

## **“ACT GLOBAL TO LIVE LOCAL” - GLOBAL TRADE, POLITICS AND THE NEED FOR A REFORMED MODERNISM.**

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### **ABSTRACT**

**This paper turns the old adage, "Think Global, Act Local" on its head. It evaluates the different levels of action for sustainability - from the local through to the global. It argues that at a local, household, building, even neighbourhood, level, the technology, knowledge and means exist to create sustainable communities. Moreover, it argues that living and working in this paradigm is a far more effective means of creating truly democratic (equitable) and employed (economically viable) societies.**

**But, unless we save the planet from its current path of destructive consumerism and production all local action will ultimately be undermined by an escalating conflict over resources in which the global "haves" will use their force and might to maintain current consumption and production patterns at the increasing expense of the "have-nots" - a polarity which is increasing at an alarming rate. We are facing the nasty side of globalization - the post-modern fight for hearts and minds carried on through the neo-classical economic agents of the WTO, IMF and World Bank and echoed in religious dogma and the political polarisation of east and west. On the other hand, paradoxically and ironically, global systems are also essential for creating the environment within which local sustainable communities can live and be. We need a reformed modernism.**

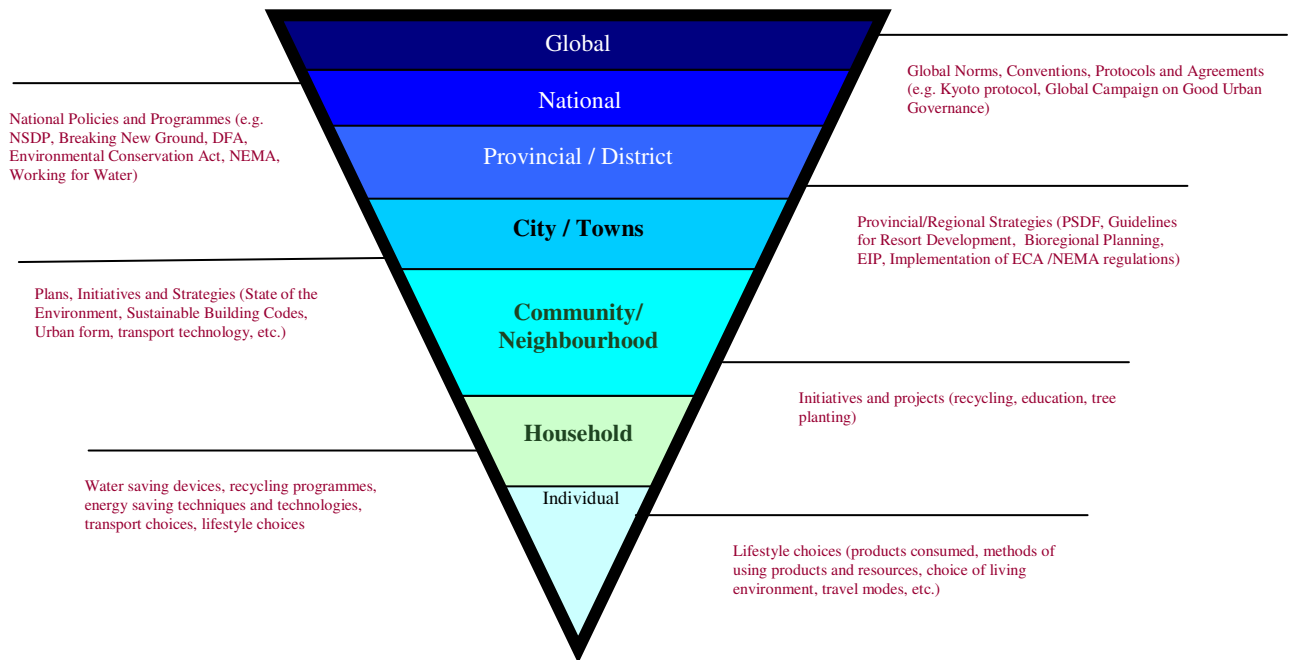
**The bottom line? In order to be free to act locally, we must act globally to establish a reformed global modernism that rests on the pillars of a global resource management system (Jared Diamond), built around a globally constructed democracy (George Monbiot) and a personal/ political/ legal/ religious ethic that supports an earth first paradigm of living and being (Cormac Cullinan). It suggests that perhaps the new adage could be recast as "Act Global to Live (in all senses of the word) Local" - reformed modernism in a nutshell.**

### **PREFACE**

This paper is an attempt to place my activity as a planner in context. As planners we have on the one hand the enviable luxury to 'start afresh' with our plans, but on the other we are also in the frustrating position of still having to place this in the context of the world as it is today. Whilst planners are increasingly blowing the whistle with the 'business as usual' approach, we also often end-up perpetuating the unsustainable systems which our profession has committed itself to address.

