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Essay
STS300, “The environmental context”
Autumn session, 2005
Science, Technology & Society
University of Wollongong

I know...let's have a dinner party!

***Six intellectually, physically and emotionally diverse people variously located on a large covered verandah on a glorious late-Autumn Saturday afternoon.*

Miranda, Carly and Daniel are sitting around a rustic coffee table drinking wine while engaged in raucous, animated conversation.

Walter and Nathaniel are off to the side, leaning on the verandah rail and contemplating the vista of rurality spread before them as they converse in a subdued, contemplative fashion.

*Eva is sitting in a huge, tattered armchair in a far corner, avidly reading from the surrounding piles of print media, and periodically exclaiming loudly to nobody in particular.***

Miranda: I really *don't* know how you cope with living so far from civilisation, day in and day out. I mean, it's a great spot for us to come to for a weekend every now and then, but I couldn't do it all the time. We both *really* thought you'd be over it by now. Don't you *miss* the shops and the human interaction?

Carly (looking quite surprised): Oh for *goodness sake*, Miranda! We're only twenty-five k's from the nearest primitive settlement of a mere *four thousand* inhabitants! You talk as if I might still change my mind about changing my life! It's been *ten* bloody years since we left the insanity of civilisation, as you call it. More to the point, how many times have *you* been here in the last twelve months?

Miranda: Well, I *have* to come don't I, if I want to see *you*? I'd die of loneliness in the city if I waited for you to visit *me*. When you *do* come it's only for one night, or two at the most. These days you act like the city is somehow *contagious* - or *malignant* even. Surely such a short exposure to all that is *truly* good in the world doesn't require such a protracted convalescence?

Daniel: Yes Carly, when *was* the last time you donned the ideological armour and braved the mortal elements so often found in restaurants, theatres and shopping malls?

Carly (ignoring Daniel completely): Don't give me that shit, Miranda! Don't try and tell *me* you don't look forward to being here, that you don't understand and appreciate the intrinsic valueⁱ of the place. You can't get enough of it! You've been here *at least* eight times in the last year, *and*, I wasn't even here myself for half of those visits!

Miranda (exasperated): Don't you *dare* try and turn this around on *me*! Yes, it's a nice place to visit, but only because it's different. Not because it's *particularly* different to anywhere else. And certainly not because I'm beguiled by any 'intrinsic value', whatever that might mean.

Daniel: I think it means...

Miranda (cutting Daniel off sharply): I *know* what it means, Daniel! I was attempting to point out, *rhetorically*, that the notion of 'intrinsic value' leaves a lot to be desired and isn't always a helpful one. Not everyone has the luxury of choice regarding their immediate surroundings. *Most* people's priorities revolve around the more mundane issues of food, shelter and employment.

Carly (attempting to avert an imminent soapbox moment): Okay, okay...let's leave the heavy-duty stuff to its rightful battlefield – the dinner table! But I do agree with you that the very idea of being able to prioritise at all, let alone well, isn't available to everyone. I'm constantly amazed at the things some people prioritise around here. That woman down the road, for instance. Lois. She's a strange one.

Daniel: Do you mean the one on the right trying to build her own empire by encouraging the touros to 'Byronise'ⁱⁱ the neighbourhood? Last time we were here there was some kerfuffle regarding council policy and unsustainable development practices.

Carly: No, no, not her. Although, I *can* tell you that the D. A.ⁱⁱⁱ for the fully appointed residential country club on three hundred and fifty undeveloped acres *is* still in the pipeline. It's currently tied up in the Land and Environment Court because of perceived *problems* with water and waste issues...

Eva (explosively, to no one in particular): *Bastards!* G.M.^{iv} crops *aren't* the way to go!

Carly: No, I'm talking about the other woman, further along on the *left*, with all the horses. She's living on seven acres in an unfinished mud-brick house, with no carpet on a concrete slab. She exists on a single parents' benefit and has at least two horses, neither of which is gainfully employed. Her little boy ended up in hospital last winter because she chose to buy new horse rugs over a good supply of decent firewood.

