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I came to India to learn about the culture, traditions and social action by NGO's, specifically CARPED, that works for the development of tribal people in Medak district. I had the valorous opportunity to see how an Indian NGO work and the difficulties that are encountered when trying to solve the very much complex issues, such as child marriages, sanitation facilities for villages, women's empowerment and so on.

I came to discover that a country of three thousand years of making could be loosing its traditional heritage by modern market forces and factory made goods and all this is affecting tribal arts and crafts in the sense that is slowly disappearing.

In the month of July I had the opportunity to visit Kala Ashram, an independent crafts center in Adilabad led by Sri Ravindra Sharma, which aims to preserve traditional ways of producing crafts and also train artisans from all over India.

I think that community empowerment and a basis for a sustainable income would retain and develop tribal arts and crafts and thereby stop the disintegration of the tribal community and their heritage identity as well as enhance creativity.

There are activities that would be helpful to preserve the arts and crafts in tribal communities, such as organizing artisans self-help groups, provide easy access to domestic and overseas market through exhibitions, upgrade skills through appropriate design and technological intervention, improve the quality of production and productivity, involve all members in marketing processes for production, business and income, set up a museum.

The work in process is being made by several NGO's in India<sup>1</sup> and I think that the special schemes for every community should be emphasized by the local persons involved in this work.

The following essay is an attempt to get a deep look about the relationship between individuals and collective and some methodological matters for the study of social subjects. It is an effort of the appliance of rational posture on new possibilities of theoretical reflection that may contribute to enrich the projects dealt by NGO's.

I think projects are of interest when they define the social relations in the frame of its own possibilities of transformation. The project is the conscience of the building of a future and the determination of the practices required for its achievement. The reality

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<sup>1</sup> Check [www.craftrevival.org](http://www.craftrevival.org)

understood like this, stops being that past charged with inertia to develop its self with all the strength of its virtuality. In this frame, a social conglomerate is constituted in subject in the way that can generate a collective will, therefore developing the capacity that permits itself construct realities with a direction consciously defined.

On November I had the opportunity to visit NATURE NGO for the second time and they are now running a project called STEP (Sustainable Tribal Empowerment Project). The aim of this project is to make villagers conscious of their potentialities and give them the chance to build their future by their own. This process is started by NGO's and social workers and then the villagers start to work with clear purposes in mind.

Following comes the essay called Subjectivity and Social Reality. After this I will make a review of a paper called "Reflective modernism in front of postmodernism: notes about identities". I hope the things said are in a way useful to Carped. This is not a long report but I think its concrete, and I don't want to repeat a lot of well-known things that other trainees have already said in their reports.

## **SUBJECTIVITY AND SOCIAL REALITY**

### **Clarification**

*I would like to make clear that when I speak about the 'conscious reality of subjects', I am not getting into the path of existentialist philosophy in terms of analyzing the complexity of the issues in the human mind. It is widely known the problems of confronting reality in this type of approach and I will skip it. I'm just giving a notion of reality since the point of view of the social sciences.*

*But I would like just to make a quotation of Jean Baudrillard at this respect. " No matter what, our consciousness is never the echo of our own reality, of an existence set in 'real time.' But rather it is its echo in 'delayed time,' the screen of the dispersion of the subject and of its identity - only in our sleep, our unconscious, and our death are we identical to ourselves. Consciousness, which is totally different from belief, is more spontaneously the result of a challenge to reality, the result of accepting objective illusion rather than objective reality"*

The contradiction posed between the individual and the society can be questioned when this society does not contribute to stimulate the potentialities of the individuals. Yet we can not advance in overcoming this contradiction if we are limited to formulate relative warnings regarding the fact that man can not be subordinated to the development of social structures; as well, when it is argued that its non sense to speak about the potentialities of the individual if the structural conditions of a basic equality have still not been reached. The central question consists in that the level of satisfaction of needs of the individual recognizes a field with dynamic limits: what in a moment appears as the liberation of man, in a posterior moment it is defined as non satisfactory and limiting for his full development.