Having attended and been involved for almost 6 years in the SBE series of conferences, I have always come away inspired and energized by the exciting and innovative practices showcased and discussed. In fact, I have come away convinced that the means exist for us to live sustainably right now if the systems in which we operate were still not so firmly entrenched in old ways of doing things. Going

back into the daily grind of planning, it is difficult, if not impossible, to bring these ideas into our everyday planning work. Grappling with the conundrum has convinced me that in order for us live sustainably locally, we must address the global systems within which we operate. The one transformation is not possible without the other. At a previous SBE conference I presented the concept of the inverted triangle to illustrate this point.



The point being made here is that as we move down the triangle we as individuals have increasing control over the systems that shape sustainable development. At an individual level we can choose to live completely sustainably. However, our ability to extend this is also shaped by the degree to which the political, social and economic system within which we exist allows this to occur. This ultimately goes all the way up to the global systems within which we find ourselves. In a world that is inevitably globalising we have to address these systems as well.

This paper is thus an attempt to explore the forces that are currently shaping our global systems, what we can do with this knowledge and then to suggest some possible ideas as to possible alternatives. In writing this paper I am very aware of the fact that I am not an academic, nor someone who can claim expert knowledge in any of the areas covered. However, I do believe that it is vital that, as we explore the exciting possibilities of creating sustainable built environments at this conference, we also begin to seriously explore the world in which these will hopefully become commonplace. Perhaps we might even look back and see in this and other similar initiatives as the birth of a world of exciting new possibilities.

*“...the roots of many of our urban and environmental problems lie in global attitudes to economic growth and redistribution, and we should not hesitate to draw attention to that. American planning theorist Bob Beauregard has made the obvious but perfectly true statement – you will never get good planning without good institutions. That is as true for New Orleans as it is for cities in Africa. Until we have just and progressive institutions at both national and global levels, the best efforts of planners can be negated again and again. What is important however, is that we are not compliant with a system which entrenches inequalities and environmental destruction.”* Watson (2006), p10

## MODERNISM, ALTERNATIVE MODERNITIES AND REFORMED MODERNISM

Societal and cultural modernisation in a globalising and globalised world is inevitable. A form of modernity that incorporates a global discourse around grand narratives is also necessary and essential. Indeed, the need for utopias and grand visions has perhaps never been more important than at this juncture in modern history where the pursuit of individual and capitalist growth has come face-to-face with natural and ecological limits. Inasmuch as traditional modernity defined a vision for human development and progress (albeit Western inspired) based on specific sociohistorical conditions, this type of grand vision is still of critical importance in our globalised world. However, the premise of this vision needs to be informed by our new socioeconomic reality. A reality where there are limits to growth and where new voices are being added to the global debate, underlining the importance of creating space for local and regional identity, economy and culture.

### Traditional modernity

Modernity has traditionally been associated with the West and linked to the specific social, cultural, scientific, political and economic transformation which occurred specifically in Europe some centuries ago. Over the intervening period it has grown and spread.

*“awakened by contact; transported through commerce, administered by empires, bearing colonial inscriptions; propelled by nationalism; and now increasingly steered by global media, migration, and capital. And it continues to ‘arrive and emerge,’ as always in opportunistic fragments accompanied by utopic rhetorics, but no longer from the West alone...”* Gaonkar (2001), p1

Traditional modernity has both its good and bad aspects. These differ depending on who is describing them and their particular world view and political outlook. This is a debate in its own right. However, one key aspect of traditional modernity (good or bad), has been the development of the concept of the individual as a free agent. This is supported by democratic, secular states run by bureaucracies of technocrats. This concept has been further developed and built into neoliberal economics as the cornerstone of the global economy. In this rhetoric the unfettered freedom to trade, free of constraint and barriers is idealised as the way to bring the benefits of economic progress to all. This idealisation has in turn been built around the incredible luxury of surplus and cheap oil based energy.

Such a conceptualization of the individual or the world economy is not possible without the means to liberate the productive powers ‘slumbering’ of our economies, generate the surplus value and thus create the conditions within which governments and economies can increase our free time and disposable income – this has been the luxury granted by oil.

The irony and paradox is that this very same rhetoric creates the conditions within which the more economically and politically powerful can pursue their own ends, effectively undermining that very freedom of choice for others.

*“President Bush seems to have a different vision. Like so many defenders of the current global economic model, he argues that democracy is not so much an active choice as a trickle-down effect of economic growth: free markets create free peoples. Would that democracy really were such a laissez – faire matter. Unfortunately, investors have proven themselves all too willing to support oppressive monarchies like Saudi-Arabia’s, or Communist authoritarianism in China, as long as these regimes crack open markets to foreign companies. In the race for cheap labour and precious natural resources, pro-democracy movements are often trampled.”* Klein (2002), p 44

## **Alternative modernities**

Traditional modernity thus has both its positive and negative aspects. However, as Gaonkar (2001) and others such as Arjun Appadurai (who thinks with and against various discourses on modernity) have argued, modernity is no longer something that simply comes from the West or from a Western discourse.