Miranda: God, Carly! What *is it* with you and horses? You wouldn't let me keep one here for when I come to visit, and now you're suggesting that this woman is

wrong to care so well for hers. How well do you know her? Maybe she's an eco-feminist?^v

Daniel: Or maybe she's a 'converted' greenie and has *finally* realised the environmental folly of the fossil-fuelled fireplace. They contribute significantly to the current environmental situation, you know. In *my* opinion they should be outlawed in favour of a more environmentally sound approach (looking pointedly across to the fireplace which quietly dominates the lounge room adjoining the verandah).

Carly (purposely misunderstanding): What's *that*, Dan? You want greenies *outlawed* because they are environmentally unsound and 'contribute significantly to the current environmental situation'. Are *you* finally acknowledging that greenies *do* have faults after all? That sometimes they are as much a part of the environmental problem as the purported solutions?^{vi} Well, well, well. *What a wonderfully encouraging turn of events!*

Daniel: Don't you start! You know damned well that that's *not* what I mean. I mean that burning wood to provide heat adds considerably to the environmental situation. It's not efficient and it's an obsolete method that just adds to environmental problems *unnecessarily*. Do you have *any* idea...

Carly (cutting him off and glaring swiftly at Miranda): Do *you* have any idea of the *real* cost involved in keeping horses just for the sake of it? No self-respecting greenie or eco-feminist would condone this practice as it has developed in the West.

Miranda: Bugger! I see that anarchism is still *well* and truly on the menu, then. *How very tedious!*

Carly (ignoring the barb): Apart from the *obvious* things like vets bills and purchasing supplementary feed, there's the wider cost to the physical environment and the social one as well.

Daniel: A few farting horses can't possibly have as much impact on the environment as burning perfectly good trees just to keep warm!

Carly: You really can be *quite* obtuse, Daniel. I'm talking in a *much* broader context here. Ninety-nine percent of these horses don't do any meaningful work! No ploughing, no cart pulling. Most are kept just so people can ride them occasionally, or bet upon the outcome of other people racing them. Any day of the week groups of mounted marauders trample their way meanderingly about the countryside here.

Daniel: Oh, so you're talking about the *physical* impact of the horses. I get it now.

Carly: Yes, but it's a *lot more involved* than that. There's a whole cultural discourse which has grown up around the historical relationship between humans and horses. It is heavily underpinned by patriarchal constructs of a social hierarchy, and can easily be understood along classic lines of gender, class and culture.

Miranda: Don't be so bloody *academic*! It's just horses and firewood we're talking about here. They can't constitute *that* much of an environmental problem, surely?

Daniel: No, they can't be doing *that* much damage. How many of them can there *possibly* be.

Carly: There are more than enough of them to illustrate my point. Horses and motor vehicles don't mix well, and some riders are blatantly arrogant regarding what they interpret as their *inherent right of access* to private property in order to avoid this issue.

Miranda: But why shouldn't they be allowed to ride through private property? I mean they are going *through*, not setting up a township. What could be more natural than riding a horse in this rural setting?

Carly (exasperated): *You've got to be joking!* Why should property owners not be able to protect the environment within it?^{vii} The whole 'horse' scene is just a human creation, a situation brought about when machines replaced horses, and some people couldn't stand to let them go. An entire industry has developed around pampering animals for the sake of human enjoyment. Horses would come with bloody rugs attached if they were meant to have them!

Daniel: But not everybody thinks about things the way you do. *You* may think that it's logical to keep yourself warm instead of an animal. But *other people* may think it's more important to care for animals.^{viii}

Carly: No, I'm not saying that either is more or less important than the other, just that in this case I see little logic in continuing a situation where a child is hospitalised because rugs for un-employed horses were deemed more important than heating a dwelling. The fact that this woman is a full-time dole recipient just adds insult to injury. Not only is the dole paying to feed her useless horses, but the system is also paying for the medical treatment of her son.

Miranda (worriedly): Yes, well, be that as it *may*, Daniel does *still* have a point. It would appear that there are far more people burning wood for energy of one sort or another than are keeping horses for pleasure. *And you're one of them!* I don't see how it's okay for you to burn wood, but not for someone else to rug their horses.

