Class against Class

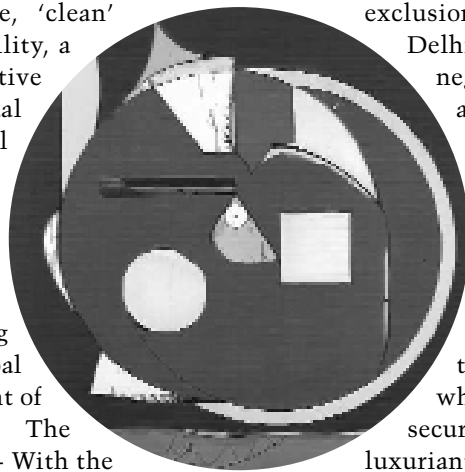**Lalit Batra** *examines the neoliberal restructuring of Delhi*

Following the rise of economic liberalization since the early 1990s, the *raison d'être* of urban development policy in India has increasingly come to be the transformation of major metropolitan centres into 'world class' cities.

The 'world class city', in the dominant public discourse in India, is characterized by leisure living, high-end infrastructure, managerial governance, 'clean' businesses, faster mobility, a spectacular consumptive landscape, and nodal positioning in the global flow of transnational capital and international tourists.

Delhi, as India's capital and one of the fastest growing metropolises in the global South, is at the forefront of this transformation. The 'Master Plan for Delhi - With the Perspective for the Year 2021' states it main objective as turning Delhi into a 'global metropolis and a world class city'. Over the past fifteen years, the state and non-state actors that constitute a 'pro-reform' consensus have made sustained attempts to effect sweeping changes in the city's political economy, spatial and labour geographies, developmental priorities, city planning practices and governance technologies. Delhi is undergoing an extensive makeover: the beauty package consists of shopping malls, hotels, golf courses, metro rail, flyovers, IT parks, elite residential complexes, swanky office buildings, bigger airports and the like.

However, the landscape in which this utopian city is to be built has a highly variegated geography fashioned by years of intense struggles over resources. The British set in motion a process of exclusionary urban growth in Delhi through conscious neglect of the old city and the establishment of New Delhi as a symbol of imperial power. Starved of resources and ameliorative interventions, the old city was allowed to decay into a 'slum', while the colonialists secured for themselves the luxuriant environs of the garden city of New Delhi.

The nationalist elite, though critical of the discriminatory attitude of the colonialists towards the old city, displayed little resolve to rectify the inherent bias of the imperial policy. Statist urban planning, based on monopolization of land, zoning and equitable residential densities ,could neither effect planned development nor could it provide the poor with legal spaces in which to live and to work.

The modernist and technocratic blueprint of Delhi enshrined in the first Master Plan of Delhi, enacted in 1962, failed to adequately to apprehend the complex realities of a predominantly poor, newly independent, postcolonial country. Thus, while, in 1961, about two-thirds of the city's population was too poor to afford more than a one-room house, the master plan was seized with the fetish to build a leisurely, low density, spread out city: expensive for people to live in and for municipalities to provide infrastructure for and maintain.

Similarly, while the 1962 plan aimed at grafting an orderly bourgeois city onto Delhi's geography, with strict

'the utopia of the world class city can only be achieved by the violent dispossession of the urban poor'

spatial segregation of various functions, the national economic emphasis on domestic capital formation through import substitution ensured that the political and administrative apparatus not only tolerated but actively encouraged daily violations of the plan.

It is not surprising, then, that at the turn of the millennium over three-quarters of the city was not living in master-planned areas. Whether it was squatter settlements, unauthorized colonies, small scale industries or informal sector services: the

existential necessities and ingenuity of the poor, coupled with the requirements of electoral democracy, produced an urban space very different from the idealized bourgeois space envisaged by statist planning. While this process did not guarantee a legal existence for the city's working class based on constitutional rights, it did create a gray zone – evocatively termed 'political society' by Partha Chatterjee (*The Politics of the Governed*, 2004) – between legality and illegality where the working class could, at least as a collective, bargain their labour and votes against securing a *de facto* right to the city.

The realization of the vision of building a world class city is thus an intensely political exercise; it depends crucially on erasing the 'grey zone', that is, correcting what the decision-making elite calls 'distortions' and 'leakages' in land and labour markets, service delivery and decision-making. However 'distortions' and 'leakages' are in fact essential strands out of which much of the existence of the bulk of the urban working classes in a post-colonial country like India – labouring outside the Fordist factory system and living in non-master planned areas – are woven.

Thus the pressures on the urban space generated by the opening up of the Indian economy, coupled with the emergence of middle class civic activism demanding transparent, legal and rational governance and a privatized and aestheticized property regime, have created conditions in which the utopia of the world class city can only be achieved by violent dispossession of the urban poor and blue-collar workers. The hegemonic bloc, consisting mainly of private capital, high politics actors, higher judiciary, corporate NGOs and affluent citizenry, attacks the affirmative activities of the welfare state as the root cause of corruption, lawlessness and pollution of city life; and it blames 'vote bank politics' for pushing the national capital to the verge of collapse.

The hegemonic elite advances an ideology of pollution, disease and crime in order to justify the eviction of the poor from inner city areas. Moreover, it is claimed, the 'legal and

aesthetic pollution' caused by working class settlements and factories denies legitimate citizens their due rights in the city. So the idea of the reclamation of the rights of the 'citizenry' gets directly linked to the dispossession of the working class. It is no surprise, then, that it is the Resident Welfare Associations of affluent colonies that file many of the Public Interest Litigations in courts for the removal of slums. The courts have also been instrumental in reproducing this ideology, as many of their judgements – castigating the poor for the ills plaguing the city and the administration for extending its welfare provisions to include 'encroachers' – over the past few years show. This excerpt from a judgement is a good example of the prevailing attitude of the judiciary towards the presence and entitlements of the poor in the city:

The number of slums has multiplied in the last few years by geometrical proportion. Large areas of public land, in this way, are usurped for private use free of cost… A city like Delhi must act as a catalyst for building of modern India. It cannot be allowed to degenerate and decay. The slums that have been created… (are) the cause of nuisance and breeding ground of so many ills. The welfare, health, maintenance of law and order, safety and sanitation of these residents cannot be sacrificed and their rights under Article 21 (are) violated in the name of social justice to the slum dwellers (High Court of Delhi, Case Number- CWP [Civil Writ Petition] 4441/1994).

The result of the neo-liberal turn in policymaking and city planning in Delhi is a massive assault on the habitats and livelihoods of the urban poor: a process similar to that which David Harvey is referring to with his thesis of the 'accumulation by dispossession' (*The New Imperialism*, 2002). While there are sections of society who welcome the changing face of the city, for most poor and

Classical liberalism and ecological rationality

The modern green movement exhibits seemingly contradictory attitudes towards the state's role in environmental issues. Green political theorists criticize states for their hierarchical procedures, which they hold to be incompatible with the complexity of relationships between humans and the environment. On the other hand, green thinkers urge states to regulate the behaviour of individuals and organizations in a market economy; and, they argue, state-like conceptions of democratic 'citizenship', should be extended in order to cope with environmental issues that transcend national boundaries.

By contrast, green theorists consider the other primary 'steering mechanism' in contemporary society – the market economy – to be chronically lacking in the potential to 'turn green', because markets are judged not to be amenable to the same degree of citizen control; at best, they are responsive to consumer sovereignty rather than to any notion of the common good. The prevalence of collective goods problems means that market institutions are incapable of reflecting the value of environmental assets. Moreover, ecological rationality requires recognition that 'everything is connected to everything else', where saving the part involves knowing what is happening to other parts of the whole. Only a collective institution such as the state has the capacity to enable citizens to analyse how their choices impinge on the environment and lives of others.

A second reason that green thinkers favour a state-centred approach is that collective choice processes, which entail debate and argument, allow the preferences of social actors to be challenged. Questions pertinent to ecological rationality involve conflicts between often incommensurable values and ends. The use of a common denominator such as money to aggregate preferences into an 'efficient' social welfare function is considered inappropriate where such incommensurability is involved and where aggregation is thus impossible.

Another reason green theorists give for favouring the state is that commercial exchanges reflect differential access to resources, with money power exercising the greatest influence on decisions. Ecological

> 'the logic of green theory may imply complete socialization and the creation of centralized political structures'

rationality requires that the distributive consequences of social decisions are taken more fully into account: unless the distribution of resources is seen to be just then public support for the behavioural changes necessary to avoid further ecological damage will not be forthcoming. According to this perspective, only the state, through its widespread powers of redistribution, has the capacity to bring about social justice.

Mark Pennington *challenges the statism of green thought*

CLASSICAL LIBERALISM

These normative claims for a 'green state' are subject to significant tensions. In particular, it is not clear how demands for community autonomy can be squared with the call for greater 'unity' in decisions. Consistently applied, the logic of green theory may imply complete socialization and the creation of centralized political structures.

Although it has often been viewed with hostility by greens, classical liberalism may resolve some of the tension between individual and community autonomy and the macro-social requirements of ecological rationality. With its emphasis on 'spontaneous order' classical liberalism aims to show how the autonomy of voluntary associations can be protected while ensuring a degree of rationality at the macro-societal level.

Classical liberalism originated in the Scottish enlightenment of Adam Smith and David Hume; more recently

it is reflected in the work of Friedrich Hayek, Michael Oakeshott and James Buchanan. Its fundamental organizing principle is freedom of association and disassociation. People must, according to this view, have the freedom to enter and leave a variety of human arrangements. This does not exclude the possibility of authoritarian or communitarian organizations that subscribe internally to 'illiberal' norms; but it does require that social actors may leave any group that they have joined voluntarily or have been 'born into' involuntarily. A liberal society, therefore, is one where there are multiple authorities and jurisdictions, none of which exercises a total, hierarchical form of power over the others.

This ideal of free association is reflected in support for private property. Respect for property is not, on this view, a manifestation of a Lockean natural right; rather, it represents the observance of a Humean convention or *modus vivendi*, one that is necessary for coping with the reality of diverse human values. Contrary to communitarian claims, classical liberalism does not maintain that preferences are pre-given. Rather, it notes that human values, though fluid, differ and that institutions should accommodate these differences rather than risk conflict by attempting to suppress them.

Classical liberalism emphasizes freedom of association because such freedom may permit what Hayek refers to as 'spontaneous orders'. Such orders exhibit patterns, but the regularities at issue are not the product of deliberate design by agents pursuing a unitary goal. Communal conventions such as linguistic rules and property rights are examples of such orders. Linguistic rules may emerge as the unintended consequence of multiple communicative acts that are not directed towards the achievement of any particular end.

Social norms of this nature must, on a classical liberal view, be understood as a form of 'civil association' or cosmos.While facilitating general purposes such as communication and cooperation, these norms are otherwise purposeless. Actors identify with the cultural practices that order

their behaviour, but civil rules such as respect for property also provide the liberty to experiment with a wider variety of ends. To speak of a 'communal end' would require that society operate as an 'enterprise association' (Oakeshott, *On Human Conduct*, 1990) or *taxis* (Hayek, *Law, Legislation and Liberty*, 1982) that defines the ends of its citizens and is
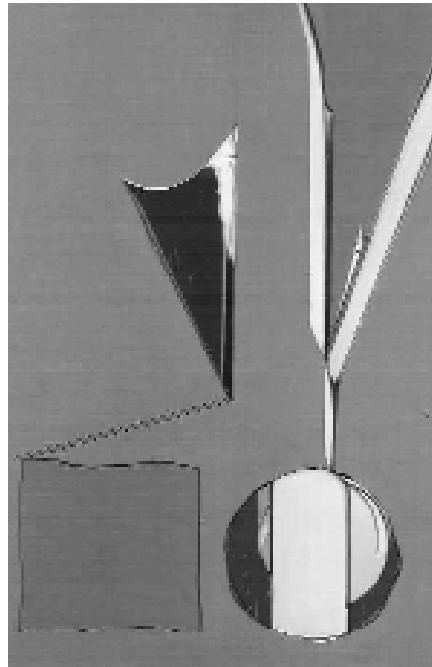
only appropriate to a closed society defined by a narrow set of goals. As Oakeshott (1990) has noted, 'civil freedom is not tied to a choice to be and remain associated in terms of a common purpose: it is neither more nor less than the absence of such a purpose or choice'.

SPONTANEOUS ORDERS

For classical liberalism the advantages of spontaneous orders are threefold; and they are exemplified in a market economy based on dispersed though unequal ownership of property. First, such orders are better placed to cope with complexity because they draw on and adapt to knowledge embedded in the multiple nodes that constitute them. In markets, for example, dispersed individuals and organizations make bids for resources and contribute incrementally to the formation of prices that transmit their particular 'bit' of information to those with whom they trade. The latter may then adapt their behaviour in light of

their own preferences and knowledge; these adaptations affect subsequent transactions with still other agents; and so on in a network of increasing complexity. The resultant price signals prompt 'economizing behaviour' and enable a degree of coordination that may not be achieved by a central coordinating authority. Such an authority could not be aware of all the relevant margins for adjustment that are scattered across a diversity of social actors.

The coordinative properties of markets should not, on this account, be confused with a narrowly utilitarian procedure for aggregating values into an 'efficient' social outcome. To speak of efficiency is appropriate only in the context of an 'enterprise association' that operates according to a unitary scale of values. The adjustments set in train through the price system, by contrast, increase the chance that any one of a diversity of perhaps conflicting ends may successfully be achieved.

