

# JES !

Towards a joint effort society



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&  
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# Preface

## From Industrial to Spiritual Revolution

Change begins in the mind. The human mind controls the brain and leads brain, body and soul in a chosen direction. When the will to change sprouts, the mind orders the brain to act. After all the brain tells a person what the world looks like. It shapes the individual reality. If the brain shifts, reality follows. The human mind has an enormous power. Imagine what would happen if all minds were set on joint efforts to improve society. Imagine what would happen if the good spirits would chase away evil and color the mood of a whole society in vivid overtones.

The movement towards a joint effort society is about joining opposites in search of a higher level of wellbeing. The voices that reject the paradigm *growth is good* are gaining support, spreading eco-literacy while doing so. Although much of the philosophy was already developed long before the 1960's, now it can reach more people and contribute to awareness. General and true concerns on the direction humanity chose since machines became the main producers of goods, feed the sprouts of the joint effort society. Since the start of the Industrial Revolution, countless individuals (and the societies they were part of) committed and experienced cruelties against humanity and

its' mother (Earth) in general and the poor & vulnerable in particular. A phrase originating from Charles Darwin's Theory of Evolution, but actually introduced by Herbert Spencer<sup>1</sup>, led to rationalization of the slaughtering and gave it a name: Survival of the Fittest. This concept turned into the dominant view of life. And so exploitation, abuse, slavery, terror and competition became legitimate means used by the rich & strong to become even richer and stronger. The overall result was a great divide between Haves and Have-nots that kept on growing until this day.

For Nobel Prize laureate Amartya Sen this divide is central in every day politics. 'For me the difference between left and right is clear,' he said in an interview with Frank van Empel. 'It simply depends on: are you for or against the poor? Are you on the side of the poor, then you are on the left side of the political spectre. Are you on the side of the rich, then you are on the right side.'<sup>2</sup>

Under the regime of Capitalism, that placed competition at the centre of its' value system, the enrichment and reinforcement of the fittest reached new heights. The free market became the arena where producers battle for the favor of consumers and consumers try to gain as many goods as possible at the lowest price. All eyes have turned towards matter and materialistic gain has become what mattered most. Within the dynamic context the job of

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<sup>1</sup>Charles Darwin used Spencer's phrase 'survival of the fittest' as a synonym for natural selection in the fifth edition of *On the Origin of Species*, published in 1869.

<sup>2</sup>'Samenleving faalt als ze sociale deugden niet waardeert', interview met Amartya Sen, Hans Buddingh en Frank van Empel, NRC Handelsblad, 11 november 1995.

governmental agencies has been to facilitate the so-called 'invisible hand' that would bring supply and demand together into a state of equilibrium. When a system is in equilibrium, you can push, pull and prod it all you like, it will simply return to how it was to begin with.<sup>3</sup> Investor George Soros would later call this belief in the existence of an invisible auctioneer 'market fundamentalism'. Market fundamentalism, according to Soros, is the acceptance that 'competitive markets are always right – or at least they produce results that cannot be improved. The financial markets in particular are supposed to bring prosperity and stability – the more so if they are completely free from government interference in their operation and unrestricted in their global reach.'<sup>4</sup>

There is, however, one big problem with this equilibrium concept: in practice not one (sub)market is in balance for more than a heartbeat. When one (sub)market (e.g. the labour market) is nearing a state of equilibrium, it generally is disturbed by a disequilibrium in another (sub)market (such as the money market), already before the balance is reached. Possible reasons: greed, interests, power. The free market ideology, a.k.a. fundamentalism, belongs in the same league as religious fundamentalism. The connection between these two types of fundamentalism has been formed by the poor. Western abandonment of the poor, Micheline R. Ishay stated in *History of Human Rights*, has

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<sup>3</sup>Philip Ball, *Critical Mass*, Arrow Books, 2005 p.123.

<sup>4</sup>George Soros, quoted by Micheline R. Ishay, *The History of Human Rights*, University of California Press, 2008, Preface p. xviii

created a vacuum that has been filled by Islamist fundamentalists. ‘For Islamist fundamentalists,’ Ishay wrote, ‘it is a moral obligation to meet the basic needs of ordinary people. The fact that such needs were so neglected, first by colonialists and then by corrupt secular elites, has given these fundamentalists a powerful weapon with which to spread their beliefs.’<sup>5</sup>

The belief that everyone, by virtue of her or his humanity, is entitled to the satisfaction of basic needs and certain unalienable freedoms is rooted in earlier tradition and documents of many cultures, but in the arenas of brute market forces human rights and needs have been completely misunderstood. They were formulated by higher Spirits. It took World War II as a beastly catalyst to propel human rights onto the global stage and into the global conscience. People like Robert Schuman – one of the founding fathers of the European Union – and Eleanor Roosevelt – who was one of the initiators of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights – paved the way for the human rights movement. The moment of glory came in the sixties and seventies of the 20th century; hippies and other idealists claimed the power to change, former colonies liberated themselves from Western rulers and the first steps towards a ‘better’ world were set in happy optimism. The backlash came almost immediately.