Carly: It's all a matter of degrees! I'm talking about informed choices. Most of our firewood is the stuff the loggers leave behind, which we go out and collect under government permit. It's already *dead*. We've planted at least fifteen or twenty times as many trees as we've actually cut down since we moved here. We are consciously trying to lessen our impact on the environment.^{ix} Our lifestyle has less impact than your city lifestyle. Lois isn't even aware her existence creates one, let alone...

Eva (explosively, to no one in particular): The world's biggest *floating fish factory*...that's just fucking *obscene!*^x

Carly (looking at the clock): Anyhow, there's no wine left in that bottle and *really* I should go and check on our dinner. But I'm not finished with this environmental discussion yet, so be ready to continue it while we eat!

Daniel: A challenge, eh? Well, *I'm* game if *you* are! Do you need a hand in the kitchen, by the way?

Carly: Thanks, but it's fine. Let's not try to shatter the stereotypes just yet. It's a bit early for the big guns. Perhaps you could toddle off and *patriarchally prioritise* the wines for the meal?

Miranda: Come on, Carly, before you manage to wind him up any further. *I'll* help you in the kitchen. What *are* we having for dinner, by the way? You're not still on that *tiresome* macrobiotic^{xi} kick are you?

Carly (laughing and walking towards the kitchen): *No*, I'm well and truly over that. But I am utterly committed to using locally grown produce wherever possible. The amount of money spent on ferrying foodstuffs all around the planet is horrendous.

Miranda (following): Oh? And what does that mean, exactly, in terms of dinner, tonight I mean?

Carly: It means that by and large, tonight's food, drink...*everything*...is locally grown and either currently in season or preserved...

(meanwhile, over near the verandah rail...)

Walter: Doesn't look like there's much economic growth going on around these parts. The drive down here clearly illustrated the need for a *large* injection of fresh capital.^{xii}

Nathaniel: Yeah, it's getting harder and harder for farmers to make a living. We're all going to have to change the way we think about farming. Those of us who are only aiming for small-scale sustainable development saw the light long ago.^{xiii}

Walter: But that's *insane*. Australia is *famous* for it's broad-acre farming. And it's the only way to make a reasonable profit.

Nathaniel: Well, *now* all it's famous for is the resultant salinisation, erosion and loss of biodiversity due to overcropping and over-use of pesticides and fertilisers.^{xiv}

Walter: Oh, don't be such a merchant of doom and *gloom*. There are *plenty* of new and promising agricultural innovations going on out there.^{xv}

Nathaniel: Unfortunately they're not happening nearly fast enough, or cheaply enough, to become easily available to the people who need them most. Conditions are changing at an alarming rate. Even here on small acres we can only just keep up...we've already made plans for additional water storage.

Walter: *See!* I'm right! So when are you going to *finally* admit defeat and come back to the comforts and conveniences of the city? I mean there's not much scope for making a quid around here. *Particularly* if the local council persists in driving developers away because of greenie semantics.

Nathaniel: You know *very* well that the concept of sustainable development involves much more than greenies *or* semantics. And *please* give over about us coming back to the city – it's not going to happen. We're both very happy here.

Walter: Well, Carly *obviously* is. But I refuse to believe you are. You earn a fraction of what you're worth, you still cut your own firewood, for fuck's sake, and your only company is a woman who is openly hostile to your work! How can you stand it?

Nathaniel (infuriated): In the first place, you *know* I'm not interested in making money! I do quite nicely the way things are, and I see nothing wrong with being as self-sufficient as possible, and with firewood *especially*. And secondly, Carly is *not* hostile to my work. My area of work is specialised and *narrow*. The scope of her realm is far broader and inclusive of cultural sensitivities – it's the *perfect* environment for me because it's supportive and nurturing and encourages me to challenge my own ideals. But you wouldn't know anything about that, would you little brother?

Walter: Oh, *piss off!* I know where this is going. Don't start all this again! You don't know the first thing about my relationship with Miranda...

Nathaniel: Oh, *yes* I do! The very first thing I noticed is that your relationship revolves around Miranda's uncontrollable 'affluenza'^{xvi} and your ongoing ability to finance it...

