

**Matti Sarmela**

## WHAT IS CULTURAL IMPERIALISM?

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*Cultural imperialism is the economic, technological and cultural hegemony of the industrialized nations, which determines the direction of both economic and social progress, defines cultural values, and standardizes the civilization and cultural environment throughout the world.*

*The whole world is becoming a cultural common market area in which the same kind of technical product development, the same kind of knowledge, fashion, music and literature, the same kind of metropolitan mass culture is manufactured, bought and sold.*

*Western ideologies, political beliefs, western science, western laws and social institutions, western moral concepts, sexual symbols and ideals of beauty, western working methods and leisure activities, western foods, western pop idols and the western concept of human existence have become objectives, examples and norms everywhere in the world.*

*But there are too many dispossessed people who have amassed a few western material possessions but no longer have any birthplace, home or final resting-place.*

# 1. The ideological profile of cultural imperialism

Industrial development is customarily considered to be the path towards a better future for the whole of mankind, material squalor, hunger, sickness and the rawness of nature becoming, in the process, things of the past. Development on a global scale and colossal industrial production since the war have been accompanied by a blind faith in scientific and technical progress and in the ability that western social planning, environmental planning, educational planning, family planning and leisure planning will before long solve all the problems confronting man.

The post-war decades, particularly the sixties, will go down in cultural history as a period of industrialization, urbanization and far-reaching changes in the structure of communities. During this period the industrial world order has triumphantly established itself over much of the globe and the high material standard of living that western progressives have always dreamed of has finally been achieved. In the light of the present international economic crisis and threat of ecocatastrophe, it is possible to draw an ideological profile of those decades of faith in scientific and technical development, and to suggest the cognitive and ideological factors that also go some way towards explaining the hegemony of western culture and the process that is leading to the establishment of a common world culture.

**1) The ideology of the technological imperialists.** To western man, culture is the antithesis of nature; it implies the subjugation of nature in order to build a technological, man-made world, in order to establish civilization, the acme of which is the metropolis. The ideology of the subjugation of nature has reached its climax in the conquest of outer space, but it has also supplied the moral justification for the white man's voyages of discovery, for colonialism, the slave trade, the unscrupulous exploitation of natural resources and the overseas aid plans of today: the purpose of these being to yoke all nations to the world trade network of the industrialized countries.

**2) The maximization of culture; the ideology of total efficiency.** The ideal of the competitive, mass-producing society is to achieve total efficiency. It strives to maximize production, organizational efficiency and human performance in science, art and sport.

**3) The cult of modernism; the ideology of novelty.** Western culture does not set much store by the unchanging and traditional: it accords its highest accolade to the unconventional and the revolutionary. Western civilization has established the cult of the genius for those who are instruments of change. The worship of modernization and the faith in

technological progress culminated in the radicalism of the sixties, the heyday of the student, when it was believed a new society could be created by means of surveys. In this scientific utopia the non-democracy dictated by traditions such as the institution of marriage and sexual norms would no longer exist. Instead unremitting progress, liberation and change would lead eventually to an optimal ethical or ideological democracy. But has this development merely led to the dictatorship of the men of change, of the planners?

**4) The ideology of productivity.** Both on the group and individual level cultural choices and decisions are made in the first instance on the basis of materialist economic planning, of cost accounting, of a 'scientific' assessment of the relations between input and output. Industrial culture is in fact being transformed into an organization geared exclusively to the planning of productivity, a statistical curve, index and trend mechanism, from which human, historical and traditional elements must be eliminated as disruptive factors.

**5) International standards; the ideology of the supranational.** In industrial production, science, art and every other human activity, western culture recognizes no higher goal than internationalism: the standards of the metropolis hold sway. The change in the structure of western societies has taken the form of adaptation to market economy, to international trade; the response of the ecosystem to international standards. The techno-structures are the most rigidly standardized of all, part of a sterile, professional mass culture employing standardized values, to reach standardized 'scientific' and 'artistic' decisions, a culture in which personal and individual solutions are more illusory than real. Social planning and architecture that come up to the professional international mark have created standardized modern environments, the fruit of the very latest research into metropolitan design, in which life is played out with the same cultural props, the same basic services.

