Chapter summary

The opening two decades of the twenty-first century will be remembered for the harsh austerity measures imposed on countries such as Greece and Spain for example. These conditions are voluntarily and subtly accepted by many other nations who espouse a dual commitment to democracy and capitalism. These two organising principles promise the emancipation of the human race from past systems of selective privilege and control. Chapter 3 invites you to think about the relentless reminders that economic growth globally is in the interests of all people. The indicators of such growth (or otherwise) are daily reported in national news broadcasts as the vital signs of ‘the economy’ – so something we should all pay attention to. In subsequent chapters of *Understanding Management Critically* we will have reason to revisit the effects of the relentless pursuit of ‘economic growth’ – be that calculated as assessment of ‘the global economy’, ‘GDP’, ‘Corporate Profits’ or our personal bank account. Each entity to be assessed of course is a selective ‘valuing’ of many micro processes that materialise a macro theory of [economic] development in which we are required to trust – or at least not disturb significantly. The protection of these ways of valuing can require the restructuring of organisations, ‘outplacing’ of people (sacking), ‘outsourcing’ of jobs – even if this causes significant harm to some. The World Social Forum (WSF) is an annual meeting with a different focus to the World Economic Forum (WEF). Their purpose is to support policies that will ‘ensure that globalisation in solidarity will prevail as a new stage in world history’. This will respect universal human rights of all citizens – men and women – of all nations and the environment and will rest on democratic international systems and institutions at the service of social justice, equality and the sovereignty of peoples.¹

Webpage structure

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3.1 Revision notes: Globalisation – blessing or curse?

The Spring Uprisings occurring in the early decades of the twenty-first century in what we still call ‘The Middle East’ are urgent calls for greater democracy and more transparent government in the region. Syria, Egypt, Iran, Israel and the Gaza are at war – as is much of the world. The governments of Italy, Greece and Spain have committed to austerity measures to bring their ailing economies into line. Hilary Clinton visited with the Military Junta in Burma and Barack Obama committed to work closely with Australia’s Julia Gillard to shape the Pacific to protect and enhance US interests in the region. Africa is viewed by many as a fantastic mine of minerals if only the rest of us could get at them safely and its inhabitants can be drawn into collusion or kept at political infighting. South America is still an attractive destination for tourists seeking affordable sun and culture, even exotic eco-conscious exploration, though increasing drug-related violence makes for second thoughts on behalf of a consuming public. India and China may well succeed in attracting to themselves the fuel and the customers they need to bring their nations to their full economic strength. Multinational corporations’ expectation that they can frack for oil wherever they think they will find opportunities, the removal of herders from their traditional grounds in Mongolia, and many more examples where communities seek to exercise their rights to a healthy and prosperous life invite questions about the power communities have to exert their rights to development on their own terms. Monasteries, temples, pristine parts of Earth, and soul enhancing spas are attracting the searchers for tranquillity – itself a growing and mobile market. Publicly funded armies and privately organised contingents of mercenaries and security guards are ever present, globally mobile and at the service of wealth. It is evident that there is much afoot globally that has direct impact and seemingly indirect impact on each person on this earth.

Participants in the Occupy Movement that came to public attention in the first decade of the twenty-first century were calling attention to what they perceive of as corporate greed and structurally achieved inequality of opportunities and outcomes. They express concern about the protection and endorsement of the interests of a small but powerful elite (their symbolic 1% of humanity) and the endorsement and enforcement of the social order that protects their privileged existence. Many protesters witnessed at first hand the pressure of police and politicians, the sneers of their detractors, the danger of infiltrators, and the apathy of many. Many youth have been in the vanguard of these protests. Many run the risk of achieving a criminal record – and further marginalisation in a world they want to be fairer – for themselves and for others. They have achieved interesting support from perhaps unexpected quarters. In places such as Spain and Italy the rate of graduate unemployment is estimated at over 25%. This bald statistic does not account for the jobs taken by graduates that are well below their level of education – and are probably jobs needed by people who have had less educational opportunities. Unemployment – particularly of youth – is an issue of global concern. Why would that be?