Eva (explosively, to no one in particular): The *bloody audacity!* I always *thought* there was something shonky about the U.N.!!^{xvii}

Walter: *Very* timely! I really *don't* want to discuss my marriage with you, so let's change the subject altogether, shall we? What's the word *overseas*? How are the old coal exports shaping up? I've been offered the chance to join a new, *international*, air-conditioning outfit. I stand to make big bucks, but I also need a couple of mill' up front. So I need you to tell me that global economic growth is not going to slow any time soon, because I'll have to mortgage the house and the business...

Nathaniel: *Walter!* I'm an environmental scientist, not a bloody global free-market economist! How can you continue to be such a callously calculating capitalist? Why can't you acknowledge that the changes going on around us demand a *completely different* technological approach to what has been 'standard procedure' for far too long?^{xviii} We have to concentrate on *better* development, not just more. We've got to stop thinking simply in money terms.^{xix} No, I'm sorry, I simply *can't* condone this new venture you...

Miranda (shouting from the dinning area): *Come on you lot*, dinner's on the table. And *very* nice it looks, too. Did you hear me, *Walter*? Come on *Eva*, I'm *starving*!

Eva: I'm coming, just let me finish this page...

Miranda: Just *bring* the damned thing *with* you!

Walter (walking towards the dinning area): Yeah, I *heard* you, Miranda! We're *coming*! We should get over there, bro', while there's still *some* food left.

Nathaniel (following): You are *really* starting to piss me off, you know that, *bro*'? There's always *plenty* of food here, and you know...

Walter (cutting Nathaniel off): Wow! This food looks absolutely great... a real Indian feast. Isn't it great the way globalisation has increased our choice of available foodstuffs? Now we can eat whatever we like, whenever we like!

Miranda: Walter, you *do* show yourself up! This food, and the music you can hear, are quite clearly representative of Middle Eastern culture, and are not Indian in any way. It would seem that all the globalisation of foodstuffs has done in your case is to render them homogenously flavoured as 'ethnic'. And everything here is *locally* produced!

Walter: Oh, *do* give over. Nobody cares if you can tell the difference, because *you* didn't know either, until *Carly* filled you in. Ethnic food and ethnic music are just that. Ethnic merely implies difference from the Aussie norm. It's all the same to me, so long as it tastes good. And who cares where it *came* from, what's *that* got to do with anything? We eat in ethnic restaurants all the time, and you never question the origin of *their* ingredients!

Daniel: Trust *you* to be able to conflate the glorious diversity of the world's great cultures into a grubby little adjective like 'ethnic'!

Walter: *Settle down* there, lad! I just tell it the way I see it. And the way I see it at the moment is, that *wherever* those great cultures currently exist outside the 'wonderful, white West', the people living in them don't do too well, for one reason and another. Knowing whether they're Middle Eastern, Indian, Tibetan or Angolan isn't helpful to me at all.

Daniel: Surely you don't really *believe* that shit about the West being superior just *because* it's the West? You *can't* just generalise things that way.

Walter: But *why* can't I? Simply because *you* tell me I shouldn't? To me it's pretty simple and straightforward...the West *is* generally far better of than the rest. Health-wise, financially, technologically, environmentally and socially...*we're* generally better of than *they* are.

Daniel: And just why, *exactly*, do *you* think that might be the case? I'm sure we'd *all* be *very* *interested* to hear your views in this regard!

Walter: Very simply, *Danny Boy*, the accumulation of real power relies on the ability of those who seek it to prioritise, *ruthlessly!*

Carly: Priorities! That's exactly what we were talking about earlier! But in a far more local and environmental context...

Walter: How *quaint!* *Nate* and I were having a conversation along very similar lines ourselves.

Eva: I find that *highly* unlikely!

Carly (ignoring them both): That's right, I was using the local 'horse crowd' to illustrate the difficulty in identifying local environmental problems and solutions, when often they are the opposite sides of the same coin, depending on one's own views. We need to find another way to approach environmental problems that ultimately affect us all.^{xx}

Miranda: Are you suggesting that people need to be able to draw a more *obvious* link between local and global environmental problems in order to find workable solutions to them?

Carly: Yes, that's it. But if they aren't informed and aware of what environmental problems *consist* of, then they won't readily make the link. We need to formulate some specific action that will educate and encourage people to make that link...^{xxi}

Nathaniel: Hold on! First things *first!* Before we get to *that* part, we need to be more specific. What exactly *are* the main issues conveniently lumped together as environmental issues, problems or situations? Let's just see what the general consensus is here amongst ourselves, shall we?