**6) The mechanistic system of knowledge and causal relations; the ideology of technical solutions.** The functional basis of western society is a classification of the natural world into a cognitive system that only recognizes mechanical, factorial and technical causal connections and solutions. The most important logical model for scientific thought throughout the sixties was factor analysis. The material and human waste problems resulting from the production process are eliminated by means of special mechanisms; a technological waste process grows up side by side with the production process – sewage plants, asylums, approved schools, community homes and police stations. New sicknesses are cured by new medicines, the debilitating effects of mass production and the conveyor belt are solved by the invention of ergonomics. The establishment of counter-technologies, counter-organizations and counter-cultures corrects technological blunders – thus development becomes synonymous with the fragmentation of society

into ever smaller and weirder compartments.

**7) Group centrality; the ideology of organization.** Western society is one-sidedly based on marching masses, which become socialized into one all-powerful cybernetic machine; it is based on group centrality and faith in organization. The mechanistic or atomistic structure of society has led to the formation of increasingly specialized and efficient organizations but also to an intensifying struggle between them for material development, power and growth. Their policy of growth demands that the individual become totally dependent on them so as to strengthen mass identity and solidarity. The manipulation of these masses requires ever more authoritarian personality cults, the dogmatization of ideals, a strict demarcation of interest-areas and an intensified information war. In the western world power has become concentrated in the hands of organizations, which use discontent, gain, progress and social change as instruments of unscrupulous manipulation.

**8) The opinion industry; the ideology of the control of knowledge.** Scientific and technical progress has also maximized knowledge. On the other hand it has made communications, the mass media, manipulation, information shocks, industrial opinion-molding, propaganda and advertising its most important instruments of power and influence. Western society permits any form of manipulation, even if it is systematically one-sided, as long as its aims are economically useful, commercially successful or otherwise progressive. Western man has long accepted the necessity of organizational lies.

## 2. Superculture and local culture

Human cultural behavior is determined by the global cultural-ecological supersystems of western developmental ideology:

- a) A delocalized and standardized production process
- b) A global marketing mechanism
- c) Centralized scientific-technical control, dominated by the metropolis
- d) A delocalized system of knowledge, communications and education

e) A delocalized concept of culture and cultural norms

The industrialized west has adopted a common technological culture that satisfies international standards and that has made possible the realization of the imperialists' centuries-old dream of yoking the entire world's resources with a systematic global production process. This megalomania has given birth to the superculture, which prides itself on building the largest reservoir in the world, the largest atomic power station and the longest conveyor-belt. Western culture is a monument to its own planners, executive directors, party leaders and developmentalists, a culture evaluated statistically in terms of size, productivity, and material objects, development trends and consumer indices. In this culture the man in the street has increasingly less value collectively or culturally, as a worker or as a consumer. The high standard of living of western society has delivered nations from the tyrannies of nature and submitted them to the tyrannies of man. Primitive societies had nothing of value to offer in the creation of this new society that worshipped development – in the spectrum of human ways of life, the two stand irreconcilably at opposite poles.

*Technological, differentiated  
world order  
Scientific system of knowledge  
controlled by elite groups  
Efficiency, organization  
directed  
Standardized global  
solutions*

*Non-technological, natural world  
order  
System of traditional knowledge;  
folk wisdom  
Community directed; self  
determination  
Traditional, locally adapted  
solutions*

So-called primitive cultures are essentially small community-cultures that gain their ethnic characteristics through adaptation to a specific environment. The individual's relationship with his community is the prime relationship in non-technological communities. The individual has his own permanent place in his community and he can comprehend this ethno-social organism as an entity. Many small ethnic communities have learnt to live in accord with nature rather than at the mercy of nature and thus aim at a state of permanent equilibrium. Their cognitive world picture, their intracultural system of knowledge, is not geared to unscrupulous and egocentric exploitation or to a greed for growth but to their life as a community. Increased productivity and growth are not seen as ends in themselves; production is only expanded enough to guarantee the traditional subsistence of future generations. Research has demonstrated that small ethnic communities are cultures totally regulated by tradition and governed by the traditional world order, the folk culture.