The United Nations and the work emerging from BAWB are two examples of organised ideas and actions that make a specific link between political activities that attempt to shape, frame, legislate, or use treaties to set out the conditions of ‘development’ and the channels and the constraints of the organisations that are combined to shape what we then consider our communities, societies, society – increasingly placed in the service of that seemingly over-riding behemoth: The Global Economy – that fictive entity we are all called to serve,
perhaps at some personal or family distress and for some, even unto death. In this book, we are primarily (but not only) concerned with organisations that are ‘managed’ in some formal processes that the rest of this book takes a closer look at – be they big or small businesses, government departments, NGOs, and yes, community gatherings such as the Occupy Movements, the Spring Uprisings, political parties, families and private citizens.

Development of an individual or a country doesn’t solely rest on economic development but includes other spheres associated with life. Shiva (2008)\(^2\) insists on changing the rules of globalisation so that individuals can move from market totalitarianism to a democratic earth. She highlights the central notion of nature that is the responsibility of every individual to protect the earth and increase consciousness, thereby helping in transforming the corporate. The ability to shape the global environment by self-organisation can deliver the people from the hands of the global mega structures and support an extended community to live a prosperous life on earth.

### 3.2 Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) – remedy or ruse?

Fleming and Jones (2013)\(^3\) suggest that in the face of every intensifying global issues of concern in which the corporations are seen as either remedy or wreckers, there is a necessary responsibility for ‘speaking truth to power’. The example below illustrates researchers in the environmental context undertaking this responsibility.

#### 3.2.1 Researchers speaking truth to power

Scientists have found that mercury is ‘wafting’ out of oil sands operations in NE Alberta. Levels of the potent neurotoxin found near the massive industrial operation have been found to be up to 16 times higher than ‘background’ levels for the region, says Environment Canada researcher Jane Kirk, who recently reported the findings at an international toxicology conference. Mercury can bio-accumulate in living creatures and chronic exposure can cause brain damage. It is such a concern that Environment Minister Leona Aglukkaq signed an international treaty in October pledging Canada to further reduce releases to the environment. The federal scientists stress the mercury loadings around the oilsands are low compared to the contamination seen in many parts of North America including southern Ontario and southern Quebec. But they say the mercury is ‘the number one concern’ when it comes to the metal toxins generated by oilsands operations. It is also a major worry for aboriginal and environmental groups concerned about the oilsands’ impact on fishing, hunting and important wildlife staging areas downstream of the oilsands. Environment Canada scientists are sampling everything from snow to lichens to bird eggs as part of the federal-provincial joint oilsands monitoring program. Kirk, who will publish the findings in a scientific study in 2014, told the Society of Environmental Toxicology and Chemistry conference in Nashville

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in November that about 19,000 square kilometres are “currently impacted by airborne Hg (mercury) emissions originating from oilsands developments.”

Scientists say that the mercury is like a bull’s eye with the strongest concentration nearest the extraction zones and the outside rings less toxic. There is, however, mounting evidence that the toxin is building up in the native wildlife. The highest loadings of mercury were 1,000 nanograms per square metre, much higher than the background level for the region. But she says the “pulse” of mercury in meltwater entering the ecosystem in the spring is below the limits in water quality guidelines for the protection of aquatic life established by the Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment. The scientists also found up to 19 nanograms of methyl mercury per square metre near the oilsands, 16 times the region’s background level. It is the first report of this more ‘toxic’ form of mercury in snow. Microbes typically convert mercury into methyl mercury when the metal enters aquatic ecosystems and begins to work its way up through the food web. “Here we have a direct source of methyl mercury being emitted in this region and deposited to the landscapes and water bodies,” Kirk said. “So come snowmelt that methyl mercury is now going to enter lakes and rivers where potentially it could be taken up directly by organisms and then bio-accumulated and biomagnified though food webs.”

Think Progress reports:
Giant oil companies across the United States are currently investing in Canada’s tar sands as part of their role in the Keystone XL pipeline, which would carry tar sands oil from Alberta all the way to Texas. The pipeline would double imports of tar sands oil into the United States and transport it to refineries on the Gulf Coast and ports for international export. The oil sands industry itself is undergoing a major expansion, powered by $19 billion a year in investments, according to Bloomberg News. Mercury pollution is just the latest contamination-related environmental woe to hit the tar sands. In May of this year, leaks of the oil started popping up in Alberta, and haven’t yet stopped. In September, the company responsible for the leaks was ordered to drain a lake so that contamination on the lake’s bottom could be cleaned up. By September 11, the leaks had spilled more than 403,900 gallons – or about 9,617 barrels –of oily bitumen into the surrounding boreal forest and muskeg, the acidic, marshy soil found in the forest.