A second advantage of spontaneous orders is that they allow for experimental evolution. Decentralized property rights allow competing ideas to be tested simultaneously without approval from any one majority. A polycentric order such as the market may be more effective at facilitating the spread of new ideas and values than a hierarchical or majoritarian system, which can at most conduct consecutive experiments where there is only one option – or very few options – to which all must subscribe. The latter limitation is particularly significant because the virtues of many innovations may not be immediately recognized by the majority; these virtues may only come to light when a minority of pioneers have put the innovations into practice.

These points refer to the potential epistemological advantages of spontaneous orders and make no assumptions about human motivations – they do not, for example, assume that actors are, or should be, egoistic. A third advantage of such orders, however, is that they may provide safeguards against the abuse of power where people do act out of self interest. As David Hume and (more recently) James Buchanan have argued, people should be modelled 'as if they

are knaves' – not because most are egoistic, but because institutional safeguards are needed to constrain the actions of a selfish minority.

In the specific case of markets, the 'exit' option may allow people to escape from actors who offer inferior terms of cooperation. Although the distribution of wealth in a market economy is uneven, this inequality is dynamic as resources are continually shifted away from those who fail to put their property to the most valued use. Where property rights are well defined, the costs of decisions are effectively internalized – actors profit from decisions that benefit their fellows but must bear the costs of those that do not.

The focus on markets and spontaneous evolution in classical liberalism does not preclude all attempts to achieve coordination via deliberate design. Competition is a process that may occur on multiple levels; these include competing rules designed to cope with collective goods problems, and competition between different 'constitutional designs' that determine the 'rules of the game' within which actors such as firms must operate. Classical liberalism does not advocate 'leaving it to the market', as this phrase is usually understood. Rather, it maintains that actors should be able to exit and enter competing institutional designs. The state, therefore, although a particularly powerful association, is just one of many organizations that should be constrained in its powers by the existence of competitors. This does not require 'perfect competition' where actors can select between multiple homogenous institutional designs. It simply requires that incumbents, at whatever level, are open to challenge from actors offering better opportunities.

If diversity in human arrangements is the hallmark of a liberal society, then such variability may also apply to the notion of justice. A unitary notion of distributive justice is – according to classical liberalism – incompatible with a process of evolutionary learning and the principle of free association. Evolutionary processes necessarily embody an element of inequality because unequal results enable people to discover and emulate more successful paths. The results of a spontaneous order cannot be considered just or unjust since they are not based on obedience to a unitary structure of commands, but follow from the observance of general rules such as respect for property. When people follow diverse ends, and where the income they receive results from a more or less random combination of distributive principles (such as effort, genetic inheritance, cultural background and the decisions they take or fail to take in response to
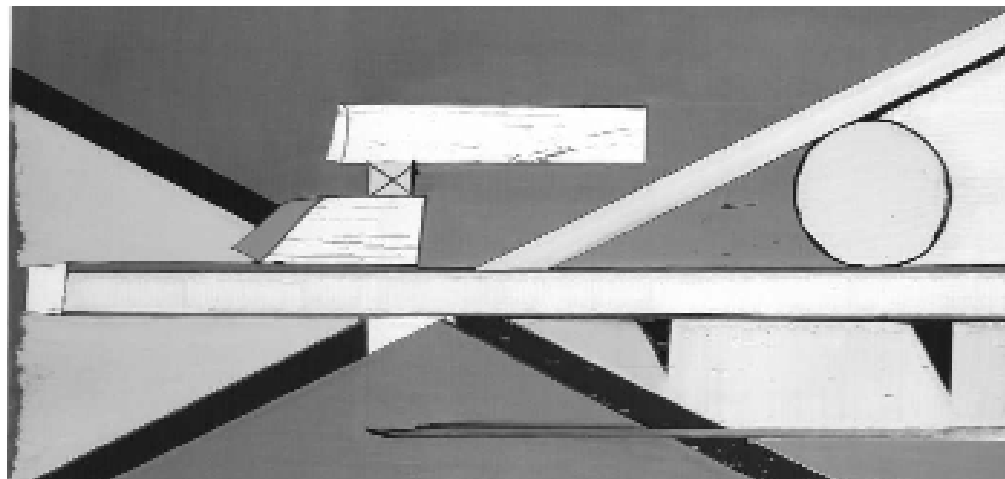
> 'Classical liberalism does not advocate "leaving it to the market", but, rather, that actors should be able to exit and enter competing institutional designs'

market signals) – then there is no common scale of values against which to evaluate different outcomes. While the distribution of income under a spontaneous order is partly the result of caprice, such orders may reduce conflict because they minimize the power of some to judge on the merits of others.

WHICH REGULATIVE IDEAL?
The green emphasis on collective choice and the classical liberal focus on competitive spontaneous order represent alternative regulative ideals with which to approach socio-ecological problems. The ability of each to meet the requirements of ecological rationality can be illustrated by examining its capacity to cope with the complexity of socio-ecological relationships.

Green political theorists contend that 'systematic environmental protection' requires an approach that transcends bargaining between private agents in favour of a democratic consensus that articulates the common good. From the perspective of classical liberalism, however, it is the very complexity of socio-ecological problems that prevents the constituents of the common good from being articulated in any one forum. The common good cannot be reduced to an aggregation of preferences, for, as greens rightly point out, aggregation is impossible when values are incommensurable. Neither, however, must the common good be equated with a process of central coordination. On a classical liberal view, what the common good requires is a complex process of behavioural adaptation that takes into account a diversity of values and improves the chances of all concerned to achieve their respective ends.

That such adjustments may also be required by those committed to 'green values' is apparent in current disputes over wind farms. For their proponents,
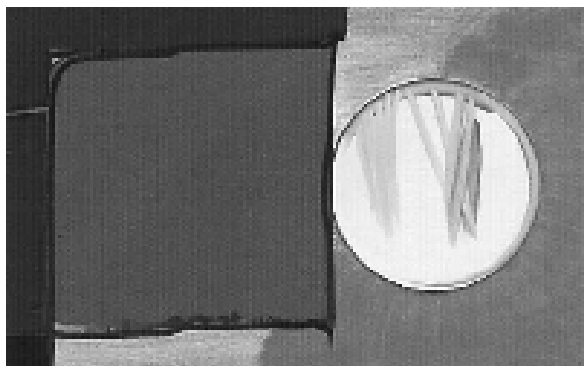
such farms represent a more sustainable form of energy supply when compared to oil and natural gas. To their opponents, however, the prospect of hundreds of windmills atop previously open moors is an affront to rural integrity. Unless one of these competing 'ideals' is simply imposed on the relevant dissenting group, then some notion of bargaining and marginal adjustments between the holders of different values must be accepted as the basis for decision making.

For classical liberals, the case for such bargaining does not assume that actors are selfish or egoistic. Rather, it recognizes that under conditions of 'bounded rationality' the ends about which people know will always be a tiny fraction of the needs of dispersed others. The knowledge necessary to promote social adjustment does not exist as a coherent whole but is widely scattered across hundreds of thousands, and in some circumstances millions, of actors, most of whom are completely unknown to each other. The primary requirement of ecological rationality must, therefore, be to facilitate adjustments to knowledge of which people are not and cannot be directly aware. These adjustments may be approximated by the dispersed adaptations to the fluctuating price signals generated in competitive markets. In such markets, the whole acts as one, 'not because any of its members survey the whole field, but because their limited individual fields of vision sufficiently overlap so that through many intermediaries the relevant information is communicated

to all' (Hayek, *Individualism and Economic Order*, 1948). Thus the plumber's knowledge of substitutes for copper piping influences the electrician's choice of materials for home wiring through its effect on the price of copper and, in the process, increases the chance that either of their respective ends may be achieved. In the specific case of wind farms, dispersed knowledge of ethics, cultural norms and pressures on land use may not be gathered into a single forum. If property rights to land and other assets are specified, however, the relevant 'bits' of information may be communicated by prices which may, for example, shift demand away from more valued and hence relatively more expensive sites. Without such prices social actors are unable to calculate the fine-grained adjustments necessary to know how many wind-farms there should be and where they should be located.

EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE

The theoretical importance of markets in encouraging the adjustments necessary to promote resource conservation is supported by empirical evidence on the comparative impact of different economic systems. According to Bernstram (in Simon, *The State of Humanity*, 1995), by the late 1980s the emission of air pollutants from transport and stationary sources per

'The primary requirement of ecological rationality must be to facilitate adjustments to knowledge of which people cannot be directly aware'

unit of GDP in the socialist countries was between 250 and 580 per cent higher than in developed market economies. Cross-country studies comparing the relative environmental performance of more and less regulated market economies are hard to come by, so their conclusions must be treated with circumspection. Of the available studies, however, there is evidence

that secure property rights and market prices are a significant factor in improving environmental performance. Norton (in Hill and Meiners, *Who Owns the Environment?*, 1998), for example, finds systematic correlations between measures of environmental conservation including forest cover and water quality and those pertaining to property rights. Similarly, in their analysis of developing economies, Bate and Montgomery (in Booth, *Towards a Liberal Utopia?*, 2006) find that energy efficiency is consistently lower in heavily regulated countries than in those where prices fluctuate more freely. Studies of individual resources meanwhile suggest that in the case of land-based assets such as forests, mineral reserves and wildlife, fresh-water resources such as salmon grounds and inshore assets such as oyster beds, tradable private property rights promote more sustainable management.

Though they are often considered antithetical to the concerns of the environmental movement, the institutions favoured by classical liberals may be better placed to meet the criteria of ecological rationality. Classical liberalism does not constitute a 'blueprint' for environmental reform. Rather, it articulates a set of principles against which to evaluate existing institutional practices and alternative proposals for environmental improvement. When judged against these principles, many of today's structures for managing environmental assets are found wanting. So too are contemporary proposals for a 'green state'.

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Politics, Markets, Complexity

Dan Greenwood *examines the contribution the ideas of Ludwig von Mises and Friedrich Hayek might make to discussions of governance*

Theoretical inquiry into governance and policy often alludes to the significance of complexity: the variety of forms of knowledge and values held by individuals and groups in society. Governance theorists argue that, in light of the heterogeneous, dispersed character of the information required by the policy process, both traditional, hierarchical government and the market mechanism are of only limited effectiveness. They suggest further that, recently, an important shift has occurred from hierarchical government to 'governance', a less centralized process involving various public and private sector actors. Governance seeks to draw from the various forms of knowledge and expertise of these different actors about societal objectives and how to attain them. Governance, theorists suggest, avoids the shortcomings of, respectively, the hierarchical state and markets. Political processes and the market mechanism, they emphasize, have become increasingly intertwined.

Yet important normative questions remain about the relative effectiveness in addressing complexity of different systems of governance, involving as

they do different relationships between politics and markets.

Contemporary discussions about governance can usefully draw from longstanding debates in political economy, as these address more explicitly fundamental normative questions about the strengths and weaknesses of markets and planning. The contributions of the Austrian

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economists Ludwig von Mises and Friedrich Hayek – who, from the 1920s and 1930s respectively, developed a stringent critique of socialist proposals for non-market, planned economies – have been central to these debates. Von Mises and Hayek argue for a model of political economy in which markets are radically extensive in their scope. The role of the state is primarily confined to upholding the rules of private property and market exchange; the level of state welfare provision is relatively minimal. Their arguments arguably overlook the significance and scale of the problems of the market

that motivated socialist proposals. Nonetheless, the Austrians offer important insights into the problem of coordination that faces the non-market, political sphere. These insights, this article argues, can serve as a useful framework for evaluating the effectiveness of governance.

MARKETS, AUSTRIAN-STYLE

The starting point for the Austrian case for markets is its understanding of complexity. The Austrians adopt the liberal premise that economic decisions must take account of the plurality of preferences and values, or 'ends', of individuals across society. They also emphasize that economic decisions about how to produce the goods and services that will enable these different ends to be attained involve choosing between a wide variety of different productive methods or 'technologies'. These different technologies involve various different combinations of what economists call factors of production: the human labour, natural resources and capital goods used to produce goods and services.

The Austrians emphasize that the efficiency of different 'technologies' cannot be established on the basis of technical criteria alone. The choice of technologies depends upon the relative levels of demand and supply for different factors of production across the economy and therefore involves economic complexity. Economic decisions need to take into account the different ends of individuals across society and the various possible economic means for achieving them. Such economic information, the Austrians stress, is often locally specific and subject to continual change.