## APPENDIX

***Structural differences between technological and non-technological cultures***

	<b>Industrial urbanized society</b>	<b>Non-technological small community culture</b>
1. Mass-production	Serial production Mechanization Automation	Piecemeal production Physical work Manual work
2. Specialization	Total division labor of Total professional specialization Technocracy Bureaucracy Formal training necessity	Natural division of labor according to age and sex Little professional-specialization (craft workers) Social roles within community  Continual informal training
3. Group-centricity	Groups of peers (e.g. schoolmates) Special groups (ideological, political) Professional groups Trade union	Age and sex groups  Area groups (village)  Family groups

4. Market economy	<p>Monetary economy  Money/consumption/  spending power  as measure of value  Conversion of work  and skills into money  Home-centered  investment; domestic  appliances, continual  rise in standard of  comfort  Marketing a necessity,  production dependent  on marketing</p>	<p>Payment in kind  Ensuring satisfaction  of basic needs; sufficiency  of food as measure of value  Work as guarantee of  self-sufficiency  Contentment with  traditional living standards;  investment in communal  ceremonies</p> <p>Marketing restricted to  exchange unavoidable</p>
5. Rhythm of life	<p>Standardizing  rhythm of life,  consciousness of time  Compulsive use of  time, punctuality,  timetable, clocking-in;  mechanical rhythm of  conveyor-belt  Differentiation between  working hours and free  time</p> <p>Intensification of rhythm  of life, monotony of work  Stress</p>	<p>Periodicity of rhythm of  life; seasons, work  periods  Rhythm of day and night,  seasons, different work periods</p> <p>Spontaneous uses of time,  variability of work at different  times of day and seasons;  leisureliness</p>

## **Industrial urbanized society**

## **Non-technological small community culture**

### 6. Mobility

Horizontal social mobility great; change in work place, neolocal marriages, necessity of moving to where job is  
 Communications (cars), tourism, worldwide mobility opportunities  
 Broadening of horizons, world picture  
 Metropolis-centricity  
 Supranationalism

Confinement to locality

Staying at home

Traditionality of horizons  
 Village and immediate circle

### 7. Interaction

Anonymity of social intercourse, official relationships, formality, hierarchy, bureaucracy  
 Mass communications, flood of information from outside  
 Impersonal involvement; role of audience or public  
 Professional, specialized entertainment  
 Formal, official control; police or family discipline

Personal, face-to-face contacts

Personal communications  
 Community centered information  
 Personal involvement in local public ceremonies  
 Little professional entertainments

Personal control; village



8. Competition	<p>Heterogeneity of values; different political and ideological objectives Social competition status Ideological competition Sub-cultural competition Increased status symbols Increased differences in status levels of importance Increased opportunities, rewards and demands Greater opportunities for failure Secularization of religious values Deprivation, alienation, inability to adapt</p>	<p>Greater uniformity of values and norms  No social competition; inherited  No ideological competition Single culture Few status symbols Few statuses of different  Few opportunities for competition, few social rewards  Religious confidence  Communal and collective spirit Harmony</p>
9. Eco-system	<p>Maximal Differentiated systems Imbalance with nature and environment Dependence on global resources of energy and raw materials</p>	<p>Minimal Holistic system Tendency towards equilibrium Adaptation to environment</p>

### **3. The death of ethnic culture**

In industrialized countries the functioning of the production process necessitates professional specialization. Society is compartmentalized into thousands of sub-cultures; civil servants, technicians, salesmen and workers each have their own 'culture' made up of professional or interest groups that are supra-nationally and non-locally orientated, cogs in the machinery of development, progress and power, that use professional jargon as a means of manipulating professional discontent. In differentiated societies the most varied social and religious groups and group-cultures can be found but real regional or folk culture is dead.

To be more precise, folk culture is outlawed, for the scientific-technical society has turned culture itself into an organization. Culture has become the exclusive responsibility of vocationally trained specialists, cultural architects, whose job specifications and qualifications are defined by law, and who are all members of unions. Folk culture can only emerge within the limits of the money specifically allocated to it from the public purse and under the direction of professional cultural leaders. The supranational, compartmentalized eco-system has no room for a spontaneous, do-it-yourself folk or regional culture. The industrialized countries can show imposing and unprecedented achievements in science, art and sport, in the vast metropolitan sets and technical props of professional culture. But what culture has the industrial nomad or the urban lemming? Can restaurants, nightclubs, the entertainment world be called culture? Does the weekly visit to the supermarket constitute a cultural pilgrimage?

