

Zeitschrift: Geographica Helvetica : schweizerische Zeitschrift für Geographie = Swiss journal of geography = revue suisse de géographie = rivista svizzera di geografia

Herausgeber: Verband Geographie Schweiz ; Geographisch-Ethnographische Gesellschaft Zürich

Band: 57 (2002)

Heft: 1: Vulnerability = Verwundbarkeit = Vulnérabilité

Artikel: Hour of darkness : vulnerability, security and globalization

Autor: Watts, Michael

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-872257>

Nutzungsbedingungen

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist die Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften auf E-Periodica. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Zeitschriften und ist nicht verantwortlich für deren Inhalte. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern beziehungsweise den externen Rechteinhabern. Das Veröffentlichen von Bildern in Print- und Online-Publikationen sowie auf Social Media-Kanälen oder Webseiten ist nur mit vorheriger Genehmigung der Rechteinhaber erlaubt. [Mehr erfahren](#)

Conditions d'utilisation

L'ETH Library est le fournisseur des revues numérisées. Elle ne détient aucun droit d'auteur sur les revues et n'est pas responsable de leur contenu. En règle générale, les droits sont détenus par les éditeurs ou les détenteurs de droits externes. La reproduction d'images dans des publications imprimées ou en ligne ainsi que sur des canaux de médias sociaux ou des sites web n'est autorisée qu'avec l'accord préalable des détenteurs des droits. [En savoir plus](#)

Terms of use

The ETH Library is the provider of the digitised journals. It does not own any copyrights to the journals and is not responsible for their content. The rights usually lie with the publishers or the external rights holders. Publishing images in print and online publications, as well as on social media channels or websites, is only permitted with the prior consent of the rights holders. [Find out more](#)

Download PDF: 10.12.2025

ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, E-Periodica, <https://www.e-periodica.ch>

Essay / Essay / Essai

Hour of Darkness: Vulnerability, security and globalization

Michael Watts, Berkeley

«[W]e are not dealing with «lands of famine» becalmed in stagnant backwaters of world history but with the fate of tropical humanity at the precise moment (1870-1914) when its labor and products were being dynamically conscripted into a London-centered world economy.» (DAVIS 2001: 9)

The tragic and devastating «crimes against humanity» of September 11th in New York City and Washington DC perpetrated against a diverse, multi-cultural community of many nationalities and ethno-religious identities, has forever changed the way we think about risk, security and vulnerability. Americans, of course have generally been immune from the sorts of insecurities and violence – and the devastating poverty – that attend the life experiences of large swaths of humanity in the South. The indelible images of aircraft plunging into the Twin Trade Towers, and of their horrific, vertiginous collapse, has however brought the awful realities of say the West Bank and the Balkans to the American heartland, but with a terrifying bonus: namely, an anti-globalization, anti-imperialistic resistance movement armed with all the knowledge and weaponry of twenty-first century «cyber-cultural» modernity. Against the backdrop of this calamity, I have been reflecting however upon the «why» question, and upon its almost complete invisibility in the media. In its place we have talked of the rebirth of community, of the tactical problems of retaliation (how to attack Afghanistan when there are no «high value» targets, only tents as the Pentagon lamented), of the new kind of «war» associated with bioterror and the trade in fissionable materials, and recurrent invocations of God and Pearl Harbor at every turn. But why the hatred, why the militant mobilization of global networks of Islamic resistance, why this particular form of anti-imperialism, why these sorts of vanguardist militants (I mean, or I presume, Saudi, Egyptian, Jordanian and other 20-40 year old educated, cosmopolitan «moderns»)? And I am gesturing here to an explanation that transcends psychopathology (they are «crazy» and «mindless»). Mainstream US media have made it clear that Mr. bin Laden has himself offered an explicit answer to the why question: settlers on the West Bank, US military in the Peninsula, and the continued US bombing of Iraq – coupled to his wider goal of overthrowing every pro-US regime beginning in, order of succession, with

Saudi Arabia, followed by Egypt and Jordan. Such an account is not uninformative but as academics we also know that the reasons people give for why they do what they do cannot always be taken at face value and are always incomplete and partial.

The fact that the why question is so absent itself demands an explanation; why the attention to «mindless acts», to the who, what and how, what journalist ROBERT FISK calls «the essential new war rule» (THE INDEPENDENT, September 16th 2001)? Why is there so little discussion as EDWARD SAID has noted of the US *presence* in the world:

«its direct involvement in the complex reality beyond the two coasts that have for so long kept the rest of the world extremely distant and virtually out of the average American's mind. You'd think that «America» was a sleeping giant rather than a superpower almost constantly at war, or in some sort of conflict, all over the Islamic domains» (GUARDIAN, September 13th 2001: 6).

For a decade or so, the US body politic has entered a deep narcolepsy, drugged by unprecedented economic growth, by unrivalled imperial power, but an almost surreal concern with the trivia and detritus of capitalist modernity: the 24 year old billionaires, the President's sperm on the blue dress, stock-market mania and so on. The why question is unthinkable in this sort of culture of imperial power. It has been said of Bush, «he does not know how much he does not know»; and so goes the US body politic.

All of this was brought home powerfully to me during this week as I received e-mails from friends in Nigeria who took a certain pleasure from the fact that many people are driving around Kano (the heart of the Sunni Muslim north) with bin Laden posters in the rear windows of their cars. None of these engineers, doctors and academics are either planning to sign up

A part of this paper appears in a slightly different form in WATTS, M. (2000): The Great Tablecloth. – In: CLARK, G., FELDMAN, M. & M. GERTLER (eds): The Oxford Handbook of Economic Geography. – Oxford: Oxford University Press: 195-214.

for Florida pilot-training schools, nor do they exhalt in the carnage and horror of Tuesday last. But such e-mail sentiments says much about the feelings among educated people within the global Muslim *ummah* and something of the sympathies that define the complex road map within Islamism and political Islam.

The why question must address the soil in which a particular sort of articulation – the language is from STUART HALL (1996) and he refers to the simultaneous process of the interpellation of an identity (i.e. Muslim) and of a political project (i.e. the return of the Caliphate) – has produced a particular sort of insurgent (militant, suicidal, perhaps nihilistic). In this sense, the why question must start with the global Islamic revival. In a universe marked by locality and diversity generalization about Islam is always treacherous but there surely are important discursive shifts and debates within what has been called the «Qu'ran Belt» of 1.2 billion Muslims. One aspect of this revival is Islamism, a series of movements of moderns, educated and urbanized groups rather than the *ulema* and sufi brotherhoods: it is modern, male-dominated, and seeking to reinstitutionalize their conception of Islamic laws, institutions and other imagined practices of the first Muslims. Like other movements there are a variety of tactics employed, from armed insurrection (Islamic Jihad) to building a parallel civil society (virtually everywhere) to the voting booth (Malaysia). OLIVIER ROY (1994) has shown that Islamism is concentrated among urban youth caught, as LUBECK & BRITTS put it, in the «miasmatic webs of multiple post-colonial crises» (LUBECK & BRITTS 2001: 6). Political Islam, then, represents a shift in popular consciousness from a secular nationalist to an Islamic narrative. Islamism of course operates at many levels: the global *ummah*, reform of the territorially defined nation state, the moral economy of the urban neighborhood, and this in part explains its appeal, reach and robustness (LUBECK 1999).

