

**Mary Scott**  
**Essay**  
**STS300, “The environmental context”**  
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*Please note: This is an imagined dialogue, written by Mary Scott. Nothing in this dialogue should be attributed to Harish or Julie Mehta.*

**DIALOGUE**

*Location: upstairs at the recently renovated Foreign Correspondents Club (FCC) in Phnom Penh, Cambodia’s capital city. From their seats overlooking the bustling street below Harish and Julie Mehta can see the homeless sleeping on pavements, whilst child beggars carrying babies seek out the hordes of tourists, wealthy Cambodians and foreign business people who frequent this stretch of prime real-estate which is close to the palace and the wealthiest pagoda. The impoverished ignore the manicured grass since its use incurs fines, a beating or imprisonment. Harish and Julie Mehta are journalists and authors of Samdech Hun Sen’s Unofficial Biography. They have returned from visiting Hun Sen who is celebrating the recent Khmer- language release of their biography.*

**JULIE:** I'm still having difficulty getting my head around the idea that sustainable ecological and economic development can come out of illegal logging. Also his idea that privatisation of water will first lead to state capitalism, then to socialism. These ideas have got my mind racing.

**HARISH:** Well I guess it's his ideas that make the man so fascinating. When we had our first interview with Hun Sen<sup>1</sup>, I thought well here is a man who lost an eye fighting a revolution that virtually destroyed his country, who changed sides, was helped by Leninist Vietnam to become Asia's youngest Foreign Minister and who has managed to become Prime Minister and stay in power under the auspices of Social Democracy for eighteen years.

**JULIE:** Yes, but what an opportunist he's been. Exploiting not only the world's collective guilt for turning a blind eye to Pol Pot's attempts to take Cambodia back to Year Zero, but for their successive attempts to overthrow his democratically elected government.

**HARISH:** To some extent he has been, but how many people get the chance to take their ruined country and its depleted population and then mould these to fit their ideology? He has witnessed first hand the excesses and mistakes of colonialism, Marxism and neo-liberalism whilst the Vietnamese Communist Party gave him and his country a new life and the opportunity to study Lenin's theories.<sup>2</sup> It's not really surprising that his heart is with Leninism disguised under the mantle of Social Democracy. Not bad for a peasant kid, whose parents worked the rice paddies and who was educated by Buddhist monks.<sup>3</sup>

**JULIE:** Yes but don't forget he has a Ph.D in Political Science from the National Political academy in Hanoi and two Honorary Doctorates.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> For further information on Samdech Hun Sen see: [Online] Mehta, H and Mehta, J 1999, *Hun Sen: Strongman of Cambodia*. (No publisher details available) information obtained from [Http://www.bigpond.com.kh/users/ngoforum/aboutcambodia/Resource\\_Files/Hun\\_Sen...](http://www.bigpond.com.kh/users/ngoforum/aboutcambodia/Resource_Files/Hun_Sen...) Accessed 06/04/2004; also [Online] Heping, X (Translated from the Chinese by Paul Marks), 'Why Did Hun Sen Write "Cambodia 130 Years?"', *The Commercial News*, March 26, 1999; also [Online] Faulder, D, 1999, 'Respect Our Sovereignty' *Asiaweek Online*, November 26, 1999; also [Online] Jennar, RM, 'Who Is Really Mr. Hun Sen?', *Cambodia Research Centre*, Nov 9, 1998; all accessed at [Http://www.bigpond.com.kh/users/ngoforum/aboutcambodia/Resource\\_Files/Hun\\_Sen...](http://www.bigpond.com.kh/users/ngoforum/aboutcambodia/Resource_Files/Hun_Sen...) on 06/04/2004; also [Online] 'Biography of Hun Sen' available at [http://www.cnv.org.kh/personInfo/biography\\_of\\_hun\\_sen.htm](http://www.cnv.org.kh/personInfo/biography_of_hun_sen.htm). Accessed 06/04/2004.