Hayek in particular emphasizes that markets are an indispensable means of achieving coordination in the face of complexity. For Hayek, only the market process can enable individuals to act on the basis of locally specific and situated knowledge in a decentralized yet coordinated way. The prices generated by markets facilitate
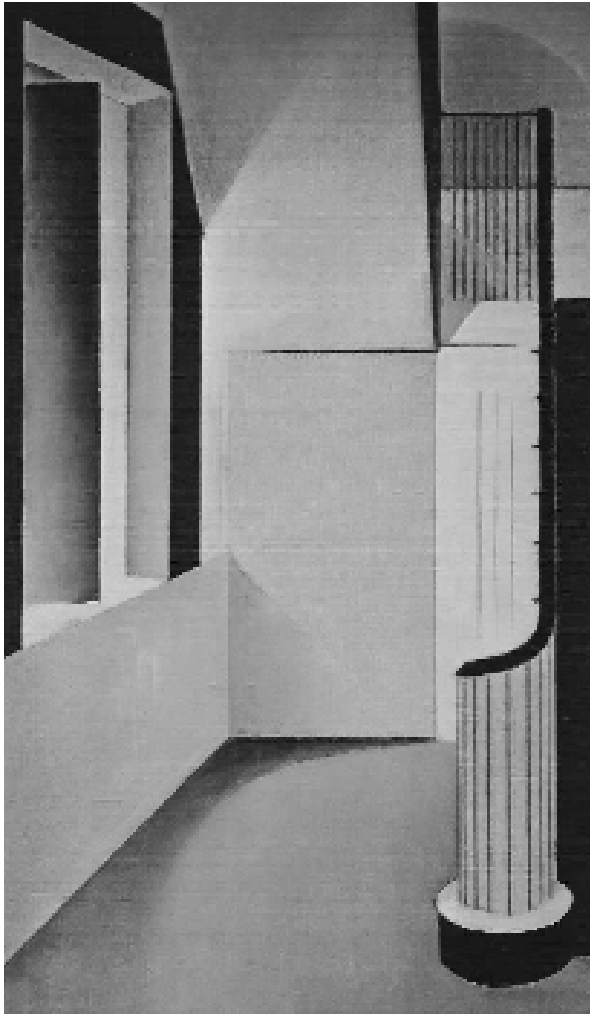
concrete economic alternatives through which they might be translated into practice. The range of economic possibilities made available to society by producers changes as entrepreneurs respond to the ends motivating consumers through an ongoing process of innovation. Hence, from an Austrian perspective, there is a close, dialectical inter-relationship between value pluralism and economic complexity; this is addressed through the simultaneous operation of factor and consumer goods markets.

The Austrians emphasize that the spatio-temporal dispersion of knowledge makes it impossible for governmental institutions to perform the coordinative functions that are facilitated by the decentralized market mechanism. Even if the government could, in the absence of markets, acquire all of the information necessary for achieving coordination at a specific point in time, non-market planning, the

market decisions require. Hayek especially stresses that this epistemological argument applies to a broad range of governmental attempts to shape substantively economic outcomes. For Hayek, such attempts inevitably culminate in arbitrary decisions that fail adequately to reflect and accommodate the variety of objectives held by individuals in society.

This epistemological emphasis of the Austrian thesis is a notable departure from earlier pro-market arguments. Bernard de Mandeville and Adam Smith, for example, had focused upon the incentive of monetary reward offered by the market. They emphasized that altruism is a scarce resource; the strength of the market economy, they argued, is that its capacity to achieve economic efficiency does not depend upon altruistic behaviour.

Yet there is a danger in resting the case for a set of institutional arrangements such as markets entirely upon premises about human motivation. For incentives can themselves be a product of the institutional context from which they arise. Perhaps recognizing this, Hayek in particular emphasized that non-market, political decision-making involves profound epistemological problems, however well-intentioned and motivated the decision-makers might be.

coordination by neatly encapsulating, in numerical form, a huge amount of complex information concerning the relative levels of demand and supply for different goods in the economy. The Austrians recognize that market prices do not perfectly capture all dimensions of value. Their point is that market prices encapsulate a significant amount of information without which producers would be unable to make rational economic decisions. Market prices also provide indispensable guidance for both producers and consumers as they search for new knowledge about the different economic means through which their ends might be attained.

The Austrians emphasize that the ends that motivate consumers are shaped by and respond to the range of

'a weakness of von Mises, Hayek and the Austrian tradition lies in their assignment of normative primacy to the preferences of the consumer, as stated through the process of market exchange'

NON-MARKET COORDINATION

The Austrians' epistemological argument for markets is somewhat compelling. However, a weakness of von Mises, Hayek and the Austrian tradition lies in their assignment of normative primacy to the preferences of the consumer, as stated

Austrians point out, inevitably entails both a temporal and spatial gap between the formulation and implementation of objectives. This means that a certain degree of information loss will inevitably occur in planning, the scale of which depends in significant part upon the degree of centralization that particular non-

through the process of market exchange. Hayek presents markets as a neutral way of achieving coordination between the economic activity of producers and the different individual ends of consumers. As suggested by both contemporary and later critics, there are various normative considerations that provide strong

grounds for challenging the primacy that Hayek assigns to the liberty, or 'sovereignty,' of the consumer.

For example, Hayek is relatively unmoved by considerations of social inequality; he offers a stringent epistemological critique of the capacity of governmental institutions to do more than secure only the most minimal form of state welfare provision. The Austrians also largely overlook the scale and normative significance of market externalities such as ecological degradation. There is a need for institutions and policy to be evaluated in a way which incorporates consideration of such excluded values.

Various traditions in political thought – socialist, social democratic, ecological, amongst others – have produced a wide variety of proposals for democratic, political institutions to take a more substantive role in shaping economic outcomes. The Austrian thesis highlights the coordination problem facing such proposals. For achieving certain non-market objectives where markets alone fail to provide adequate guidance also involves addressing complex choices and trade-offs. This raises vital questions about the most appropriate spatial scale across which different, non-market, political decisions should be taken. The dispersed, locally situated knowledge required for addressing complex allocative decisions might be best captured through decentralized institutions and processes. However, certain policy challenges facing the non-market political sphere, such as inequality or environmental degradation, apply to larger geographical scales across which coordination and a certain degree of centralization of information is, therefore, needed.

Von Mises and Hayek do not consider the possibility that democratic, political institutions and processes might perform an enabling role in the face of complexity. Yet various forms of non-market, political decision-making can be understood as
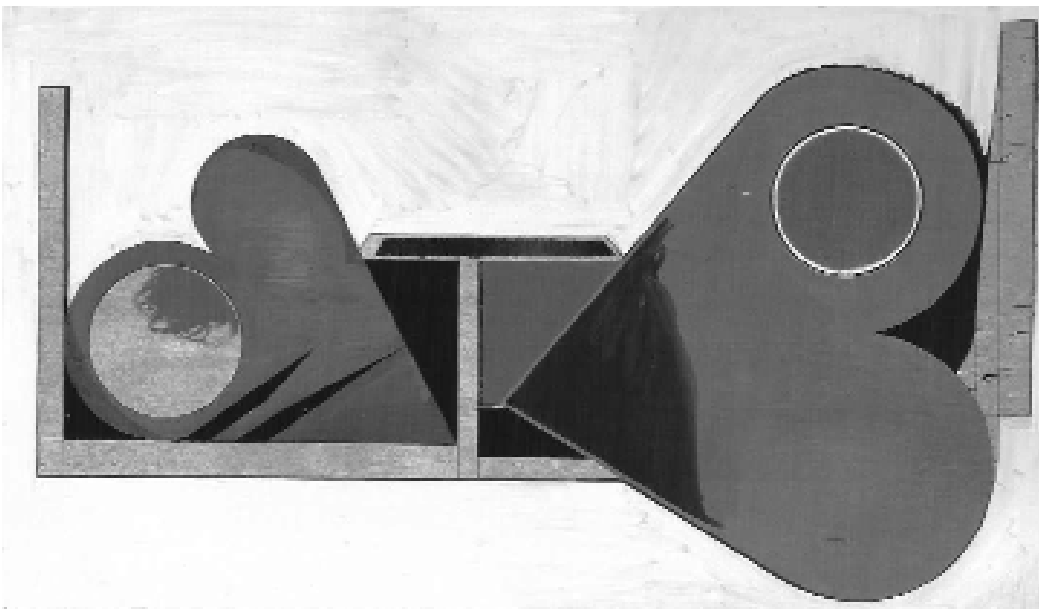
facilitating the encapsulation and discovery of knowledge. For example, environmental management involves the use of indicators designed to capture non-market values. Various experiments involving public participation in complex policy issues, such as citizens juries and consensus conferences, have explored how different kinds of stakeholders might mutually engage in processes of learning and knowledge discovery.

'The dispersed, locally situated knowledge required for addressing complex allocative decisions might be best captured through decentralized institutions and processes'

Indeed, the democratic process itself, through the debate and controversy that it generates, might be understood as a process of knowledge discovery in the face of complexity.

The Austrian thesis raises the important question of the capacity of the political sphere to achieve coordination. To what extent, it might be asked, can political processes facilitate the encapsulation and discovery of knowledge? In addressing this question, there is potential to consider a greater plurality of values and forms of

knowledge than do Mises and Hayek, with their strong normative commitment to market-orientated, individual liberty.

Of course, not all problems of the political sphere can be reduced to problems of coordination. However well-coordinated a system of governance might be, political disagreements can be expected to remain about what such a system should seek to achieve. Yet problems of coordination are of fundamental importance for understanding the process through which political views are formed and translated into practice. Closer attention to the coordination problem highlighted by the Austrians could strengthen the arguments of those who take a critical view of the market and advocate a more substantive role for the non-market, political sphere in shaping economic outcomes. An engagement with the Austrians' arguments could also inform contemporary debates about governance, which tend to side-step normative questions about which institutional designs and which combinations of politics and markets most effectively address the challenge of complexity.

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The Return of the Sacred

Ashis Nandy

No one thought that religion would re-emerge from the shadows to occupy centre-stage at the beginning of the twenty-first century. Yet, today, religion is a phoenix that has risen from its own ashes and wears the ashes as a sign of its new triumph.

This may or may not be an enigma. The attempts to banish all mystery and spirituality from life, the increasing poverty of the consumerist individualism that envelops lonely crowds in wealthy societies, the steady growth of violence, a decline in the sanctity of life that finds expression not only in wars and torture but also in assaults on the environment and life-support system of the coming generations, the widespread use of the Enlightenment values as justifications for new forms of dominance and despotism – these have all contributed to the erosion of an easy faith in the

losing their shine, many people are returning to religion defensively, as a last resort against the forces of globalization, homogenization, and the all-round loss of sanctity and secularization. As modern science, development, secularism and theories of progress repeatedly show that they are as keen to be co-opted by despotic regimes as have been, over the centuries, religions and traditions, many have begun to yearn for a resacralization of the cosmos. They feel that such a return of the sacred may correct the all-round *desacralization* in human affairs that has taken place during the last one hundred and fifty years, a desacralization that has left almost nothing untouched – from nature to human life, from the impersonal to the private and intimate.

Of course single-key solutions never work in human affairs. After the crusades and holy wars, genocides of indigenous peoples in the Americas and colonialism sanctioned by powerful sections of the Christian church, and the more recent rise in religion-based terrorism in the Islamic world and the blatant secular use of religion in South Asian politics, we have to admit: the world of religion parallels the secular world and can be as much a domain of gratuitous

> 'many people are returning to religion defensively, as a last resort against the forces of globalization, homogenization, and the all-round loss of sanctity and secularization'

unlimited power of human reason. But they do not fully explain the new power of religion.

Perhaps there is another way of looking at the situation. At a time when some of the major legitimating principles of contemporary life are

violence, paranoia and sadomasochism. It is true that R. J. Rummell's data (with some rough arithmetical manipulation) reveal that in the last hundred years fully secular states have killed at least forty-five times as many people as religious violence and fundamentalism have killed (*Death by Government: Genocide and Mass Murder Since 1900* 1994). However, it is safer to presume that given opportunities, people will kill, rape and plunder in the name of religion as happily as people have done in the name of secular statecraft, nationalism, progress, revolution and development.

Only two things have changed. First, whatever may have happened in the past, the violence that religion *now* sanctions cannot compete in range and depth with the violence that modern states sanction in the name of secular ideologies. Secondly, being primarily interest-based and a pathology of rationality, state violence has increasingly become more organized, scientific, efficient and user-friendly, whereas religion violence, to the extent it is passion-based and a pathology of irrationality, still leaves some scope for individual initiative, private resistance and inefficiency. (However, these differences are becoming smudged: religious violence is now acquiring many of the features of state violence.)

Why, then, should we study religion? We do not have to. It is unlikely that one would run out of company if one refused to learn the language or enter the cosmology of religion. One can easily converse with a sizeable number of people in the academe, in professions and in the higher echelons of the state who speak the language of secular statecraft and individual citizenship.
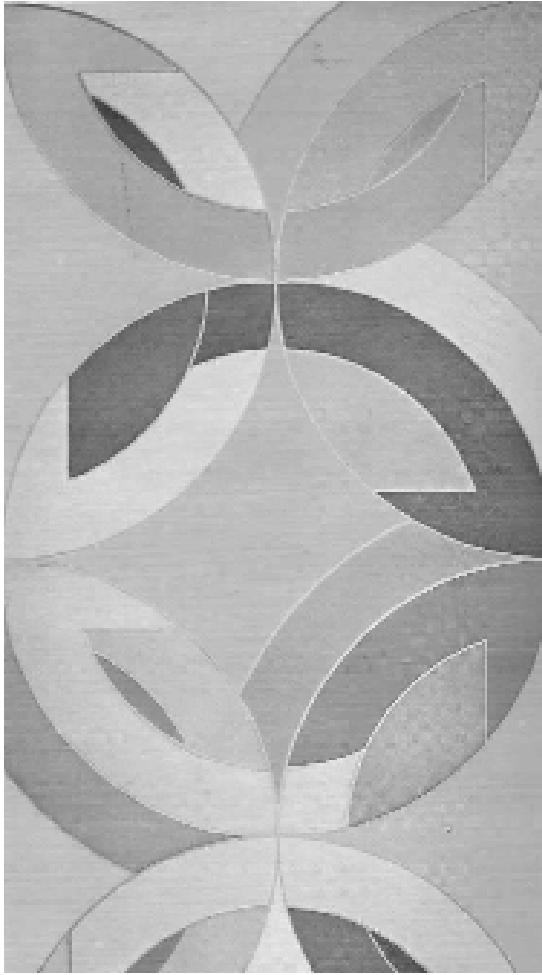
However, an even larger part of the world – and a huge majority of those in Latin America, Africa and Asia – have partial or no access to the language of secularism and citizenship. (They have also often been denied such citizenship, though invited to use the language of citizenship.) Anyone who refuses to learn the language and cosmology of religion thus has little or no access to that other world. This is no great loss unless you happen to take

democratic participation seriously, or seek to influence public life and public policy, in the Southern world.