*“The proposition that societal modernisation, once activated, moves inexorably towards establishing a certain type of mental outlook (scientific rationalism, pragmatic instrumentalism, secularism) and a certain type of institutional order (popular government, bureaucratic administration, market-driven industrial economy) irrespective of the culture and politics of a given place is simply not true. Nor does cultural modernity invariably take the form of an adversary culture that privileges the individual’s need for self-expression and self-realisation over the claims of community. Still, many of the aforementioned cultural forms, social practices, and institutional arrangements do surface in most places in the wake of modernity. But at each national and cultural site, those elements are put together (reticulated) in a unique and contingent formation in response to local culture and politics.”* Gaonkar (2001), p 16.

This understanding adds an important and positive dimension to modernity. It acknowledges the fact that different places, cultures and societies engage with and respond to the pervading forces of modernity in different ways. Importantly, it recognizes that this adds new dimensions and voices to the development of modernity. The great thrust of sameness towards some ‘pure’ and ‘universal’ end-point that traditional modernity implies is instead ‘articulated’ and massaged to fit different cultures, societies and economies. This may seem to be in direct contradiction to the concept of modernity, the idea that different places have their own take on modernity. Gaonkar (2001) argues that different starting points for the transition to modernity lead to different outcomes. But the culture and society nevertheless are transformed by that process. “..alternative modernities produce combinations and recombinations that are endlessly surprising” (p23). The emergence of the Bollywood movie industry, and the increasing enjoyment of these films by audiences outside of India are perhaps a case in point.

## **Reformed modernity**

Reformed modernity describes not a particular epoch in the evolution of modernity, or even an existing cultural or societal form of modernity. If traditional modernity is about a grand rhetoric and ideal for a grand social evolution – a path along which all are marching, and if alternative modernities is about the way in which this march is absorbed, taken on and ‘articulated’ by different cultures, then reformed modernism is about the need for global agreement on how these two forces can work together in the context of our limits to growth.

To a large extent the concepts embodied in traditional modernity were possible because of the technological, scientific and cultural advances brought about by the new capitalist mode of production. This in turn was possible because of the abundant supply of raw materials, natural and human resources.

Reformed modernity thus recognizes the need for a global vision of our common future, but within which we can pursue our local and regional paths in the context of limited resources and the need change production and consumption patterns in keeping with these limits.

## **Table1: Definitions of Modernity**

<b>Modernity</b>	<b>Alternative Modernities</b>	<b>Reformed Modernism</b>
Rationalism, pragmatic instrumentalism, secularism, popular government, bureaucratic administration, market-driven industrial economy (cowboy economy), the individual's need for self-expression and self-realisation over the claims of community	Elements of modernity are put together (reticulated) in a unique and contingent formations in response to local culture and politics, giving rise to different and new forms of expression of 'modern' culture and society	Still fundamentally seated in the recognition of the positive aspects of modernity – rationalism, pragmatic instrumentalism and a form of market based economy (spaceship earth), reticulated and informed by local and regional cultures and conditions. However, the basic recognition that individual and market growth must be 'limited' by our common need to protect and manage the resources of the world sustainably and to enable equitable access to these resources.

There are already strong elements of reformed modernity expressing themselves through commitments to the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation (JPOI) emanating from the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development and through the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). However, these both remain largely statements of intent and still largely couched within the paradigm of traditional modernity. They assume that increased economic growth with some form of trickle-down effect will help develop us out of poverty.

The great problem with the concept of reformed modernity is the fact that at one level it appeals for change amongst those powerful nations and industrial economies who have most to lose by such an approach. However, idealists such as George Monbiot (2004) have persuasive ideas about how the power of the weaker nations can be harnessed to overcome this. This is something the paper will return to.

In conclusion: As societies and cultures all around the world begin to engage with, and define for themselves, what modernity means (and to manage those changes), we need to create the global conditions within which this can happen without fear or domination by a single power. In retrospect the unilateral invasion of Iraq outside of UN sanction may be construed as the global equivalent of Julius Caesar's crossing of the Rubicon to bring his army to the door of republican Rome. This is the cross-roads at which we sit. The ability to reform our global dialogue and relations for sustainable development or the continuing path of development of traditional modernity, driven by powerful industrial economies and ultimately resulting in increased global conflict and breakdown of global norms.