<sup>2</sup> 'The contradictions of market Leninism', in *The Economist (US)*, July 8, 1995 v336 n7922 pV6(5).

<sup>3</sup> 'Hun Sen's biographers paint complex picture of Cambodian strongman' *AFP*, October 28, 1999. Available [http://www.bigpond.com.kh/users/ngoforum/aboutcambodia/Resource\\_Files/Hun\\_Sun...](http://www.bigpond.com.kh/users/ngoforum/aboutcambodia/Resource_Files/Hun_Sun...) accessed 06/04/2004.; Jennar, RM 1998, 'Who Is Really Mr. Hun Sen?', *Cambodia Research Centre*, November 9, 1998 [Online]

Available: [http://www.bigpond.com.kh/users/ngoforum/aboutcambodia/Resource\\_Files/Hun\\_Sun](http://www.bigpond.com.kh/users/ngoforum/aboutcambodia/Resource_Files/Hun_Sun)

<sup>4</sup> Honorary doctorates are 1) a Ph.D. in Politics from the Southern California University for Professional Studies (1995). The title of his thesis was *Cambodian Revolution's Special Characteristic*, which according to Xing Heping (above), resulted in two works: *Cambodia 130 Years* and *Cambodia 10 Years*. and 2) a Ph.D. of Law from Iowa Wesleyan College, USA (1996) from 'Samdech Hun Sen', *Biography of Hun Sen*, [Online] [http://www.cnv.org.kh/personInfo/biography\\_of\\_hun\\_sen.htm](http://www.cnv.org.kh/personInfo/biography_of_hun_sen.htm), accessed 06/04/2004.

**HARISH:** How could I forget! When we gave him our completed biography and he gave us a signed copy of his thesis I was almost lost for words. You never know it might be of value some day.

**JULIE:** Just a pity neither of us can read Vietnamese. Do you know what it was about?

**HARISH:** Yes. I read somewhere<sup>5</sup> that Hun Sen considers Lenin's '1921 New Economic Policy' to have been an important influence on his thinking as it confirmed his belief that Lenin had the best understanding of how capitalism works and that democracy and sharing the benefits of capitalism with the people would not and could not lead to a more just society without the need for an armed uprising.

**JULIE:** Well he's already had the armed uprising. Pol Pot did his best to bring democracy and capitalism undone, but ultimately it didn't succeed.

**HARISH:** Oh yes, but Lenin's theory stressed that it was necessary not to by-pass capitalist development<sup>6</sup> in order to get to a one-party dictatorship. Plus Lenin's acknowledgement that it is a long and difficult transition between capitalism and socialism has probably formed the basis of Hun Sen's political thinking.<sup>7</sup> I'm pretty sure it's Lenin's theory about the need for absolute dictatorship, state capitalism and his commitment to government for the people<sup>8</sup>, that drives him forward...

**JULIE:** And drives the aid donors crazy!

**HARISH:** I assume he's taken Lenin's advice on using attractive economic inducements and diplomatic manoeuvres to keep capitalists at each other's throats,<sup>9</sup> but purely to benefit his nation and his people.

**JULIE:** Yes he seems to have got that aspect down to a fine art. He's very good at playing other countries against each other. I guess Cambodia's history of Angkorian kings and military suppression of invasions has been turned into a benevolent dictatorship of political suppression of Western agendas, by whatever means he feels are necessary. First he gratefully welcomes them and their pots of gold, then threatens them with dismissal, and he does it with a diplomatic smile alluding to his responsibility to preserve Cambodia's sovereignty.

**HARISH:** Oh, do I trace a hint of cynicism there? Don't forget he's prepared to make mistakes. He's probably taken that from Lenin's understanding that state leaders would never know something was a mistake if they didn't try it first.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid, Heping.

<sup>6</sup> Lenin, 1905 *Two Tactics* and Lenin, 1917, *Political Thought*, 5<sup>th</sup>. Edn. (Russian) cited in Brinkley, 1998.

