

## Editorial: The Times They Are A-Changin'

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The famous 1963 song by Bob Dylan *The Times They Are A-Changin'* rings true in the year 2011. As in the 1960s, there are young and old people on the streets demanding change to the economic system, an end of war, climate justice, women's rights, gender equity and true democracy. The year has seen Arab revolutions, European governments toppling, faltering banking systems, and the occupation movement full of young and old spreading the message of the 99 percent from Wall Street to 900 cities around the world.

All through history, there are major moments of change, bringing fear for the future for some but also tremendous hope for new generations. Now with social networking information, complete with images, digital posters, commentary from journalists and any one who cares to and can tweet, spreads so quickly that just by receiving messages or blogging you feel you are participating in history. New images, new voices, new ways of organizing seem to be spilling into conversations on all levels as people from Tahrir Square to Zuccotti Park demand economic justice and want to hold the financial system accountable for the deep inequalities that rip through societies everywhere.

For those of us working in development, this need for change, and the search for social and economic justice, is not new, not at all; for years we have been saying that we need systemic change to politics, economic, military, gender hierarchies and social systems. But with the years the intersecting interests, the proliferation of different powers, the complexities of negotiations have led to many development activists becoming more intertwined with the dominant economic logic. As such, we have moved well off the mark as we became glossier and cleverer in our messaging, more adept at making the funding stretch, but somehow not so able to bring about the systemic changes that perpetuate inequality and injustice.

The excitement and determination around the Arab revolutions, around the occupation movement and the voice of hope from Latin American cosmovisions takes me back to my student days in the 1980s. In Australia, I was one of the 1 million people who protested in Tasmania to save the wild Franklin River; among the protestors who helped ban Uranium mining, one of the women marched into the US military base in Pine Gap in solidarity with Greenham Common in the UK and Comiso in Italy. It was the days of the early global sustainable development movement. But we did not know that it was truly global until thousands of representative civil society members met up in 1992 at the UN Conference on Environment and Development. We mingled in huge side

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events held at the Hotel Gloria and in Flamengo Park or in the pressrooms of the Earth Summit in Rio di Janeiro. In those pre-Internet, pre-social networking days, it was only in that throng of people that we could see for ourselves that there was a 'global civil society' that could come together from different organizations and movements (whether peace, environment, women, youth, worker's rights, human rights, sexual rights, religious rights, farmers rights). Back in the early 1990s, with the fall of the Berlin Wall, in 1989 and the end of the Cold War and the beginnings of something called globalization, there seemed to be a strong possibility that the world could become a fairer, more equal, better place.

It was in the discussions stirred by Rio that I first heard about greening the economy. The occasion was a meeting organized by the Harvard economist Stephen Marglin whom I met via Tariq Banuri (interviewed in this issue), whom I first met in the Women's Tent in Rio. Banuri was, as I recall, one of the few men watching the proceedings where many famous women environmentalists were speaking including Wangari Matthai, remembered in this *Development* issue's 'Last Word'. The Marglin conference held in Bellagio, Italy based on a book by Marglin and his partner (Apfel-Marglin and Marglin, 1990) was just one of the many places where 'dominant' knowledges were being challenged with the expectation that policymakers would be engaged and listening.

Sadly, it turned out not to be the case. Or rather those ideas and words and plans about equality, participation, environment and gender were swept into the dominant neoliberal discourse and those of us talking about social justice, political ecology, economic fair play, women's rights, peace were labelled idealists, and placed deftly 'on the margins'.

Looking back over the last 20 years, you see how the 'social' 'ecological' 'gender equality' 'cultural diversity' issues were set as incidental to the 'hard' development issues of trade, finance and economic policy. Development in these last decades has been about progress through economic growth and trade with some democracy and good governance, and perhaps participation of different 'sectors' and development aid. What very few

people dared to question was the assumption on which we all lived our lives: that development was to deliver the 'modern' market-led consumer dream through high finance, global trade, scientific expertise and technologies.

But now, those who created the dream and greatly benefitted from it acknowledge that it is collapsing. The 'dominant knowledge' has taken us rapidly to a point of no return in terms of unlivable climate, poorly functioning governability, uncertain provision of basic needs, security and well-being. The myth that we all can live the market-led consumer dream is turning sour. Though, on the flip side, with the help of social networking we realize that the moment is ripe for change. While there is a sense of hope in the active engagement of civil to bring about change to the current economic order and power hierarchies, there is also a concern that violence mar constructive change towards a fairer world.