## **COLLAPSE – CAN WE CHOOSE TO SUCCEED OR FAIL?**

Jared Diamond (2005) in his book, "*Collapse, How Societies Choose to Fail or Survive*," documents in detail the collapse and success of various societies in the past. His explorations include the collapse of Easter Island (Rapa Nui), the Pitcairn and Henderson Islands, the Anasazi in America, the Maya, Greenland Norse and in modern times the Rwandan genocide (amongst others). He also explores why other societies faced with resource and other challenges managed to survive, including Japan and the

Inuit (who survived when the Greenland Norse collapsed). From this he draws out five factors which played a role in the survival or collapse of societies. These are:

1. **Environmental damage** (damage inadvertently inflicted on the environment – the extent being dependent of the rate of damage and the ability of the environment to recover – fragility or resilience of the environment)
2. **Climate change** (today we see this as global warming, but over the period of recent human history the environment has gone through various periods of cooling and warming, wetter and dryer times. Factors influencing this have to do with variations in the sun's heat, volcanic eruptions, and changes in the earth's axis. Such a period of cooling impacted on the survival of the Greenland Norse (but benefited the Inuit sharing the same land). Drought also affected ancient societies much more severely – especially if populations had grown to the extent allowed by a period of relative good rains. Diamond (2005) argues that it is thus the combination of climate change and human environmental impact that creates the problem – in turn linked to the fragility or resilience of the environment)
3. **Hostile neighbours** (Many societies live in proximity to other communities. A society may thus be able to hold off hostile neighbours, but ultimately succumb to conquest due to a weakening – often caused the effects of environmental damage. The obvious cause would thus be conquest, but the reason being due to a weakening as a result of drought or some other factor)
4. **Friendly trade partners** (decreased support from friendly neighbours can also be a factor contributing to collapse. If a particular society relied on certain key raw materials or other inputs from trade, which in turn ceased for any reason, this could also lead to collapse for societies living in environmentally fragile circumstances. A good modern example is the reliance on oil trade for the economic functioning of the world).
5. **Society's response to its environmental problems** (Different societies respond differently to similar problems. These depend on political, economic, and social institutions and on cultural values. It is this factor in particular which is so significant to the challenge we face in the world today where we are required to change our production and consumption patterns in order to respond effectively to our global resource and economic challenges. The mindset of traditional modernity Vs. the framework of a reformed modernism).

Of the five, the first four may or may not be present (or prove to be a defining feature) in each case studied by Diamond. However, the fifth, society's response to its environmental problems, always proves significant.

Diamond (2005), makes the point however, that not all collapses of societies can be attributed to his five point framework. He has specifically chosen to look at these examples because of their relevance to us today.

## **THE CURRENT CONTEXT AND CHALLENGES**

In viewing the global political and economic environment today the overarching impression is that the major powers from the IMF, the World Bank, the WTO and along with them their drivers in the USA and the EU are still working on the assumption that we can develop ourselves out of poverty without any of the environmental consequences that implies. This is still very much the old neoconservative modernist paradigm. As Watson (2006) argues:

*“It has been estimated that on average economic growth tends to benefit the rich 120x more than it benefits the poor. Moreover, the amount of growth needed to benefit the poor (in terms of present rates of trickle down) is environmentally unsustainable – we do not have the*

*resources to support it. Already our obsession with growth has led to a major resource crisis – most significantly, the likely end of oil – in our lifetimes – as well as clear indications of climate change, water depletion and food insecurities. You are probably familiar with the various ecological footprint measures, that claim that if we all consumed resources at the level of European countries we would need 2.1 x planet earths to sustain us.”* Watson (2006), p X

In addition, the increasing pressure over access to resources is likely to result in increasing levels of conflict. In an article published by Sustainable Development International (2004), titled “*Environment wars from human consumption*” it is noted that the links between human conflict and environmental factors are poorly understood.

Steve Loneragan, Director of the UN Environment Program (UNEP) Division of Early Warning and Assessment (DEWA), is quoted as saying. “Under climate change we expect more extreme events, more floods, more droughts,”.

Aside from oil and the obvious conflicts around this, lack of water is one underlying cause of conflict between Israel and Syria and Israel and the Palestinians. Environmental damage has been a factor in political unrest in nations from the Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda and Haiti. Based on the research of Diamond, we can expect such conflicts to increasingly emerge.