<sup>7</sup> For further comments on modern day Leninism see 'The contradictions of market Leninism' in *The Economist (US)*, July 8, 1995, v336, n7922 pV6(5); also "Leninism in disguise", in *Africa News Service*, July 22, 1999, p1008202u6096.

<sup>8</sup> Brinkley, G 1998, 'Leninism: what it was and what it was not', in *Review of Politics*, Wntr 1998 v59 n1 p151(14).

<sup>9</sup> Harding, N 1996, *Leninism*, Duke University Press, Durham;

<sup>10</sup> Pipes, R (ed.) 1996, *The Unknown Lenin*, Yale University Press, New Haven.

**JULIE:** That's a good excuse to explain away the predicted revolution that didn't result in the expected outcomes. Democracy and capitalism have remained, stronger than ever. No doubt this has motivated Hun Sen to adapt some of Lenin's premises to suit recent free-market capitalism and globalisation. [*Sips from her drink*]. Do you think this has anything to do with Hun Sen's comment that you cannot have theory without practice and that you need to have mistakes to improve your theory?<sup>11</sup>

**HARISH:** Yes. I think he was implying that the focus of capitalism has always been on demand and surplus.<sup>12</sup> It should now be amended to focus on supply because revolution will come from the people when they realise that all aspects of their lives have been violated by capitalism's demand for diminishing non-renewable resources. The majority are used to living without surplus in their lives. Many have barely enough for survival. What they do have is usually provided through the supply of freely-available, natural resources. As capitalism's competing demands diminish their subsistence supply they will have no choice than to revolt in order to reclaim what is rightfully theirs. This time it will be a revolution for environmental control.

**JULIE:** Are you saying that it will take the near-extinction of natural resources before free-market capitalism can be destroyed once and for all?

**HARISH:** Other methods haven't worked to date. Anyway it's one way of trying to make sense of Hun Sen's ideas. Not many people know that he calls himself a closet environmentalist.

**JULIE:** What's that got to do with what we are talking about? Weren't we talking about Leninism Hun Sen-style?

**HARISH:** Well yes we were, but we were also talking about ideology and beliefs and about how one man thinks society should be organised and managed and what role the economy is likely to have in the future. Being an environmentalist gives him a different perspective on all of these.

**JULIE:** Sorry you've lost me. I thought environmentalists were people like us who try and help protect the environment for ourselves and others and who are active in making sure that future generations will also have access to clean water, fresh air and all the benefits of natural resources that we currently have.<sup>13</sup> Isn't being an environmentalist about trying to prevent exploitation of natural resources? I didn't think that someone who wants to privatise water and who supports illegal logging would understand environmental governance and such concepts as equity and sustainable development.<sup>14</sup>, let alone call himself an environmentalist.

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<sup>11</sup> Lenin's quote as taken from "Brinkley op.cit.:151 reads, "Theory without practice is dead, and practice without theory is blind".

<sup>12</sup> Loosely translated from definitions of Economics [Online] <http://www.economist.com/research/Economics/alphabet.cfm?LETTER=E> , accessed 02/03/2004

<sup>13</sup> Olmstead, S 2003, 'Water supply and poor communities: What's price got to do with it?- Cover Story' in *Environment*, Dec. 2003.

<sup>14</sup> Pas-ong, S and Lebel, L, 2000, 'Political Transformation and the Environment in [S]outheast Asia', in *Environment*, Oct. 2000.

**HARISH:** Hey, I can understand why you're getting hot under the collar. I agree it's difficult trying to fit Hun Sen's ideas into the usual way we understand those concepts. His thinking seems to work in different ways to those of most people. Would you like another drink?

**JULIE:** Don't patronise me. I am more than capable of making sense of Hun Sen's ideas if you explained them better. And yes, I will have another beer.

*...summons waitperson and orders two beers. They sit in silence waiting for their drinks. The Cambodian waitperson puts them down and departs silently.*

**JULIE:** I don't know if she [*nodding towards the waitperson*] has much understanding of the concepts of sustainable development<sup>15</sup> and equity<sup>16</sup> – but she probably knows from personal experience what they are not.