Islamism, one can say, has seized the imagination of sections of the urban youth broadly construed, by throwing down the gauntlet of anti-imperialist populist nationalism (LUBECK 1999): it is what IMMANUEL WALLERSTEIN calls an antisystemic movement opposing US-led globalization (it is another sort of «anti-globalization» movement on the same ground as Seattle and Genova in other words). To grasp Islamism's appeal and dynamics requires an understanding of the crisis of the secular nationalist development project in the Koran belt, and within the Middle east in particular. In my view one can immediately identify four powerful vectors. First, the political economy of the oil boom which produced rentier capitalism of a decrepit and undisciplined sort, and a profound sense of moral decay and state delegitimation prompted by the commodity booms and the shock of the new. Second, the

vast financial resources that flowed to the Saudi and Gulf states exposed immigrant labor to Wahabbi and other Islamist doctrines and in turn funded global networks of associations, and charities. Third, the intersection of the 1990s petro-bust and the IMF/World Bank led austerity and neo-liberal reforms further pulverized an already crippled state, throwing millions into poverty and further eviscerating state services and welfare provision (in which Muslim civic organizations came to play an enormous role as the state contracted and withdrew). And fourth, geo-politics – the effects of the Cold War struggles for which Afghanistan is a paradigmatic case, the US support of Israel and of West Bank settlements, and the collapse of the Soviet-socialist block – provided a setting in which Islamist ideas provided an obvious bulwark against US hegemony. The particular confluence of these powerful forces – all saturated with an American presence in the form of oil companies, IMF, foreign investment, and foreign policy interests – crippled, one might say destroyed, the secular nationalist project which had shallow roots in any case in the region.

Of course Islamic reformism has a long history dating back to the 17th century and this is not the place to trace origins of Wahabbism or the Muslim Brotherhood. But the point is that within this maelstrom of Muslim debate, radical ideas of the likes of the famous Egyptian cleric SAYID QUTB had an appeal; they combined puritanical Islam with a sort of Leninist approach to political organization. As OLIVIER ROY says, Islamists received their training not in religious schools but in colleges and universities «where they rubbed shoulders with Marxist militants whose ideas they borrowed and injected with Quranic terminology» (1994: 4). The huge increase in urban unemployed graduates provided a fertile ground within which such radical and militant anti-imperialist ideas could draw sustenance.

All of this has seemingly taken me far from risk and vulnerability, but I want to argue that it leads to its ground zero. My simplified account of the global Islamic revival, and of the place of Islamism within it, turns on a global political economy. And to the extent that «terrorism» generates new risks and vulnerabilities, one might say that any discussion of how to improve security must start from the grinding gears of global vulnerability: capitalist modernity, the world market, Islam, US hegemony, and the crisis of the secular nationalist project. This is the intellectual bedrock for an understanding of risk and vulnerability – at least from the vantage point of the events in New York and Washington DC – and it takes us necessarily into the links between globalization broadly construed and the topic of this special issue, security. It is precisely this nexus of relations that I seek to shed some light on here.

Global Vulnerability and Late Victorian Holocausts

The process of «opening up» to The World Market, says a character in WILLIAM MORRIS's novel *News From Nowhere*, «shows us at its worst the great vice of the nineteenth century, the use of hypocrisy and cant to evade the responsibility of vicarious ferocity.» In what must remain one of the great perorations on Europe's civilizing mission, MORRIS excoriates the crude appetites of liberal capitalism with astonishing rhetorical force: the «homicidal madmen and desperados» in the service of the imperial project, the «ignorant adventurers» breaking up traditional society, the brute coercion of market creation («the jaws of the ravening monster»), the robbery of exchange, the reckless pursuit of profit, and what MORRIS's narrator calls «the slavery of hopeless toil». It all makes KARL POLANYI's (1947) sober judgement in *The Great Transformation* on the horrors of the self-regulating market – the «catastrophe of the native community» consequent upon the violent dissolution of its basic institutions as he put it – appear positively rosy by comparison.

MIKE DAVIS's new book *Late Victorian Holocausts* (2001) suggests that MORRIS and the radical critics of Pax Britannica might not have been radical enough. DAVIS has unleashed what is perhaps the most sustained broadside against the sinking wreck of Victorian capitalism in a century, and unearthed the horrifying costs – the holocausts – of market utopianism, and of what BEATRICE WEBB called the «employers gospel» underlying the Victorian imperial order. It is of course the figure of the English pauper, which looms large in POLANYI's treatise on the antinomies of market and community in nineteenth century England. But projected onto the screen of the *fin de siècle* world market, the imperial correlate of the English pauper is, as DAVIS's coruscating portrait depicts, the emaciated corpse of the Asian, Latin American and African peasant, sixty million of them in fact who perished in the «colonial genocide» between 1870 and 1906. Rarely was the violence of primitive accumulation granted such free reign as in the waning decades of the Victorian imperium. *Late Victorian Holocausts* is at once the veritable black book of liberal capitalism, a thundering indictment of the so-called golden age of imperialism, and a radical unmasking of the massive brutality which attended the making of global markets and the creation of a Third World proletariat.

News from Nowhere was published in 1891 during what we now know to have been one of the most severe El Niño Southern Oscillation (ENSO) events of the last two centuries. The El Niño drought – more precisely the warm phase of the active ocean component of a vast Pacific-basin wide oscillation in air mass and ocean temperature – devastated China, Brazil,

India and parts of Africa. It proved to be one in a series of synchronous climatic perturbations between 1876 and 1902, which in turn set the environmental stage for a serial trio of global subsistence crises in 1876-79, 1889-91 and 1896-1902. It is the burden of *Late Victorian Holocausts* to show that the fate of tropical humanity between 1870 and 1914 was harnessed not to natural disasters or to the specter of MALTHUSIAN grain shortage, but rather, as ALFRED RUSSELL WALLACE put it (cited in DAVIS 2001: 56), «to the most terrible failures of the century.» In DAVIS' hands, this failure, the unnecessary deaths of millions, must be located at the ground zero of the late imperial order, namely a London-centered world economy. Subsistence crises have social origins, he argues, best grasped through a sort of causal triangulation encompassing the depletion or loss of ecological entitlements, a radical deepening of household poverty, and state decapacitation, each the precipitate of a lethal suturing of market utopianism to the neo-Darwinism of a new imperial order. The famine holocausts were no accident of climatic history. Rather they were overdetermined artifacts of the workshop of nineteenth century liberal capitalism, forged by profit, primitive accumulation, and state extraction.

DAVIS wants to retain the idea that there is an extraordinary density of invisible environmental instability in modern history. The discovery of ENSO in the 1960s represented in this regard a signal achievement because it accounts for *the* fundamental source of climatic variability after the seasonal cycle. But at the same time that he endorses the vast, radiated social consequences of the seesawing of Indo-Pacific air masses, DAVIS is alert to the dangers of recapitulating the dreadful logic of an earlier political economy he assiduously seeks to condemn: namely late Victorian environmental determinism (still with us, alas, in new pernicious forms) and its bold claim, embodied in the 1878 Indian Famine Commission reports, that «drought causes famine». *Late Victorian Holocausts* stands as a striking counterpoint to BRIAN FAGAN's (1999) apocalyptic treatment of El Niño in *Floods, Famines and Emperors*; what stands between El Niño and starvation is not FAGAN's «overcrowded lands» – to take his egregious MALTHUSIAN account of the Sahel famine of the 1970s – but rather the organized famine produced by peasant commercialization, declining terms of trade, and the formal and informal subjections imposed by the Gold Standard and colonial appropriation. What made late nineteenth century ENSO events so devastating was the chronic vulnerability of millions of disenfranchised subjects, mired in poverty and debt, and haunted by the bleak authoritarianism of market and state alike. The many thousands who died in Madras in 1876, in Shandong in 1899, in the Brazilian *sertão* in 1878, in Sudan and Egypt in the late 1880's, were not

victims of technological backwardness or «lives of idleness» to invoke RICHARD TEMPLE's repugnant characterization of the Deccan peasantry; neither were they fatalities cast off by a fickle nature. Rather they were the casualties of the icy, steel-plated armory of modern economic and political systems. The market, said KARL KAUTSKY (1899) in his great treatise *The Agrarian Question*, is «even more moody and incalculable than the weather». DAVIS has charted the lethal circumstances under which the intersection of global climate, world markets, and imperial politics – three great wheels of incalculability – came to serve as a gigantic genocidal and proletarianising machine, killing millions, and throwing many more into the clutches of the labor market.