Raymond Williams, the great English social commentator and activist wrote as far back as in 1982 with incredible and scary foresight:

*“ to see ahead a situation in which the shortage of certain key raw materials and commodities, which are necessary to maintain existing patterns of production and existing high levels of consumption, will create such tension within societies which have got used to these patterns that they could in majority be prepared to resort to every kind of pressure – not only political and sub-military, but openly military – to assure what they see as the supplies necessary to the maintenance of their order of life. This is already a dangerous current of opinion in the United States”* Raymond Williams, 1982

What makes this scenario more worrying is that as we increasingly push the boundaries of our resource utilisation, one environmental catastrophe can be a trigger that has spiraling consequences. Thus one could foresee a scenario in which a major drought or crop failure (perhaps through a volcanic eruption causing a shorter summer for a few years) could lead to widespread starvation. Link this to the genetic mutation of the Bird Flu (because now people are eating anything) to airborne transmission leads to a global outbreak. Bring in global warming, the spread of malaria and wide-scale migrations...It is a scare scenario – but not completely out of the bounds of possibility.

### **Unsustainable consumerism**

Modern patterns of human consumption are unsustainable. However, consumption has also gone way beyond what we as humans actually need. It has become an end in itself. It has become a central part of traditional modernity. Indeed, for many the ability to consume more and more has become synonymous with freedom, democracy and everything that traditional modernity stands for. One sometimes gets the feeling that in the rhetoric of our current world, the implication is that if we are not consuming more, we are not living.

Environmental pressures caused by consumers include the loss of forests and wetlands, overfishing, and transport, which collectively use nearly 30% of world energy and 95% of its oil.

Sustainable Development International (2004) reports that both private consumption expenditures and production efficiencies have increased radically in the last fifty years. The amount spent on goods and services by households has risen dramatically from US\$4.8 trillion in 1960 to US\$20tr in 2000.

In 2000 average production processes in the US took 12 hours to produce what it took 40 hours in 1959. What took 18th century workers four years to produce is now completed in one week (Sustainable Development International – 2004).

### **Is consumption really making us happier?**

The same report suggests that expenditure on many individual luxury items is enough to meet basic needs. The US\$15bn spent on perfumes would cover clean drinking water for all for \$10bn. The elimination of hunger and malnutrition could possibly cost US\$ 19bn, close to the US\$18bn spent on makeup every year. Ocean cruises cost \$14bn, enough to pay twice over for immunising every child and securing universal literacy. The World Values Survey 1990-2000 found that income and happiness tend to track well until about US\$13,000 (R91 000 @ R7/1US\$) annual income per person (using 1995 prices). After that, additional income yielded only modest additions in self-reported happiness.

Conversely, suffering the consequences of our current developmental ‘trickle down’, consumption expectations and associated cultural values could make us really unhappy.

### **ECONOMY, JOBS AND LOCAL DEMOCRACY**

It is really at the local / regional level where many of the answers and solutions to living within our resource constraints exist and where we can draw inspiration for the future. Not only do gatherings such as the SBE series of conferences show the amazing levels of innovation and creative thinking that makes this possible, it also these approaches which offer the means to bring people and greater equity back into the picture. At one level, the local level, one could argue that we already have the means and understanding to live sustainably and completely within the limits of our resources – and to do so in a manner that is comfortable and empowering.

However, if we are to ensure that these processes continue to flower and evolve, we critically need to bring these solutions into the global arena – into the rhetoric of economists, politicians and industrialists. There are many positive signs. But so too are there worrying signs of a retreat by the powerful into securing their own consumption and lifestyle patterns. George Bush’s comment in response to the pressure to sign the Kyoto Protocol (problematic as it may be) is indicative, “Our lifestyles are not up for negotiation”.

### **The environmental economy**

How real then are the solutions being offered by SBE 2006 and by the myriad of other organizations, professionals and practitioners in the renewable and sustainable development field? Given that poverty and unemployment are one of the greatest challenges facing not only South Africa, but the developing world as a whole, then the use of renewable technologies offers possibly one of the greatest opportunities to tackle these problems. The term ‘Environmental Economy’ has been used to describe all those components within the economy that contribute to sustainable patterns of consumption and production – be it the waste stream, energy utilisation, water management, agriculture and, of course, construction. The Environmental Economy subsists in all sectors of the economy and defined not so much by its sectoral nature, but by the technology and approaches utilised to ensure sustainable utilisation of resources.

## Democracy

The 'Environmental Economy' also has other potential benefits for freedom and democracy. Alternative and renewable energy sources from wind and solar are inherently democratic in that they can be controlled and produced at the household level. Conversely technologies such as nuclear, because of the secrecy and security around the by-products and the sensitivity of technology, are inherently undemocratic.