### **4. The fragmentation of cultural identity**

Cultural identity is the term commonly employed to describe internalized cultural consciousness, identification with one's own culture. In anthropology, cultural identity is most often defined as identification with an ethnic group and its culture, the communal spirit. With the disintegration of small communities, it has become increasingly difficult to define ethnic

identity. Soviet scientists have coined the term 'ethno-social organism' to describe the process of economic, social and cultural change which takes place in particular historical circumstances within an ethnic community having a common 'ethno-genesis' i.e. history. This historically fatalistic concept is coolly scientific – as is the description of an ethnic community as an ecosystem. It takes no account of the way in which human beings experience their own culture and the changes that take place in it, nor questions the necessity or value from the human point of view of change perpetrated in the name of development and progress.

Cultural identity is perhaps generally understood to mean the concept of reality held by a member of a particular culture, the way in which he comprehends and motivates his own socio-cultural existence. A vital part of cultural identification is therefore the community's concept of the purpose or meaning of life around which the individual organizes his own existence. In this respect global cultural change has meant the disappearance of any generally held concept of the meaning of life and the emergence of numerous substitutes. The sense of regional identity has been submerged in that of national identity, which was perhaps latent anyway. More significantly, the individual has come to identify himself with the culture represented by groups sharing the same profession, interests or ideals. The pivotal point of cultural existence for a member of an urban culture offering multifarious possibilities and possessing multifarious values is a material or ideological objective: a house or property of some other sort, a professional career, a position of influence in a political or religious group or in some other organization. A member of industrialized society may identify himself with his objective, provided that this seems sufficiently worthwhile in the long-term and allows him to make full use of his potentialities. But for a far greater number, who are just factory fodder, the meaning of life lies in identification with the consumer society.

Changes of identity and the essential content of different identities could perhaps be tabulated as follows:

**Regional (spatial) identity**

- recognition of environment as an entity
- experience of continuity
- communal spirit



**Goal identity**

- definition of goal
- experience of motivation
- emphasis on achievement



**Group identity**

- delimitation of group of members
- experience of membership
- group-centricity

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**Mass identity**

- recognition of opportunities for consumption and stimulus
- experience of novelty
- existentialism

**Regional identity** (spatial/ethnic identity) includes the individual's personally lived-out experience of culture in the environment in which he lives: the social intercourse that links an individual to his community in his capacity as a member of society. Regional identity also includes a fundamental sense of continuity and permanence, social awareness and the idea of the community as the most important framework of existence. The individual sees his own immediate circle as part of the regional community and his own existence as part of a social entity, which manifests itself in communal symbols, traditions and systems of communication.

**Group identity** means nowadays identification with a meta-group for which the individual has no physical significance. In the differentiated society groups are little more than organizations whose members are united by common professional, political or ideological interests, the struggle between interest groups or the fear of losing rights. On the other hand social alienation and compartmentalization has led to a search for a real feeling of belonging through ideological and religious group fervor, occult, mystical and magical movements, transcendentalist or parapsychological cults, social-psychological group therapy itself and, to a certain extent, communes and other regressive back-to-nature movements. These movements represent a counter-culture and have no functional status in industrialized society.

**Goal identity** is identification with the illusions of the creative, development-minded and forward-looking cultural architects for whom work and achievement are the purpose of Life. Or equally well compensatory alienation and escape from the realities of monolithic culture.

**Mass identity** is identification with the industrial mass production society as a consumer of the technological products of a specialized metropolitan culture. The meaning of life is to be found in egocentric, new experiences, in taking advantage of all the technically maximal entertainments and stimuli offered by the professionals: restaurants, sport, television, or so-called creative hobbies and art-forms, or the new technological challenges – parachuting, slalom and motor

rating. Existential experiences provided by specialized departments of the welfare state are the be-all and end-all of human existence.

## **5. The imperialism of the production process**

Economic development today is dominated by supranational, world trade organizations, common market federations between states, and supranational or multinational giant enterprises. In the market economy countries the development of monopolies, mergers and the emergence of mammoth corporations is a fact; in the language of the politics of commerce it is called integration or the international division of labor. The cultural and ecological changes that have taken place as a result of adaptation to world trade in every country are self-evident:

- 1) The regional concentration of production, the emergence of mammoth industrial areas.
- 2) The establishment of a metropolis-periphery relationship between central and subsidiary industrial areas with all its economic, social and cultural consequences (governmental and cultural centralization).
- 3) Increasing specialization in production demanded by the international division of labor.
- 4) Adaptation of the structure of production plants and sales organizations to supranational marketing.
- 5) Product development and production planning determined by international standards, standardization of cultural products.
- 6) Policy of a centralized labor force. The individual seeking employment becomes the new nomad of the industrial society.
- 7) Death of small ethnic communities.