In actual fact DAVIS has written two books. One is a fascinating scientific detective story: the nineteenth century mystery of the causes behind the global droughts between 1870 and 1900. The search for the Holy Grail of El Niño – the recognition that normal rainfall events over the globe change in response to oscillations of air pressure and ocean temperature in the great climatic pumphouse of the equatorial Pacific – takes DAVIS to the substance, or at least the historical moment, of the second book: namely the political economy of nineteenth century famine. Tropical meteorology, it turns out, had its origins in the East India Company, and their obsessive interest in the links between climate, peasant production and food output. The British Empire set up the rudiments of a global weather observation system in which, not surprisingly, the annual lottery of the monsoons took pride of place. At the time of the great El Niño events in the 1870s, the prevailing theory of what were already known to be coherent planetary droughts turned on variable radiation. The founding fathers of neoclassical economics precisely tried to naturalize what they called «commercial crises» by linking trade cycles to sunspots. Political economy, as DAVIS dryly notes, was unmasked as a province of solar physics. This sunspot madness was overturned by the efforts of a ballistics expert and world class anal retentive, GILBERT WALKER, who crunched unimaginable quantities of weather data and discovered the Southern Oscillation in the 1920's. Following a hiatus, the search resumed in the 1960's when the hero of DAVIS's story, University of California, Los Angeles climatologist JACOB BJERKNES, documented a catalytic, and variable, exchange of energy between ocean and atmosphere that could moreover be self-generated and self-sustaining; no exogenous forcing was required in other words. Subsequent work outlined the warm (El Niño) and cold (El Niña) phases of ENSO, and more critically the teleconnectivity or coupling between the tropical Pacific and the rest of the world climate system (which incidentally laid the groundwork for the calibration of successful predic-

tive models). All of this takes us to our own *fin de siècle* El Niños (1990-95, 1997-98), and their peculiar properties, not the least of which is the apparent uncoupling of ENSO from the Indian monsoon. It's hard to imagine getting too exercised about thermocline-oscillations and inter tropical convergences, but this is gripping stuff.

DAVIS's second book, so to speak, provides what he calls a «political ecology» of late Victorian famine, an angle of attack that locates synchronous drought in India, China and Brazil (his three case studies) in the «malign interaction between climatic and economic processes». One part of his historical narrative sees Moroccan peasants and Tamil sharecroppers as already immiserated by the effects of the Great Depression. Another thread shows how peasantries starved in Oud and Ceara as grain merchants and colonial states deliberately expelled local grain surpluses: between 1875 and 1900 Indian grain exports increased from 3 to 10 million tons. Correlatively, food relief was corrupted by local Brazilian elites for whom drought was good business or, as in the Indian case, eviscerated at the hands of colonial administrations only concerned to maximize tax collection («revenue must at all costs be gathered in» said a Bombay official in 1902).

DAVIS's account of both the 1870s and 1890s famines is a blistering assault on the much-vaunted golden age of imperialism: district mortality rates of 30-40% in southern India, traces of cannibalism and slavery in Africa and China, cholera epidemics in the wake of food shortage, and the collapse of the ecological commons. Early in *Late Victorian Holocausts*, DAVIS highlights the «conjunctural» events such as cotton booms or trade recessions that both detonate, and give local shape to, subsistence crises. Later in the book he turns to what he calls «slower structural processes» such as commercialization of peasant production, colonial tax demands, the impact of the Gold Standard, the decapacitation of local systems of resiliency (for example indigenous irrigation practices), and the corrosive effects of informal colonialism.

In stitching together economic long waves, ENSO and the new imperialism, DAVIS argues that famines were forcing houses of dispossession and impoverishment, and yet incubators of political conflict, resistance and millenarian visions. In the wake of El Niño, he says, came «gunboats and messiahs» and a new Dark Age of colonial war. These holocausts were «genocidal» but they marked something else: a world-historical rupture, the unprecedented gulf that came to divide the First and Third Worlds. In 1700, Timbuctu and Oxford, two cosmopolitan centers of learning, would have found much in common; by 1900 the chasm had grown irrevocably deep. Indian per capita income was

stagnant, after all, between 1757 and 1947. DAVIS has unearthed, I think, the secret history of this great divide.

The intellectual temper of *Late Victorian Holocausts* is, in many respects, quite unfashionable. Discourse, identity, modernity are almost nowhere to be found. And in their place we have the structural armory of Nature – climatic oscillations, tropical cells, and inter-tropical convergences – articulated to the roaring Marxian machine driven by profit, greed and the brute imperial power of the Maxim gun. DAVIS's reach is global and comparative, of course, and it makes for a narrative of a very grand sort. In tenor and style, it is angry, accusatory and moralizing.

There is inevitably a cost to this world-historical structuralism. While DAVIS is sensitive to the complex class mapping and the contrasting vortices of accumulation in say Tamil Nadu and the Narmada valley, inevitably some of the nuances of the colonial state and its internal tensions are lost, as necessarily are the details of what one might call the famine dynamics themselves, their life and death histories so to speak, their unique character and architecture. DAVIS comes close, despite his best intentions, of seeing in virtually every prosaic event and social process the fingerprints of ENSO, and the traces of the late Victorian holocausts. Whether one can really see in the militants of MAO's Yenan Way or among the Mozambiquan insurgents the imprint of El Niño is an open question. On occasion one catches a glimmer of a questionable inclusivity in *Late Victorian Holocausts* which draws together huge swaths of wildly different histories and historical struggles under the great arch of El Niño famines.

Inevitably, India figures centrally in DAVIS's story – it was the «Utilitarian laboratory» in which lives were wagered against market idolatry. Its arch villains turn out to be the nutty LORD LYTON, and the likes of LORD ELGIN, LORD SALISBURY and RICHARD TEMPLE. All were converts to the religion of free trade, and in the name of tough love diverted social funds to military operations in Afghanistan, coercively imposed onerous headtaxes amidst harvest shortfalls and cut the Lilliputian food rations for starving ryots in Madras in the name of fiscal discipline or the sloth of the Gujurati peasant. Yet running through DAVIS's account – which weaves together the radical Indian nationalist critiques of the nineteenth century with the best of contemporary historical writing – is the spectral presence of THOMAS MALTHUS who hangs like a pall over the Indian holocausts.

In fact I would press further than DAVIS does. It is MALTHUS who provides the sacerdotal authority and the ideological muscle, for the likes of CURZON and

his ilk. MALTHUS's polemical first edition of *An essay on the principle of population* was published anonymously in 1798 and his personal influence was probably at its height in Britain in the second decade of the nineteenth century when the debate over the abolition of the poor laws was at its zenith. A number of critics have all rightly made the point that ADAM SMITH was considered a friend of the poor, a subversive of sorts who wished to laicize morality, and a voice for liberty and freedom in the widest sense (McNALLY 1993), but by 1800 many of these ideas had been discarded. It was MALTHUS who became key figure in the ascendancy of a particular form of political economy and liberal governance, by rooting political and economic practice in the stark bioeconomic laws of Nature: population and subsistence. In a sense he was the original political ecologist.

