratic rule is feasible, sustainable or even possible, and if so, what it should look like. This takes us to the core issue of political sovereignty, which addresses the ability of political power to guide a community to new horizons without falling prey to the perennial oligarchical nightmares of appropriation, usurpation, hijacking, outsourcing and delegation of power, which alienates and separates governance from community participation. Since one cannot change the world without taking development power (see section 2.1 in this chapter), the difficult challenge of the moral reserves of humanity is how to make people's voice compatible with people's fate. As a minimum, this requires an internal locus of command to be able to decide one's own destiny.

Humanity should deal with envelopment power in the hands of elites and tyrants with a shift to development power, which requires a change from outsourcing to repatriation of power back to the heart of communities and social settings, turning them into the sources of policymaking and the real agents of history. Only a communitarian political system can offer a development-based democracy and prevent rule by uncontrollable power elites, which so far have characterized the power allocation schemes of all prevailing systems of governance.

The practical question is where exactly to start with the implementation of such an extra-systemic political project. Do we need a completely different social and political organization? Are there examples of a communitarian democratic approach in operation from which we can learn valuable lessons?

"Que se vayan todos" (all of them should go) was the Argentinian slogan against the discredited state and its political institutions at the height of the social, economic and political crisis in the country at the turn of the millennium, which helped inaugurate a decade of still ongoing democratic changes in Latin America. People claimed their society back and demanded to be the architects of history, as

expressed in Bolivia in those days: “We’re the rightful owners of this country... Since you can’t govern, give us back the power... Let us govern!”²⁵

Community participation that mobilizes the internal social response capacity, both in the process of conquering power and when executing rule, is the backbone of democratic ownership that determines the degree to which people are the architects of their future and the shapers of history. “Democracy is not about telling lies, not even about telling the truth, but about listening to the authors of history, to hear what people think and aspire, to feel their heart beat and to watch how people act on their own behalf.”²⁶ From this perspective, democracy is the political incarnation of the mobilization of inherent potentialities. Without participation as a core pillar of development, it is impossible for people to take destiny in their own hands. “Power, not by bullet, ballot or wallet, but by representation that mobilizes the strategic forces of society, as the agents of history, is the only feasible response to social death in contemporary world.”²⁷ That, in a nutshell, constitutes the road to rescue democracy, trigger development and bring about harmony that can accommodate the diverse agendas of different projects to thrive.

Democracy seals the marriage of legality to legitimacy by making “people’s vote compatible with people’s fate”,²⁸ as their voice shapes the political choice. The litmus test for democratization is the empowerment of the powerless – which in fact can only be effective when it amounts to self-empowerment. This is only possible when politics ceases to be an autonomous realm controlled by elites or vanguards, separate from the social, cultural and economic engagement of people. Politics should rather translate the potentiality of the community into potency, shifting capacity into agency and

²⁵ The response of opposition Senator Germán ‘El Inca’ Choquehuanca’s at the height of Bolivia’s social and political crisis to Bolivian Vice-President Carlos Meza. See: ‘Bolivia: Aymara Rebellion and Democratic Dictatorship’ by Forrest Hylton. Znet, October 13, 2003 (<http://www.zmag.org/weluser.htm>)

²⁶ Glenn Sankatsing, People’s vote compatible with people’s fate. A democratic alternative to liberal democracy. In: Jack Menke (ed.), *Political Democracy, Social Democracy and the Market in the Caribbean*. Paramaribo, Democracy Unit, Faculty of Social Sciences, Anton de Kom University of Suriname, 2004, p. 58

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 58

²⁸ *Ibid.*

strength into power.

While no blueprint exists for shaping the future, we do not have to start with a blank slate. In the spirit of development, people have attempted alternative roads on all continents with wonderful democratic experiments, as in Pachamama projects of South America and Ubuntu philosophy in southern Africa (see Chapter 8, section 3.2).

Obviously, no uniform solution exists as a standard model for all destinies, since contextual factors always trigger customized practical responses. Still, we may find inspiration and guidance in projects with a common denominator that have already begun to translate development into democracy. Communitarian rule offers an alternative to the envelopment flaws of capitalism, communism and their hybrids, when it takes the shape of a participatory system that includes people in both the achievement and the execution of power, while people enjoy social and economic rights next to civil and political rights.