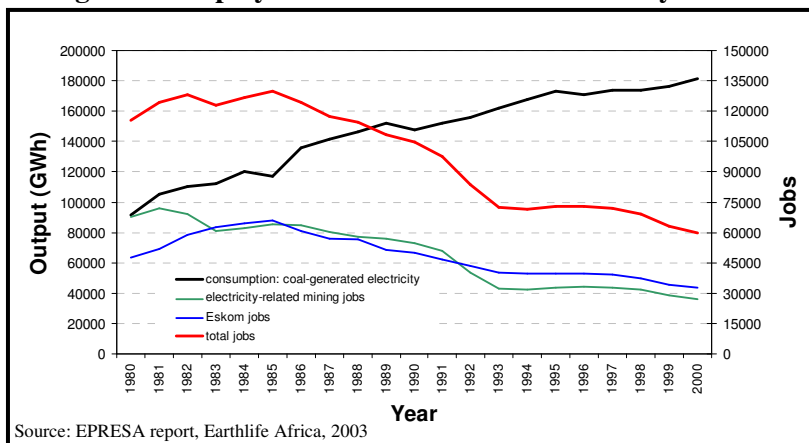
## Job creation

The Environmental Economy also has much higher job creation possibilities than conventional technologies.

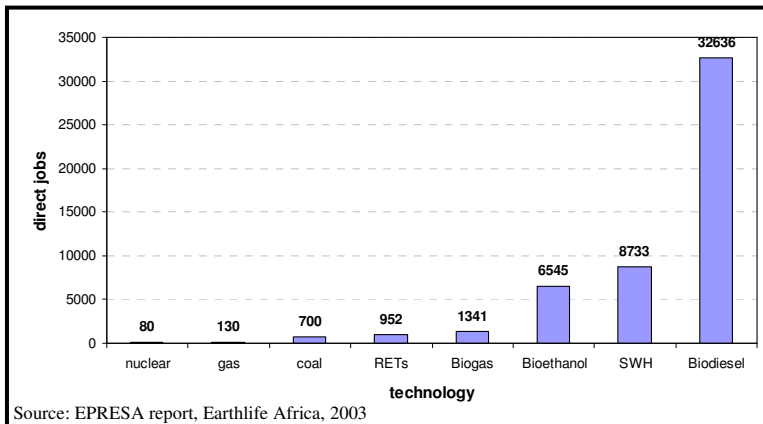
Greg Austin of Agama Energy, presented a case study of the South African energy sector at a recent course on creating sustainable and integrated human settlements run by the Dept. of Housing: Western Cape for Municipalities in the region. The case study was commissioned by Earthlife Africa to investigate job creation potentials in the energy sector.

The results of the study illustrate a story similar to the production efficiency examples quoted earlier. As Eskom's energy production capacity has increased, so to has the job creation/potential decreased – almost in direct proportion (see Figure 1 below – red and black lines). In the lexicon of traditional modernity this is a vindication of the rational, pragmatic results of technology, innovation and advancement in science and technology. Yet it flies directly against the need for greater equity and job creation. Against this is the assessment of the alternative and renewable energy sector which conversely has much high job creation ability and potentials (see Figure 2 below). These job creation figures are not unique to the energy sector. Waste management also offers high levels of job creation and SMME development potential.

**Figure 1: Employment trends in the SA electricity sector**



**Figure 2: Comparison of all generation technologies:  
gross direct jobs/TWh-equivalent**



## ACT GLOBAL TO LIVE LOCAL – SOME IDEAS

Whilst the solutions at local level presented by the Environmental Economy have much to offer, these cannot be pursued in isolation. To do so would be to lose the opportunity they present to challenge the dominant paradigm encapsulated by traditional modernity.

Gareth Hardin (1968) in his seminal article, *“The Tragedy of the Commons”*, encapsulated our current problem between local action and the global system within which it sits. He pointed out that in a world in which each person is striving for his or her best interest and in which there is a drive to create a free for all in the use and consumption of resources – we are each driven to maximize our own good without thought of the global ramifications. As I buy my car I suffer only marginally from the seemingly miniscule extra pollution, oil usage and road congestion – but I get the full benefit of my car. If I don’t use a car, I have all the hassle (especially in a situation of poor public transport), but similarly have no benefit of the miniscule less oil used or pollution created.

*“There is the tragedy. Each man is locked in a system that compels him to increase his herd without limit – in a world that is limited. Ruin is the destination toward which all men rush, each pursuing his own best interest in a society that believes in the freedom of the commons. Freedom in a commons brings ruin to all.”* Gareth Hardin, *Tragedy of the Commons*, 1968

More recently, George Monbiot (2004) has echoed this same concern in his ‘manifesto’, *“The Age of Consent”* which he contrasts to our current Age of Coercion (at a global level of trade and politics).

*“We might declare our neighbourhood nuclear-free, but unless we are simultaneously working, at the international level, for the abandonment of nuclear weapons, we can do nothing to prevent ourselves and everyone else from being threatened by people who are not as nice as we are. We would deprive ourselves, in other words, of the power of restraint”* Monbiot (2004), p 13

### The Age of Consent

It would be impossible to do justice to Monbiot’s arguments here and I would urge everyone to read his book. The nexus of his argument is that everything has been globalised except our consent. He argues that power always tries to get away from consent and democratic processes, and this is what has effectively happened at a global level as large industrial corporations are largely free to exploit and

develop resources around the world with very little control at the global level. He builds his case for an Age of Consent around three ideas (these ideas cannot be done justice outside of the context within which they are raised in his book. The danger is that presented blandly here they just look silly):

1. **Building a World Parliament.** His argument is that the current UN System, with its structure of electing representatives and the vetoes of the Security Council are simply not doing the job of representing the majority of people on earth.