**HARISH:** Now don't start individualising the broader meaning of the concepts.

**JULIE:** That is so typical. Everything has to be looked at from the big picture whilst individual experiences account for nothing. It's kowtowing to the moneyed elite that enables governmental development policies to impact upon the most powerless as both individuals and as members of particular groups. Any attempts they make to get acknowledged or heard get dismissed as trivial.

**HARISH:** Sorry. Please continue. I just have some difficulty in understanding grassroots appeal for tackling major issues.<sup>17</sup>

**JULIE:** As I was saying, she probably has direct experience of unsustainable development<sup>18</sup> and inequity.<sup>19</sup> For example, I expect when she visits her motherland

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<sup>15</sup> Beder, S 1996, *The Nature of Sustainable Development*, Scribe Publications Pty Ltd, Newham Australia. pp.3-8

<sup>16</sup> *ibid* pp 145-211

<sup>17</sup> "Smaller, grassroots groups tend to lack knowledge and expertise to exploit funding opportunities, even when they would choose to do so." In Bretherton, C 2003, 'Movements, Networks, Hierarchies: A Gender Perspective on Global Environmental Governance' in *Global Environmental Politics*, 3:2, May 2003; Bretherton, C and Sperling, L 1996 'Women's Networks and the European Union: Towards an Inclusive Approach? In *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 34 (4): 487-508.

<sup>18</sup> For a discussion on unsustainable policies and resultant practices in a tropical setting see Carden, MF 1999, 'Unsustainable Development in Queensland' in KJ Walker and K Crowley, (eds.), *Australian Environmental Policy 2: Studies in Decline and Devolution*, University of New South Wales Press Ltd, Sydney.

<sup>19</sup> **Environmental Equity** – An ideal of equal treatment and protection for various racial, ethnic, and income groups under environmental statutes, regulations, and practices applied in a manner that yields no substantial differential impacts relative to the dominant group ...and the conditions so-created. Although environmental equity implies elements of "fairness" and "rights", it does not necessarily address past inequities or view the environment broadly, nor does it incorporate an understanding of the underlying causes and processes." I would add to this definition that it does not include the potential negative effects of inequitable distribution of benefits and pollutants that some groups experience today that will be carried forward to their descendants. For this and further Environmental Justice Definitions [Online] at [http://gladstone.uoregon.edu/~caer/ej\\_definitions.html](http://gladstone.uoregon.edu/~caer/ej_definitions.html). Accessed 24/03/2004.

commune she probably notices more native trees are gone or have been replaced with rubber trees.<sup>20</sup> Trees, doubtless removed in the interest of economic development.

**HARISH:** Yes but...

**JULIE:** She probably sees that the soil is cracked and barren and that her mother's rice no longer thrives.<sup>21</sup> Could it be about powerful pesticide and seed manufacturers seeking greater financial gain at the expense of the least powerful? She probably has to give comfort to her hungry mother and sisters because dwindling fish supplies are not enough to feed their expanding family due to the pollutants released into the waterways and commercial over-fishing.

**HARISH:** Can I say some...

**JULIE:** [*totally oblivious to Harish's interjections*] She probably has to use most of her wages to pay for their medicines and health care since malaria and T.B. and diseases resulting from lack of sanitation are still rampant amongst poor communities.<sup>22</sup> Don't you consider it ironic that pesticides are available to protect crops but cheap medicines are not made available to protect humans?

**HARISH:** But you're not looking at the benefits many farmers have gained...

**JULIE:** [*Ignoring his input, she continues*] She probably has to buy potable water since the lack of wells and rivers with clean water means her family will continue to get sick if that's all they have to drink. It's probable that she's the family's main breadwinner since her father and brothers have either been killed or damaged by landmines or because they've moved to the city to seek work with slave wages.