Without some access to the religious worldview, you will soon become primarily a spectator of politics and left with the option of constantly bemoaning the bad choices that 'ignorant', 'ill-informed', irrational electorates make and of shedding tears about the rise of fundamentalism and religious and ethnic chauvinism. You will also have to reconcile yourself to lamenting the way the ungodly and the ill-motivated occupy an increasingly large public space just because they speak the language, and can converse from within the cosmology of, religion.

This is not a plea to return to faith or to establish the superiority of the language of religion. It is a plea to acknowledge the costs of democracy. It presumes that in a democracy citizens have the right to bring their ethical frameworks into politics and it recognizes that the frameworks may not meet the criteria set up by earnest well wishers. No lecture on the need to

keep separate religion and politics – the church and the state – is likely to work on people whose everyday ethics are directly or indirectly derived from religion. (It is a pity that, despite more than three hundred years of spirited, dedicated efforts, so many still use religious cosmology as a ballast in life, particularly when buffeted by the disorienting pace of social change, uprooting or personal insecurity.)

The situation has been complicated in recent decades by the growing trend in many secular, modern states to set up, as a political ploy, entire religions and civilizations as demonic Others that need to be de-fanged. Those at the receiving end of such stereotype, naturally find it increasingly difficult to adore the secular worldview as intrinsically opposed to fanaticism and hatred.

Here African Americans have a lesson to offer to Africa and Asia, particularly to the Indians tirelessly and pompously speaking of the virtues of secularism. Christianity was imposed on the American Blacks: their Christianity bears the mark of their immense suffering over two centuries. Yet it would be foolhardy to appeal to them to give up Christianity on those grounds. Out of that imposition they have made something that is distinctively theirs. Christianity, in turn, has been at its creative best when deployed, by African Americans and African Africans, as a theology of emancipation. From Reverend Martin Luther King to Reverend Desmond Tutu, the potentialities of an Asian faith – potentialities that defy the European heritage of Christianity –

have unfolded to supply a potent political philosophy of militant non-violence that has radically changed our ideas of political resistance and dissent. This development has emancipated Christianity from its European conventionalities and, perhaps, even from its European history – the history that prompted Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi to say that Christianity was a good religion before it went to Europe. The South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission was not a secular enterprise: it was squarely located in an ecumenical normative frame that also made sense to most nonbelievers. The Commission was a clear case of religion intruding into politics, in a way that Gandhi would have applauded.

It is often said that Muslim rulers in medieval India imposed Islam on unwary Hindus. The entire movement to reconvert Muslims to Hinduism in states like Rajasthan and Gujarat is based on that presumption. But such attempts to reconvert can only re-endorse a defensive, closed version of Islam among South Asian Muslims. For, since the medieval period, South Asian Islam has become for millions a language of self-definition and a means of social creativity. It has contributed something to the universal culture of Islam – and, for that matter, Hinduism – that is non-substitutable. South Asian Islam is not a lightweight variation on Islam; over the last two centuries it has shaped the contours of

> 'Without some access to the religious worldview, you will soon become primarily a spectator of politics, constantly bemoaning the bad choices that "ignorant", "ill-informed", irrational electorates make'

the global culture of Islam. Yet, plagued by a peculiar sense of inadequacy, some movements in this part of the world seek to turn South and Southeast Asian Islam into a pale copy of West Asian Islam.

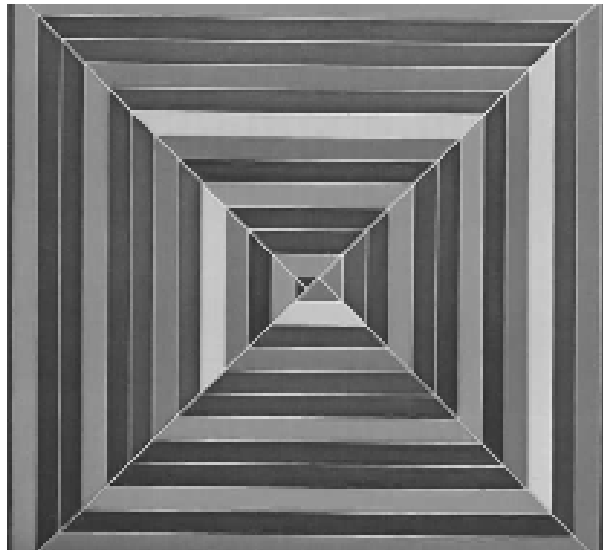There is another lesson for us in the

African American enterprise. The American blacks, through all their struggles and movements, never seriously yielded ground to religious fanatics. Because the black leadership never abandoned the domain of religion as untouchable or as irrelevant to the public sphere, some of the most creative inputs into the Black struggle for equality and dignity came from within Black religious consciousness. More than that: those who opposed fanaticism and bigotry among the Blacks could make sense to others in their community because they had access to the language of religion.

In India, on the other hand, the first generation of post-Independence leaders was respectful towards but fearful of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi and his 'intemperate' use of religion in politics. Some of them, to the delight of 'progressivist' intellectuals, quickly shifted to a political idiom that could be called an insipid copy of social-democratic ideologies floating around in Europe, especially Fabian socialism of the inter-war years, leavened with a pinch of the hard materialism of the Leninist kind. They declared the entire domain of religion untouchable and left it to those whom they felt to be its natural carriers—the 'backward', 'illiterate', 'provincial' apprentice-citizens of the society.

The results of that short-sighted obeisance to transient fashions could only be disastrous – particularly when combined with the fear of and contempt for the worldviews and categories of ordinary citizens that, in much of the world, have constituted the underside of both democratic politics and political radicalism for at least two hundred years. Taking advantage of such blinkers, not only have Hindu, Muslim, Buddhist and Sikh fundamentalists and religious chauvinists in South Asia tried to establish their hegemony in the sphere of religion. Even the occasional attempts of well-motivated NGOs and movements from the modern sector to use the language and cosmology of religion to counter fanaticism and violence arouse derision. Such attempts enjoy little legitimacy because secular India has systematically eroded the credibility of anyone from the modern sector speaking on behalf of religious traditions. This all the more so because appeals against violence based on modern, state-centric ideologies seem hypocritical, as the past record of these ideologies is primarily one of unmitigated, unapologetic violence.

At the same time, the modern intelligentsia in India has devalued the leadership of serious religious leaders

> 'the modern intelligentsia in India has devalued serious religious leaders by accepting the credentials of anyone who claims to speak on behalf of a religious community'

by mechanically accepting the credentials of anyone who loudly claims to speak on behalf of a religious community. Because this intelligentsia has chosen to know as little about religion or the religious way of life as possible, it has to take on face value everyone who claims to speak on behalf of a religion – for example, as spokespersons of the Hindus, psychopathic, violence-prone, rabble-rousers like Sadhvi Ritambhara and Pravin Togadia or scheming, paranoiac necrophiles like Narendra Modi and Ashok Singhal. One of the saddest spectacles in India in recent years has been the effort of some Catholic religious figures to open a dialogue with the un-elected, self-proclaimed leaders of Hindus like the RSS (the Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangh) and the VHP (the World Hindu Council). These are formations that claim to speak for all Hindus of the world – the one billion of them – when they and the parties they support have together never won one-third of Hindu votes in India. That is the price modern India has paid for quitting the domain of faiths and declaring it irrelevant, redundant or obsolete.

For more than three millennia, human beings have invested some of their best cognitive and affective resources in the spiritual and the religious. This investment has not been uniformly wise or creative, but nor has it been uniformly forgettable. The relatively recent investment in secular statecraft and public life, on the other hand, though often immensely creative, has also been spectacularly destructive.

Civilization, as we know it, is largely the achievement of the religious way of life. Can we ignore or bypass this achievement for the sake of a theory of progress that seeks to wipe clean the pre-Enlightenment world or freeze it as a museum piece? If not, how can we acknowledge the achievements of a part of our self that the Enlightenment vision has declared a *terra incognita*?

Ashis Nandy is ICSSR National Fellow at the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies, Delhi. This is an edited extract from the 2008 C.R. Parekh Lecture that Professor Nandy gave at the University of Westminister in May 2008.

CSD in the Department of Politics and International Relations

The Department of Politics and International Relations (DPIR) at the University of Westminster was launched on 1 September 2008.

The Department is a merger of CSD and the undergraduate Politics and International Relations section of the University of Westminster's department of Social and Political Studies. The Department is consolidating its undergraduate and postgraduate programmes (which include a new BA in International Relations and an expanded suite of MA courses: (see page 15 for more information).

CSD will retain its role as a leading international hub for innovative research and scholarly activities; these include (see page 16 for more details):
* the CSD Seminar;
* the CSD Encounter;
* the C R Parekh Lecture;
* the Democracy and Islam Seminar;
*the Governance and Sustainability Seminar;
* the Political Theory Seminar
* the Westminster International Relations Forum;

* the Visiting Fellowship programme (see page 14) and
* DPIR's vibrant doctoral and post-doctoral programme (page 15).

From 1 September 2009, the head of department will be Professor Roland Dannreuther: read more about him on the next page.

Until then, Professor Simon Joss is acting head of department. From 1 September 2009 he will be the full-time Director of Research in the School of Social Sciences, Humanities and Languages.

DPIR STAFF

Professor Roland Dannreuther
Head of Department
International Relations

Suzy Robson
CSD Administrator

Dr Dibyesh Anand
International Relations

Dr Richard Barbrook
Politics of Media/Internet/Gaming

Dr Patrick Burke
European Politics/Research Publications

Professor David Chandler
International Relations

Dr Bridget Cotter
Political Theory

Dr Abdelwahab El–Affendi
*Islam and Democracy;
ESCRC Fellow*

Dr Dan Greenwood
Governance and Sustainability

Dr Liza Griffin
Governance and Sustainability

Dr Aidan Hehir
International Relations

Dr Patricia Hogwood
EU Policy/ Immigration Policy

Dr Maria Holt
Islam and Democracy

Professor Simon Joss
Science and Technology Studies

Professor John Keane
Political Theory/Leverhulme Fellow

Rob Macmaster
Political Theory

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US Government and Politics

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Political Theory

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International Relations

Dr Raouf Tajvidi
US and Comparative Politics

Dr Paulina Tambakaki
Political Theory

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Urban and Regional Governance

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The Johns Hopkins University

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Visiting Research Fellow

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Smithsonian Institution

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Urban and Regional Governance

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Baatr Kitinov

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Yogendra Yagav *

* Sponsored by the Nirman Foundation, Alexandria, VA, USA

For more information:
http://www.wmin.ac.uk/sshl/page-2226

Head of department

Professor Roland Dannreuther joins the Department of Politics and International Relations in September 2009 as Head of Department.

Professor Dannreuther's research interests include security studies and the post-Cold war security agenda; Middle Eastern and Central Asian politics; Soviet and Russian foreign policy; the EU and its neighbourhood policy; the international politics of energy; and the role of historical sociology in International Relations theory.

His most recent publications are:
International Security: The Contemporary Agenda (Polity, 2007); *Security Strategy and Transatlantic Relations* (co-edited with John Peterson, Routledge, 2006); *European Union Foreign and Security Policy: Towards a Neighbourhood Strateg*y (edited, Routledge, 2004); and *The Strategic Implications of China's Energy Needs* (with Philip Andrews- Speed and Xuanli Liao, Oxford University Press, 2003)

Staff News

Dibyesh Anand gave a keynote speech, 'Postcolonial Informal Empires', at the Second Annual Durham International Conference - 'Informal Empires, Past and Present' - in April.

David Chandler's new book, *Hollow Hegemony: Rethinking Global Politics, Power and Resistance*, is published by Pluto Press in July 2009.

John Keane's new book, *The Life and Death and Democracy,* is published by Simon and Schuster in June 2009.

Abdelwahab El-Affendi has been awarded a £300,000 grant by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) for a study entitled 'Narratives of insecurity, democratisation and justification of (mass) violence.'

Dr Dan Greenwood's paper (co-authored with **Professor Peter Newman**), 'Markets, Large Projects and Sustainable Development: Traditional and New Planning in the Thames Gateway', will appear in a forthcoming issue of *Urban Studies*

Aidan Hehir's *Humanitarian Intervention: An Introduction* is published by Palgrave Macmillan in late 2009; and *Kosovo and the International Community: Intervention, Statebuilding and Independence* by Routledge in late 2009.

In October 2008, **John Owens** gave a keynote lecture; in the Australian Senate, at a conference sponsored by the Senate and the Australian National University's Parliamentary Studies Centre, on 'Bicameralism, Strategic Interaction and Lawmaking within the Contemporary Congress: The US House and Senate in an Era of Polarised Partisanship' .

Studying at DPIR

UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMMES

For more than twenty years the University of Westminster has been a leader in providing quality undergraduate programmes in the social sciences. We now offer students the widest choice of undergraduate study in politics and international relations. Our degrees are taught by experienced academics who are committed to expanding your academic knowledge and furthering your career development.

The Department of Politics and International Relations offers a range of undergraduate study options in Politics and International Relations, including:

* **BA POLITICS**

* **BA INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**

* **BA POLITICS COMBINED (A combination of two of the these 'sets': Politics; European Politics; International Relations; War And Conflict Studies)**.