Ending the 1970’s conservatism and competition in the

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<sup>5</sup>Micheline R. Ishay, *The History of Human Rights*, University of California Press, 2008, New Preface, p. xviii.



political arena took over from idealism and cooperation. The dominant ideology of conservative politics and neoliberal economics sang the same old song: enrich the rich, empower the empowered, after which the poor would rise from the Swamp of Poverty & Injustice in some miraculous manner. One of the tunes was called: supply side economics. Critics use the term ‘trickle-down’ economics. The main characteristics of supply side economics were large-scale tax cuts for individuals and corporations, deregulation of businesses and strong incentives for investment. This would lead to economic growth and an accumulation of wealth that would ‘trickle down’ the economy. Its proponents believed that making the rich richer eventually would help the poor because the benefits of an expanding economy would seep down to them. But, in fact, this last shackle of the chain got lost. And this is exactly what went wrong: Inequality grew like weed in the America’s of Ronald Reagan.

Not only in the USA inequality grew during those years, all over the world disparities increased, despite humanitarian aid and development programs for the developing countries and for the poor and deprived. Especially on the African continent the population suffered and was unable to throw off the heritage of colonialism. Wars and famines raged, and still do, over the continent. Of the many theories and explanation on the causes, the socio-psychological analysis of John Kenneth Galbraith is much referred to. He published *The Nature of Mass Poverty*, at the

eve of returning conservatism and neoliberal economics, in 1979. Galbraith blamed e.g. accommodation for being one of the psychological forces of the poverty trap. The strategy to accommodate is a rational act, since improvement of the circumstances of life seems impossible to those who have suffered deprivation already for generations. No reasonable individual spills energy if there is no gain to expect from the effort. Accommodation can only be attacked by examples of successful escape. Migrants and revolutionaries are among the front soldiers that battle accommodation. They possess the will to succeed and show their peers that escape is possible, bringing energy and dynamics for change to the community.

Together all economic, political, ecological, socio-cultural and psychological developments have left 1,2 billion – and probably more – people in the world starving. They live on less than \$1 a day. In Africa 46% of the population earns less than \$1 a day.<sup>6</sup> It is one of the key problems and major societal threats of today.

JES! Towards a joint effort society is an attempt to contribute to the reduction of poverty and injustice. It advocates fundamental human freedoms and teaches to stimulate self-reliance. Professor of Philosophy (University of California) Paul Feyerabend provided the motto for this adventure: ‘If we want to understand what is going on and if we want to change what displeases us then we have to

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<sup>6</sup>3.000.000.000 people have to live from \$2 a day. World Bank, World Development Report, 2000-2001, 22.

know both the nature of the world and of human beings and we also have to know how they fit together'.<sup>7</sup>

So...

As opposed to the Historical Materialism of Karl Marx this book proposes Historical Spiritualism;

As opposed to Darwin's Evolution this book proposes Ecolution;

As opposed to a focus on Production & Consumption (Wants) this book stresses Needs & Opportunities;

As opposed to Galbraith's Affluent Society this book promotes a Joint Effort Society (JES) as part of a Spiritual & Moral Revolution. It is a natural follow up of Materialism, which dominated the last two hundred and fifty years.

Writing for a better world implies starting a dialogue with scholars who went there before, learn of their thoughts and meanings and make new combinations, and while doing so creating a fresh vision on what society needs today and tomorrow morning. While tomorrow afternoon, hopefully, somebody else will further the discussion. This person will reject parts of JES! and will embrace other pieces. She or he will create something new, again, and so on. This is the process of learning we call 'ecolution' and that has to go on and on to higher plateaus of awareness. This book is a part of that neverending story.

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<sup>7</sup>Paul Feyerabend, *The Tyranny of Science*, Polity Press, 2011, p. 10.

Please join the dialogue: [www.ecolutie.nl](http://www.ecolutie.nl)<sup>8</sup>

Frank & Caro

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<sup>8</sup><http://www.ecolutie.nl>

# 1 Reader's guide

In the North life is focused on one purpose: bringing order in chaos. Still chaos is the rule, and so is disequilibrium. Order, linearity and balance are the exceptions. One strategy of politicians and policymakers is to break the rule and try to beat Nature. The other, more realistic, strategy is to get used to chaos and try to live with it. Chaos has a charming side to it. It leaves room for creation.

Chaos is a system, like all others. It has structure. It is not pure anarchy. There are some ordering principles underneath all things. Things that present themselves as signs and clues to follow up on. This book looks at the things behind things and at the patterns underneath.