The nations of the world have been made to run on terms laid down by industrial, urban employment and world trade, they have been concentrated around standardized services, packed into the endless rows of identical suburban and slum-land boxes. Modern man is himself a mass product, the cheapest, most insignificant and dispensable structural unit of a worldwide production process. The continual intensification of technological growth is a prerequisite of the functioning of political organizations; the political ideologies of the world compete amongst themselves to bring about scientific and technical development – on terms laid down by international trade. The international production process has given birth to the mechanism of political, obligatory development. The fate of the natural environment and of plant and animal species threatened by the ever-expanding global production process has become a subject of universal concern. Ethnic cultures have come into being as a consequence of their isolation and by a process of economic and ecological adaptation to their regional environments; they are mutations just like the Galapagos sparrows. But the market economy and the production process do not only trample underfoot aboriginal cultures: every single small regional community and traditional ethnic culture is threatened by eco-catastrophe.

## **6. The imperialism of marketing mechanisms**

The continued development of the industrialized countries is dependent on marketing their culture in total. The further production moves from the satisfaction of basic needs, the more important become sales organizations, the creation of consumer demand and the regulation of consumption. Cultural experts have paid too little attention to the fact that the most efficiently organized thing in the world is diffusion, and that it is the marketing organizations – direct and indirect advertising, newspapers and magazines, the entire worldwide awareness industry – that create the framework of meaning in the modern folk culture. Folk culture is merely the response of the people to external, supranational, commercial and political influence and regulation, a more or less uniform manifestation of mass identity, in which national, ethnic and regional differences are primarily reflected in terms of consumer potential, the unequal distribution of economic resources over the world.

In the market economy culture everything that is produced must be sold, the tools of culture, science, art, even man

himself. The cultural eco-system of the mass production society is only kept going by marketing which is more important than the tools of production, surplus and capital. The marketing mechanisms are approaching scientific and economic perfection: marketing has not for a long time meant the advertising and distribution of individual products but integrated marketing in which the demands of marketing influence the earliest stages of planning and production down to the smallest detail. In a world becoming economically unified the mechanisms of marketing are in their turn becoming global:

1. Supranational marketing creates common illusions throughout the world, the cultural values of the urban consumer
2. Marketing is the sale of the total technological way of life. It would be cynical to deny that much else of the western way of life is not introduced into other cultures along with western technology. One cannot buy a transistor without also buying western pop music, a television without advertising breaks, gangster films and violence, a glossy magazine without pornography. No part of western culture can be bought as an isolated product, one machine requires another and thus one is launched on the slippery slope of western consumption.

In non-technological cultures the mechanization of one phase of production assumes the mechanization of the other phases and, in order to function efficiently, every machine requires all the rest of the related western technology. And when agricultural production is automated then transport, storage and further processing must also be automated. In the tough world of international technology, formal speeches about gentle development from a national base and individual choices are more often than not empty rhetoric.

The marketing of western cultural development has created supranational illusions of the metropolitan living-style: the modern furnishings of the white European, his de luxe kitchens, night clubs, yachts and sports cars. During the last decades whole armies of writers and pen-pushers have sold a fairy-tale urban world, have swooned in ecstasies of self-expression describing the narrow-mindedness of small communities, the tangled web of social relationships, social controls, the absence of real stimulus. Man has been made to believe that in his little urban box he can spend a more remarkable life than anywhere else or ever before. There he can liberate himself entirely from social relationships and social controls and devote his time exclusively to himself and his own consumption.

## 7. The imperialism of the social order

To the expert in international politics the world might seem to be an arena of national interests and cultural contradictions. Yet in every state behind the political violence, cruelty, terror and the fight for justice a centralized social order is being created which in terms of its structure and governmental machinery more and more conforms to world-wide governmental models. In every country of the world centralized, technically efficient, economic and political organizations are being created, western bureaucracies and social hierarchies which bury beneath them the communal order (the result of adaptation to local circumstances) and standardize the socio-cultural structures within each state.