The original peoples of Latin America possess two encouraging approaches to mobilizing internal capacities in a democratic way that offer some clues on how to proceed. Remarkably, they originate in communities that were oppressed under colonialism for five hundred years but did not lose the spark of development hidden in ancient cultural expressions. Their communitarian banners of *Sumak Kawsay* (living well in harmony with our community, with ourselves and with our environment) and *mandar obedeciendo* (obedient governance) offer powerful handles to the enhancement of political sovereignty.

The Quechua term *Sumak Kawsay* now forms part of the Constitution of Ecuador, and its Aymara equivalent *Suma Qamaña* (bien vivir, or living well) entered the Constitution of Bolivia. *Sumak Kawsay* stands for good, harmonious life in complementarity, fraternity, reciprocity and community. It rejects the idolization of individual liberty and its selfish aspiration to excel over others through incessant competition and rivalry. Discussing *Sumak Kawsay*, Bolivian intellectual David Choquehuanca Céspedes mapped its implications in simple terms. “Either we follow the road of Western civilization and death, war and destruction or we advance on the indigenous

road of harmony with nature and life.”²⁹

Following the development approach of this communitarian indigenous alternative, as a response to envelopment schemes, is definitely not a pointless regressive movement aiming at constructing the future by returning to the past. There is no point in idealizing an ancient society that had its own portion of imperial design, as was the case with the Inca Empire and Mayan politics. Rather, in the spirit of development, *Sumak Kamsay* actualizes the principle of harmony and balance, opting for mutual symbiotic relations. This makes it the opposite of self-destructive parasitism, which kills the host on which it feeds, as is the case of modern, industrialized market fetishism that assaults nature, fellow humans, culture and the mind.

In the same spirit of ‘living well in harmony’, the Zapatista Movement in Chiapas (Mexico) unearthed an ancient, communitarian, solidarity-based model of governance under the banner of *mandar obedeciendo*, ‘obedient governance’. It responded to the paradox that leadership that does not follow the people becomes a disconnected vanguard without moral authority. To appreciate its full potential as a development-based practice of democracy, a precise understanding of this participatory approach to power is necessary.

The seven Zapatista principles of obedient governance are: (1) Serve; do not self-serve; (2) Represent; do not replace (no delegation of power); (3) Construct; do not destroy; (4) Obey; do not decree; (5) Propose; do not impose; (6) Convince; do not conquer; (7) Work from below; do not seek to rise.³⁰

These characteristics of obedient governance reflect a communitarian management of the common good that amounts to the absence of an enveloping power and the abolition of the appropriation of power by an elite. The community refuses to surrender its fate to any governing body or to leaders who decide on their behalf. Instead of outsourcing control over destiny, obedient governance sees to it

²⁹ David Choquehuanca Céspedes. *Hacia la Reconstrucción del vivir bien*, *Agencia Latinoamericana de Información*, (ALAI), *América en Movimiento* 452, 2010

³⁰ Gustavo Esteva, *Mandar obedeciendo en territorio zapatista*. *Agencia Latinoamericana de Información* (ALAI), 2014

that a community permanently repatriates decision-making and policy formulation to the bosom of its own social life and social evolution. Obedient governance abolishes modernity's fragmentation in state, corporate capital and civil society, as the community is in direct control of the realm of politics, economy and cultural life. Obedient governance assures a decisive say of the community in its own affairs, with the underlying tenet that only a community that holds command of its destiny can consistently guarantee the basic assets of home, land, work, food, health, education, information, culture, democracy, justice, freedom and peace for the vast majority.

As the Zapatista social and political organization in Chiapas shows, obedient governance comprises an inbuilt decentralization of power, where communitarian responsibility and direct control prevents old and new elites from usurping political leadership through a concentration of power. Obedient governance offers a refutation of German sociologist Robert Michels' (1876–1936) Iron Law of Oligarchy, which states that any democratic organization or political system inevitably engenders oligarchic rule.³¹ He was right, but with the caveat that his tenet is only valid for envelopment power that outsources governance to elites who hijack decision-making, as has become the prevailing political system worldwide. Michels' law does not hold for obedient governance as an inherently participatory expression of self-governance that blocks the road to the appropriation of power by elites.