Globalization and Food Security

Over the past three decades famine has become an intense object of scrutiny driven both by the apocalyptic imagery disseminated by relief industry, and by the conundrum that mass starvation represents for neo-classical economics: why would utility maximizers choose death? Nobel Laureate AMARTYA SEN's corpus of work, including his latest book *Development as Freedom* (1999), stands as a sharp counterpoint to both MALTHUSIAN doctrines – what he calls «FAD» or food availability decline – and to utilitarian presumptions about human behavior. SEN's analysis seems out of tune with the timbre of hard-core methodological individualism but it also stands at an angle to institutionalist economics. The SEN lexicon is saturated with the likes of public action, social welfare, inequality, capabilities and moral philosophy – words somewhat foreign to cognoscenti of the economics profession.

DAVIS's treatment of the lethal confluence of El Niño and the world market does not engage directly with either SEN's work or the critical literature on vulnerability as such but *Late Victorian Holocausts* gives good reason to rethink entitlements and to take seriously what SEN passes over quickly in his classic text *Poverty and Famines* (1981) namely «the economic class structure as well as the modes of production in the country». SEN begins with the individual endowment which is mapped into a bundle of entitlements, the latter understood as «the set of alternative commodity bundles that a person can command» through the use of various *legal* channels of acquirement open to someone of his/her position. Such entitlement bundles confer particular capabilities which ultimately underline well-being. The basic unit of analysis is the individual person, his/her endowment, and his/her entitlement arrangements, though there is considerable ambiguity

and slippage in SEN's analysis over the aggregation of such individuals into social assemblages such as households or communities or classes. SEN's theory turns on the microeconomics of survival, and on the means by which such individual capabilities fail, producing as a consequence «excess» individual deaths through generalized individual entitlement failure. In SEN's language, famine as a short-term event characterized by acute deprivation of staple foodstuffs occurs because «the entitlement set does not include any commodity bundle with enough food».

SEN is able to show how famines may occur without a decline in food availability and how entitlements attached to individuals through a generalization of the exchange economy – through markets – may shift in complex ways among differing classes, occupational groups and sections of the population. In Bengal in 1943 the events of the war years displaced entitlements of certain occupational classes with devastating consequences (over 2.5 million died in 1943–44). Food did not move into famine-stricken Wollo in Ethiopia in 1973 because food prices were not in general higher in Wollo despite starvation since purchasing power of the local population of peasants and workers had fallen with food output decline. Conversely a famine «need not necessarily occur even when there is a decline of food availability». Famines can then be seen to have differing dynamics: what he calls «boom» and «slump» famines expressing the conditions under which entitlements may fail. SEN is concerned with demonstrating that food supply is not unimportant. Entitlements themselves are influenced *inter alia* by the food system through changes in direct ownership or through contributing to food price rises. The real danger resides in concentrating exclusively on food production and availability, which can often lull governments into soporific complacency, what SEN calls «MALTHUSIAN optimism».

Late Victorian Holocausts confirms, however, that the social, historical, and structural character of famine is not reducible to individual entitlements. SEN remains rooted in a somewhat narrow and individualistic model of human behavior, and his identification of some proximate causes of hunger leaves untheorized the means by which class-based entitlements arise. SEN offers a *proximate* sort of causal analysis predicating what immediate or conjunctural forces might shift such forms of access and control, enabling a social mapping of such shifts to understand *who* dies or starves (say artisanal craftsmen versus peasants) and *why*. While SEN says that entitlements are in reality a «network of entitlement relations» that depend on economic class structure and a mode of production, he pays scant attention to the political economy of entitlement creation and destruction. This is precisely where DAVIS is strongest.

Command over food always depends upon something more than legal rights. Geographers in particular have elucidated, across a variety of cultural and historical settings, the panoply of forms of social interaction – the complex patterns of obligation and duty within and among communities, households, and state systems – by which command over food is effected (WATTS & BOHLE 1993). Such rules and norms may reside in a moral economy, and in forms of sociability which reside within civil and associational life but lie, more pertinently, outside of the law narrowly construed. SEN's definition of entitlement fails to give equal weight to such mechanisms and social relations, most particularly *socially determined entitlements* (a moral economy, indigenous security institutions), *non-legal entitlements* (food riots, demonstrations, theft) and *non-entitlement transfers* (charity). DAVIS again picks up on all of these elements: the massively elaborated Qing redistributive state capable of mobilizing its vast granaries and embarking upon massive infrastructural improvements; the popular protests against rising food prices and the hoarding activities of grain merchants; and the flexible forms of drought-response and agro-ecology capable of ameliorating the worst consequences of climatic variability.

DAVIS is not the first to lay claim to the pre-capitalist solidity of a local moral economy capable of providing forms of protection against drought and other fluctuations. But like JAMES SCOTT (1999) and others who identify subsistence ethics, village reciprocity, and state-based redistributive networks, there is a danger of exaggerating the robustness of these arrangements (and of reading too much into the often uneven and ambiguous historical record). The most compelling case is the Qing food system with its cadre of skilled administrators, its well managed granaries, its national system of price stabilization and incomparable hydraulic infrastructure. DAVIS shows how the abdication of a coherent hydraulic architecture coupled with fiscal crisis and the devolution of state capacities to corrupt office holders explains the awful failure of the once robust food provisioning system between 1877 and 1899.

I am less convinced, however, by the Indian and Brazilian cases. Faced with the sorts of shortfall induced by severe El Niño events (50–75% harvest failures over wide areas, the almost total decimation of livestock), it is not plausible that such perturbations could have been easily accommodated by the Mughal state or by the lineaments of a moral economy in the Brazilian northeast. DAVIS is also right to emphasize the myriad ways in which food scarcity was contested and fought over by workers, peasants, merchants and state functionaries and how the politics of scarcity fed into anti-market protests, food theft, large-scale popular mobi-

lization and even dynastic change. But famines are rarely the crucible of revolutionary upheaval. Resistance is the product not of starving peasants at death's door; indeed there is an eerie silence surrounding famines. Food politics typically appears early on in the trajectory of subsistence crises as food prices skyrocket, and as customary prices and the normative expectations of local institutions are compromised. Famine consciousness, one might say, is Janus-faced. Under some circumstances it provides a language in which millenarian and even revolutionary movements can be articulated; and in others it acts as a sort of dead weight, sapping the literal and metaphorical life from politics beaten into apathetic submission.

Rethinking Entitlements and Risk

Running across SEN's scholarship on entitlements are a number of unresolved tensions, a number of which it needs to be said, *contra* his critics, he is acutely sensitive to. One way to reflect upon these tensions is to acknowledge what famines are in practice – a reality that has been immeasurably deepened by the work of geographers (and anthropologists) working on food systems (see WATTS 1983, BOHLE et al. 1991, SWIFT 1993). Famines have in fact a complex internal architecture, which is to say that the mapping of entitlements (E-mapping) is much more complex and dynamic (involving all manner of social, cultural, institutional, and collective actions beyond the entitlements discussed by SEN). E-mapping is a rather passive term for the multiplicity – and the creativity – of coping and adaptive strategies pursued by peasants or petty commodity producers prior to and during a food crisis. In addition, famines must be located historically in terms of the structural tendencies within the political economy, and the crisis proneness of systems of provisioning: proximate causes (SEN's strength) must be distinguished from longer term secular dynamics. A famine is inseparable from the historical processes and tendencies which may, quite literally, manufacture it. And not least, as one recent report of famine puts it, «the study of famine must integrate institutional, political, market, production spheres at both macro and micro levels» (VON BRAUN 1999 et al.: 73).