**HARISH:** Now just a minute...

**JULIE:** She probably lives in those derelict tenements next to the garbage dump because rents here have been pushed up by diplomats and aid workers being able pay exorbitant rents. And, [*finally facing Harish*] because she is a marginalised female she knows that her family's future depends upon her having a marriage partner, attending to his every need in the patriarchal Cambodian tradition and having far too

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<sup>20</sup> "Rather than focus on enhancing sustainable agricultural production, the Cambodian government instead arranged with corporate investors to expand the harvesting of rubber plantations for export, resulting in massive deforestation" from Wermuth, L and Monges, MM 2002, 'Gender stratification: a structural model for examining case examples of women in less-developed countries' in *Frontiers-A Journal of Women's Studies*, Jan 2002, v23, i1 p1(24).

<sup>21</sup> The soil is generally sandy and rainfall is irregular, plus the after effects of war and more recent effects of development policies that exclude women and degrade the environment. See *ibid*; also for a description of Cambodia's rice production conditions see, 1992, "Not a grain of truth: Cambodia" in *The Economist(US)*, Jan 11, 1992, v322 n7741 p34(1).

<sup>22</sup> This situation is likely to create greater inequity in the near future since one of the conditions placed upon Cambodia's recent inclusion in the World Trade Organisation was Hun Sen's agreement, "... to stop importing generic drugs after 2007, even though existing poor members have until 2016 to start honouring drug patents." See 'Welcome to the club; Cambodia and the WTO', in *The Economist (US)*, Sept 13, 2003, v368, i8341, p40US.

many children because she can't afford to buy condoms. Oh yes, she will have a good understanding of what sustainable development and equity are not.<sup>23</sup>

**HARISH:** Ok, you've really steam-rolled your feminist point with that emotive display of rhetoric.<sup>24</sup> I agree that her gender and lack of personal economic power are more than likely responsible for the inequities you've described, but I don't think you can use gender to justify land degradation and misuse. Environmental degradation and poverty affects both genders.

**JULIE:** I'll ignore your snide comments in the interest of trying to get you to understand and because to some extent you're right. But in under-developed countries like Cambodia, it is the women who traditionally provide for their families' basic sustenance. As soon as development policies, which I might add are policies for developing the economy and not policies for developing protection of the natural environment<sup>25</sup>, are put in place and new technology is introduced to increase agricultural outputs, then women are disadvantaged.<sup>26</sup>

**HARISH:** On what grounds are they disadvantaged?

**JULIE:** For a variety of reasons, often historically and culturally related, but generally they are denied educational opportunities. Men get taught the new technologies, not women. They don't get shown better rice growing methods; and men remain the traditional land-owners.<sup>27</sup> You could say that the only thing that gets sustained is inequities based on gender differentiation. Yet males and females both depend on these collective women's abilities to develop sustainable behaviours and relationships with nature in order to provide daily supplies of potable water and food. There is no ethical treatment shown to marginalised, non-elite women by their patriarchal political leaders whose governmental commitment is purely for the purposes of accelerated economic growth through the depletion of natural resources.

**HARISH:** There's no stopping you when you get on your ecofeminist bandwagon!

**JULIE:** That really shows how little you know about sustainable development, or any other socioeconomic environmental factor affected by gender-differentiation. For the record, ecofeminism applies to a variety of positions that have roots in different feminist practices and philosophies and applies to a variety of environmental spoilage practices. You should read Karen Warren's study on the differences that exist in

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<sup>23</sup> "The Asian Development Bank's report of April 2000 found that Cambodian development is hampered by a poorly educated workforce, poor health care, and poor water and sanitation." Source: 'Cambodia Development Hurt by Low Education' in CNN Website, (retrieved on May 29, 2000) at <http://www.cnn.com> by <sup>23</sup> Wermuth, L and Monges, M 2002, 'Gender stratification: a structural model for examining case examples of women in less-developed countries', in *Frontiers-A Journal of Women's Studies*, Jan 2002, v23 i1 p1(24).

