How Does Localized Social Economy Sustain in a Globalizing World? A Critical Analysis of Post-Developmentalist Initiatives in Andhra Pradesh, India

Ashok Kumbamu
University of Alberta

Tuesday 11 October 2011

United Nations Research Institute for Social Development
Global Agriculture at a Critical Conjuncture

A Triple Crisis:

- Food crisis
- Energy crisis
- Climate crisis
"Biotechnology is the science of changing the genetic makeup of seeds that grow our food to add new benefits. Healthier, more abundant yields. Reduced reliance on pesticides and fossil fuels. A cleaner environment."

[“Let the Harvest Begins” campaign started by Monsanto on the World Food Day (October 16th) in 1998. Emphasis added.]

Ecological modernization: A neoliberal modernist and technocratic approach to the environment
The “Gene Revolution” as a Solution

With Gene Revolution technologies, genes from an organism can be mapped, isolated, altered and transferred to:

- another organism of the same species or
- an organism of a different species or
- an organism belonging to a different kingdom (Eg. Bt Cotton)
Global GM Crop Adoption

- GM crops first commercially released in 1995

- By 2010, 15.4 million farmers in 29 countries cultivated 148 Million hectares (i.e., about 10% of the world’s total cropland area)

- By 2010, percentage of GM crops of global crop area:
  - 81% of soybean
  - 64% of cotton
  - 29% of maize
  - 23% of Canola

Source: The International Service for the Acquisition of Agri-biotech Applications (ISAAA)

Funders: Monsanto, DuPont, Syngenta, Pioneer Hi-Bred, Cargill, Dow, Bayer CropScience and CropLife International
Corporate Control Over Agriculture

- The world’s top 10 corporations control 67 percent of the total proprietary seed market.

- The world’s top three companies – Monsanto (US), DuPont (US), and Syngenta (Switzerland) – account for 47 percent of global proprietary seed market.

- The world’s top 10 corporations control 89 percent of the global agrochemical market.

- The world’s six biggest agrochemicals are also big players in the global seed sector (ETC Group 2008)
Introduction of Bt Cotton into India: Neoliberal Economic Policies and Farmer Suicides

- Removal of import and export restrictions on almost all commodities
- Decline in state support to agriculture and rural development
- Privatization of seed research, development, and distribution
- National seed policy reforms
- Takeover of local seed companies by multinational corporations
- Lack of transparency and democratic approach in new technology approval process
- Lack of efficient monitoring and regulatory mechanism
Across the country, 241,679 Farmers committed suicide between 1995 and 2009 (Center for Human Rights and Global Justice 2011)
Alternatives and Resistance: Different Paths

“Old” left social movements

“New” social movements
New farmers’ movements, environmental movements, civil rights movements, and other.

Progressive Non-governmental Organizations and Civil Society Groups
Building a coalition of local movements to reclaim control over food and agriculture
Implementing the Post-Developmental Agenda: The Deccan Development Society

- Established by a group of “deprofessionalized intellectuals” in 1983 in Medak district, southern India.

- Working with *dalit* (the so-called untouchables) women

- Expanded to 75 villages

- Primary focus on:
  - Community engagement and democratic participation in decision making
  - Autonomy over resources, the market, and media
  - Biodiversity conservation
  - Sustaining indigenous knowledge and livelihoods
  - Building social economy
Grassroots Initiatives

- **PLACE-BASED INITIATIVES:**
  - Implementation of alternative development practices.

- **NETWORK-BASED INITIATIVES**
  - Construction of a counter-hegemonic discourse.
  - Solidarity movements.
Place-based Initiatives
Food Sovereignty

- Local food production, local storage, and local distribution

- Café Ethic
  (Organic Millet Restaurant)

- Revival of local food culture
Seed sovereignty

- Agro-biodiversity conservation
- Traditional Seed Banks
- Biodiversity festivals
Sustaining Indigenous Knowledge and Autonomy over Media

- Indigenous knowledge documentation
- Community Media Trust
- Green education: Transcending the current symbols of modernity

*Videos: My Farm – My Classroom*  
*Dhanwarlo O’ Avva*
Sustaining Agriculture and Livelihoods

- Ecological agriculture
- Organic cooperative market
Network-based Initiatives
Construction of a Counter-hegemonic Discourse

- Research conducted by civil society members and public intellectuals
- Video documentation by the Community Media Trust to show the socio-ecological and health implications of GM crops
- Organizing citizens’ juries
Building Solidarity Movements

- Networking
- Policy lobbying
- Struggles against anti-farmer technologies and development
Achievements of the Deccan Development Society

- Constructed a farmer suicide-free zone in India
- Achieved food security and seed security
- Increased and secured livelihood options
- Enhanced *dalit* women’s empowerment and created new community leaders
- Reestablished a sustainable relationship between the farming community and nature
- Built a strong coalition of local movements across the country
The Deccan Development Society: A Critique

- Dependency on external funding sources (from ‘green’ international organizations and the Indian government)
- Dependency on urban-based intellectuals
- Compartmentalization of the aspirations of social movements
- Neglect of systemic exploitation and oppression of the state and the capitalist market system
- Romanticization of culture, agriculture, and nature
Conclusion

- Technological fixes for politico-economic and socio-ecological crises are undemocratic and unsustainable

- A “double movement” in Indian agriculture

- “There Are Thousands of Alternatives”: Local solutions to local as well as global problems

- Cultivating a hope amidst agrarian distress and farmer suicides
Questions & Comments?

Thank you!

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Contact: akumbamu@ualberta.ca