It is truth that it is non sense to satisfy the non material needs in a situation of poverty of the population, yet it is also non sense to restrict one self to the basic needs starting from the assumption that everything else comes by itself as a fatal product of solving with success the problem of those material needs. We must be clear that life of men is manifested in fields every time wider and rich with new hopes, what contributes to the fact that the 'being' of men carries a constant enlargement of his life horizons.

This transformation that experiments the life of men within contents of the real world, demands a reflexion about this dialectic between the subjective and privative of men, and what is external to him, but that represents the reality that can conquer. What this is about is not to do a dualistic approach between the individual and society or to give the privilege of men as individual or to society as a whole, but to find the channels through which men gets rich (not in monetary sense) of his social experience, at the same time that society feeds itself of the capacity of men to take the condition of protagonist subjects.

The contradiction between society and individual obeys to the circumstance that the individual is product of certain social conditions. To reach his specificity, the individual must deny himself as a social product. That is, in order to be subject, and not a mere circumstance, men must conquer his freedom in the frame of the historical development.

But this freedom contains the tension of being, simultaneously, an historical product and a force that transforms the historical conditions in a subjectivity that transcends them.

In this sense, the historicity of the social constitutes a denial of the individuality, while this individuality represents a potentiality of history. Individuality is denied by history to the extent that it is substituted as a subject, but, at the same time, it is potency when the social subjects of history are empowered by the development of the individualities that constitute them. This is a dialectic relationship that constitutes the depth itself in which the reflexion of the historicity of the individual and the subjectivity of the history, understood as an appropriation of the social as a whole.

From this perspective, historicity and subjectivity constitute reality as a project of social life in which two dimensions can be distinguished: the whole of the society that develops itself by its own rhythm, and the affirmation of this by the individuals. This is why, when it is talked about development (social and human), means that society takes a form of organization that is open to the possibility of becoming in the object of appropriation by the subjective individuality; in consequence, the development of society consists not only in generating new and better life conditions, but, besides, in opening more channels that facilitate that the social can be enriched by the individual and social subjectivity.

Development must not only consist in the achievement of certain goals, but also in the capacity of defining life options. Human development consists in the constant widening of the subjectivity as a shaping force of society. To be able to harmonize it with the social development, it requires that society can be organized with the base in social relations that don't imply economic or politic domination, even though we all know very well that in all society the division of labor has served as a foundation to structure domination. The pretension of speaking about human development poses the task of generating a division of labor not based on any relation of domination, which assumes entering in a field not walked by history and it forces to make an historic reflexion without support in any past.

The problem of the possibility of organizing a division of labor not based of differentiations of power has been transferred since the plane of utopia until the one of

history with experiences of the 'real socialism'. The old Marxist idea that the development of each one be the condition for the development of all, and that the development of all be the condition for the development of each one, it's clearly not reached and it constitutes the great pending utopia.

The subjective capacity of appropriation of the real that is in constant expansion, without the restriction of the logic of power, defines the real humanity of change in the structures of labor; but this capacity has not been widened, maybe because of still being an embryo of that superior way of social organization in which this possibility would be a reality.

I see India as a very particular example of a structure of domination where the potentialities of the individual are not exhausted; this may be because of the high spirituality of the people. Maybe because this conscience directs the will, and this form of will depends on the way of how conscience knows the conditions of existence and the depth of this knowledge.

Social development contradicts the development of man when the division of labor involves domination relations. In this context, labor ceases to be an expression of the potentialities of man to be reduced to a function in which accomplishment of the labor is materialized in the insertion of the individual in society. But, which other options can be given to establish the relation with the social as a whole?

The answer to this question lacks of antecedents. Historically, labor has been the basic relation needed to characterize the different ways of social interaction among men. However, the prevalence of labor as a phenomenon and as category of analysis has often been confused. The acceptance of the idea that labor has been a determinant phenomenon of society doesn't mean that one has to accept its omnipotence as a category of analysis. Labor, as a way of insertion of the individual in the system of production, does not exhaust the complex world of the social relations of men, because one can not pretend to exhaust the comprehension of men reducing it only to the level of his structural determinants.