Daniel (quietly to Eva): This promises to be a *long* and probably volatile evening...I hope you're up for it!

Walter: Now, hang on *just* a minute! Before we all get *too* carried away with saving the world, I think we need to make sure that we have *adequate provisions* for the journey.

Daniel: Yes, I seem to remember last time that things got a *bit* ugly at about 3.00 am... when it was discovered that the *entire* establishment was utterly devoid of *both* alcohol and gear^{xxii}!

Eva: *Well*, I'm pleased I wasn't here to wit...

Nathaniel (standing up and shouting): *Silence!* Never fear...unlike the Minister for Immigration, we have learned well from past mistakes, and will not repeat *those* in particular.

Carly (pretending to try to keep a straight face): Like I explained to you earlier, Miranda, I can source just about *everything* locally if I *try* hard enough!

(The entire room erupts in gales of knowing laughter.)

Miranda: So, now that the *important* stuff has been taken care of...who will be the first to offer their expert opinion regarding individual identity and rank of the main environmental problems we all face in one way or another today?

Walter: *Well*, I think Nathaniel should go first. After all, he's just come back from yet *another* fucking environment summit. To *Norway*, no less. Go, on...tell us what the latest scientific opinion is, *Nate*!

Nathaniel: If it's okay with the rest of you, I'd *love* to go first! That way we'll at least have a *rational* starting point. According to the latest scientific findings, with which I *wholeheartedly* concur, undoing the effects of global warming continues to be the biggest environmental challenge facing this planet today.^{xxiii}

Walter: No, I disagree with that *completely*! I think the biggest problem is, *and will continue to be*, access to clean water.^{xxiv} We should be putting all our efforts into ways of ensuring Australia's supplies. Where's the logic in concentrating on the climate if we all die of thirst in the mean time?

Miranda: Yeah, well I think you're *both* 'way off the mark. I think the loss of bio-diversity is *far* more problematic than we realise. We don't know enough about the long-term effects of increased species loss^{xxv} to be able to take the risk of letting it continue.

Eva: And so do *I*. Think you're both off the mark, that is. But I also *disagree* about diminished bio-diversity being the main problem. I consider over-population^{xxvi} to be the biggest and *most urgent* environmental problem right now. We can never make any real headway with the other problems if the exponential growth of the very thing which creates them – too many people – is not addressed immediately.

Daniel: But what about de-forestation and soil-depletion^{xxvii} – you can't tell me *they* are less important than the others. If we don't stop cutting down the world's remaining trees, which are mostly for *firewood*, *Carly*, then we'll soon find ourselves with no arable soil left, regardless of reasonable climate and abundant water supply. No food equals no people, eventually.

Eva: And don't forget pollution in general, and waste in *particular* – from both people and industry^{xxviii}. I still think that the *main* problem we have is too many people for the finite natural resources the Earth contains. Increased materialism and consumerism result from increased consumption of material!

Walter: Oh, *very* clever, Eva!

Carly: Well, as true as all that might be, I don't see that *any* of the problems mentioned can be easily singled out for individual attention or treatment. The whole

environmental construct has become an *impotent generalisation*, to the extent that everyone assumes that someone else is doing something about the problems. Most people don't even do the things that they *easily* could do. I agree to some extent with the recent notion that environmentalism is dead^{xxx}, and consequently I believe that the most pressing environmental problem is getting the whole environment back onto the agenda.

Eva: Whose agenda? It's *always* on *mine*!

Carly: Joke if you want to, but the environment should *always* be on *everyone's* agenda. I'm talking about resurrecting grassroots participation in revitalising the environmental debate towards a 'proper' outcome.^{xxx}

Eva: Proper for *whom*, and according to whose standards? Who's going to decide what needs to be done first and how to go about it? I think it's going to be *a lot* harder than you seem to think, Carly.