For *specific enquiries* contact: Dr Aidan Hehir, Undergraduate Programme Coordinator, DPIR, University of Westminster, 32–38 Wells Street, London W1T 3UW, United Kingdom
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For more information, go to: *http://www.wmin.ac.uk/sshl/page-3177*

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DPIR's Masters programmes (one year full–time, two years part–time) offer innovative and intellectually challenging theoretical and empirical frameworks for postgraduate study in International Relations, Politics, and Political Theory. The programmes exploit DPIR's reputation as a distinctive and well-established centre of excellence in these areas. The United Kingdom Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education has rated teaching at DPIR as 'excellent'.

* **MA INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**

* **MA INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND CONTEMPORARY POLITICAL THEORY**

* **MA INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND EUROPEAN POLITICS**

* **MA INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND SECURITY**

* **MA INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND GLOBAL CHANGE**

For *detailed information* about our Masters programmes go to http://www.wmin.ac.uk/dpir (Click on 'Masters'; for online applications see 'How to Apply').

For *specific enquiries* contact: Professor John E Owens, DPIR, University of Westminster, 32–38 Wells Street, London W1T 3UW, United Kingdom

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PHD PROGRAMME

DPIR has a highly-regarded MPhil/PhD programme with over 25 research students enrolled. These high quality students are attracted to the work of DPIR's internationally renowned staff. Staff members' research covers various geographical regions and a broad spectrum of interests in political theory, international relations, cultural studies, and media and civil society, among others. Several of our students have received scholarships from both British and international funding bodies.

Current PhD topics include:

* Nationalism and identity

* Anti–terrorism legislation and the future of dissent in the Muslim community

* EU integration and subjectivity

* The construction of the discourse of secularization in the Turkish Republic, 1924–45

* Reinventing democracy in the era of the internet

FURTHER INFORMATION
For initial enquiries about DPIR's PhD programme, contact:
Dr Maria Holt
(M.C.Holt01@wmin.ac.uk)
OR
Dr Aidan Hehir
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For more detailed information, and the PhD students' web pages:
http://www.wmin.ac.uk/dpir

CSD EVENTS

CSD

CSD hosts a range of events and academic programmes, including:

The **CSD SEMINAR**, at which speakers from CSD and other academic institutions – in the UK and abroad – present papers on a wide range of subjects in politics, international relations and cultural studies. Recent topics and speakers have included:

'The Needs for a Politics of Human Rights'
Professor Bill Bowring
Birkbeck College
*
'Politics, Markets and Complexity'
Dan Greenwood
University of Westminster
(see article, pages 7-9)
*
'The Bush Doctrine at Year Six'
Professor Robert Singh
Birkbeck College,
University of London
* * *

The annual **CR PAREKH LECTURE**, at which a distinguished speaker explores various aspects of democracy. The 2008 CR Parekh lecturer was *Professor Ashis Nandy* (see article pages 10-12).
* * *

The annual **CSD ENCOUNTER**, at which CSD members and outside academics discuss in detail the work of a leading thinker in his/her presence. The 2009 Encounter was with *Stuart Hall*
***

The **DEMOCRACY AND ISLAM** programme. Recent events include:

Reza Aslan in conversation about his new book *How to Win a*

Cosmic War - God, Globalisation and the End of the War on Terror
*
'Islam and Human Rights'
Professor Dr Mathias Rohe
(University of Erlangen-Nuremberg)
* * *

The **GOVERNANCE AND SUSTAINABILITY RESEARCH PROGRAMME**
(See page 28)
* * *

THE **POLITICS/POLITICAL THEORY FORUM**
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On Friday, 13 November,
2009 there will be a
symposium to mark the
twentieth  anniversary
the founding of CSD

     See
https://webmail.wmin.ac.uk/dpir
 for more information
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The **WESTMINSTER INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS FORUM**
Recent speakers and topic:

'Security and the Built Environment: The Fortified Aid Compound in Sudan'
Professor Mark Duffield
University of Bristol
*
'Enemies and Criminals'
Professor Gerry Simpson
London School of Economics

For more information contact CSD

CSD

The Centre for the Study of Democracy (CSD) is the research centre for Politics, International Relations and Asian Studies at the University of Westminster.

Well known for its inter-disciplinary work, CSD is led by a team of internationally recognized scholars whose research concentrates on the interplay of states, cultures and civil societies. CSD also supports research into all aspects of the past, present and future of democracy, in areas such as political theory and philosophy, international relations and law, European Union social policy, gender and politics, mass media and communications, and the politics and culture of China, Europe, the United States, and Muslim societies.

CSD is located in the Department of Politics and International Relations in the School of Social Sciences, Humanities and Languages (SSHL). It hosts seminars, public lectures and symposia in its efforts to foster greater awareness of the advantages and disadvantages of democracy in the public and private spheres at local, regional, national, and international levels.

THE BULLETIN aims to inform other university departments and public organizations, and our colleagues and postgraduate and undergraduate students at the University of Westminster, of CSD's research activities. The *Bulletin* publishes reports of 'work in progress' of our research students and staff and contributions from visiting researchers and speakers. Comments on the content of this *Bulletin*, or requests to receive it, should be directed to Dr Patrick Burke, *CSD Bulletin*, 32-38 Wells Street, London W1T3UW. As with all CSD publications and events, the opinions expressed in these pages do not necessarily represent those held generally or officially in CSD, DPIR, or the University of Westminster.

As Good As It Gets?

Neil Cooper *on liberal interventionism and the diamond trade in Sierra Leone*

Three related factors make Sierra Leone in general and its extractive sector in particular worthy of examination. First, since the formal declaration of peace in 2002 after over a decade of civil war, the country has emerged as a model of liberal peacebuilding. At its height, the peacekeeping operation was one of the largest ever undertaken by the UN, costing some $2.8 billion. Between 2003 and 2006 official development assistance to Sierra Leone (multilateral, bilateral and from UN agencies) amounted to $US1.2 billion; and in 2006 the country's $1.6 billion debt was forgiven. In 2007 the country's second successful post-conflict national election brought the opposition All People's Congress to power.

Secondly, the country has become indelibly associated with the trade in 'conflict diamonds'. The emergence of several apparently diamond-related conflicts in the 1990s led to the creation, in January 2003, of the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme (KPCS) – a global certification system that aims to prevent the trade in conflict diamonds. The Kimberley regime operates under a somewhat restrictive definition of conflict diamonds, describing them as 'rough diamonds used by rebel movements or their allies to finance conflict aimed at undermining legitimate governments as described in relevant United Nations Security Council (UNSC) resolutions'; yet the regime includes almost all the states involved in the global diamond trade and entails a commitment not to trade with non-members. The regime is thus considered to have 'regulatory teeth', in contrast with the more 'gummy' voluntary codes that have characterized other ethical trading initiatives. The Sierra Leone government anticipated Kimberley by introducing its own certification regime in September 2000, since when official diamond exports have risen dramatically. Sierra Leone thus appears as a specific example of the generally beneficial effects of the Kimberley regime.

Thirdly, the political economy of peacebuilding in Sierra Leone in general, and the reform of the diamond sector in particular, reflect the merger of security and development, which commentators highlight as a feature of post-cold war liberal interventionism. Two aspects of the merger are relevant.

First, it securitizes underdevelopment, particularly in weak states, defining it as a threat to the *developed* world: such states are deemed to be the source of numerous instabilities that threaten global order

> 'a liberal intervention framework can best be characterized as 'liddism': it keeps a lid on disorder rather than transforming the underlying conditions of the poor'

– disease, crime, terror and refugees. According to the 2005 UN High Level Panel on Threats, underdevelopment has given rise to 'mutual vulnerability', a state in which both the rich and the poor worlds, threatened by poverty, have a mutual interest in redressing the conditions of the poor in the global South. Symptomatic of this attitude is the apparent shift from the rigours of structural adjustment and a general scepticism about the role of the state to a 'post-Washington consensus' emphasis on poverty reduction and the importance of state strength and state institutions in maintaining order and delivering development.

Secondly, the merger of security and development rests on the notion that the two are interdependent and mutually reinforcing. However, in Sierra Leone by contrast, the merger has both permitted security (in its narrow sense) to encroach on development, and 'neoliberalization' to continue – though under the guise of participatory poverty reduction. Consequently, whilst the security element of the security/development equation has been pursued relatively successfully, a particularly anaemic version of 'development as security' has been implemented. Thus, while Sierra Leone may well be a model of contemporary peacebuilding, it demonstrates the limits of a liberal intervention framework. It can best be characterized by what Paul Rogers describes as 'liddism': it keeps a lid on disorder rather than fundamentally transforming the underlying conditions of the poor.

PEACEBUILDING

Liberal intervention in Sierra Leone has, with some success, re-established order. The state's monopoly of violence has been restored; the army and the police are now generally considered to be among the country's more effective institutions. Security has also been underpinned by the (until 2005) UN peacekeeping force and, initially at least, by a British 'over-the-horizon' security guarantee to provide a military reaction to a crisis within 48 to 72 hours.

However, eight years after the final ceasefire, and seven years after the formal declaration of peace, poverty remains pervasive: there is a 35 per cent literacy rate and a 70 per cent unemployment rate; only 7 per cent of the population has access to electricity; and average life expectancy is forty one. In real terms GDP per head (in 2005) remained below 1990 levels and, in the UNDP's 2008 *Human Development Index*, Sierra Leone is ranked last.

Donor influence on the country – which combines the use of old fashioned conditionalities with newer 'post-conditionality' forms of influence via more direct involvement in government – has been extensive. In

the diamond sector, for example, the UK's Department for International Development (DFID) funded the post of Director General of the Ministry of Mineral Resources – a position held by a Canadian expatriate consultant provided by Adam Smith International. Donor–government discussions on the diamond sector formally take place in the High Level Diamond Steering Committee, which includes representatives from the UK, the United States, the EU and the World Bank.

SEA CHANGE?

The discourse on both broad macroeconomic policy and the diamond sector suggests a sea change from the structural adjustment prescriptions imposed on pre-conflict Sierra Leone. The emphasis since the war is on local participation, ownership and empowerment. For example, the IMF has claimed that the development strategy reflects 'the outcome of extensive participatory consultations'. However, the macroeconomic prescription for post-conflict Sierra Leone is strikingly similar to the 'one size fits all' prescriptions of earlier periods. The emphasis, for example, has been on reducing corporation and income tax,

> 'the macroeconomic prescription for post-conflict Sierra Leone is strikingly similar to the "one size fits all" prescriptions of earlier periods'

lowering tariff rates and promoting privatization. In addition, there have been recommendations that – as part of a policy to promote 'sustainable pro-poor growth' – a regressive sales tax be introduced.

The role of donor influence, the intermingling of security and development agendas, (and the use of radical language to frame the promotion of neoliberal orthodoxies) were highlighted by the debate over the government's decision, in 2005, to raise public sector salaries in response to a two-day general strike .Viewing the issue through the lens of security, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) agreed with the authorities that the strike 'threatened state security in a fragile, post-conflict environment, leaving the government with little choice [but to raise salaries]'. However, looking through a development and poverty reduction lens, the IMF has been equally adamant that the consequent increase in the wage bill 'weakened the government's ability to meet poverty-related expenditure targets' and has insisted the government avoid a repeat of 2005. This is in a context where the World Bank has noted that 'many civil servants have salaries that are close to or below the poverty threshold'.

Much the same phenomenon can be seen in the government's 2005 poverty reduction strategy (PRSP). The conceptual merger of security and development provided the context in which the PRSP could note that 'almost all sectors and sub-sectors in the budget are poverty-focused including the security sector'. Consequently, 16.1 per cent of projected PRSP expenditure for the period 2005–7 was allocated to security initiatives that included restructuring the army and developing an intelligence service to support the army and police. By contrast, projected funding on education and health accounted, respectively, for 5.8 per cent and eight per cent of overall expenditure. This is not to suggest that expenditure on the security sector in Sierra Leone is unnecessary. However, legitimizing this expenditure as intrinsic to poverty reduction obfuscates the hard decisions that need to be taken between spending on the security services (a form of public good but generally considered to be a drag on economic growth – and one which may even increase the risk of a return to conflict) and spending on sectors of clear benefit to the economy.