The sense of men as the collection of his relations of production establishes a relationship with the idea of the historic-social man, which his evolution is concomitant with the evolution of society. But man as conscience remits to the idea of an acting subject in concrete moments of the historical becoming. The conscience as a vision of the own social being and of his horizons of possible actions, transforms the historical man in subject. The will of action puts into flesh a subjectivity in process of widening while the capacity of appropriation of the real is enriched, and, by the same reason, a widening of the own conscience of the subject is produced. But this logic of the conscience does not work in a fluent way, because the widening of subjectivity comes across with obstacles that come from the social structure that stop that the conscience transforms the historical-social man into subject; from here that history tends to become in will of action but identified with the dominant power. At this respect, it has been pointed out that the alienation resultant of modern technology and of the industrial organization of the labor stops, at least from the labor situation, the development of this conscience.

We can say that the protagonist man should be socially mobilized (as NGO's do with their valuable work). The basic characteristic of this mobilization consists in that its content is formed by the needs and aims of the individuals, and not to be reduced to the aims of goals imposed by the dominant power in the national context. This is where NGO's role is crucial, giving the tribals the means of creating new social realities. And this does not mean that the logic of the social functioning that the dominant power imposes should be ignored, but what is pretended is to claim for a base movement capable of enriching the definition of the strategic and tacit goals for the national society. What is being formulated is a remake of the relations of society and State from the base of its structural processes. It is not pursued to determine the regulations that rule these processes, but define the way of building them, the constructivist itself, starting from the foundation given by the micro dynamisms. The State and society must be re examined since the perspective of the own movement of their constitution. This could be understood as the social movement of Mexico called EZLN says 'we want to create a world where a lot of worlds can fit into it'.

## **METHODOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS**

The effort of rescuing the role of a conscious man in the development of society must be linked with the effort of understanding society as in constant movement. Man is only rescued as an acting subject and protagonist when he is totally immersed in the general course of the happenings; therefore it is needed to develop a methodology that highlights the microsocial processes of constitution, where the action of man is essential, about what is being crystallized in history. However, when it is intended to conceptually represent reality, one comes up with obstacles. For instance, the indicators of economic growth, which are referred to particular phenomena (national income, investments). The relationship established among these processes is theoretical because it reflects a model of reality. This perspective stops an articulated reasoning about reality as a whole that is not reduced to theoretical relationships. The difference between a theorist approach and another which is not theorist, lies in that the first requires of a list of processes previously defined, while the second, requires only of certain universes of observation in whose interior could be determined several phenomena or specific processes. We will call the first approach normative, and the second, procesual. This approach harmonizes better with the rescue of the conscious individual and with the comprehension of the social processes, because man, as a constructor of reality, it is stepped as a producing entity. Producing entity that requires of indicators that give account of the way in which different spheres of the real can be articulated with its praxis; which, therefore, forces to consider the contexts that historically specify the purely normative. The normative is opposed to the possible because, while that is restricted to give account of whether it been progressing or not in the achievement of certain goals; the possible pays attention to the potentiality that is contained in a given situation. The possible is orientated to define the edge of the viable alternatives. The potentiality makes the function of delimiting, among the possible alternatives, what is viable. The normative indicators are imposed by the public agencies of development; while, in my view now after observing the work of Indian NGO's, NGO's use indicators of process, that are closely related with the developing of the capacity of vision of the real, and because of this, the critical conscience of the social subjects, because they conduct the analysis of a concrete situation in function of definition of alternative policies.

## **ROLE OF CARPED**

The role of CARPED as a NGO would be to enforce their approaches of definition of the analysis of the issues. We know the great work CARPED is doing in terms of health, education, sanitation and options for a new future for the villagers. Yet we all know social changes take time, but the ongoing work should not be stopped. The motivations of the villagers to carry out their responsibilities in the collective work could be emphasized. Because, when analyzing the concept of collective work, it is clearly linked with participation. In this way, this situation could also contribute to define the basis that permit the making of adequate policies of mobilization to give more dynamism to the community.