Nathaniel: Yes, but surely the degree of difficulty doesn't negate the urgent need to do *something*, Eva? We're talking about an outcome that empowers people to be proactive rather than stifled in their efforts towards achieving local sustainability. We each have to take action appropriate to our own environment to create meaningful change.^{xxx}

Walter: Anyhow, there's no conclusive proof that global warming and climate change are inseparably linked. In fact there's plenty to suggest that we may all have been wrong about the effects of global warming, to the extent that it may even be good for us!^{xxx}

Daniel: You can't be *serious*, Walter?

Walter: *Why not?* After all, we haven't really been keeping records all that long, have we? We don't really know for sure if people cause climate change. I mean, perhaps we are at the tail end of a ten or twenty thousand year cycle and this is just the way it is on Earth every now and then.

Eva: Yes! Maybe this is just what the Earth does every so often to reassert Her sovereignty? The big spring clean, so to speak, where she rids herself of vermin, just like a dog attempting to shake off fleas!

Walter: Well, I'm no conspiracy theorist, so I wouldn't go that far...

Eva: Well, perhaps you *should!* There's plenty of alternative research out there which suggests that the human species is just one of many similar versions spread far and wide across various galaxies as a result of a huge genetic experiment undertaken three hundred thousand year ago by beings known as 'creator-gods'...^{xxx}

Daniel: Ah, *babe*...I don't know that this lot are quite ready for your Pleiadian theory just at the...

Walter: No, no! Don't stop *now*. I love a little comic *relief*...even if it is hippy-inspired and drug induced! So how does the story go? Something like 'a long time ago in a galaxy far, far away'...

Eva: *Fuck off, Walter!* Your personal drug of choice is far more addictive and destructive than mine will *ever* be! Why do you think the government outlaws one and promotes the other? If capitalism is so wonderful why are so many people suffering so much by living it?^{xxxiv}

Miranda: Despite our awareness, nothing changes. I'm not saying nothing happens, by the way. Just that it's not ever *enough*.

Eva: Well, maybe it's just not possible to *ever* do enough. I mean the world was *so* pleased with itself after Banaid, and gloated about the amount raised for the cause. And then you have bloody *Bono* on the telly the other night, pointing out that they were all rather *deflated* once they realised that it was about the same amount that Africa spent *each month* to pay for it's foreign bloody debt!^{xxxv}

Carly: Well, whatever we've been doing, it doesn't work!! It's time to try something else.

Walter: And I suppose that you've *conveniently* got something in mind?

Carly: As it happens, *I do*. I'm advocating a form of third-way anarchism: a combination of rethinking the role of capital and grassroots mobilisation towards achieving equity for everyone.

Walter: Oh, *here we go*. Chapter eight of the gospel according to Carly. Paragraph six, page ninety-four: 'locating capitalism as evil'. I've heard this one *several* times before. Haven't you got something *new* to tell me?

Carly: *All* the problems we face result from the continuation of concentrated wealth remaining in the hands of an *elite*.^{xxxvi} We are effectively dependant on the whims of this elite. As a result we're all too attached to our comfort zones and don't really have any plans to change our ways.

Miranda: If everyone owns the means of production how will the means be directed towards doing the *most* good in the *shortest* time period?

Walter: I don't think people are going to take too kindly to this notion of *no wages*.

Nathaniel: It's not a matter of working for no wages...that's just *stupid!*^{xxxvii} This is about rearranging priorities in order to live the best life *within ones means*. There is an inherent incentive there to encourage creative activity when one is a *shareholder* in the means of production.^{xxxviii}

Daniel: But it is true, isn't it, that the ongoing concentration of capital wealth in the hands of just the powerful few has translated into the 'new colonialism' - controlling people by controlling private ownership of the means of production?^{xxxix}

Carly: Well I certainly believe it's true. We currently exist on an economic pendulum, arcing its way back and forth between the *extremes* of capitalism and socialism. As things stand, there is no location along this arc which allows *the people* to attain ownership of the means of production whilst remaining *the people*: it's either the private elite or the state elite.^{xl} I say it's time to ditch the lot and start again!

