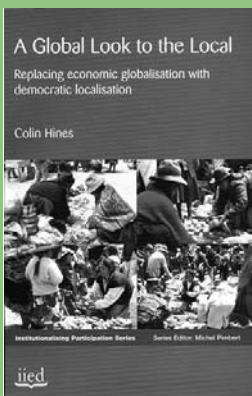


Book reviews

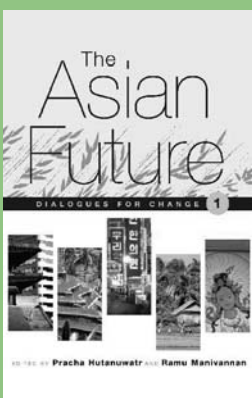


A global look to the local: Replacing economic globalisation with democratic localisation

Colin Hines, 2003. IIED, London. ISBN 1 84 369 5006, <http://www.iied.org>.

Colin Hines, Associate of the International Forum of Globalisation, begins this book by briefly looking at 'corporate globalisation': a process based on the free-market ideology that aims for reduction of barriers to trade and investment. At the same time it undermines democracy and economic control in nation states and their communities. 'Localisation' is presented as a viable alternative, which reverses the trend of corporate globalisation in favour of local initiatives. Local self-reliance and increased self-determination stand at the core of this economic approach. A set of policies that can increase control on the economy by communities and nation states is described.

Building on these principles, the author presents new trade rules designed to achieve food sovereignty in a variety of settings. This paradigm shift can lead to an increased sense of security and well-being, through enhanced community cohesion, reduction of poverty and inequality, and improvement of livelihoods, social infrastructure and environmental protection. By challenging the prevailing neo-liberal economic thinking in today's policies, this book aims at furthering the debate on the basic elements of the global economic system.



The Asian future. Dialogues for change Volumes 1 & 2

Edited by Pracha Hutuanuwatr and Ramu Manivannan. Zed Books, London UK. ISBN 1 84277 343 7/1 84277 345 3.

The Western development model has been criticised within Asia for several decades, but there has been little intellectual articulation of the possible alternatives - at micro and macro level - from an Asian perspective. What do the Asian communities share beyond their anxiety about the local effects of globalisation and Western dominance?

These two volumes bring together the ideas and experiences of some of Asia's outstanding intellectuals and social activists from various nationalities, traditions and faiths. Through in-depth interviews an understanding of shared spiritual, social and ecological values emerges. There are fourteen contributors to this dialogue: Abdurraman Wahid (Indonesia), Chandra Muzaffar (Malaysia) and Mahmoud Ayoub (Lebanon/US) are all Muslims; Samdhong Rinpoche (Tibet/India), Sulak Sivaraksa (Siam) and Helena Norberg-Hodge (Sweden/Ladakh) are Buddhists; Satish Kumar (India/UK), Ashis Nandy (India) and Vandana Shiva (India) are Gandhian-alternative thinkers; Tu Weiming (China/US) is a Confucian scholar; Bishop Julio Labayen (the Philippines) is a radical Christian; Arief Budiman (Indonesia / Australia), Walden Bello (the Philippines) and Nakamura Hisashi (Japan) are intellectuals strongly identifying with Asian culture. The common ground of these authors is their passionate commitment towards social justice and ecological sustainability. These are today's voices of engaged action and transition in Asia.



Awakening earth: Exploring the evolution of human culture & consciousness

Duane Elgin, 1993, William Morrow & Co, ISBN 0688116213, 382 pp.

This book brings together views from science and spirituality, East and West, the practical and the visionary, to present a new picture of human evolution. It explores the human journey from the initial awakening as hunter-gatherers roughly 35,000 years ago, through the agrarian era and industrial revolution. Then the three additional stages of development which have led to our initial maturity as a global species-civilisation, are described: a disoriented world civilisation which is facing dwindling resources, mounting pollution and a population explosion.

It is imperative that the human family begins making rapid and profound changes in how we live together on Earth. We must now ask ourselves fundamental questions, like who are we? What are we doing here? Where are we going as a species? Awakening Earth provides a catalyst for this conversation, with its inspiring map of the journey towards a sustainable, compassionate, and creative future. There are a number of unique features to this book: first, the span of evolution considered is uncommon. Only a handful of books cover both the historical past and the deep future in one evolutionary sweep. Second, the cosmology or theory is distinctive - it presents a systems view of the cosmos which is congruent with both modern science and perennial wisdom. This cosmology is neither materialistic nor transcendental, but integrative as it describes a co-evolutionary view of culture and consciousness. Third, the meditative or intuitive origins are unusual. While the particulars of this book are based on two decades of research, the organising pattern emerged as the culmination of six months of self-directed meditation.