At this respect, one of the challenges in the construction of knowledge resides in recognizing potential options, because reality has to be conceived as a collection of objective possibilities sensitive to be empowered by means of projects.

The social subject will be really active if he is able to distinguish between what is viable and what is purely desirable, and in this way make the possibilities viable. It is only on the frame of experience where one can recognize the possibility of a transformation of reality, because the notion of experience gives account of the objectivity of what is viable; that is, the transmutation of the desirable in possible, giving the place to the utopia to become a project through which is pretended to impose a direction to present or to any given situation.

However, to solve the issue of what is viable, it is reluctant to determine the context in which the social subjects are located, by means of the reconstruction of the play of relationships that form the concrete reality of the subject.

This what I consider to be the pertinence of knowledge, when the capacity to recognize options faces us with the responsibility of giving NGO's diagnosis instruments that make the function of stimulating its auto growing.

The observations made may illustrate about the articulation points of reality based on a reasoning of articulated lecture. These points could be useful as a reference to make

propositions of policies or to elaborate policies. The distinctive feature consists in recovering the articulated character of all planes of reality, not in terms of conceptual schemes formulated *a priori*, but of practices of the communitarian subject, in a way that the micro space of functioning of the social subject can be rescued without cutting its links with the macro spatial planes.

#### AN OBSERVATION TO THIS ESSAY

What is pretended in general is the location of the theoretical core of social sciences in the theme of social subjectivity. Because it expresses the historicity of reality in a movement that transforms and that is transformed, but that, simultaneously, revises sense as an issue that always would be associated to the efforts to build the social reality from options that are translated in axiological preferences derived from utopist visions, but with the mark that they can be objectively possible.

If we agree that Today is an ethical obligation to look for new horizons of life, all this can be possible solely starting from the point of unraveling the inner forces that put in motion the social structures. The meaning attributed to the efforts made to deeply know the problematic of constituent social subjectivity and its manifestations in the variety of social subjects that can be recognized in the different socio historical contexts.

Here follows a review of an article published in a Mexican Sociology Journal. The article is called: “**Reflective modernism in front of postmodernism: notes about identities**”. I chose to review this article because it gives interesting theoretical insights that may be useful to Carped, and I think it is useful to share knowledge.

The article analyzes the sociology of Giddens in contrast with postmodern notions about the constitution of social identities. The sociology of this author is focused in the analysis of the reflective processes that make the profile of the diversity and complexity of the globalized world. With this, its opposed to other sociological sources that, using echoes of postmodernism, interpret the proliferation of agents, identities and senses as a product of decentralization with no turning back of the protagonists of modernity: the subject and the reason.

The post modernity analyzed is from its sociological interpretation and built as a critique to the philosophical project of modernity. The obvious sense in this critique is perceived by its name itself: the postmodern philosophers try to go beyond modernity, to declare it dead, finished. This effort is based in a deeply negative vision of what that project represents, fundamentally in its ethic and political consequences.

According to the postmodern diagnosis, modernity has drowned in three aspects: its vision of history, its vision of subject and its vision of universal reason. The drowning of these perspectives obeys basically to the fact that, through them, modernity offered itself as a project of emancipation using a biased and tricky approach. This approach can be resumed in the promise, made by the philosophy of Illustration, of building a an universalistic approach that would give equality to all human beings. The trap, according to several critiques, comes from the fact that behind this universal approach a partial and biased position was hidden and it pretended to impose itself as unique, annulling the diversity. Lets pay attention on how, according to postmodern questioning, this homogenizing trap is expressed in each of the three visions of the project of modernity mentioned before.