In broad terms, then, phrases such as 'development', 'poverty reduction' and 'job creation' have become substitutes for the continued application of neoliberal prescriptions that privilege privatization, marketization and the presumed trickle-down benefits of macroeconomic stability over emergency job creation, social welfare

and subsidy and protection for strategic sectors of the economy. This contrasts with World Bank research that suggests that spending on social policies – even at the expense of a deterioration in macroeconomic balances – produces significant benefits for growth.
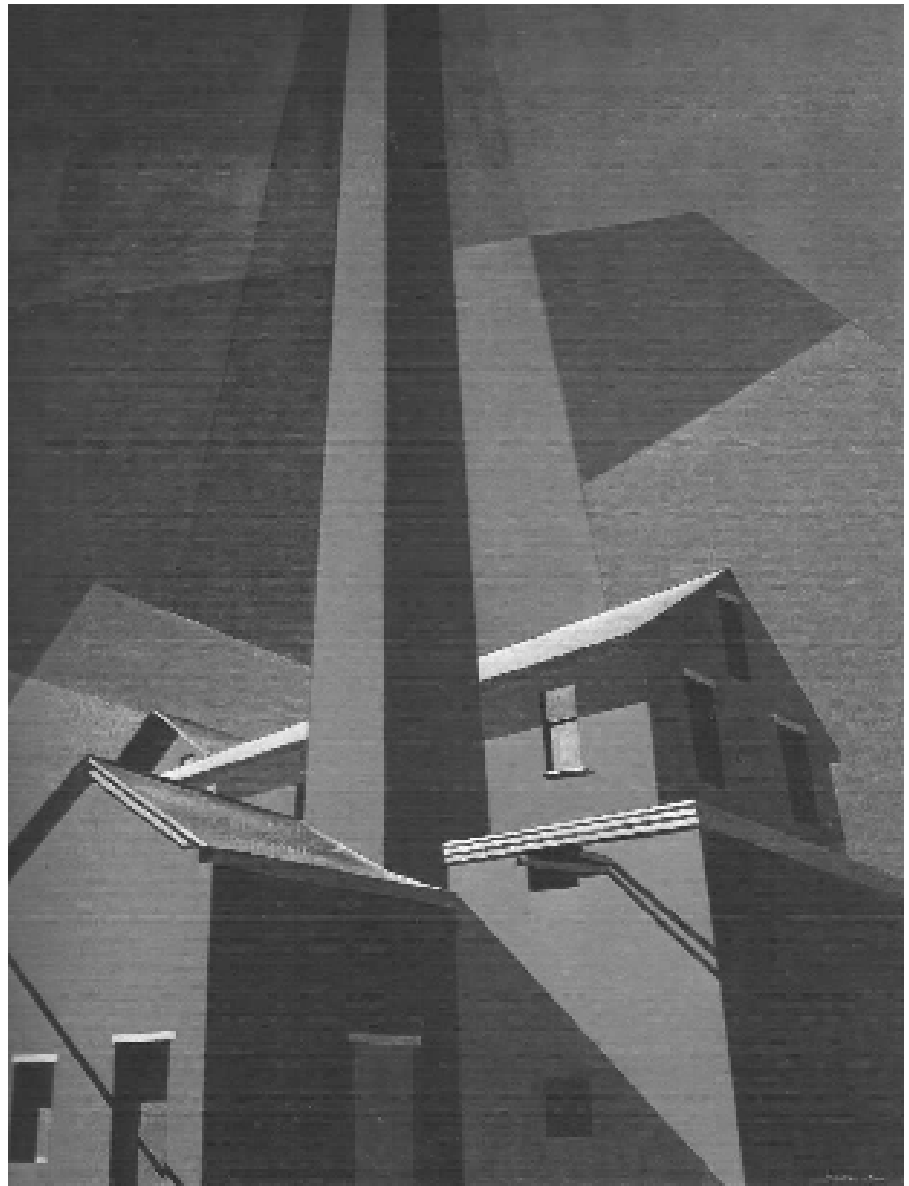
The combined effect of such policies has led some commentators to ask whether donors are encouraging the reproduction of the conditions that led to the war. This claim overlooks the relative success in delivering security (understood in its narrow and traditional sense as the absence of overt conflict) inside Sierra Leone and the removal of external security threats (such as the Liberian leader Charles Taylor). Yet it does highlight the profound limits to development policy in Sierra Leone, a policy that has limited the direct promotion of alternative livelihoods outside of the alluvial diamond sector.

THE DIAMOND SECTOR

Reform of the diamond sector in Sierra Leone reflects the broader emphasis on, and relative success of, policies designed within a security and law and order framework as compared with development initiatives.

The diamond industry has traditionally functioned as a mainstay of the country's economy, accounting for some 70 per cent of foreign exchange earnings in the 1960s and 1970s; it has also been characterized by significant levels of smuggling. The capture and control of this shadow trade by governing elites in the 1970s and 1980s contributed to a radical decline in official exports, further exacerbated during the civil war by the rebel Revolutionary United Front's gaining control of the key diamond producing region. However, the introduction of the national diamond certification system in 2000 and the inception of the global Kimberley regime in 2003 have coincided with a significant increase in official exports.

In part, this is explicable by the fact that, while the formal aim of the Kimberley regime is simply to prevent the trade in *conflict diamonds*, the creation of a global certification

> 'World Bank research suggests that spending on social policies – even at the expense of a deterioration in macroeconomic balances – produces significant benefits for growth'

system designed to record the export and import of each package of rough diamonds means that the regime also functions *de facto* to prevent smuggling in general. So, while a substantial proportion of diamonds are still exported illicitly, it would appear that the attempt to monitor and regulate diamond exports within the security and policing framework of the Kimberley certification system has, to date at least, been relatively successful.

However, as Partnership Africa Canada has noted:

The Kimberley Process is strictly about controlling the trade in rough diamonds, in order to ensure [they]…are not used to finance conflict. There is nothing in the KPCS requiring governments to improve the lot of diamond miners,

to distribute the wealth from diamond mining to local communities, or to use the revenues from diamond mining for anything at all.

Yet the global discourse on the diamond industry *has* evolved to incorporate a concern with the developmental impact of the rough diamond trade. The concrete manifestation of this was the foundation, in October 2005, of the Diamond Development Initiative (DDI). This aimed to 'optimize the beneficial development impact of artisanal diamond mining to miners and their communities within countries in which the diamonds are mined'. This broader agenda has also been reflected in the meetings and the work of the Kimberley system itself, most notably in the work of the KPCS Working Group on Alluvial/Artisanal Producers.

Nevertheless, in Sierra Leone both the operation of Kimberley and the local reform initiatives – rooted in the development perspective – that are aimed at the diamond sector have manifestly failed to promote development. This is evident in three areas: the conditions and pay of the

devastating human consequences arising from Sierra Leone's position in the global market, rather than at transforming global market structures to benefit producing countries.

POTENTIAL REFORMS

There are potential reforms that might make a difference to diggers, government and the economy. These include, for example, amending Kimberley so that it includes an explicit remit to promote development, and so that it acts as a global income redistribution scheme (with a Kimberley tax on jewellery sales used to properly fund social protection and development initiatives in the diamond sectors of producing states). Kimberley might also include a greater role for the state in the production and marketing of diamonds and the provision of state/donor subsidies to finance the establishment of a niche cutting and polishing industry designed to add value within Sierra Leone.

However, given the securitization and 'neoliberalization' characteristic of approaches to Sierra Leone in general and the diamond sector in particular such initiatives seem unlikely to emerge, at least in the short term. International policy towards Sierra Leone is, indeed, best described as an example of relatively successful (short term) 'liddism'. If Sierra Leone is a model of liberal peacebuilding one must then ask: is this as good as it gets?

'International policy towards Sierra Leone is best described as an example of relatively successful (short term) "liddism"'

diggers – these have been addressed mainly through laudable but mainly tokenistic initiatives; raising government revenue from diamond exports; and addressing the problem of capital flight – success in these last two fields is limited by the local, regional and global structure of the industry, and by the fact that Kimberley does not have a formal remit to promote development, raise government revenue or to address capital flight.

Nor does current global and local action on the diamond sector more generally offer solutions: at best it is aimed at marginally ameliorating the

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Mao Propaganda Posters

from the University of Westminster collection were on show at the University of Essex from 15 January-19 February at The Lakeside Theatre, University of Essex.

Interest in and fascination with Mao Zedong live on, despite the horrific excesses of his regime and a creeping ambivalence of those in power in Beijing and the public in China towards the myths and legends surrounding the former Communist Party Chairman.

'Mao is the Reddest Reddest Red Sun in Our Hearts', 1967,
University of Westminster Chinese Poster Collection

Individuals and institutions around the world have collected propaganda posters from Mao Zedong's Cultural Revolution (1966-76), which caused irreversible damage to China's culture.

A major collection, curated by Katie Hill, is held at the University of Westminster, London.

The propaganda posters were part of the Communist Party's campaign to project the party line onto the masses.
They provide a powerful insight into China's social, political and cultural developments in that period.

For more information, go to
http://www.wmin.ac.uk/sshl/page -2007

The Rhetorical Citizen

James Martin *discusses Jacques Rancière's conception of democratic politics as the activation of a 'disagreement'*

The medium of any democratic politics is, primarily, speech. Arguing and persuading one's fellow citizens is a fundamental skill that helps distinguish democracy from other forms of government. But this rhetorical dimension also illuminates a tension in the relationship between democratic politics and citizenship, a tension that prevents the one from fully aligning with the other.

A genuinely democratic politics is essentially *disruptive* of the terms of membership of the political order. This disruption takes place on the terrain of rhetoric. The rhetorical citizen – the political subject engaged in democratic speech – is neither simply 'in' nor 'out of' the political community. Rather, he or she is engaged in transforming the community by making a claim to inclusion as an equal.

This idea of democracy as a claim to equality has been developed by the French historian and theorist Jacques Rancière. Rancière underscores the importance of speech as the means through which disagreement with the prevailing order is channelled.

Democratic speech can be conceived as the speech of the 'part who has no part' and, therefore, as the effort to disrupt the established codes of social and political inclusion. This view contrasts with a conception of speech and rhetoric as the confirmation of communal membership, a view that has been handed down to us since classical times.

RHETORIC 'ANCIENT' AND 'MODERN'

Rhetoric is widely understood as an

> 'A genuinely democratic politics is essentially *disruptive* of the terms of membership of the political order'

inheritance of ancient political life. In classical Greece and Rome, the arts of speech and persuasion were viewed as essential to the skills of the citizen. Of course, citizenship was understood as more than just formal rights and duties. As is well known, ancient citizenship involved a commitment to participate in the life of the community: to serve on its juries, take up roles in its offices, and to pursue the common good in association with fellow citizens. Rhetoric was, therefore, more than just a handy skill; it was an integral part of civic membership.

This conception of the citizen and the nature of participation was transformed with modernity. As Benjamin Constant put it, the freedom of the 'moderns', as opposed to that of the 'ancients', is tied fundamentally to the pursuit of private, not public, goods. Citizenship now involves membership of a sovereign state that arrogates public business to itself in return for preserving the liberties of individuals.

With the privatization of liberty, rhetoric diminished as the supplement to citizenship. Public speech gradually became the preserve of educated elites, and speech itself underwent a transformation as scientific discourses grew in prominence. It is no surprise that those who stood by the virtues of scientific enquiry – Locke, Hobbes, Bacon – were also the ones to point out the dangers of rhetoric, now dismissed as the unrestrained indulgence of emotion at the cost of precision, clarity and order.

The development of constitutional, popularly elected, governments has, of course, massively transformed the nature of citizenship, undoubtedly for the better. Nevertheless, rhetoric has largely remained the preserve of elites. The language of formal politics is still constructed around the assumption that the state requires a mediated relationship to its popular citizenry via qualified experts who can communicate interests and formulate demands more effectively than they.

THE 'SCANDAL' OF DEMOCRACY

Jacques Rancière's work is interesting for its refusal to juxtapose simplistically the ancient and the modern models of democratic life. For him ancient democracy remains instructive, but not because it provides a model of participatory government, communication, or eloquent speech. In fact, Rancière rejects the idea that democracy

signifies an institutional arrangement, 'way of life' or electoral system.

Instead, he underscores what he calls the 'scandal' of democracy. The claim that the *demos* should participate in determining the common good was originally an affront to the aristocratic oligarchy. Despite later efforts to present Athens as a unified, self-sustaining order of virtuous citizens, democracy signified less a distinctive way of life than the effort to disrupt it. The demos constituted an unacknowledged sector of society that had no part in its formal governance. Democracy was indeed an insult, the name of an outrageous assertion by 'the part that had no part' that it was, in fact, equal to those traditionally in charge. It is in this scandalous origin of democracy that Rancière discovers what he understands as the genuine meaning of politics.

In *Disagreement* (1999), Rancière contrasts politics with the 'police' order. By police, he means all efforts to regulate and order society, to contain division and to render life in some way predictable and intelligible. This is a practice that falls not only to those who physical impose order, but also to those with any role in

accounting for the various constituent 'parts' of society and their relations. This accounting is practised by philosophy and culture as much as by governments; it forms a certain 'partition of the sensible', that is, a structuring of public and private life that includes some experiences and identities but excludes others.

For Rancière, politics refers to the moment at which the police order is

'Aristotle distinguishes in *The Politics* between humans who can speak and those who merely make noises'

faced by those not included in it, at least not in its own terms. Politics is the confrontation with the established partition of the sensible by a sector that is not recognized as such, and that disagrees with this partition and mobilizes its disagreement as a grievance against it. It is at this moment that a collective subject is formed, one that does not pre-exist this confrontation so much as is formed through it.

Moreover, this group reasserts its place in the order of things, but this time as an equal. For Rancière this claim to equality is a vital, positive move. Politics isn't just mindless resistance or a withdrawal from society. It involves an assertion of one's status as an equal. Now this isn't simply a demand to be *treated* equally, 'helped up', or assisted in a process of redistribution, integration or assimilation. Like the suffragettes, or the civil rights activists of the 1960s, equality is asserted as an *a priori* principle to which the order must adjust; and, in so asserting, the group confronts the established order with its own contingency.

By defining democracy, or democratic politics, in terms of a disagreement, Rancière follows a number of contemporary theorists in

rejecting the tendency to see consensus as the proper outcome of political practices. For Rancière official, institutional politics is not politics at all but, rather, an instance of the police order. Political systems, institutions and practices – in so far as they seek to regulate and stymie the expression of disagreement in favour of a compromise or process of bargaining between established sectors –belong properly to policing, not politics. In this respect, as he points out, politics occurs relatively seldom.

THE RHETORIC OF DISAGREEMENT

Rancière offers us a distinctive way of thinking about the relationship of rhetoric to democracy. First, he reminds us that democracy is not a settled political order but one founded on the scandal of equality asserted by the part that has no part. The founding dissensus undermines all efforts to conceive the democratic polis as an integral way of life or a naturally self-balancing institutional order. That is precisely what both Plato and Aristotle tried to do either by eradicating politics altogether (Plato) or combining it with other systems so as to limit its disruptive effects (Aristotle).