The rehabilitation of *Sumak Kawsay* and 'obedient governance', even after long repressive eras in Bolivia and Mexico, constitutes a telling case of development–envelopment dynamics. Combined, they offer a promising response to today's failed models of social and political organization embedded in longstanding envelopment and vanguard tyranny. From a development perspective, they offer a powerful alternative to escape global envelopment, even when they need further fine-tuning, elaboration and contextualization in specific realities to serve humanity's quest to rescue its future.

Over the years, the Zapatista Movement in Mexico had to deal with the challenge of proceeding to a broader worldview beyond

³¹ Robert Michels, *Political Parties. A Sociological Study of the Oligarchical Tendencies of Modern Democracy*. New York, Hearst's International Library Co., 1915

their territories and even outside Mexico, because without rescuing humanity's future no local or national project can thrive. The Zapatistas started with the firm strategy of not pursuing state power, a position which John Holloway used as an argument to validate his thesis of changing the world without taking power (see section 2.1 in this chapter).³² Their strategy to concentrate primarily within the frontiers of indigenous territories under their control soon confronted them with a number of questions. Why should their practice of 'obedient governance', as a wonderful communitarian development device, not extend to other indigenous groups? This would fit well in the spirit of their inspiratory forerunner Emiliano Zapata, the leader of the Mexican Revolution. Should they not share their promising achievements with the whole of Mexico and with the larger world, which were facing the same challenge of shaping a different political system that could enhance command of their destiny?

The communitarian without the cosmopolitan easily becomes sectarian and tribal. The model of management of the affairs of the Zapatista community through obedient governance could make a difference for the whole of humanity when projected and creatively adapted to the state and to the global level. If the Zapatista Movement really aspired to drive its promising innovative experience to the logical consequence of contributing to rescuing our future, it had no other choice than to overhaul its model with a cosmopolitan viewpoint.

It took the Zapatistas a decade to slowly formulate a strategic change with a series of Declarations of the Lacandona Jungle. The Sixth Declaration of 2005 explicitly shifted to a national strategy, moving beyond the realm of the indigenous people into a more wide-ranging joint project.³³ "A new step forward in the indigenous struggle is only possible if the indigenous join together with workers, campesinos (peasants), students, teachers, employees...the workers of the city and the countryside."³⁴ The second step was an

³² John Holloway, *Change the World without Taking Power*. London, Pluto Press, 2002

³³ Zapatista Army of National Liberation. Sixth Declaration of the Selva Lacandona, <http://enlacezapatista.ezln.org.mx/sdsl-en/>

³⁴ Ibid.

open call for cosmopolitanism. “We are now going to tell you what we want to do in the world and in Mexico, because we cannot watch everything that is happening on our planet and just remain quiet, as if it were only we were where we are.”³⁵ The Zapatistas made their global stance explicit by stating recently “our struggle is not local, regional, or even national. It is universal. Because the injustices, crimes, dispossessions, disrespect, and exploitations are universal.”³⁶

This dynamic change that the Zapatista Movement has undergone and is still experiencing with a series of new challenges, provide valuable lessons for the project of the enhancement of political sovereignty, regardless of whether the movement will be able to succeed against the formidable enemy of a corrupted Mexican state. Empowering participatory paths at the local, national, regional and global level offer a valuable alternative to escape today’s global ‘democratic’ impasse of power without the people.

The combination of ‘living well in harmony’ and ‘obedient governance’ eliminates modernity’s artificial separation between state and civil society and, above all, between community and economy. It undoes the inbuilt envelopmental flaw of today’s dominant political systems that powerful elites pre-appropriate economic power, and by doing so undermine evolution, because legal support of the dominant system places the economic realm in quarantine against the voices of democratic decision-making. Instead of being lost in the alienation and dehumanization of modernity, the communitarian approach to power harmonizes the voice to speak and the power to act. From there, it is a small leap – though a big act – to cosmopolitanism, which generalizes group affiliation from family to the community level and finally to the whole of humanity.

In the framework of a communitarian and cosmopolitan worldview, ‘living well in harmony’ and ‘obedient governance’ contain valuable elements for a development-based organization of power and rule at the service of local and global harmony. Still, the practical implementation of these alternatives needs a reassessment

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Words of the EZLN on The 22nd Anniversary of the Beginning of the War against Oblivion, January 2016, <http://enlacezapatista.ezln.org.mx/2016/01/02/words-of-the-ezln-on-the-22nd-anniversary-of-the-beginning-of-the-war-against-oblivion/>

from a development perspective and an extra-systemic approach. Their fierce opposition to neoliberal capitalism is on target, but the tendency to opt for leftist solutions contains the risk of incorporating context-alien envelopment traits. This is the flaw of the Zapatistas' choice of "a national program of struggle, but a program which will be clearly of the left".³⁷ This is also the case of the neo-Marxist models in Bolivia that are still struggling to enhance political sovereignty by finding a context-related indigenous political project.