It is the relation between the entitlements of the individual and the social group – how are individual (micro) entitlements aggregated for example to account for (macro) class dynamics? – and between the existence of endowments and their social determination which are undeveloped in SEN's corpus. It is not simply that SEN, for example, ignores the role of war in famine genesis – clearly the fundamental cause of famine in much of post colonial Africa – but that he simply assumes that war displaces production based entitlements which

cause food shortage and famine. But as DE WAAL (1997) and KEENE (1994) have shown, war is often about the political construction of markets. In a similar vein, SEN does not, as NOLAN (1993: 759) imputes, ignore socialist famine in China, it is that he attributes it to «policy failures during the famine years» without providing an account of how a theory of the state and socialist political economy (a Kornai-like theory of shortage) might provide the reference point for individual entitlements. The social, historical, and structural character of famine is not reducible to individual entitlements any more than the proximate causes of individual entitlement changes have anything to say about the fact that «the exchange entitlements faced by a person depend, *naturally*, on his position in the economic class structure as well as the modes of production in the country» (SEN 1981: 4, emphasis added). Naturally, indeed! In SEN's practice, however, the socio-economic are, as FINE (1997: 638) says «necessarily filtered through the analytical framework provided by the microeconomics of entitlements».

I want to offer two ways in which SEN's micro-economics of poverty and food might be pushed forward and expanded. One accepts the intellectual originality of entitlements as proximate causes of hunger and famine but deepens and extends their definition and deployment. The second avenue focuses on class structure and modes of production – political economy – which helps us understand the mechanisms by which social forces give rise, through the food system, to particular entitlement outcomes and forms of E-mapping. While SEN says that entitlements are in reality a «network of entitlement relations» (1981: 159) that depend on economic class structure and a mode of production, he pays scant attention to both the forces which cause entitlements to change or come into being, or to how entitlements are protected and/or promoted.

To begin with entitlements themselves, geographer CHARLES GORE has noted that «command over food depends upon something more than legal rights» (1993: 433, emphasis added). Indeed, what the geographic work on famine and food systems has shown is precisely the panoply of forms of social interaction – the complex patterns of obligation and duty within communities and households, and collectivities – by which command over food is effected (for example redistributive institutions, forms of charity, gift-giving and so on, and the multiple forms of livelihood strategy through which command of food is achieved (RICHARDS 1986, SWIFT 1993, WEBB & VON BRAUN 1994)). In part such rules and norms may be part of a moral economy (WATTS 1983), in part they may be forms of sociability which reside within civil and associational life but lie, more pertinently, outside of the law narrowly construed. SEN is sensitive to these «social enti-

itlements» but his own empirical approach to famine tends to neglect the ethnographic insights into, for example, household, social structural or community institutions and forms of cultural practice in which command over food may inhere. More importantly, such extended entitlements give reason to question the profoundly individual and legalistic definition of entitlement itself. The legal bias in *Poverty and Famines* fails to accommodate the obvious fact that illegal acts (food theft by a peasant from a landlord's granary) may be a form of food security.

More precisely, SEN's definition fails to give equal weight to:

- *socially determined entitlements* (a moral economy, indigenous security institutions),
- *non legal entitlements* (food riots, demonstrations, theft),
- *non-entitlement transfers* (charity).

To include the above under the rubric of entitlements – «extended entitlements» is the term GORE (1993) deploys – highlights a rather different way of thinking about entitlement mapping. First, entitlements are socially constructed (not just individually conferred); they are forms of social process and a type of representation. Second, like all forms of representation, entitlements are complex congeries of cultural, institutional and political practice which are unstable: that is to say, they are both constituted and reproduced through conflict, negotiation and struggle. Entitlements are, then, political and social achievements which are customarily fought over in the course of modernization (in this sense one can think about the means by which entitlements enter the political arena in the course of the differing routes to modernity outlined by BARRINGTON MOORE in his classic treatise *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy* (1967)). And third, social entitlements confirms SEN's unelaborated observation that the relations between people and food must be grasped as a «network of entitlement relations» (1981: 159, emphasis added). Food security or famine proneness are the products of historically specific *networks of social entitlements*.

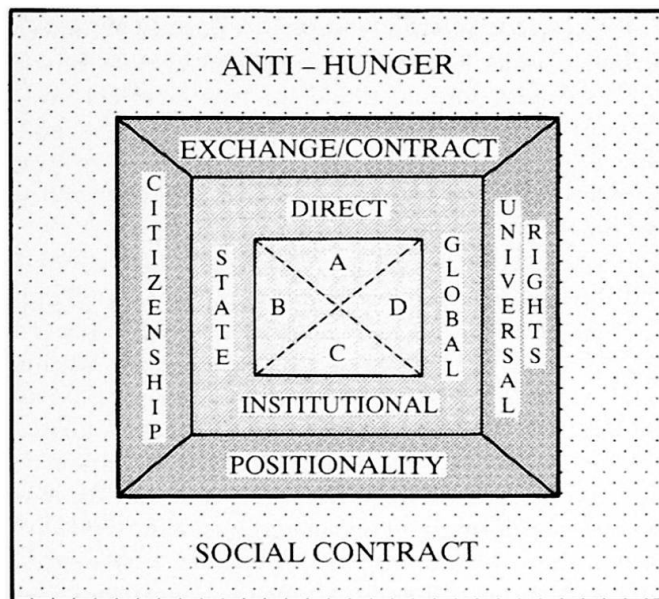
To map such networks, however, requires a theory of entitlements themselves. What are the sources of the entitlements, beyond the fact that they grow in the soil of endowments? Using the work of DE GAY FORTMANN (1990), one can conceive of a simple mapping along four dimensions:

- *Institutions*: affiliation to semi-autonomous, rule-making entities in which social networks and positionality determine whether, and what sorts of, entitlements are available.

- *Direct Access*: direct access to forms of legally derived access which turn on property and contract (in SEN's work, ownership and property rights, exchange of labor).
- *State*: forms of instrumental state law (in SEN social welfare) which identify need and categories of the poor (cf. FRASER's (1989) discussion of discourses of need or dependency in US welfare) and which in turn are rooted in citizenship rights as a bedrock of the modern nation-state.
- *Global Legal Order*: forms of humanitarian assistance grounded in human rights discourse and general principles of freedom, equality and solidarity for all people as embodied in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (see ALSTON (1994) and FAO (1998) on the international «right to food»).

In any setting, the network of entitlements which SEN invokes can be graphically depicted (Figure 1). The strength, depth and density of the entitlements in each of the four realms will of course vary (one could depict this graphically in terms of the size or shape of the triangular space of each broad category of entitlement), and this differing patterning of entitlements shapes what one might call the architecture of the «food security system». Put simply, the geometry of the network for a rural worker in Kerala in South India will look very different from a northern Nigerian peasant. In the former a regulated agrarian labor market and forms of institutionalized bargaining between state and landlords provides a wage sensitive to price increases; there is in addition a credible and relatively accountable public distribution system which operates effectively in rural areas; and not least there are a number of regional and local civic institutions which provide credit, food for work and other assistance (see MOON 1998a, HELLER 1999). For the Nigerian peasant, state derived entitlements are almost non existent, direct access to land is compromised by small holdings incapable of providing self sufficiency in staple foods, and local food security turns, in some degree, on his/her positionality with respect to local forms of support through lineages, extended families, village redistributive offices, Islamic alms, and the village moral economy (WATTS 1983).

Figure 1, in classifying the sources of entitlement, permits a better understanding of both the endowment process and of E-mapping. Endowment embraces not simply assets (land, labor) but *citizenship* (the right to state support), *local group membership* (civic identity in village or community association), and *universal human rights*. The E-mapping then refers to the actual transformative process by which assets, citizenship, and other claims are rendered into effective (i.e. meaningful) entitlement bundles. Put differently, actual state support depends on accountability and transparency



KEY:

- | | |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------|
| A = Direct Entitlements | B = State Entitlements |
| C = Institutional Entitlements | D = Global Entitlements |
| A - D = Entitlement Space | |

Fig. 1: Networks of entitlements and the anti-hunger contract

Entitlement-Netzwerke und der Anti-Hunger-Vertrag
Réseaux d'exigences justifiées et contrat anti-famine
 Idea: M. WATTS, Graphics: V. SCHEURING

(what SEN (1993a, 1999) simply refers to as democracy). A functioning moral economy rests upon the forms of governance – what others have called social capital (see EVANS 1996) – within self-organizing heterarchies; humanitarian assistance depends upon the commitment of states and, as DE WAAL (1997) shows, on the politics and accountability of relief agencies.