Walter: Oh *bravo!* However, the simple fact remains, that barring some major cataclysmic event which renders the *entire global economy utterly useless*, we are *always* going to have to deal with economic and financial stuff...^{xli}

Nathaniel: I think the reason we seem to be unable to take steps to create any *meaningful* change is that we are looking at things *completely* the wrong way. We are so tied to the capitalism/economic growth dichotomy that we are not capable of discerning a *different* perspective... a vision involving a *different* combination of the *existing* elements of the situation!^{xlii}

Carly: People have to start being responsible for their own wellbeing. I see the amount of energy we waste unnecessarily, whilst in pursuit of all the pointless activities we undertake, as a big part of the problem.

Eva: *Yes*, just think...if everyone had an equal stake in making sure things were done as efficiently and as effectively as possible the first time round, then the excess energy created would be astounding!

Nathaniel: The third-way approach eventually benefits everyone, even the chronically poor and sick. Under such a system, an asset-underpinned economy would have funds for emergency purposes and would not need to 'cut funding' in one are to fund a new project in another!!^{xliii}

Walter: *Oh, no!* Don't tell me she's convinced you of this as well, big brother? So how *is* all this going to help us solve environmental problems? I'm pretty sure that this has already been attempted in Sweden, and other places with mixed results.^{xliv}

Carly: Well it's all quite simple really Walter. The very first and most important thing is to replace the World Bank and the I.M.F.^{xlv} with honest, committed people who will administer global micro-credit so that people can start to make choices and decisions for themselves, about the things that affect them directly.^{xlvi}

Daniel: I'd agree with that. In many cases the people being directly affected by environmental problems could do something about them if they had access to the capital required.^{xlvii} Technology could be of far greater benefit except that lots of people with great ideas are not being given the chance to voice them. In fact in many cases there are forces actively operating to keep them quiet!^{xlviii}

Nathaniel: And as far as the political third way *you're* talking about, Walter, we'll it's hardly the same thing, is it? There's a huge difference between third way politics and third way lived reality, as we're seeing it. You're referring to policy that retains the state as an elite. We're talking about policy determined by the people it is going to most directly affect.^{xlix}

Carly: One of the biggest hurdles to overcome is the cultural dislocation created by the globalised economy. The globalisation process threatens to break the fragile ties that bind individuals into communities, and we have to recognise that cultural difference makes ethical solutions an imperative.¹

Eva: As I was reading earlier, when we have ties to everywhere, we risk being connected to nowhere.^{li}

Miranda: So, okay...how does it work and is it likely to happen any time soon?

Carly: Well, seeing as how it's almost daylight...the short version is that by overhauling the current system and making cheap capital directly available to the workers, they will have increased incentive as the fruits of their labour accrue to them directly.^{lii}

Miranda: But how will people become aware of what is really going on?

Daniel: I think in many cases people are already aware but remain inactive because they don't believe that what we do individually matters one way or the other, particularly when compared to the powers wielded by elites such as corporations. This is where technology will be useful. The increased access to electronic information has already allowed for changes in some communities, purely by its availability.^{liii}

Eva: I don't think that you should ignore the power of television and print media in the process, though Dan. It seems as though Greenpeace has only just realised they still exist themselves, judging by their sudden recent re-appearance on TV.^{liv} But where is reality television when you need it? This topic of a third way would also make a great documentary. Even a glossy magazine at the supermarket checkout would be worth the risk if it gained people's attention.

Walter: Well from what I can see, all this is going to do is destroy consumerism, encourage self-sufficiency and destroy the mystique of the economic realm. I just don't understand why people will be happy to have *less*.

Nathaniel: Well, that's exactly what we've been attempting to do here for the last decade...live as well as we can within our means whilst making the least impact on the planet at the same time! You've never really gotten that, have you Walter?

Walter: Well, I say it won't work!

Carly: Sorry, Walter...but it already is happening. We are just two of the growing number of people turning their back on a society drowning in over-consumption.^{lv}

Nathaniel: But don't worry, it won't affect us in the West too dramatically in the foreseeable future, so you've still got time to mortgage yourself into the next millennium.

Carly: I think a lot of the momentum will come from people refusing to be governed by a capitalist work ethic designed specifically to exploit the work...

Miranda (screaming loudly): *Walter*, what's Nathaniel talking about? *Tell me it's not what I think it is?* At least half of everything is mine so don't even think about mortgaging any bloody thing! Do you hear me? Don't you dare walk away from...