A clarifying discovery was that of a rhizome. A rhizome is like a rootstock, a networked herb that grows underground with no other ordering principle than the search for fertile earth, water and sunlight. The rootstock is indestructible, unless the gardener uses chemicals or patiently, meticulously and continuously, keeps on weeding. Deleuze and Guattari wrote on the rhizome<sup>1</sup>: 'Let us summarize the principal characteristics of a rhizome: unlike trees or their

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<sup>1</sup>Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *a Thousand Plateaus, Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, Continuum, 2008 p. 23

roots, the rhizome connects any point to any other point, and its traits are not necessarily linked to traits of the same nature; it brings into play very different regimes of signs, and even nonsign states. The rhizome is reducible neither to the One nor the multiple. It is composed not of units but of dimensions, or rather directions in motion. It has neither beginning nor end, but always a middle (*milieu*) from which it grows and which it overflows. It constitutes linear multiplicities with  $n$  dimensions having neither subject nor object, which can be laid out on a plane of consistency, and from which the One is always subtracted ( $n - 1$ ).'

JES! is a rhizome of words and concepts. There is no beginning, neither an end. You can plunge into it at every paragraph and find a dimension or a direction in motion. Always in motion, in development. All pages together form a network that may be hard to oversee or summarize, but that offers an intuitive vision for a direction society and individuals in that society can choose. Searching fertile grounds is done without a map, because as soon as the map is drawn the land has turned infertile or overcrowded. As soon as a society is described, developments have taken a different course and the society has changed. Only things that are dead and done can be rightfully described in a linear way, because the motion stopped, the 'thing' is finished, it has become something with a beginning and an end, history has entered. In that case back casting can do the trick, but for living organisms, under which we reckon all systems, back casting alone is not sufficient for there is

nothing linear between the past, the present and the future.

The rhizome needs to be approached from the middle, which can be at any place of the network. To find it we need to develop at least an understanding of how it works. Understanding goes beyond knowledge or information, although these are required. Understanding needs context too as well as experience. All these elements come together in intuition, which enables a person to dance with systems. Dancing is the only effective way to interfere, as Donella Meadows stated<sup>2</sup>.

A person can start to understand her or his surroundings and circumstances once knowledge and information are embedded in a context. We enter the rhizome off road, right through nine battlefields. A set of true stories that occurred at different corners of the world, is brought to you as snapshots of a movie - Take 1 to 9 -and is meant to sketch a rough picture of the type of battlefields humanity is engaged in.

Further on this book will place these battlefields into a context after which the theory of evolution introduces a method and toolbox for change.

This toolbox is just as dynamic as reality. It contains concepts, which are plans for action that are variable and multiple. Each person, community or organization thinks of their own. Seven criteria to select concepts support the choice for constructive plans.

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<sup>2</sup>Donella Meadows, Thinking in Systems, Earthscan, 2009

The match of context and concept offers content, it stirs the mind to change and gives meaning to the plan. The idea becomes reality and evolves, new ideas sprout, unknown territory will be discovered. Every time this occurs, society develops towards a higher ecological, economic, societal and psychological level in the direction of a joint effort society.



## 2 Acknowledgments

JES! started as a translation in English of the thesis *Allemaal Winnen* Frank co-authored. The original idea came from Donald Huisingh<sup>1</sup> whose enthusiasm fused the project. *Allemaal Winnen* researched regional sustainable development, using the Dutch province Noord-Brabant as a study case. Together with Martin Bakker, Frank designed a matrix, toolbox and new conceptual framework for development called ecolution. Donald thought the book should be available to other than Dutch readers as well.

Most writers and thinkers will agree that translating old work is not so much fun as coming up with something new. We already were beyond *Allemaal Winnen*. Therefore we decided to take the beef out of it – matrix, toolbox, conceptual framework – and apply this to the world, while improving on the theory and walking the talk.

Donald kept pace, more than that, he kept inspiring and being critical. Founding father of the Dutch Association of Integral Biological Architects, VIBA, Peter Schmid<sup>2</sup> did the same. These two mentors and friends were, and still

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<sup>1</sup>Prof. Donald Huisingh, Institute for a Secure and Sustainable Environment, University of TN, Knoxville

<sup>2</sup>Prof. Emeritus TU/e Mag. Arch. Eng. Dr.h.c. Peter Schmid, R E D ResearchEducationDesign in ScienceArtTechnology for PeacefulSustainableDevelopment

are, with us all the way, providing insights, advice and recommending books to read.

We also have to thank our children, adopted children, friends and family for providing us with real life opportunities to apply the theory of a joint effort society. Many diners have been devoted to discussing JES! and theories have been applied as try-out, sometimes more successful than others.

The people surrounding us are a bunch of mavericks, freedom fighters, musicians, artists, moviemakers, ict-ers, entrepreneurs, writers and thinkers. Together they form an international community without borders. Some are very young, others already reached a respectable age, but all are young in spirit. Not in the least our parents. Jan and Riet van Empel, at the age of 88, supported in more than one way. Joost and Helma Sicking, who no longer inhabit this planet, have left us their ideals and works of art that still inspire. As a matter of fact, the cover of this book is a detail from one of Joost' paintings.

Not in the least we thank you, reader, for your interest. We hope you will join us on a journey to a joint effort society. Please do share your thoughts, comments and questions with your friends and with us, so we can improve JES! and make it happen.

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# 3 Footnotes

You can find all relevant footnotes underneath the pages