<sup>24</sup> Ibid: Wermuth, L and Monges, M

<sup>25</sup> Walker, KJ and Crowley, K 1999

<sup>26</sup> According to Gerhard Lenski in Wermuth & Monges op.cit., in agrarian states, one of 5 ideal types of social stratification, inequality between men and women is the greatest whereby there is a high degree of control and coercion exercised over women as labor and sexual property.

<sup>27</sup> ibid

ecofeminism.<sup>28</sup> Another source to help you move out of your traditional male thinking ‘that all women are the same’ is Vandana Shiva and her work in India.<sup>29</sup> If you want examples of putting theory into practice, as you suggest was Lenin’s motto, then get onto her website to see how small groups of women are making a difference in fighting multi-nationals to ensure the sustainability of their natural resources for themselves and future generations,<sup>30</sup> or you could try Janis Birkland’s work on linking theory and practice.<sup>31</sup>

**HARISH:** Right. I am obviously out of my depth here. How about we get back to talking about Hun Sen’s ideas?

**JULIE:** [*Takes a deep breath*] OK. Fire away!.

**HARISH:** Firstly, I think what we have been doing is identifying the concepts of sustainable development and equity through different perspectives. Correct me if I’m wrong, but you have been talking from the micro-level of understanding, about the effects of inequity and unsustainable development practices on individuals and small communities, whereas I understand them from the macro-level as they apply globally. I support Robert Paehkle’s view that neither equity nor environmental concerns can be effectively resolved other than at the same level at which economic-decision making occurs.<sup>32</sup> Also I view them from a long-term economic and political perspective whereas you tend to identify them through the immediacy of their social effects.

**JULIE:** And? Where does Hun Sen fit into this?

**HARISH:** Well in order for him to obtain much needed financial help he appears to support global economic development initiatives, although he acknowledges they are unsustainable for the global environment and for individual nation-states. His recent membership with ASEAN and the WTO and the fact that the World Bank holds the purse strings have made him follow the ‘big powers’ agenda for water privatisation in order to obtain necessary funds for other projects.<sup>33</sup> But it has been on his terms.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Warren, KJ 1993, ‘Introduction to Ecofeminism’ in M. Zimmerman, J B Callicott, G Sessions, KJ Warren and J Clark (Eds.) *Environmental Philosophy: From Animal Rights to Radical Ecology*, Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs, NJ.

<sup>29</sup> For example: Shiva, V 2003, [Online] *River Linking: False Assumptions, Flawed Recipes*, 19 Jun 2003; Shiva, V (nd), *Terminator Technology: The Genetic Bomb of the Biotech Era*; Available at <http://www.vshiva.net/articles...>; Transcript of 1997 Interview: ‘Vandana Shiva on McDonald’s, Exploitation and the Global Economy’ from TV documentary *McLibel: Two Worlds Collide* by One-Off Productions. [Online] Available at

[http://www.mcspotlight.org/people/interviews/vandana\\_transcript.htm](http://www.mcspotlight.org/people/interviews/vandana_transcript.htm). Accessed 25/02/2004

<sup>30</sup> <http://www.vshiva.net/articles> accessed 07/04/2004.

<sup>31</sup> Birkland, J 1993, ‘Ecofeminism: linking theory and practice’ in G. Gaard (Ed.), *Ecofeminism: Women, Animals, Nature*, Temple University Press, Philadelphia.

<sup>32</sup> Paehkle, R 2001, ‘Environment, Equity and Globalization: Beyond Resistance’ in *Global Environmental Politics*, Feb 1, 2001, v1, i1, p1(10).

<sup>33</sup> ‘A report by the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists says the World Bank has flexed its financial muscle to “persuade governments to sign long-term contracts with the major private companies”’ see ‘Water: Is Privatisation the Answer?’, in *Africa News Service*, April 5, 2003, p1008094u0007.

<sup>34</sup> See Mauclert, V and Trevett, A 2003, ‘PPP for rural water supply in Cambodia’ in *Waterlines*, Jan 2003, v21, No.3 for a discussion on the management of rural water supplies by private investors.