In practice the four sources of entitlement are connected in complex ways. For example, DE WAAL (1997) has shown how the international humanitarian community is unaccountable in part because local states are decrepit and unaccountable. Much famine relief is channeled through state institutions, the transparency and credibility of which may be open questions. Whether direct access to resources is safe and reliable may turn in large measure on the role of the state, the powers of the judiciary, or the robustness of civil institutions. Some entitlements in any case are the product of state and civic associations – public-private synergies as PETER EVANS (1996) calls them. All of which is to say the network of actually existing entitlements is much more complex than Figure 1 depicts. But posing entitlements in this way gives content to the idea of networks and the sources of the network configuration via the differing sources of power, authority, legitimacy

by which the practice of E-mapping actually works out in practice.

The four broad categories of entitlement (and their differing social endowments) raise a number of observations. Firstly, the congeries of social entitlements will be configured in complex bundles in differing settings but they normatively represent what DE WAAL (1997) calls «an anti famine political contract» (what I prefer to call a «food contract»). This contract is both a functional configuration of entitlements to provide food security but also a *political achievement*. Second, the *shape* of the contract will change over time as a function of the dynamics of the political economy, and of its changing forms of politics and so on. Structural adjustment in Africa and the growing privatization of the humanitarian industry for example, have reduced an already minimal set of state-based entitlements, and radically reconfigured the space of humanitarian aid (DE WAAL 1997). And third, the network of social entitlements and the food contract it represents delimits a field or social space of field food security, or put differently it defines a «space of vulnerability» (WATTS & BOHLE 1993, see also SWIFT 1993). Vulnerability is here understood as the risks of exposure and the limited capacities to respond to shocks or crises which precipitate entitlement or E-mapping changes. The network of entitlements is more or less inclusive, more or less robust, more or less reliable and so on. In light of particular perturbations – a drought, an economic recession, price fluctuations, unemployment and so – one can begin to think about those who are structurally vulnerable in relation to the networks of entitlements.

In pushing entitlements in this way one inevitably confronts the larger questions of how particular entitlements are distributed and reproduced in specific settings. How is the larger canvas of rights by which social entitlements are defined, fought over and contested, won? How do the structural properties of the political economy precipitate shifts in endowments and E-mapping? These are of course «classical» questions of political economy.

Bread and Butter Politics in a Global World

SEN (1993a, 1999, 1984) has, of course, linked his account of entitlements to politics both in his work on households – which he links intra-household allocation questions to differing «perceptions» by household members – and to a general claim about the relations between famine and democracy. But the spheres of both democracy – discussed in a large measure as the freedom of the press or more blandly as «public pressure» (see DRÈZE & SEN 1990) – and of politics are typically quite abstract and disembodied. There is for

example little in the way of discussion of food riots, or struggles over the social security net, or an examination of the political discourses over the right to food. For this reason, I want to spend a little time invoking two empirical cases of food politics.

The first is drawn from the Indian food system, the Public Distribution System (PDS) and its differential effectiveness in two Indian states: Bihar and Kerala (MOOIJ 1998). The PDS was set up partly in response to the Bengal famine and institutionalized in 1964, as part of the Nehruvian socialist vision, in tandem with the state-run Food Corporation and the Prices Commission. It is a large scale rationing program which accounts for 2.5% of government expenditures and 10-15% of total production of grains. Staples are purchased in surplus regions, transported and stored and sold in fair price shops. By 1980's 75% of shops were located in rural areas but the quantity of food allocated through the system varied from state to state – for example, Kerala distributed 63kg/capita while Punjab accounted for a paltry 1kg per head – and the «leakage» was also uneven among the states (for rice, for example, from 70-80% loss in Bihar and Orissa to 18% in Kerala).

What MOOIJ's work (1998, 1998a) reveals is how the actual performance is largely a function of how and whether food and PDS is «politicized». In Kerala a long history of grass roots activism and political mobilization from below has meant that leakage is low (state accountability and popular mobilization are mutually reinforcing) and distribution reaches the proper constituencies with little loss. In Bihar conversely leakage is exceptionally high, beneficiaries small, and food security is accordingly low. MOOIJ's argument turns on how populist politics in the state is of a different sort in which (i) politicians do not require food to increase their popularity, (ii) politicians cannot make PDS function in such a way as to make political capital out of it, (iii) the diversion of PDS to the black market is a greater source of profit than targeting food insecure constituencies, and (iv) some of the households are too poor for PDS. In both cases the actual forms of democracy – one a redistributive politics associated with Marxist parties, and the other a decrepit and corrupt sort of authoritarian populism – have to be grasped in all of their local complexity to identify the ways in which food enters, so to speak, the social contract.

The second is of some work I conducted in Gambia, specifically a smallholder irrigation project to increase food security and food productivity (WATTS 1993, 1994). At its heart lay a technological innovation (high yielding seeds and water control) at the point of production involving a crop (rice) for which there was a longstanding sexual division of labor by crop (rice was almost wholly a women's crop). Women customar-

ily possessed some direct access to rice land through forest clearance and by inheritance through the female line. Increased output and income had the effect, however, of stimulating struggles *within* the household over entitlements. Insofar as a second rice crop was historically unprecedented among Mandinka families, the pressing question at the level of the growers was who would work (longer and harder and in new ways) and for what return? Insofar as women lost their traditional rice land and the standing of the improved irrigation was redefined (by men and by local Muslim legal institutions) as male property, the question of entitlements – to land, to the labor of others – carried a powerful valency. The struggles over entitlement in this case were intra-household and took the form of women bargaining with men (their husbands typically) over a share of the crop, over property rights (what claims women had over the improved land), and over the exchange of resources within marriage – that is to say the content of the conjugal contract. The household as a political arena – of mutual obligations, responsibilities and entitlements – was converted into a terrain of conflict, negotiation and struggle. How and whether increased food output at the household level actually enhanced food security of individuals in Mandinka households was in large measure a consequence of the ways women, and wives in particular, could win and establish their claims from their husbands in a patriarchal and patrilocal social structure

What both of these examples have in common is that they vividly display how differing social entitlements are contested and fought over on the one hand, and how they enter differing sorts of political discourses and practices on the other. One turned on gender and domestic politics, the other on various forms of state populism. Each case suggests that while SEN is right that democracy and famine are related, politics can assume a panoply of forms in numerous arenas (the state, the workplace, the family). They show how entitlements have to be won, enforced and fought over, and that these struggles rest on the existence and enforcement of civil and political liberties. These political arenas and the struggles over entitlements which ensue are rooted in forms of social power (for example, Hindu populism or Mandinka patriarchy) and in modes of production (for instance, peasant forms of livelihood in The Gambia or social democratic forms of regulated capitalism in Kerala). These struggles and contestations suggest that there are two different sorts of politics involved in the creation of an anti-famine contract, and that both are constitutive of what Sen calls democracy. To invoke NANCY FRASER (1995) there is a *politics of redistribution* (in which state redistribution and political parties often play a central role), and there is a *politics of recognition* (often, but not exclusively, a domain of civic and associational life). Linking

democracy and food security must necessarily, in my view, build upon such a recoupling of recognition and redistribution, as I think the two case studies show in rather different ways.

But I think that these prosaic local illustrations of struggles over food – over food and democracy – also reveal something else and this returns us to the Twin Trade Towers and to late Victorian Holocausts. Namely, the anti-famine contract is now fundamentally shaped by global forces.