To define the road to the future negatively as anti-capitalist resistance remains envelopment-responsive, rather than offering a constructive development project. An open, non-exclusive, non-vanguardist, concerted, negotiated, democratic, development-based agency offers a better foundation for legitimacy-based legality and global ethics-based justice, which can secure political sovereignty in the hands of the community. In the realm of development, the moral reserves of humanity can only change the world by taking power, but imperatively it needs to be development power, which guarantees communitarian rule over all spheres of life that matter for a group, community or species to thrive. Coming together for dialogue and joint decision-making, considering the interests of all in the realm of development, is the best and most encouraging path to the future. In these fateful times, as humanity travels on dangerous paths where any misstep can be fatal, enhancing political sovereignty seems to be the imperative strategy on history's avenue of no return.

3.7 Development through sovereignties

An internal locus of command is an essential part of development, which we have just discussed in the form of survival sovereignties. The moral reserves of humanity hold the key for guaranteeing the survival sovereignties that constitute critical areas for fostering development, which global envelopment has hijacked with its regime of 'free' competition and 'free' trade for profit maximization. Local

³⁷ Zapatista Army of National Liberation. Sixth Declaration of the Selva Lacandona, <http://enlacezapatista.ezln.org.mx/sdsl-en/>

control of economic life at the community level marks a commitment to development that serves the direct needs of people instead of the profits of a few. As David Korten has suggested, “The economy functions most efficiently and democratically when businesses respond to the self-defined needs of people rather than spending large sums on advertising to generate demand for unneeded products.”³⁸ One may wonder why we should tolerate the waste of trillions of dollars in manipulative self-advertising, sophisticated weaponry and warmongering, while the majority lives on the edge.

The challenge in front of us is to purge ‘the economy’ from the envelopment obsession of profit maximization. This will bring a hijacked sphere of life back into the hands of social producers who directly serve humanity’s needs and respond to the challenges that our species encounters in the realm of development. Such a shift in the economic system will not only enhance human wellbeing but also serve the cause of peace, since historically economic competition has been an important trigger for war. It will save trillions of dollars spent in the weapons industry and more trillions of dollars in losses due to the destruction of infrastructure, homes, services and production facilities in war-torn areas, along with the price of lost lives without monetary value and the indescribable sadness grafted for life on so many millions of victims who survived.

Survival sovereignty is critical to guarantee development in historically enveloped and impoverished societies where the impact of the implosion of the global neoliberal system will hit hardest. Food, health and shelter sovereignty, ecological and energy sovereignty, educational and technological sovereignty, communication and information sovereignty, economic sovereignty and political sovereignty constitute the first line of defense for all communities.

The challenge of securing self-sufficiency in realms that are crucial for the creation of conditions for development requires the translation of the six survival sovereignties into practical actions that allow the subjects of history to mobilize their potentialities. This can be the first step in bringing down today’s global market

³⁸ David Korten, *The Great Turning. From Empire to Earth Community*. San Francisco, CA, Berrett-Koehler, 2006, p. 344

fundamentalism by eliminating the profit motive as the overarching driving force.

Giving local production a high priority enhances autonomy and provides protection against devastating envelopment, blackmail and coercion. From a development perspective, humanity needs an emancipated market rather than the decreed 'free market' that is today's driver of profit maximization for the already wealthy, while it impoverishes the poor into extreme misery.

One keeps wondering what economists can mean when they claim that an 'international division of labor' for the sake of product diversification is part of efficiency, when in reality it would be highly efficient to resort to a broad spectrum of diversified local production that is less alienating and more needs-oriented, context-responsive and environment-friendly. Carrying millions of tons of raw materials to distant locations to generate one-size-fits-all products that hardly fit when they return to the places of origin is a huge waste of energy, labor and time.