Second, for Rancière the conflict generated around equality is conducted, to a great extent, in terms of speech. The confrontation between the *demos* and the police order is one between those whose speech is not recognized as speech at all and those who determine what is 'genuine' speech. Rancière points to Aristotle's distinction in *The Politics* between humans who can speak and those who merely make noises to distinguish between pleasure and pain. The voices of those outside the partition of the sensible simply do not count as intelligible; their words are not really words but grunts.

To anchor politics to the negotiation of interests or the rational formation of consent presupposes the capacity of all groups involved to be recognized as speaking agents who need to be listened to at all. This is why, in *Hatred of Democracy* (2006),
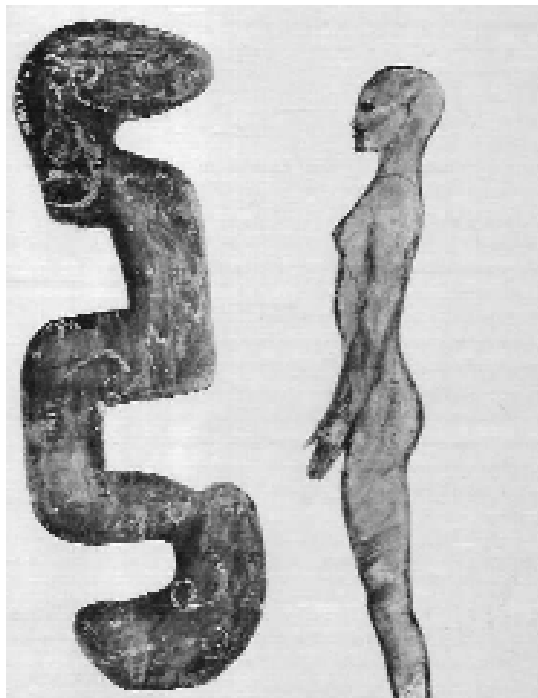
Rancière argues that much of contemporary culture is persistently troubled by the prospect of more democracy: because it offers legitimacy to those who are deemed unfit to speak or driven by an excessive and insupportable lust to satisfy personal desires.

Though, for Rancière, speech is the primary medium of democratic politics, this is not speech as the medium of rationality and universal principles so much as the marker of an aesthetic – or, as Rancière says, 'poetic' – readjustment of the boundaries of community. What matters is not the rationality of the claim but the capacity to declassify the excluded or marginalized and to present themselves as equals. Disagreement, therefore, can be viewed as involving both a pulling away from the established order *and* a claim to be in it under transformed terms.

Democratic speech for Rancière, then, is not equated with the formal techniques of argument or the affirmation of an existing community, as the classical rhetoricians implied. The rhetoric of disagreement, as we might call it, refers us primarily to the *polemical* dimension of speech: the contestation of established norms and practices. In classical rhetoric this polemical orientation falls under the category of 'deliberative' oratory, which is concerned with arguing for or against a particular desired state of affairs. The deliberative mode is distinguished from 'epideictic' (or ceremonial) speech aimed at affirming a sense of common values in the present (either for or against something) and judicial speech, aimed at the forensic examination of the past.

Most rhetoricians understand the future-oriented nature of deliberative rhetoric as 'political' speech proper. It is associated with contests over particular policies where what is at stake is the future direction and deployment of resources of the polity. Deliberative rhetoric refers to the kinds of arguments we might expect to find in democratic assemblies and public spaces. It is a discourse associated with participatory practices; hence it is no surprise, today, to find the terms 'deliberative democracy' and 'discursive democracy' employed to describe an alternative to the formal electoral politics of liberal democracies.

Yet whilst deliberative democracy offers more participation than the aggregative models, its promoters tend to downplay what they describe as the 'rhetorical' dimension of speech – which is associated with emotional appeals and non-rational forms of persuasion – in favour of formal principles of communication. Without first disciplining speech towards the production of consensual principles, it is felt, all manner of 'distortions' are believed to interfere in the practice of deliberation.

In Rancière's terms, 'deliberative democracy' and 'discursive democracy' insist on the presence of some prior police order before democratic speech can occur. They fall under the category that he designates 'parapolitics': absorption of political contestation by mimicking it to some degree, but preventing the formation of new subjects. Discursive and deliberative democrats promote rational procedures to determine what counts as a proper utterance within deliberative dialogue. Whatever virtues we may find in these models, they do not constitute,

> '"deliberative democracy" and "discursive democracy" do not constitute, for Rancière, a genuine form of democratic politics'

for Rancière, a genuine form of democratic politics. For him, *dissensus* is the primary feature of political deliberation.

But it would be wrong to conceive of democratic speech purely in terms of deliberative modes of argumentation. A democratic rhetoric, in Rancière's terms, need not be limited to deliberative objectives; it could utilize the entire field of rhetorical devices. His analysis focuses on disagreement as a relationship that *exceeds* any effort to regularize persuasion through a typology of techniques and devices. In this sense, the whole tradition of rhetorical advice would form a kind of police operation, as he understands it.

If we are to indicate any kind of rhetorical form of democratic speech, we have to do so in the awareness that democratic politics always exceeds form, by definition. What we might employ Rancière's work for is not to elaborate new rhetorical techniques but to look more closely at how oppressed and marginalized groups invent *their own* terms of reference and how these enter into the mainstream.

On this analysis, we have to accept that a rhetoric, or form of democratic speech, that invites citizens to *overcome* the distance between themselves and the community is anything but political. The gap between citizens as members of a regularized order of rights and responsibilities and as speaking subjects can never really be closed. The tension between citizenship and democratic politics permits us to contest, whether eloquently or not, who says what and how.

James Martin is Reader in Political Theory at Goldsmiths, University of London. He is currently writing a book, Politics and Rhetoric. *This article is an edited extract from a talk he gave to the Politics/Political Theory Forum in March 2009.*
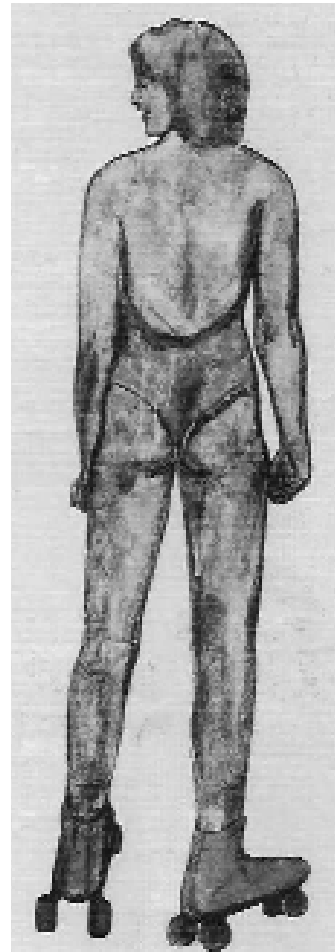
Mob Rule?

Giovanni Navarria *asks if online petitions are good or bad for democracy*

In November 2006, in collaboration with MySociety.org (a non-partisan organization based in London), the UK government, under the leadership of Tony Blair, launched a new service: a website (http://petitions.pm.gov.uk/) on which citizens can create new, or sign up to existing, petitions addressed to the Prime Minister's Cabinet.

Petitions are not new in the United Kingdom. The right to petition the monarch for redress of personal grievances dates back to the *Magna Carta*. However, compared to traditional petitions, which often entail a complex (sometimes cumbersome) bureaucratic process – and which, to be successful, must rely on a degree of organization and have some financial backing – it takes no more than five minutes to place a petition on the UK government website, and even fewer to sign it.

The website has been a success. In its first year it published more than 14 thousand petitions which gathered nearly six million signatures. By comparison, between 1989 and 2007 (according to official data) the average annual number of traditional petitions received by the British Parliament was just 327.

Blair praised the success of the e-petition website as a sign of the health of democracy in Britain. He also pointed to the positive impact the internet has on the way in which the dialogue between representatives and citizens is organized.

A closer look at the story of one particular online petition highlights the ambiguous challenges the use of the internet in the politics of everyday life can pose to a representative system.

THE ROAD TAX PETITION

The road tax petition is the most successful online petition to date in the UK: between the end of 2006 and early 2007 it collected almost 2 million signatures. The pressure generated by this impressive success was crucial in the government's decision, one year later, to postpone *sine die* its plans for a new road tax (which many considered an unpopular but necessary means of safeguarding the environment).

Started by Peter Roberts, an

> 'the internet is a powerful political instrument that can significantly alter the traditional role citizens play in established democratic systems'

accountant manager at an English manufacturing company, the road petition was a direct challenge of the government's intention to tackle road congestion and reduce CO_2 emissions by introducing a nationwide pay-as-you-drive tax for all motorists. Roberts's petition, submitted through the Cabinet's website, asked the prime minister to scrap the new scheme on the grounds that it was unfair to motorists. A stealth congestion charge – taxation on fuel – was already in use, Roberts argued: 'the more you travel, the more tax you pay'.

The petition's success exceeded all expectations. Roberts sent e-mails to just twenty-nine friends and posted links on websites that deal with drivers' issues: after just one week the petition had collected over 14 thousand signatures. By its deadline, 20 February 2007, it had over 1.8 million signatures. At one point the petition generated so much web-traffic that it crashed the prime minister's website.

More than that: in a short period, with little organizational effort and no financial commitment, a citizen with no previous experience in either politics or petitioning achieved something unthinkable for any traditional petitioner in similar circumstances: it not only attracted the attention of many people and of the media; it also generated enough public pressure to force the government to forgo its plan for a new tax scheme. As Tony Blair noted, Roberts succeeded, with just few clicks of a mouse, in generating a national debate.

CONSEQUENCES OF THE PETITION

Initially – despite the growing number of signatures – the Cabinet tried to minimize the significance of the petition. However, by the February 2007 deadline, Prime Minister Blair could no longer avoid addressing the issue publicly. To explain the government's position, he both wrote an article on *The Guardian* and personally emailed the petition's signatories, reassuring all the interested parties that the proposed scheme was not about imposing 'stealth taxes', and, most important, that the government had not yet made a final decision about the road tax.

Nonetheless, the clamour surrounding the petition did not die away. The unparalleled success and the location (the government website) of the petition meant that the media

and the opposition in Parliament could turn the electronic signatures into a national referendum: they presented the signatures as evidence of the public's hostility towards the new tax scheme.

The conservative daily newspaper *The Daily Telegraph* used the petition as the basis of an active campaign, lasting several months, against the government, 'The road to ruin'. By the end of 2007, the current prime minister, Gordon Brown, at last decided to listen – as the *Telegraph* put it – 'to his constituents' and instruct his cabinet to ditch the scheme. The *Telegraph* and other dailies emphasized the role played by the e-petition in Brown's decision. Subsequently, in March 2008, Ruth Kelly, the then transport secretary, told the BBC that the government was finally withdrawing its proposal: 'People legitimately raised concerns about privacy, fairness and how any scheme would be enforced. We don't have all the answers to those questions yet.' Hence, she concluded, until these questions were answered the government had to put the scheme on hold.

Peter Roberts claimed that the new e-petition service had clearly improved the quality of democracy in Britain; for without it – in the case of the road tax – the government would have certainly gone ahead with its plan. Others, for example Steve Richards, the chief political columnist of the *Independent*, labelled the transport secretary's decision 'a classic case of a necessary policy killed by cowardice'. Though new laws are needed to safeguard the environment, he argued, the electronic protest of a tiny minority of the population managed to send the government into a frenzy and decisively affect the rights of the silent majority. In a country of sixty million people, Richards pointed out, this is hardly a sign that democracy is in good health.

These two views represent two extreme views of a complex issue: is the web good or bad for democracy?

DEMOCRACY AND THE INTERNET

From its origins in the 1970s as a computer-geek niche, in the last two decades the internet has evolved into a complex communication network used by more than a billion people worldwide. It forms the backbone of a broad range of activities: from communicating with peers to working; from shopping to learning; from leisure to politics. Many – rightly – see in this network not only a formidable driver of social and economic change, but also a powerful political instrument that can significantly alter the traditional role citizens play in established democratic systems.

Consider the UK: a representative system in which, traditionally, the fundamental role of citizens is to take part in regular elections in order to choose representatives who then govern on their behalf. That simple act of casting a vote, of choosing one candidate (or one party) over others, has two main advantages: it gives the people a chance to evaluate periodically their political leadership; and, at the same time, it gives the members of that political leadership enough time to earn their voters' trust for a new mandate. Ideally, citizens should rarely be called into action between elections.

But with its persistent expansion, its scope and reach in society, and its embedded resistance to political control, the internet has the potential to affect crucially the balance of that

'with just few clicks of a mouse, Roberts succeeded in generating a national debate'

system: it allows citizens to break up this relationship between voters and representatives into a series of public acts of assessment which can be as politically significant as an election – but the timing of which, unlike the latter, are never predictable. It is difficult to say to what extent and in which ways this never-ending and unregulated process of evaluation affects the quality of the democratic process.

Broadly speaking, the internet affects the functioning of a representative system at least on two different levels: it provides a whole new range of tools and spaces that on the one hand enable citizens to monitor constantly those in power; on the other hand, it increase the opportunities for citizens to be more directly involved in the politics of every day life.

