

## **Plenary 3: Alternative economies**

**Stefan Ecks**

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### **What is "Global Corporate Citizenship"? A Perspective from the Indian Pharmaceuticals Market**

This paper aims to develop an anthropological perspective on one of the most remarkable transformations of global capitalism in recent years: the claim that corporations are "good citizens" who are driven by higher aspirations than profits alone. The paper focuses on the Switzerland-based drug company Novartis and asks: how could a company that positions itself as the most ethical in its field become accused of cutting the life-line of billions of poor patients in developing countries?

In January 2006, Novartis was denied an Indian patent for Glivec (or Gleevec), an anti-cancer drug. In August 2006, the company took legal action against this decision. Novartis held that Indian laws are incompatible with agreements under the World Trade Organization (WTO). This attack on Indian patent law caused an international outcry. Opponents of Novartis argued that the company was trying to destroy essential provisions in the Indian laws that try to keep drugs affordable even after the country joining the WTO. Even worse, Novartis' challenge would have far-reaching consequences for global drug prices, because healthcare in the developing world was relying on India's exports of cheap generics. At stake were, in particular, cheap Indian generics to treat HIV/AIDS.

With reference to "the constitutional obligation of providing good health care to its citizens", the Madras High Court dismissed Novartis' challenge in August 2007. While health activists around the world were celebrating, Novartis announced that no company will launch their latest patent products in India as a result of this judgement and that multinationals "will invest in China instead."

Based on recent fieldwork in India within the ESRC/DFID-funded project Tracing Pharmaceuticals in South Asia, I will focus on the mobilization of "citizenship" by the health activists, the lawyers, and Novartis itself. One of the puzzles I will try to solve is: why does Novartis fight for a Glivec patent in India while it gives away the drug for free in the name of Global Corporate Citizenship?

## **Jean-Louis Laville**

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Towards a theory of plural economy: in the footsteps of Mauss and Polanyi  
Economy is not one 'natural' thing, but always several and socially constructed. From Polanyi we learned that it was a mistake to conceive of the economy as being independent of society, as a self-regulating market. He insisted on the presence of different economic principles (market, redistribution, reciprocity) in concrete human economies. Mauss, however, taught us that progress does not lie in seeking to replace one economic system brutally with another. Rather, economic organization always consists of a number of contradictory institutional forms, irreducible to each other and combined with different emphasis. Starting from their approaches, the idea of a 'plural economy' is intended as a framework for considering relations between these complementary forms and to resolve potential conflicts between them. This should normally require us to place the market within an explicit institutional framework.

The return of the utopian experiment of a self-regulating market under neo-liberal capitalism requires us to evolve from the 'double movement' of resistance to articulating a programme of social transformation. We cannot afford the polarity of 'Macworld' and 'Jihad'. Nor should we repeat the excesses of fascism and communism. This means mobilizing economic principles other than the market (reciprocity, redistribution) and institutionally embedding the market once more. We will have to establish non-capitalist enterprises, that is, to embrace diverse forms of property. Somehow we must resolve the contradiction between limiting the reach of the market and enabling its capacity to enrich us. Above all, democracy is not an optional extra.

Democratic solidarity is an essential concept for effective resistance to a society based on market principles. It starts, as Mauss insisted in *The Gift*, from recognizing that modernity rests on a particular relationship between reciprocity and redistribution, between the voluntary exchanges of free citizens and the state's attempts to redress inequalities. Together these make up what in France, Brazil and elsewhere is known as the 'solidarity economy' (*économie solidaire*). Its institutional base includes unions, cooperatives, mutual insurance and non-profit organizations, as well as the welfare state. It is not a question of replacing one with the other, but of combining redistributive and reciprocal solidarity with a view to reinforcing the self-organization of society in the public sphere.

The twentieth century left us with two extreme cases that we should avoid in future: a market society whose inequality was justified by an appeal to individual freedom and the subordination of economy to a political will whose egalitarianism was a mask for coercion. Our task is to find new ways of guaranteeing a plural economy within a framework of democracy. Mauss and Polanyi agreed on the need for practical syntheses of old and new realities rather than radical reversals based on a false realism. Instead of making an

abstract appeal to an alternative economy, we should be devising fresh combinations within the field of economic possibilities open to us.

**Bill Maurer**

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**Alternatives: Social, Material, Real?**

Critical accounts of the financialization of the world economy decry the depersonalization and abstraction effected by finance in the service of extraction, expropriation and dispossession. Analysts and activists alike seek to re-socialize finance so that those whose interests it serves can be identified and so that new, socially embedded forms of exchange can emerge. They also seek to re-ground finance in a "real," presumably material and social, fabric so that its excesses can be tamed and the sources of value made apparent. My essay questions these paired critiques and their supposed aims. It will argue that the continual attempt to reassert the social in economy points to a limit to the critical imagination, and that the critique of calculative rationality misses some of the other functions and practical effects of numbers besides commensuration and abstraction.

**Richard Wilk**

Indiana University

**The strange economics of happiness**

Economists and other social scientists have taken up the topic of happiness with an almost desperate enthusiasm. The objective measurement of happiness is now an established enterprise, and the *Journal of Happiness Studies* is up to volume eight. After a century of 'utility,' why suddenly 'happiness?' What does this tell us about the real intellectual project of economics? I discuss some of the very western assumptions behind the notion of happiness, and the bourgeois values of stability and harmony it incorporates. Is this an opening for anthropology to enter the discussion with a more sophisticated construct of happiness, and what would we substitute in its place as a scale for assessing the performance of economic systems? To provoke further thought on this topic I ask why there is no economics of 'fun' and what an economics of fun would look like.