A World Parliament would initially operate purely by means of its moral authority. It would draw up principles of good global governance, assess the performance of the other international bodies against those principles, and call upon them to answer for themselves when they are found to fall short. In proposing a World Parliament he argues that he is not inventing global governance, but merely trying to make it work in the interests of the people. The voting in the parliament would be to weight the votes of the member states according to their country's size and their degree of democratisation. These rankings already exist, but could be refined. He also argues that the technological and other means exist to make the system of global elections possible and feasible to run and administer (India does it, and it contains a large chunk of the world's population).

2. **Create an International Clearing Union.** John Maynard Keynes developed a proposal for an International Clearing Union which he unveiled in 1943. It was recognised as a work of genius. Not only had he solved the problem of debt and the balance of trade; he had also discovered a formula for global economic stability. The Clearing Union was a bank operating at the international level, in which nations held their trade accounts. They would be charged interest not only on their trade deficits, but also on their trade surpluses. Before the end of every year, therefore, when the interest payments fell due, they would have a powerful incentive to "clear" their accounts – in other words, to end up with neither a deficit nor a surplus. The only way in which surplus nations can clear their accounts is to change their terms of trade, so that they import more and export less. By getting rid of their surpluses, in other words, they also get rid of other nations' deficits. As accumulated trade deficits are the major component of international debt, by preventing the accumulation of deficits you also prevent the accumulation of debt. The Kyoto Protocols Clean Development Mechanism has a similar logic.

Keynes's idea was blocked by the US government. Many economists warned that a failure to implement Keynes' ideas would be a massive accumulation of unpayable debt on the part of the poor nations, and a corresponding increase in the powers of the rich nations. They have been vindicated. It is time to bring the Clearing Union back to life he argues.

3. **Create a Fair World Trade Organisation.** Monbiot also argues that some form of global trading body is also necessary if the weaker nations are to have any possibility of collective bargaining. The fair trade regime presented by Monbiot would have the following characteristics. The nations which are poor today would be permitted to protect their new industries from foreign competition until they are big enough to fight their own corner (this is something that Joseph Stiglitz (2002) has also proposed in his book '*Globalization and its Discontents*' – in fact he notes that countries like the US still practice this today. It was the reason why Botswana managed to get a large slice of the benefits from its diamond mines), and making free use of other countries' intellectual property, for trade within their own borders and with other poor nations. A sliding scale of trade privileges would thus apply: the poorest nations permitted full protection of their infant industries and the free use of intellectual property; slightly richer nations lesser privileges, the richest nations none at all.

But this is only one component of fair trade. A Fair Trade Organisation would also become an international licensing authority for corporations. Only those companies which can demonstrate that they are not employing slaves, banning trades unions or dumping their pollutants in the rivers would be permitted to trade internationally. All global trade is therefore run on the principles of the fair trade movement today. A corporation wishing to trade internationally must employ monitoring companies to examine its performance and report back to the FTO. Among the criteria they apply should be the requirement that companies pay the full costs of production themselves, rather than dumping their costs on other people or the environment.

*So how does this happen?*

Monbiot suggests that all international treaties have the threat of force behind them, and if we are to design new ones, those who are weak today must find the means of becoming strong. Monbiot argues that the poor nations have a weapon they have never recognised as such. That weapon is their debt.

As he notes, “It is often said that if you owe the bank \$1000, you’re in trouble; while if you owe the bank \$1 million, the bank is in trouble. So what if you owe the bank \$2.2 trillion? What if, between them, the poor nations own the global financial system? If they were to threaten a sudden collective default on their debt unless they got what they wanted, they would transform their greatest enemies – the financial markets – into their allies. The banks would be forced to go to their governments and say: if you don’t give them what they want, we, and therefore you, are ruined. This is by no means the only weapon the poor world possesses, but this is the scale on which we have think if we are serious about a global transformation.”

He also suggests that George Bush’s and the USA’s attack on global institutions has also created conditions amongst developed nations that such ideas may have receptivity.