Aftermath

Let me in conclusion return to *Late Victorian Holocausts*. The book draws to a close in the early part of the twentieth century and inevitably in finishing the book one is left with the question: what of the post-Victorian (and post-colonial) order that follows, and its relation to El Niño, global forces, the world market and famine? Any answer must engage with the great socialist famines (most obviously, the Soviet Union in the 1930s, China in the late 1950's, North Korea in the recent past) on the one side, and the vertiginous descent of post-colonial Africa on the other. DAVIS notes in passing that El Niño certainly had a catalytic role to play in China and the USSR but a full understanding of the relations between socialist accumulation, the Party-State and mass starvation is far from complete. To invoke the high modernism of the Soviet state as JAMES SCOTT recently has done in *Seeing Like A State* (1999) or the hypertrophy of centralized resource extraction, or the rigid utopianism of the Plan (not unlike the market utopianism of the sort that DAVIS invokes), surely provides an incomplete understanding of why perhaps 40 millions perished in China between 1958 and 1961.

Sub-Saharan Africa, the ground zero of famine holocausts in the past 30 years, is both a confirmation of DAVIS's broad argument and a departure from it. The great Sahelian famine of the late 1960's and early 1970's which devastated much of West Africa and the Horn of Africa is a textbook illustration of El Niño coupled to market driven vulnerability. Some of the French Marxian analysis of the time foreshadows the DAVISian framework, not least in their careful attention to how different sorts of markets can redraw the class map of food security.

But the African famines of 1980's and 1990's are bathed in a rather different light. El Niño events are central to any full understanding of these crises. Furthermore, the post-1980 imposition of structural adjustment at the hands of the World Bank and the IMF endorsed precisely the free-market impulses that

the likes of Lytton and Temple championed a century earlier, with the same ideological myopia. What is radically different is, on the one side, the centrality of civil and other wars, themselves inexplicable outside of Cold War global geopolitics of course, in which the market and political violence work hand in hand; and on the other the genesis of a global humanitarian industry, the famine relief business, which alights after the Biafran war. The Boxer rebellion and the fledgling relief efforts of the non-Fabian socialists of the late Victorian period are substituted a century on by South African backed civil war in Mozambique and by BANDAID and the «humanitarian international» as ALEX DE WAAL in *Famine Crimes* (1997) dubs the disaster relief industry. Africa was on the receiving end of a homicidal four-fold pincer movement: El Niño, market-driven austerity and neo-liberal insecurity, the crisis of the post-colonial nation state often compounded by hard-ball Cold war politics, and an unaccountable humanitarian relief system. Here we have a millennial holocaust of an equally terrifying sort: perhaps 3-4 million famine victims, perhaps twenty million refugees, and an average standard of living lower in 2001 than in 1960. Africa suffers both the slow-burning torture of extreme malnutrition and rude shock of mass mortality and famine. With a gesture to BRECHT, one might say that starvation can be «organized» in a variety of ways. There are distinctively modern and postmodern holocausts.

DAVIS's invocation of genocide and holocaust in discussing famines is deliberately provocative and invites comparison to the likes of *The Black Book of Communism*. Engaging in the measurement of comparative suffering is always a dubious enterprise, but DAVIS gives us reason to think carefully about the crimes of capitalism, and the ways in which the manufacture of hunger and starvation is typically read out of institutional histories like DAVID LANDES' *The Wealth and Poverty of Nations*. Genocide is a grave accusation but in DAVIS's account there is slippage between «policy failures», reckless disregard for life and the rank intentionality associated with the eradication of a people. The Ukraine famine in 1931-33 was not an exemplar in this sense of STALIN's genocidal impulses, and the late Victorian holocausts, while a numbing indictment of a political order, were not always of a piece, and resistant to the general classification as «moral equivalents of the [atomic] bombs dropped from 18,000 feet».

But this is churlish. The incontestable point is that global liberal capitalism has its own black book and its own holocaust cemeteries. The conquest of the earth and the dispossession of those with «different complexions and flatter noses than ourselves» said CONRAD's Marlow in *Heart of Darkness*, «is not a pretty thing when you look at it too much». In excavating

the silent history of the nineteenth century, DAVIS has painted this imperial ugliness with characteristic verve and élan. The images of famine victims which litter the book – evidence incidentally of the first deployment of the new and cheap Kodak Number One handheld cameras put to the service of educating popular opinion about disasters in the colonies – are, as DAVIS says, accusations not illustrations. For, those precious few Indian workers and ryots who received the food relief administered by the colonial state in the 1880's – the so-called Temple Wage – were consuming slightly less than the Buchenwald ration of 1944. The indictment is simply devastating.

One of the frustrations of *Late Victorian Holocausts* is that it stops too soon. What of El Niño events in our time, and what of the prospects of another holocaust amidst our own world-wide capitalist triumphalism? The short answer is that it can and has. The millions who have died in the Sudan, and the Horn of Africa over the last two decades were victims of El Niño and the violent process of the political construction of markets; international food relief, as DAVIS described for the crisis of 1899-1902, was hopelessly inadequate to the task. According to the Hunger Report, the famine prone were running in the 200 millions throughout the 1990s. By the conventional measure of hunger, namely the Food and Agriculture Organization's definition of household food security [«physical and economic access to adequate food for all household members, without undue risk of losing such access»], millions of people are not household food secure. Currently 840 million consume so little food relative to requirements that they suffer caloric undernourishment, leading to anthropometric deficiency and risk of damaged human development. Yet global food consumption provides for 2720 dietary calories per person, easily sufficient if distributed in proportion to requirements.

Moreover, the discovery of El Niño, while a major scientific advance, is capable of replicating much of the rampant naturalism that DAVIS deplored in the late Victorian world. What characterizes the current epoch is the return of a certain sort of environmental catastrophism («nature's revenge») in which the vast planetary powers of the global life support system are biting back: the viralization of the African rainforest (Ebola), Frankenstein's food (mad cow disease), global warming (the «disappearance» of the Marshall Islands), and a renewed popular fascination with extreme weather events (the perfect storm) now harnessed to high-tech gadgetry and the heady imagery of earth satellite systems. All of this may or may not be cause for alarm, but each of these discourses, typically embedded in the vocabulary of risk, surely feed the great semiotic machine which naturalizes the consequences of human

practice. Of course, AMARTYA SEN (1993a) may argue that a free press and a global civil society («humanitarian internationalism») provide a bulwark against the replication of global famines of the sort DAVIS has unearthed. But I would not put my money on it. There is little in *Late Victorian Holocausts* to suggest that the silent violence of widespread and chronic malnutrition, if detonated by a severe El Niño event, might not unleash a catastrophic collapse of food provisioning for millions of the Third World poor. One thing is certain – a vast segment of humanity is deeply exposed to the vagaries of the weather, their futures coupled tight to the moody incalculability of the world market.

Bibliography

- ALSTON, P. (1994): International Law and the right to food. – In: HARRISS-WHITE, B. & R. HOFFENBERG (eds): Food. – Oxford: Blackwell: 205-216.
- BOHLE, H.-G. et al. (1993): Famine and Food Security in Africa. – Bayreuth: Naturwissenschaftliche Gesellschaft.
- CONRAD, J. (1925): Heart of Darkness. – New York: Doubleday.
- DAVIS, M. (2001): Late Victorian Holocausts. – London: Verso.
- DE GAAY FORTMANN, B. (1990): Entitlement and Development. – Working Paper Series 87, The Hague: Institute of Social Studies.
- DEVEREUX, S. (1983): Theories of Famine. – Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Press.
- DRÈZE, J. & A. SEN (1990): Hunger and Public Action. – Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- EVANS, P. (1996): Development Strategies across the Public-Private Divide. – In: World Development 24: 1033-37.
- FAGAN, B. (1999): Floods, Famines and Emperors. – New York: Basic.
- FAO (1998): The Right to Food. – Rome: United Nations.
- FINE, B. (1997): Entitlement Failure? – In: Development and Change 28: 617-647.
- FINE, B. (1994): Toward a political economy of food. – In: Review of International Political Economy 1: 579-45.
- FINE, B. & E. LEOPOLD (1996): The World of Consumption. – London: Routledge.
- FINE, B. et al. (1996a): Consumption in the Age of Affluence. – London: Routledge.
- FRASER, N. (1995): Justice Interruptus. – London: Routledge.
- FRASER, N. (1989): Unruly Practices. – Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- GASPER, D. (1993): Entitlements Analysis. – In: Development and Change 24: 679-718.
- GORE, C. (1993): Entitlement Relations and «Unruly» Social Practices. – In: Journal of Development Studies 29: 429-460.

