

# **JES !**

## **Towards a Joint Effort Society**

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# JES! Towards a joint effort society

Frank van Empel & Caro Sicking

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# Preface

## From Industrial to Spiritual Revolution

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 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 explanations on the causes, the socio-psychological analysis of John Kenneth Galbraith is much referred to here. 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>1</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 know both the nature of the world and of human beings and we also have to know how they fit together’.<sup>2</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

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<sup>1</sup>3.000.000.000 people have to live from \$2 a day. World Bank, World Development Report, 2000-2001, 22.

<sup>2</sup>Paul Feyerabend, *The Tyranny of Science*, Polity Press, 2011, p. 10.

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.

Please join the dialogue: [www.ecolutie.nl](http://www.ecolutie.nl)<sup>3</sup>

Frank & Caro

P.S. JES! towards a joint effort society has been abbreviated in January 2014. We felt it was too abundant and the text led people astray because of this abundance. The deleted passages can be found at [www.ecolutie.nl](http://www.ecolutie.nl) under the title Battlefields.

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<sup>3</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 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

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

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 can be approached from any point, that 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>.

The incorporated theory of evolution introduces a method and toolbox for change. But please keep in mind that this is a process, an ongoing development. The 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.

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.

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

## 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 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 ap-

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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 ResearchEducation-Design in ScienceArtTechnology for PeacefulSustainableDevelopment

ply 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