In the construction of this state machinery, regional ethnic cultures (tribalism) are seen as a threat to national unity and to patriotism. In many countries the creation of a uniform governmental social order and a state culture is political expediency, the unadorned construction of a mechanism of power. This is sometimes realized in the name of civilization and social development, sometimes in the name of a future of equality for the various racial groups. All too often the western machinery of manipulation called political democracy is employed in the creation of a uniform, supra-national, technocratic culture, even as a tool of the utilitarian politics of supranational economic organizations and interests. In developmental phraseology ethnic cultures are synonymous with primitiveness, witchcraft, feudalism and despotism: these labels of an eurocentric cultural and social science are surely infinitely more suited to describe the governmental and political reality of the western countries than non-technological ethnic cultures. Political bureaucracy has established the concept that the small ethnic communities of the Third World exemplify non-democracy whereas the organized, western political mechanism of power exemplifies democracy.

The centralized state machinery is more and more energetically removing the possibilities of influence from the local community, from the level at which the individual, the man in the street, lives. In many countries internal colonialism prevails. In many developing countries the palatial parliament and administrative buildings – monuments to western architecture – are the tombstones of the country's true ethnic culture. In many countries the small community world has been transformed into a benevolent dictatorship of smiling party representatives and popular development leaders. In many countries the real power behind the throne is the army. The army, after all, is the most technically advanced, efficiently organized cultural institution of western society and the one that has become accepted throughout the world with the minimum of opposition.



## 8. The imperialism of the transmission of culture

In the civilized modern state enculturation, the transmission of culture to new generations has become increasingly institutionalized: it has become the responsibility of official organizations, which conform to supranational, metropolitan standards. The cultural heritage of every race comes more and more under the control of 1) The western educational system and 2) The supremacy of western communication. A standardized western epistemological superstructure standardizes the cognitive, ethical, social and historical world picture of every race. The technological superpowers and the communications controlled by the west, not forgetting audio-visual mass communication and the pop culture, are instituting a cultural imperialism that is rapidly supplanting ecologically and socially localized knowledge with globally standardized knowledge.

In every country, regardless of its ideology, the western educational system is pursuing didactic goals that are increasingly standardized. The developing countries are following suit in the creation by professionals of educational communities that are all organized along similar lines and are alike in what they teach. For the technological culture of the west cannot be bought without the white European's ways of thinking, cultural values and ideology of mechanistic knowledge. Today western superculture is being transmitted to more and more of the world's schoolchildren.

The technological and political superculture renders utterly devoid of meaning the ethno-science and intra-cultural systems of local communities, the fundamentals of social and existential order, the explanations of life here and in the hereafter, the whole communicative, symbolic and empirical system of causal relations on which traditional culture is based. In their place the superculture supplies the western mechanisms of socialization, the humiliating and authoritarian educational system that instills organized behavior and competition as also the aggressiveness, the unrelenting fight for status symbols, for power and the instruments of power of the white man.

In many Third World countries the educational system is an inheritance from colonial times and tuition, at any rate at university level, takes place in the language of the former colonial power. Alternatively the responsibility for curriculum

planning may lie with a small 'upper class' that has itself received a western education.

The use of tribal languages is frowned upon by nation-states bent on centralization and the consolidation of power nor are these languages considered suitable for the transmission of the technological knowledge of the white man. The educational technocrats seem more interested in method than content, the aim being to create the most efficient methods for transmitting western knowledge to new generations and for establishing a uniform global educational system.

## **9. The imperialism of the assessment of cultures**

The superculture has its own superior machinery for the assessment of cultures. Just as individuals are assessed in terms of intelligence quotients and capability scales, the nations of the world are also assessed in terms of technocratic units of measurement. Every aspect of a culture has its own quantitative unit of measurement: 1) Those of development: gross national product, volume of exports, industry index. 2) Those of 'happiness' i.e. the standard of living: how many material possessions each person/household has. 3). Those of 'unhappiness': starvation, sickness, mortality. These cultural statistics have become indispensable to western society as they provide the scientific basis for social and economic planning.

Today their compilation is the responsibility of the World Bank. Although these statistics are accepted as gospel and find their way from encyclopedias to school textbooks and the pages of the weeklies, the basis on which they are compiled is not known and their veracity is un-certifiable. The euro-centric writing of history is paralleled by the imperialism of western statistics.

In the assessment of cultures a simplistic scale is employed which merely measures the extent of technological development. On this basis small, self-supporting communities find themselves at zero on the scale for they can produce no export figures, no indices of urbanization – how in fact the gross national product is calculated at all in such communities is one of the mysteries of western science. What these comparative statistics fail to take into account is

the other side of the coin: the increasing class distinctions, crime, violence, the use of narcotics, the sharp upward turn of the problems of social waste, which are an integral part of super-development even in the Third World.