*“What I have attempted in *The Age of Consent* is not a final or definitive description of a new world order, but an analysis of existing patterns of power and their weaknesses, and of the means we might possess of exploiting those weaknesses to try to turn an unjust world order into a just one. To some people it will seem under-ambitious, to others wildly optimistic. But I hope it helps to stimulate debate and concentrate minds on the question which looms behind all the issues with which we engage: what do we do about global power? None of the means I have proposed are easy or certain of success. But it seems to me that unless we seek to devise a political programme with global reach, we are certain only of failure.”*

<http://www.monbiot.com/archives/2004/06/01/the-age-of-consent/#more-888>

## **Earth Jurisprudence**

Cormac Cullinan (2002) in his book, “*Wild Law*”, has also tried to grapple with similar issues, but from a legal and legislative perspective. As with Monbiot’s ideas, it is impossible to do justice to the process, context and thinking that are encapsulated in this book. However, the nexus here is that many legal and political systems legitimize and encourage the exploitation of the Earth. It is a brave book in that it attempts to set out the complexities, difficulties and challenges that an ‘Earth jurisprudence’ would need to deal with.

He starts by debunking two central assumptions in our current jurisprudence and legal system. The first central assumption is that our current jurisprudence sees humans as independent of the earth and the biosphere. The second central assumption is the myth of humans as the master species. Both these two assumptions have devastating impacts on our planet, and ultimately on humans too. However, law

matters because it governs every aspect of our engagement with each other as humans and with the world around us. Law also fundamentally reflects and codifies human morals, ethics and beliefs. Building an Earth jurisprudence to go with Monbiot's World Parliament would be a natural fit. Building and developing an earth jurisprudence is not something that could happen overnight. It implies radical shifts in almost every aspect of our governance and legal systems.

*“Shifting our understanding of the purpose of human governance systems is at the heart of the Earth Jurisprudence approach. We need to decide whether we are correct in continuing to govern so as to maximize human freedom to exploit the Earth, intervening only (or primarily) when that use threatens or undermines the rights of other humans, or whether our purpose must be to govern ourselves so that we function as productive members of a community of life that exists within a larger universal order. The personal shift required to move from the former anthropocentric approach to an Earth- or eco-centric approach may be dramatic. However applying Earth Jurisprudence in practice is likely to be more evolutionary and gradual, though at times sudden changes may be needed.”* Cullinan (2005), p1

At the centre of the Earth Jurisprudence is the conceptual shift to regarding humans as just one of the species forming the Earth Community and recognizing that human existence is inextricably linked with the health of global ecosystems. It asks: “What might a particular law say if the subjects of it were not only human and we really acted as if the flourishing of the whole Earth community was our primary concern?”

At the end of the book, Cullinan (2002) summarises his arguments. He ends this summary by noting,

*“In order to reorient our governance systems to reflect this Earth jurisprudence we need to establish laws that are “wild” at heart in the sense that they foster, rather than stifle, creativity and the human connection to nature.*

*To implement wild laws effectively we will need to cultivate personal and social practices that respect Earth, and social structures based on communities, and communities of communities, as found in nature”* Cullinan (2002), p224

## CONCLUSION

These two sets of ideas from George Monbiot and Cormac Cullinan are just some of the concepts that are ‘out there’. There are many other ideas. For example, economic and fiscal measures include ideas around green taxes, laws requiring industry to take back life-expired products, making goods which will last longer, and more responsible choices by individual consumers.

However, those presented by Monbiot and Cullinan do hit at the heart of what I believe would need to be considered in the creation of a reformed modernist approach to society and development. As we go into this conference I believe that we must constantly ask ourselves how we can take the innovations and excitement of the work represented here as an argument for a reformed modernity.

Drawing from the analysis of Diamond (2005) about the critical role that societies response to environmental problems has shaped their success or failure, along with the terrifying rate at which our natural capital is being destroyed and the impossibility of continuing along traditional development paths, I believe we need to become not only advocates for local and regional voices and approaches, but simultaneously participants in ensuring that what we do locally is in a system that ultimately sees that grow and not destroyed.

I finish with a quote from MEC Essop (Essop, 2006) from her address to the opening of the Planning Africa 2006 conference in Cape Town.

*“Finally I will briefly refer to the 'earth democracy' principles of Vandana Shiva. The concept of Earth Democracy privileges ecological and cultural diversity in form and function. This is what Shiva refers to as 'feeling at home on the Earth and with each other' that is created through inclusive living economies. It is a counter narrative to monocultures which, as byproducts of exclusion and dominance create environments of coercion and loss of freedom. This is an alternative world-view to greed, consumerism and competition as objectives of human life. The Earth Democracy approach embodies principles that enable people to transcend practices of polarization, division and exclusion. It speaks to a logic of multi-functionality and inclusion as the basis of diversity. Embedded in the approach is the inherent human and professional duty to ensure well-being of all species, including the environment. Our human and professional responsibility is therefore one of trusteeship, instead of the dominant notion of mastery, control and ownership. Rights are inextricably related to these.” Essop (2006), p 5*

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