Instead of water privatisation becoming a potentially successful capitalistic venture,<sup>35</sup> he has withheld some water rights from the investors. He is busily installing irrigation channels to various parts of the country not included in the privatisation agreement. These will remain the responsibility of his government and will ensure there will be greater access, by some people.

**JULIE:** Who? Those people who voted for him in the last election?

**HARISH:** Who knows? Anyway through these he will ensure some people will have access to potable water in the not too distant future. He knows his people believe that water is free and belongs to all. Through his media control he'll make sure Cambodians are reminded of this. His people are already discovering that privatised water tastes bad and costs money.

**JULIE:** Why does it taste bad? AND talking about media control. Are you thinking about joining his team? You're certainly able to promote his party line.

**HARISH:** Let's not change the subject. The water tastes bad because the treatment chemicals are frequently 'unavailable', probably held up at the docks or at one of the border crossings, or the operators allege they don't know the correct quantities and are scared they'll use too much of the wrong chemical. The Khmer-language radio has reported that quite a number of people have got sick from drinking the privatised water. And of course Hun Sen never resists an opportunity to blame his enforced coalition colleagues<sup>36</sup> for such distasteful issues as capitalistic privatisation of natural resources. Meanwhile his people are getting a bitter taste of what capitalism, without his State intervention, would be like. In some ways you could compare this limited privatisation to a vaccination.

**JULIE:** A vaccination? Aren't they are meant to prevent disease, not spread it?

**HARISH:** As usual you are right. But what does the vaccination do first?

**JULIE:** I don't know – give you a mild dose of what the real thing would be like if you got it?

**HARISH:** Exactly! His people of Cambodia are being vaccinated against the evils of private enterprise through the limited privatisation of water. They will remember, since Cambodians are known for their long memories and need for revenge, how they suffered at the hands of privatisation.

**JULIE:** So what you're saying is, that when the alleged long process of moving from capitalism to socialism is near, the people, previously 'vaccinated against the evils of privatised capitalism' will welcome the new order imposed by Hun Sen! Now I've heard it all. Whose imagination is at work here, yours or Hun Sen's?

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<sup>35</sup> See Olmstead op.cit. for discussion on pros and cons of water privatisation and 'regulated public monopolies versus regulated private monopolies'.

<sup>36</sup> In the 2003 elections Hun Sen's ruling Cambodian People's Party (CPP) won the poll, but failed to obtain the necessary two-thirds majority needed to form a new government. The two opposition parties were 'actively' encouraged by King Norodom Sihanouk to join a new government led by Hun Sen. Cochrane, J, 2003, 'The Devil is in the Details', in *Newsweek International*, Nov 17, 2003, p39.

**HARISH:** Scoff if you must, but let the idea float around for a while, keeping in mind what Hun Sen has achieved already and where and how his ideas have been formed.

**JULIE:** And I suppose that his illegal logging is as equally ‘out there’ in the ideas department.

**HARISH:** I am not saying they are or are not ‘out there’ as you so quaintly put it. I am merely formulating a possibility based on information I have received from him directly<sup>37</sup> and from the research we have undertaken about him for his biography. With regard to the illegal logging, he has found it to be an excellent way of getting large amounts of legal finance and resources into his country.

**JULIE:** Did you just say legal?

**HARISH:** I most certainly did. Don’t the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank and numerous aid agencies provide money and resources deemed as legal?

**JULIE:** Legal when it comes from a legal source. But, if it implies it has many conditions attached, like the water privatisation deal, then I have to say legal but neither just nor equitable, which probably makes it ethically illegal .

**HARISH:** Again my dear you are so right. All money coming into Cambodia has conditions attached so Hun Sen plays a similar game back to the providers. When he needs more money for improving the infrastructure in his name he starts up the illegal logging again.<sup>38</sup> Remember when he expelled ‘Global Witness’ from Cambodia?