(Miranda follows Walter down the hall)

Daniel: Well, that looks like the end of the discussion...Eva's asleep, and I'm going too.

Carly: Yeah, goodnight. We'll do the autopsy after lunch tomorrow!

Nathaniel: Goodnight Dan, sleep well. Are you coming, Carly?

Carly: Right behind you, goodnight Dan.

ⁱ Beder, 1996: 47.

ⁱⁱ A term coined for this dialogue to represent the undesirable consequences of the over-development of an area, particularly regarding the impact of intensive tourism traffic.

ⁱⁱⁱ Colloquially used shortened form of 'Development Application', which is the formal procedure relating to the seeking of local council development approval.

^{iv} Colloquially used shortened form of 'Genetically Modified', or alternatively, genetically engineered material most commonly used in reference to foodstuffs, crops and some scientific/medical procedures.

^v Sydee & Beder, 2001: 15.

^{vi} Reisman, 1996: 4.

^{vii} Kurland, Greaney & Brohawn, 1998: 2.

^{viii} Grey, 1993: 3.

^{ix} Clifford, 1999: 9.

^x The world's largest super trawler, Veronica II, has recently applied to fish Australian waters. The Wilderness Society, 2005: 1.

^{xi} Macrobiotics refers to a diet 'consisting of pure whole foods, based on Buddhist principles of the balance of yin and yang.' Readers Digest, 1999: 581.

^{xii} Cox, 2004: 3.

^{xiii} Pritchard & McManus, 2000: 141.

^{xiv} For a comprehensive overview of these problems in Australia see Mercer, 1995.

^{xv} Beder, 1996: 265.

^{xvi} 'The social malady of 'affluenza' was identified by American television documentary makers in 1997' and the symptoms are noted as '[t]he bloated, sluggish and unfulfilled feeling that results from efforts to keep up with the Joneses...An epidemic of stress, overwork, waste and indebtedness caused by the dogged pursuit of the American dream.' SMH, 2005: 29.

^{xvii} The United Nations has often been criticised, see the ABC, 2004: 1 for example.

^{xviii} Cavalcanti, 1999: 1.

^{xix} Kurland, Greaney & Brohawn, 1998: 11.

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- ^{xx} Clifford, 2000: 1.
- ^{xxi} Mulligan, 2000: 3.
- ^{xxii} A commonly used pseudonym for drugs, usually Marijuana.
- ^{xxiii} Myers, 1994: 2.
- ^{xxiv} Myers, 1994: 5.
- ^{xxv} Myers, 1994: 2.
- ^{xxvi} Myers, 1994: 3.
- ^{xxvii} Myers, 1994: 5.
- ^{xxviii} Myers, 1994: 1.
- ^{xxix} Shellenberger & Nordhaus, 2004.
- ^{xxx} Marco, 2003: 16.
- ^{xxxi} Lindaman, 2001: 2.
- ^{xxxii} Moore, 1995: 5.
- ^{xxxiii} Marciniak, 1992: 30.
- ^{xxxiv} Goldsmith, 2002: 1.
- ^{xxxv} BBC, 2004.
- ^{xxxvi} Chance, 2004: 2.
- ^{xxxvii} Kurland, Greaney & Brohawn, 1998: 7.
- ^{xxxviii} Kurland, Greaney & Brohawn, 1998: 13.
- ^{xxxix} Chance, 2004: 3.
- ^{xl} Kurland, Greaney & Brohawn, 1998: 4.
- ^{xli} Kurland, Greaney & Brohawn, 1998: 15.
- ^{xlii} Scanlon, 2003: 18.
- ^{xliii} Goldsmith, 1997: 4.
- ^{xliv} Ryner, 2005.
- ^{xlv} Shortened form of International Monetary Fund.
- ^{xlvi} Beder, 1996: 179.
- ^{xlvii} Scanlon, 2003: 15.
- ^{xlviii} Kuehn, 2004.

^{xlix} Scanlon, 2003: 14.

^l Brown, 2003: 231.

^{li} Jasanoff, 1996: 8.

^{lii} Goldsmith, 1997: 8.

^{liii} Pelton, 2002: 3.

^{liv} Advertisements aired on SBS Television as viewed by author during May, 2005.

^{lv} Cameron, 2005: 19.

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