- HALL, S. (1996): On Postmodernism and articulation. – In: MORLEY, D. & K. CHEN (eds): *Stuart Hall: Dialogues*. – London: Routledge: 256-89.
- HELLER, P. (1999): *The Labor of Development*. – Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- KAUTSKY, K. (1899): *La Question Agraire*. – Paris: Maspero.
- KEENE, D. (1994): *The Benefits of Famine*. – Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- LANDES, D. (1998): *The Wealth and Poverty of Nations*. – New York: Knopf.
- LUBECK, P. (1999): The Antinomies of the Islamic Revival. – In: COHEN, R. & S. RAI (eds): *Global Social Movements*. – London: Routledge.
- LUBECK, P. & L. BRITTS (2001): Muslim Civil Society in Urban Public Spaces. – In: EADE, J. & C. MELE (eds): *Urban Studies*. – Oxford: Blackwell.
- M McNALLY, D. (1993): *Against the market*. – London: Verso.
- MOOI, J. (1998): Real Targetting: The Case of Food Distribution in India. – Working Paper Series 276, The Hague: Institute of Social Studies.
- MOOI, J. (1998a): Food Policy and Politics. – In: *Journal of Peasant Studies* 25: 77-101.
- MOORE, B. (1967): *The Origins of Democracy and Dictatorship*. – Boston: Beacon.
- MORRIS, W. (1891): *News from Nowhere*. – London.
- NOLAN, P. (1993): The causation and prevention of famines. – In: *Journal of Peasant Studies* 21: 1-28.
- OSMANI, S. (1995): The entitlement approach to famine. – In: BASU, K. et al. (eds): *Choice, Welfare and Development*. – Oxford: Clarendon Press: 253-294.
- POLANYI, K. (1947): *The Great Transformation*. – Boston: Beacon Press.
- RICHARDS, P. (1986): *Coping with Hunger*. – London: Allen and Unwin.
- ROY, O. (1994): *The Failure of Political Islam*. – Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.
- SAID, E. (2001): Many Islams. – In: *The Guardian*, September 13th.
- SCOTT, J. (1999): *Seeing Like A State*. – New Haven: Yale University Press.
- SEN, A. (1999): *Development as Freedom*. – New York: Knopf.
- SEN, A. (1993): The causation and prevention of famines: a reply. – In: *Journal of Peasant Studies* 21: 29-40.
- SEN, A. (1993a): Capability and Well Being. – In: NUSSBAUM, M. & A. SEN (eds): *The Quality of Life*. – Oxford: Clarendon Press: 30-53.
- SEN, A. (1987): Property and Hunger. – In: *Economics and Philosophy* 4: 57-68.
- SEN, A. (1983): Development: Which way now? – *Economic Journal* 83.
- SEN, A. (1984): *Resources, Values and Development*. – Oxford: Blackwell.
- SEN, A. (1981): *Poverty and Famines*. – Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- SWIFT, J. (ed.) (1993): *New Approaches to Famine*. – IDS Bulletin 24.
- UNDP (1998): *The Human Development Report*. – New York: Oxford University Press.
- VON BRAUN, J. (1991): *A Policy Agenda for Famine Prevention in Africa*. – Washington DC: The international Food Policy Research Institute.
- VON BRAUN, J. et al. (1999): *Famine in Africa*. – Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press.
- WAAL, DE, A. (1997): *Famine Crimes*. – London: International African Institute.
- WATTS, M. (1994): What Difference does Difference make. – In: *Review of International Political Economy* 1/3: 563-571.
- WATTS, M. (1993): Life under contract. – In: PRED, A. & M. WATTS: *Reworking Modernity*. – New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.
- WATTS, M. (1991): Entitlement or Empowerment? – In: *Review of African Political Economy* 51: 9-26.
- WATTS, M. (1983): *Silent Violence*. – Berkeley: University of California Press.
- WATTS, M. & D. GOODMAN (eds) (1996): *Globalizing Food*. – London: Routledge.
- WATTS, M. & H.-G. BOHLE (1993): The space of vulnerability. – In: *Progress in Human Geography* 17: 43-67.
- WEBB, P. & J. VON BRAUN (1994): *Famine and Food Security in Ethiopia*. – New York: Wiley.

Summary: Hour of Darkness: Vulnerability, security and globalization

The events of September 11th in New York and Washington DC have compelled us to focus on the links between globalization and security. I focus on this relationship by exploring the links between food security, vulnerability to hunger and the world market. Using the new book by MIKE DAVIS on late Victorian famines, I show how his political ecology of famine challenges the work of AMARTYA SEN on entitlements. My contribution examines how and why entitlements need to be deepened and expanded and grounded in a sophisticated understanding of global political economy. Case materials from Africa and India are deployed to illustrate this argument.

Zusammenfassung: Stunde der Dunkelheit: Verwundbarkeit, Sicherheit und Globalisierung

Die Ereignisse des 11. September in New York und Washington D.C. haben uns gezwungen, unser Augenmerk auf die Zusammenhänge zwischen Globalisierung und Sicherheit zu richten. Ich konzentriere mich auf diese Beziehung, indem ich die Verbindungen zwischen Nahrungssicherheit, Verwundbarkeit durch Hunger und dem Weltmarkt untersuche. Ausgehend von dem neuen Buch von MIKE DAVIS über spätviktorianische Hungersnöte zeige ich auf, wie seine politische Ökologie des Hungers das Werk von AMAR-

TYA SEN über berechnigte Ansprüche herausfordert. Mein Beitrag untersucht, wie und warum Ansprüche vertieft, ausgeweitet und in einem anspruchsvollen Verständnis einer globalen politischen Ökonomie begründet werden müssen. Fallstudien aus Afrika und Indien werden eingesetzt, um dieses Argument zu illustrieren.

Résumé: L'heure de l'obscurité: vulnérabilité, sécurité et globalisation

Les événements du 11 septembre à New York et Washington D.C. nous ont obligé de jeter notre regard sur les rapports entre la globalisation et la sécurité. Je vais me concentrer sur cette relation, dans la mesure où j'examine les articulations entre la sécurité alimentaire, la vulnérabilité par la faim et le marché mondial. Partant du nouveau livre de MIKE DAVIS sur les famines postvictoriennes, je montre comment son écologie politique de la faim interroge l'œuvre d'AMARTYA SEN sur les exigences justifiées. Ma contribution analyse comment et pourquoi les exigences doivent être approfondies, élargies et justifiées dans le cadre d'une politique économique globale bien comprise. Des études de cas d'Afrique et d'Inde permettent d'illustrer cette argumentation.

Prof. Dr. **Michael Watts**, Institute of International Studies, University of California, Berkeley, CA. 94720, USA.

e-mail: mwatts@socrates.Berkeley.EDU

Manuskripteingang/received/manuscrit entré le
28.9.2001

Annahme zum Druck/accepted for publication/accepté
pour l'impression: 25.2.2002