The case of Britain provides us with some good examples of this dual effect: through the internet citizens can access websites that feed them with crucial information to monitor what their representatives are doing on their behalf (for example, *Theyworkforyou.com* is a non-partisan website that records the daily activities of members of parliament – such as voting records and speeches [available on the website in text and
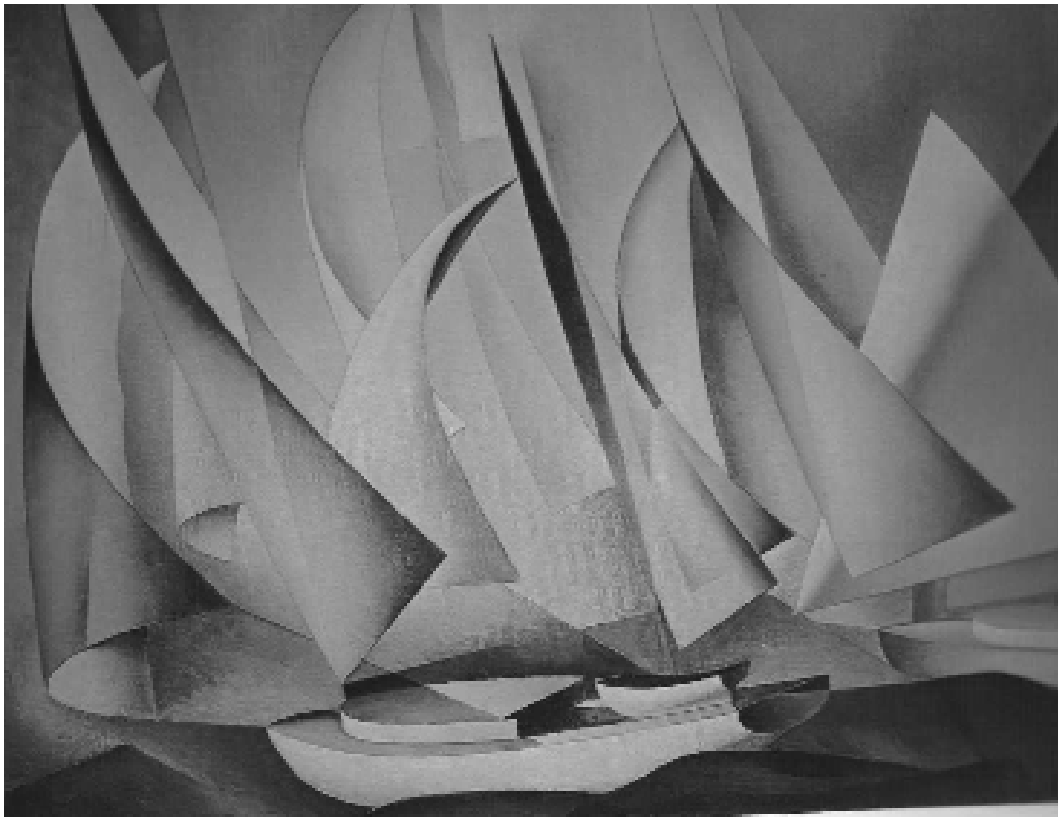
representatives' work, and openly question the policies they advocate can guarantee a certain degree of transparency and accountability; these are fundamental elements of a healthy democratic system. Yet it is important to understand that the excessive use of fashionable new tools that allow government to 'reach out' to the people can sometimes not only bring a representative system to a standstill. They can also damage its essence: the function of the elected representative.

The representative, who is at the core of the political system, is never simply the echo chamber of his/her own constituency's will; she must play the more important and proactive role of mediating between the will of the people and the needs of the state. The successful exercise of such role can only be guaranteed if a fine balance is established between the independence of action of the representatives and the need for the electing constituencies to assess their representatives' work.

The marriage between the internet and a representative system is only doomed if and when that fine balance is significantly altered. This is what happened when the UK government – clearly without properly understanding the long term consequences of its actions – equipped its website with an e-petition tool. Otherwise, the ease with which the internet allows political dissent to organized and cultivated through can only be an asset for democracy, one we should protect and nurture.

Giovanni Navarria is a PhD candidate and a Research Associate at CSD/DPIR. This is an edited extract from a paper entitled 'MoveOn and the Travel Tax, a tale of two petitions in the world of Web 2.0', presented at the conference 'Social Web – Towards Networked Protest Politics?' 7-8 November 2008, University of Siegen, Germany.

video]); and blogs and free video-sharing services (such as *youtube.com*) provide access to independent media platforms that allow citizens to denounce wrongdoings, and to openly question who gets what when and how without relying on public service broadcasting organization to do so on their behalf. Guido Fawkes's famous blog – devoted to uncovering 'parliamentary plots, rumours and conspiracies' – attracts over a hundred

> 'a web-tool that allows citizens to cast a vote on important and complex issues at unprecedented speed opens up the doors to the worst form of plebiscitary democracy'

thousand visitors a month.

Now, since 2006, thanks to the e-petition website, citizens have an official means with which to engage directly with the Cabinet. This new tool is a perfect example of the challenges the internet can pose to a representative system. The website's aim was laudable: to strengthen the government's relationship with the

public. However, a web-tool that allows citizens to record their own views or cast a vote on important and complex issues at unprecedented speed can gradually corrupt the whole idea of governing through representatives. In fact, it opens up the doors to the worst form of plebiscitary democracy.

To make things worse, the government, by hosting them on its own website, has given e-petitions the official seal of recognition. This has increased the political weight of the petitions submitted through the site and put the government in an awkward position in the eyes of both the public and the media. It is as though the government has publicly announced: let the people speak out loud through this new service; their voices will count. Unsurprisingly, once the people spoke, the media and the opposition parties asked to the government: why are you not listening?

Putting citizens in the position to scrutinize continuously the use (and abuse) of power, assess their

Book Review

Invented Edens: Techno-Cities of the Twentieth Century

Robert H. Kargon and Arthur P. Molella

Simon Joss

In 1942 work began on Oak Ridge, a city built from scratch in the heart of East Tennessee. The city's planners, inspired by the Garden City and New Town movements, envisaged this as both an innovative and a liveable city: residential areas were separated from business and industrial zones and built in clusters resembling typical American small towns; new high-tech building materials were used to produce low cost and prefabricated housing; and community living was promoted by designing town centres that were family-friendly – there were dedicated play areas and community gathering places – and by giving residents a sense of self-determination.

However, Oak Ridge harboured a secret unknown to all but its inhabitants: it was the headquarters of the Manhattan Project set up by the US federal government to build the atomic bomb. Thus, its small town residential areas sat, rather oddly, alongside a massive uranium enrichment plant covering over 40 acres.

Over half a century later, in 1996, work began on Celebration, another brand-new city, this one near Orlando in Florida. This, too, was to be a high-tech city using state of the art technological innovation. However, unlike Oak Ridge, Celebration is far from a secret; it has been given maximum publicity by its parent company. The Walt Disney World Company has commercialized it as a particular kind of futuristic 'dream' city blending together notions of traditional American town living with the application of the latest internet and tele-communication technologies built around the entertainment industry.

These are two examplars of what Robert H Kargon and Arthur P Molella label 'techno-city' in their path-breaking book *Invented Edens: Techno-Cities of the Twentieth Century* (MIT Press, 2008). According to the authors, techno-cities are cities specifically planned and developed in conjunction with large technological or industrial projects. They come in various shapes and forms, each embodying a particular relationship between technology, urban development and concepts of community typical of the era in which they were conceived.

Early forms were chiefly inspired by Ebenezer Howard's Garden City
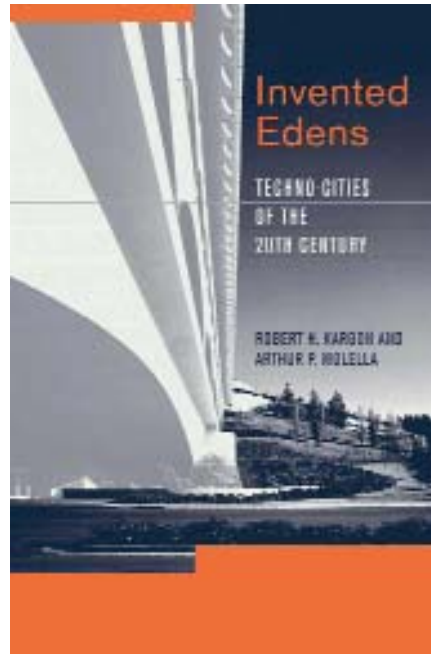
model; these were followed in the interwar period by new developments, such as Norris (USA), Salzgitter (Germany) and Torviscosa (Italy), heavily fashioned by Roosevelt's 'New Deal' regeneration programme and Nazi and Fascist ideology and politics, respectively. With the Second World War came a new emphasis on military technology, such as illustrated by the 'Bomber City' concept (Detroit) and Oak Ridge.

In the Cold War era the focus shifted to developing dispersed cities in order to mitigate the threat from atomic fallout. Urban decentralization and regionalism gained further salience from the 1960s in the form of cities such as Ivrea (Italy) and Ciudad Guyana (Venezuela), which represented attempts to counterbalance urban industrialization and modern technology with social equity and community through new urban design. The planning behind Ciuadad Guyana was especially innovative in that it involved an international team of social scientists alongside architects and planners. Celebration, the final example in this comprehensive study, adds a particular 'postmodern' twist to this emphasis on community in the age of modern technology: it enacts memories of, and creates a desire for, an idealized American way of life that its inhabitants would not have actually experienced and that, at its heart, is despite appearances, deeply industrialized.

From a conceptual viewpoint, it may be debatable how exactly one defines a 'techno-city', and whether the various examples in this volume have sufficient commonality to form a distinctive class of urban developments. As the authors make clear, however, 'techno-city' is not a historic term used at the time by the initiators of the cities being analysed. Rather, the authors use the notion of techno-cities retrospectively, as a category with which to analyse the evolving, and frequently ambiguous, role played by technology in fashioning urban developments across cultures and eras throughout the twentieth century. In doing so, they succeed in revealing deep conceptual, structural and ideological tensions and contradictions arising from the attempt to reconcile, through a form of 'techno-nostalgia', the ideal of modern technology and industry with the ideal of a return to an (imagined) pre-industrial Eden, As such, this unique historical analysis provides important insights and lessons concerning contemporary debates about urban regeneration, sustainable development, and the current fashion for so-called 'eco-cities'.

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Continued from page 2

working people these changes are, to say the least, inhospitable: they affect their lives and livelihoods in ways that make even bare survival a grueling daily struggle.

In the past decade more than half a million slum-dwellers have been evicted from the urban areas of Delhi. The demolition of slums has become such a routine exercise now that it is now hardly mentioned in the mainstream media. Slum eviction is of course one of the most visible and brutal ways of refashioning urban landscape.

There are also other, related, processes that are re-making Delhi's urban space and leading to the eviction of the poor. These include the closure of small-scale manufacturing and commercial units; the framing of zoning laws, regulations and court orders against informal sector workers such as rickshaw-pullers, hawkers and waste-pickers; the gentrification of older areas formerly occupied by low income households; restricting access to basic services like water, electricity, sanitation, health and education through the introduction of user fee; cordoning off public spaces such as parks and streets for private use of middle and upper middle classes; and bringing about corporate-friendly changes in the legislative and administrative framework of city planning and development.

The neoliberalization of Delhi's space and state structures is creating a volatile situation in the city; the result is a breakdown of social solidarity and an atmosphere of generalized insecurity. Nowhere is this more evident than in the rapid proliferation of gated communities and privatized security arrangements all over Delhi. Many concerned individuals and organizations are today forced to ask: is Delhi gradually becoming an apartheid city?

Lalit Batra, an independent researcher working on urban policy and globalization in India, was a Visiting Fellow at DPIR in 2008.
http://www.wmin.ac.uk/sshl/page-3639

Governance & Sustainability Seminar Series

Inaugural seminars: 2008

The Governance & Sustainability Programme's inaugural seminar series – January to June 2008 – focussed on the theoretical, methodological and public policy dimensions of the emerging field of governance and sustainability studies.

Seminar series 2008-9 'Between a Rock & a Hard Place: The Politics of Regulating for Sustainability'

Scholars working at the intersection of governance and sustainability have done important work documenting the proliferation of regulatory instruments designed to achieve sustainability: these instruments – deployed both inside and outside traditional government – include 'eco-labelling', voluntary agreements, environmental management standards and citizens' juries. The aim of this seminar series was to explore the political implications of environmental regulation and its potential for achieving a more sustainable and socially just society.

Professor Andrew Jordan from the University of East Anglia gave an invaluable assessment of contemporary research into governance for sustainable development, identifying some key gaps where there is potential for future research.

Professor Andrew Stirling presented his innovative project on energy policy, highlighting the need for systems of policy appraisal which 'open up' rather than 'close down' opportunities for public engagement.

At the next seminar, **Dr Andreas Philippopoulos-Mihalopoulos** from the Law School at University of Westminster provided a fascinating theoretical discussion of the problematic relationship between the environment and the law.

This theme was later taken up by **Dr Mark Pennington** of Queen Mary, University of London, whose stringent critique of centralized political approaches to addressing environmental problems prompted an especially lively debate (*see article, pages 3-6*).

At a further seminar, **Ben Shaw**, Head of the Environment group at the Policy Studies Institute (University of Westminster), presented the case for environmental taxes, giving some interesting and important insights into the work of the Green Fiscal Commission in this area.

The seminar series was rounded off by **Dr John Barry**, who provided a powerful critique of mainstream economics and made a timely case for a radical re-thinking of the relationship between politics and economics.

The seminars were well attended by colleagues from across the University of Westminster, as well as by activists, policy-makers and researchers from a range of institutions.

For more information go to http://www.wmin.ac.uk/sshl/page-2675