*Development* Volume no 55 is devoted to looking at economic justice as central to the development project from four different angles. In the volume, we aim to bring the knowledges 'on the margins' to the centre of how to move beyond today's confusions. The first issue will look (again) at what it means to talk about greening the economy, engaging in the debates around the Rio+20 review. The second issue will explore the implications of the on-going process of the occupation movement, and the importance of social networking for development change. The third will continue the journal's engagement on gender publishing conversations from the Association Women's Rights for Development 2012 Forum, a key biennial global event for young and not so young global women's rights activists. The fourth will be to take a serious look at African self-led strategies with the occasion of Juma Mwapachu, from Tanzania as the incoming SID President, giving the Society an even stronger African presence and lens from which to understand change.<sup>1</sup>

We begin Volume 55 with this issue on greening economics in partnership with the UN Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD). As the introduction by Sarah Cook and Kiah Smith explain, many of the articles were first presented and discussed at a

Conference held in UNRISD in October 2011 on 'Green Economy and Sustainable Development: Bringing Back the Social Dimension'.<sup>2</sup>

The articles from that meeting explored ways in which often-neglected social dimensions can be integrated within a green economy, in order to move towards sustainable development and poverty reduction. The topics range from global crises to grassroots conservation projects in Latin America and indigenous landowners in order to put the social back into sustainable development. In this issue of *Development*, the UNRISD conference articles are complemented by the interviews and contributions from development economists, feminists and ecologists looking anew at development aid, economic growth, climate change and the function of money, continuing the journal's in-depth examination of development going 'beyond economics'.

The journal is timed to contribute to the discussion and debates around Rio+20 review. One of the strong messages of the journal is that we can no longer afford the compromises that we have made working within the current inequitable, gender-blind, northern-dominated economic system. That being said, a complete overhaul of an economic system producing such unsustainable production and consumption patterns requires long-term major changes in our individual and collective behaviour and lifestyles. To add to the buzzwords of the day, we need not only 'green economy', but also 'green governance' that synergizes local governance and macro-level policy.

As the United Nations Climate Change Conference, Durban 2011, COP 17 has shown, the original vision of sustainable development has been reduced to politically acceptable compromises between economic growth and environmental sustainability. Climate change has become a proxy for the implementation of the sustainable development agenda and the negotiated frameworks offer a very narrow space for the needed strategic discussions. Sustainable development cannot be left to governments and policymakers. It is about all of us as consumers, changing our lifestyle expectations of what is 'good' living and what is fair and equitable.

In this context, the journal heavily scrutinizes the term 'green economics', which is emerging as one of the main policy proposals emerging from the Rio+20 processes. The articles point out that there is a danger in turning to 'green economics' when it is based on a vision of the world as a market that can 'manage' the environment through international policies such as Payments for Ecosystem Services, REDD (United Nations Collaborative Programme on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation in Developing Countries) and carbon-offset trading that address global warming and promote 'green development'.

As the leading articles by Jessop and McAfee point out the proposed process of greening economics, social goals are submerged in system-wide global 'eco-economic' management. Such green economy strategies are based on a commodification of nature, reinforcing existing inequalities North and South and deepening the global elite's control of property and resources.

Many of the articles looking at specific policies in Asia, Latin America and Africa suggest that peoples' livelihoods and the ecosystems they depend upon will continue in this green economy scenario to be plundered and excluded from any policymaking arena or vision.

What Bullard and Müller propose in their critique of the eco-governmental approach to climate change is that the way through the current crisis-ridden impasse is to recognize that economies are shaped by peoples' abilities to understand and secure the ecologies and societies within which livelihoods and our futures are secured.

The journal raises some important concerns for Rio+20 if the world governments try to apply bureaucratically a green print of the economy without ways to differentiate, respect and nurture the myriad of the world's cultures and peoples' diverse needs, ways of living and enjoying well-being.

The question is what kind of process can we agree to collectively that will take into account different ecological, gendered social contexts and correct the hugely uneven social consequences of market-based policies (Harcourt, 2012). The green economy debates now dominating 'climate'

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and environment policymaking assume that places and ecosystems are somehow universally equivalent and therefore measurable. The concern raised in the journal is that proposals to 'green' economics and financialize the environment through monetary pricing and market-based allocation of environmental resources will continue to give the richest people and places the power to gain environmental benefits and avoid environmental harm. In the 'greening' economy narrative, the citizen is no longer the focus of government services, rather it is the business

investors in the land and resources. If there are only highly technical and economic discussions around how to measure nature, put financial value to forests and water and make carbon trade-offs, other types of knowledge will not be called on to shape better policy and create possibilities for better lives.

The articles offer various suggestions about the strategies, questions to be asked and ideas to be shaped, all with a sense of dismay at the mistakes of the past, but hope in the increasing voices of discord, as befits the times in which we write.

### **Notes**

- 1 Consequently, please note that the four themes of *Development* Volume 55 are Greening the Economy, Citizenship for Change, Gender and Economic Justice and African Transformations.
- 2 See summary of the Conference outcomes and papers on <http://www.unrisd.org/events/greeneconomy>.

### **References**

- Apfel-Marglin, Frederique and Stephen Marglin (1990) *Dominating Knowledge: Development, culture resistance*, New York: Clarendon Press.
- Harcourt, Wendy (ed.) (2012) *Women Reclaiming Sustainable Livelihoods: Spaces lost, spaces gained*, London: Palgrave Macmillan.