**The notion of history:** History was thought by the illustrated project as a teleological process, directed by the categories of evolution and progress. The orientation of the historical process, that is, its direction and sense, was marked by the universal reason. In

other words, the becoming of humanity finds its last explanation in the making of the ideals of the western modern society, guided by rational principles. When trying to give sense to all the historical happenings starting from the making of the rational principles, modernity would be imposing its own goals and visions to the rest of societies and cultural expressions that, following this logic, should subordinate and accept the perspective offered by modernity. This pretension, as its seen, is very far away from adjusting itself to the liberating and excluding promise that was supported by the universalizing offer. In reality it hides, as its proven by the Hegelian historicism, an absolute disdain towards societies different from the ones marked by rationalization. However, the post moderns say, now we must celebrate the death of the history understood since that teleological point of view, because, if globalization has favored the expansion of the West all over the planet, its conflictive meeting with the multiplicity of other cultures has proven, at last, that the rationalizing logic is far away from being the unique and, above all, of being the only one that is authentic or ethically pertinent.

**The notion of subject:** Following this diagnosis, modernity built a notion of subject, based on the concept of autonomous individual, that offered itself as the punctual of the emancipation promise. The individual claims for himself autonomy, autarchy and equality in his definition as rational being. At the same time, this permits to the category of individual to claim himself as universal. Certainly, if the only condition to define the individual as such is to have the capacity to reason, the result is discerned as the most including possible. In front of this intention, the postmodern critique points out two basic problems. First, the used notion of individual suffers the effects of a series of consequences that make to the makers of the project of modernity –politicians of philosophers- give name and surname or, better to say it, gender, race, religion and status, to a category supposedly abstract. Like this, again, the individual, far from being universal, wants go give account of the legitimist universalism to a partial and excluding group of individuals. In reality, only for them, males, white, christians, heterosexuals... its designed the ideal of autonomy. The rest must be happy with being subordinated by these exclusive owners of the use of reason.

Another postmodern critique points out the fact that this biased point of view of how identities are formed in modern western culture does not apply to subjects inside this

society, and of course, outside of it. Another cultures and several groups inside the West don't behave under the rational logic, but with different perceptions and mental constructions.

However, the progressive proliferation of identities, the slowly suppression of unique modes of defining the individual in nowadays society, make it impossible to sustain the illusion of rational and autonomous individual and its homogenizing and oppressive pretensions.

**The notion of universal reason.** For postmodernism, the project of modernity does not stand by itself anymore. It has given a step to a plurality of positions that are not defined as rational or universalistic but as particularities that have their own senses, that are not intended to be imposed to anyone else.

Therefore, the postmodern society is diverse, including and particularistic and does not require of an unifying project to sustain the singularities. These are expressed by the simple fact of existing.

Until now, it has been all the postmodern critique to modernism. Now we will conduct the problem of the definition of modern and postmodern identities.

The modern definition of individual and modern society is just the individual and not the community; it's a highly individualistic structure.

For postmodernism, it's necessary to assess the fact of the multiplicity of identity structures. The diversity of identities is an evident reality and also, from the ethical and political point of view, is the only one desired, if we do not want to repeat the sad story of a project of emancipation that turned back to itself. Post modernity tries to oppose the universalism to the acceptance of all the particularities.

An alternative approach to the postmodern one of identities is the one of the sociology of Giddens. The research of this author in reflective modernity took him to be focused on the internal dynamic of the institutions in postraditional societies and in the notion of autonomy, making a critique to postmodernism, to the relation between the notion of autonomy and the character of the contemporaneous subject. This notions are still on an ongoing work by the author but I will remember what he defines as the 'democratization of personal life'. This idea gives account to the freedom as autonomy. This can be exemplified by the participation of feminists that fight for the autonomy of women, and

they have moved the construction of democracy from the public arena to the private one.

At this respect, Giddens say:

“...In the scenario of personal life, autonomy is the happy conclusion of the reflective project of the personal I (...) Thought like this, autonomy permits this respect for the capacities of everyone else, which is the core of democratic order. The autonomous individual is able to recognize to others as such and to recognize that the development of their capacities is not a threat.”

That is to say, autonomy has become a reference to auto-construction.

The author of this article ends saying that for him, the proposal of Giddens is more promising because it includes women and men in the autonomous society. I don't agree with the author since he does not fully develop in the article the theses about Giddens and he leaves unclear the pros of his sociology.

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