**JULIE:** I most certainly do. It made the world headlines.<sup>39</sup>

**HARISH:** Exactly. It also drew global attention back to the plight of Cambodian forests, to Cambodian poverty and refreshes the public’s memory that it was the indiscriminate US bombing that supposedly set Pol Pot and the Khmer Rouge off on their kill and destroy mission.<sup>40</sup> The global money-lenders and suppliers, terrified that supplies of natural resources will run out, despite their protestations that technology will prevail and save the capitalistic day, define conditions long before money can change hands. Hun Sen, theatrically, puts up a small fight, drawing the game out as long as it takes for the world’s media to report on the poverty of his country. Collective guilt endorses the payment of extra monies with reduced conditions.<sup>41</sup> Hun

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<sup>37</sup> Hun Sen, a keen golfer (his golf records can be found on his Biography website [http://www.cnv.org.kh/personInfo/biography\\_of\\_hu\\_sen.htm](http://www.cnv.org.kh/personInfo/biography_of_hu_sen.htm).) often plays on the same course as visiting journalists.

<sup>38</sup> For examples of reports on illegal logging see: 2003, ‘Law of the Jungle; Cambodia’, in *The Economist (US)*, August 9, 2003, v368, i8336, p36US; and, 1999, ‘The fight against illegal loggers’, in *The Economist (US)*, April 3, 1999, v351, i8113, p34(1); and 1997, ‘Logging on Cambodia: Cambodia’, in *The Economist (US)*, Feb 22, 1997, v342, n8005, p36(2).

<sup>39</sup> Global Witness was installed by overseas aid donors to independently monitor Cambodia’s logging. The Cambodian government ordered Global Witness to leave the country after accusations of corruption were levied against the government. See *ibid* August 9, 2003 *The Economist (US)*.

<sup>40</sup> The World Bank withheld a \$15million loan following the Global Witness incident. *Ibid*.

<sup>41</sup> Hun Sen’s government were alleged to be, ‘...devising new schemes to get around forestry regulations.’ It was suggested that forest areas be re-classified as plantation land. *Ibid*.

Sen promises to do everything in his power to stop illegal logging, whilst admitting that he is unable to guarantee its cessation since he was forced into forming a coalition government. The result is he receives huge sums of money and the services of specialised aid agencies to provide resources and the most modern and expert advice available on how to develop community-based ecologically sustainable forests,<sup>42</sup> oceans, rivers and land.

*[Julie, well used to Harish's monologues watches while the police presence below, aided with batons, move the homeless away to prevent tourists from being disturbed by their existence.]*

**Harish:** The communities meanwhile are being socialised into receiving aid from a central source, into taking direction on their management of communal operations in the interests of the country as a whole, and into accepting that centrally directed environmental protection is their only option for a sustainable future. When the time comes for social and economic change, his country and his people will be well equipped to actively sustain their environment in keeping with central government policies of prioritising equitable distribution of benefits and ecologically sustainable development. So, the next time you read or hear about the illegal logging in Cambodia, just think about my words.

**JULIE:** I'll be doing a lot of thinking when I visit one of the forest projects tomorrow. Here I was asking myself if these small community-based projects could really make a difference in the long term. What I hadn't thought about was that they might actually be part of someone else's big picture.

**HARISH:** Hmmmm. I call it the jigsaw puzzle of life. Many pieces seem to fit in the same space but what you end up with will depend on what you expect it to look like when you're finished. And on that note, I'll pay the bill on the way out.

**JULIE:** Do you fancy a stroll down to the Palace to look at the lights and see how the Cambodian Royal family squander Cambodia's limited electricity supply and....

**HARISH:** Now don't get me started on that topic. Let's go.

*They both depart into the bustling nightlife of sultry Phnom Penh.*

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<sup>42</sup> For an example of community forestry at work in Cambodia see Hubbard, C, 2003, 'Living with the forest: sustainable use proves more democratic than a forestry ban in Angkor, Cambodia', in *Alternatives Journal*, Wntr 2003, v29, i1, p38(4).