The disruptive impact of such forced outsourcing of local production has triggered mass labor migration to global economic centers in the wake of capital migration, even when immigration quotas for labor have been in stark contrast with the unrestrained transfer of wealth. It amounted to a double crisis. On one shore of the ocean, it left behind scores of abandoned plantations, farms and small factories with their basic production infrastructure still intact. On the other seashore, it provided manpower for dirty, low-wage work and new pauperization, which has led to explosive cultural confrontations.

Those who stayed behind hardly had a better fate, as their poor countries had to open the gates for mass imports of products from profit-seeking giant corporations and, at the same time, for their cheap labor sweatshops. This undermined the national production base of their communities, which was tantamount to outsourcing destiny. Development demands protection against intrusion of neoliberal free-market ideology, which removes the dynamics of economic life from within, while creating what Lloyd Best characterized for the Caribbean as plantation economies with externally propelled

industrialization and growth.³⁹

One wonders what the majority of our species can start doing to stop sacrificing its life chances for exploitation by global tycoons who systematically disrupt the development route. The first practical answer lies in enhancing survival sovereignties that are capable of transcending the dominant power's successful establishment of a system of global envelopment. This opens the way to a development-based social organization that is capable of removing the reigning system of invented property rights, appropriation of knowledge by patents, monopolistic free enterprise and free-market ideology at the service of profit. Such an alternative development route will leave little space for tyranny by global guardians such as the World Trade Organization, the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, flawed bilateral and multilateral 'aid' agreements and the undemocratic Security Council of the United Nations.

Given the powerful, overarching regime of truth, the first challenge is to break the mental slavery that succeeded in imprisoning the majority into the bizarre belief that a system of selfishness, competition, rivalry and corporate ownership of the economic realm best serves their life chances and that solidarity and cooperation are impractical, utopian inventions that will endanger progress.

Humanity needs to overcome the abuse by global envelopment that destroys context-based ways of farming and local small industry as part of a scheme of imposing global standards and yardsticks on others. Such a strategy of suppressing context-responsive action goes all the way back to the disastrous prototypical dislocation of rural people under emergent capitalism, as most notoriously happened in England. In the modern world, a similar systematic destruction of social and economic life has given rise to the creation of "unlimited supplies of labor" pouring from an ailing countryside to the modern industrial sectors of poor countries, which has allowed the mega-corporations to enhance their rule over the world

³⁹ Lloyd Best, Outlines of a model of pure plantation economy, *Social and Economic Studies*, 17 (3), 1968. See also Lloyd Best and Kari Levitt, *Externally Propelled Industrialization and Growth in the Caribbean: Selected Essays*. Montreal, Centre for Developing-Area Studies, McGill University (mimeo), 1967

economy.⁴⁰

Survival sovereignties connect to context, to inherent potentialities and to development by mobilizing the local provision and control of basic foodstuffs, medicine, shelter, educational facilities, technology, information and decision-making, which are all the opposite of global envelopment. Obviously, from the perspective of cosmopolitanism, the strategy of building on contextual conditions to secure the survival sovereignties should reach beyond autarky, and rather constitute a powerful step to connect to humanity's common destiny, raising the tribe beyond dangerous ethnocentrism, the state beyond parochial nationalism, and religion beyond orthodoxy and fundamentalism.

Survival sovereignty needs to address the question of how a cosmopolitan project for humanity deals with division lines between the local, national and global levels, notably in the form of states, religions, tribes, ethnic groups and a host of other exclusive in-group affiliations. From a development perspective, survival sovereignty at the local, state, regional and global levels forms part of a mutually supportive, osmotic relationship.

Competition is a zero sum game, while solidarity creates new spaces with a win-win situation for all. In the harmonious interaction between sovereignties across divides lies the deep secret of cosmopolitanism that paves the way for a species-wide fellowship to struggle for a world where knowledge is free and life has no price tag. No longer will medicine be a commodity, health be big business, food a luxury, education a privilege, and people's voice an echo in the desert.

This takes us back to the moral reserves of humanity as the strategic agents of the long-awaited transformation into a different world where development overwhelms envelopment, because life matters. But how will such an amorphous force as the moral reserves take the shape of a transformative agent?

⁴⁰ Arthur W. Lewis, Economic development with unlimited supplies of labour. In: A.N. Agarwala and A.P. Singh (eds.), *The Economics of Underdevelopment*. London, Oxford University Press, 1958 (orig. 1954)