Western cultural statistics arrange the nations of the world in an order of precedence that encourages the race for western development and the creation of a material culture on western lines. By means of statistics economic development is controlled over the heads of national leaders, new needs are created for entire nations, compulsive development is justified. The statistics are complemented by the supranational bureaucracy even by the United Nations' numerous agencies, which establish the imperialism of starvation. The starving has their uses.

Starvation statistics demonstrate the necessity of the supranational developmental bureaucracy and all the great and small development directors that take it upon themselves to plan a new global society. They demonstrate the necessity of mass communications to supply information shocks. In the treatment by the western media on the problems of the developing countries, one can see the creation of a total lie, for economic organizations have been seen in the role of charities, and expansionist politics, economic re-colonization and the selling of western technocracy have been seen as missionary work euphemistically called development co-operation or development aid. It should be more widely known that development aid in its present form is only the real-politics of the industrialized countries, whose aim is to guarantee new potential markets for intensified production. There have always been people in the West who have justified their right to make crusades to other cultures and in the eurocentric history of the west the subjugation of peoples has only too often been seen as a deed of heroism.

Gross national product per capita is one of measures to order the nations, cultures and life-styles of the world in order of precedence as defined by the white man. Another equally common method is to list nations according to how small a proportion of their population works on the land or how large a proportion lives in towns. A small self-sufficient agricultural village cannot make a significant enough contribution to world trade to figure in capitalist indices. What sort of civilization and development is it that moves the greatest proportion of its population into city slums in order to produce the cheapest luxury goods, labor force, services, criminality and starvation? Is it because in cities human beings provide their leaders with development statistics? Why is it that in the statistical comparison of cultures, no mention is made of those other figures that describe the urban consumer culture, the statistics of crime, violence and narcotics? Why are only trade volumes measured? Why not the alienation and rootlessness of the slum dweller or the real human consequences of mechanical conveyor-belt work?

## 10. Compulsive development

During the past decades a mechanism for compulsive development has been generated by the centralized and specialized organizational structure of society. The mechanism of development is no longer controllable by individuals and the process of standardization is no longer directed by one particular class or interest group but by the organization. It is above all the working-class that has seen western development as its hope for the future. But as organizations grow, the mechanism of compulsive development grows up with them as do the mechanisms of economic unification and the standardization of social structures, education and cultural concepts and acculturation.

It is a fact that the ecological equilibrium of ethnic communities has been disturbed and that the developing countries are forced to change in order to adapt to the new economic system. The catch phrases of today are the new economic order, self-sufficiency, regional democracy, devolution, cultural heritage, africanization and so on. But what is at issue is not regional culture but the leveling-out of differences in the standard of development. Nationalist movements in many countries may speak of taking their own road to development; the mechanism of global development is approaching an indivisible whole.

In non-technological countries western development is considered the superior cultural system, which offers untold riches to those that adapt themselves most quickly. In the developing countries an international sub-culture has grown up that has been nicknamed the International cocktail club and which apes the western way of life. But western development is indispensable to the bureaucrats who use it to construct the machinery of power around themselves, to upstart national politicians who flirt with international ideologies, to scientists and artists who can set themselves up as geniuses after the western model. Numerous developing countries are governed by political and economic profiteers, who have stakes in the industrial and commercial enterprises in their country, who receive princely sums from investors, entrepreneurs and importers. Corruption is the price to be paid by the west for the expansion of its markets and the demise of ethnic cultures.

The time has come for sociologists and cultural anthropologists to examine their own role in this compulsive development. Should they merely record the changes that take place, perhaps even establish new disciplines such as urban

anthropology or mass anthropology? Should they concentrate on collecting into museums what can still be salvaged, setting up memorials to dead cultures? Are there no longer any cultures that are not western or westernizing? Has the knowledge industry an institutionalized cultural system, a concept of civilization that must inevitably lead to standardization? Is mass identity endemic to man? Have ethnic culture and ethnic characteristics any permanent value as other institutions, such as marriage and the family, seem to have? Can culture be assessed in other than quantitative terms? Is environmental protection more important than the protection of cultures? Can technology only create centralized, mammoth production units, urban slums? Is a post-urban period possible in the history of human culture?

Translated by **Jeremy Parsons**

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