What a nightmare. And TP continues: The contamination’s reveal comes just one week after it was revealed that the Alberta government would hand over regulatory responsibility for the province’s tar sands industry to a corporation that’s funded entirely by Canada’s oil, coal and gas industry. The Alberta Energy Regulator (AER) said it would take over the duties of the now defunct Energy Resources Conservation Board (ERCB) – which was funded in part by taxpayers – and Alberta Environment and Sustainable Resource Development. The shift to the AER as the main environmental regulator in Alberta is part of the provincial government’s plan to streamline the approval process for oil companies. It’s drawn concern from environmentalists in Alberta, who are worried that the AER’s financial backing from the fossil fuel industry makes the group too close to the industry it’s supposed to regulate.

Researchers in Canada are concerned that research that does not fit with the government’s agenda is being de-funded, frozen out, silenced. Why would this be of concern other than to the deposed scientists?  

3.2.2 Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR): Mesmerising myth or fundamental shift in corporate orientation?

Fleming and Jones (2013: 107) write that CSR is not

about curbing or taming the free market of the corporations, but about saving an un-saveable social proposition. It represents the ideological justification for an unjustifiable constellation of social institutions [fabrications]: the enterprise, the market, and an increasingly authoritarian and anti-democratic capitalist state (unjustifiable because it stands against everything that a progressive modern politics ought to be about – freedom, self-determination, democracy and civil liberties for the ‘99 percent’… In this respect CSR is better understood as an ideological practice that sustains corporate hegemony than attenuate or shift its axiomatic principles.

Can you find examples to support or challenge this view of Fleming and Jones? What will you count as reliable evidence for your position?

3.2.3 Befriending indigenous peoples

Dr Wangari Maathai is noted to have said: “In the course of history, there comes a time when humanity is called to shift to a new level of consciousness to reach a higher moral ground.” List the ‘shifts in moral consciousness’ in different times and places. What was this shift? [e.g. the shift from seeing ‘traditional women healers’ as ‘witches’.] What were the consequences of this shift? [e.g. many of these women healers were burned, drowned or otherwise killed. Their knowledge however was not totally lost. It went ‘underground’. The new medical sciences were given the moral high-ground (and the research budgets) and men were given the positions as spiritual and physical healers, but these were now to be a divided specialism – a split made possible by the work of Rene Descartes – call Cartesian Dualism]. What are the implications of this today? There is a tension between those contemporary traditional healers in indigenous cultures who have retained such knowledge and the western scientists who wish to access this knowledge for ‘healing purposes’. What tensions arise? For indigenous peoples who see themselves as guardian of the knowledge granted by Earth and/or ancestors, much is at stake. Being driven from home-lands, from sacred sites, being distracted from their ways of life, are all matters of deep concern. That the model of development of ‘healing’ being globalised in the commercial models of commodification and markets add pressure to ‘capture’ the knowledge and buy/sell it. Who cares? Why? Why not?

3.3 People to meet [web]places to go, actions to take

People to meet

http://sciencewriters.ca/initiatives/muzzling_canadian_federal_scientists/
- **Noam Chomsky**: American linguist, philosopher, cognitive scientist, logician, political commentator and activist, voted the ‘world's top public intellectual’ in a 2005 poll.
  http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8ghoXQxdks

- **Bob Geldoff**: Global Duke Box. Do these kinds of stage-stunts ‘make a difference’?
  http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Live_Aid

- **Rached Ghannushi**: Radical Islam Leader – Whose globalisation?
  http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9QdEOle4uBo

- **Jürgen Habermas**: German sociologist and philosopher in the tradition of critical theory and pragmatism. Habermas is widely recognised as one of the world's leading intellectuals.
  http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jBl6ALNh18Q

- **David Korten**: co-founder and board chair of YES! Magazine, co-chair of the New Economy Working Group, founder and president of the Living Economies Forum, a member of the Club of Rome, and a former board member of the Business Alliance for Local Living Economies and associate of the International Forum on Globalization.
  http://www.davidkorten.org/author-bio

- **David van Wyk**: Researcher, Activist, Poet.

[Web]places to go

  The Life-world
  Habermas and others suggest that our ‘life-world’ is being colonised by the limited rationality of economic thinking. Visit the website for the way in which this concept of ‘life-world’ came about.

- [http://www.nationofchange.org/extremist-cult-capitalism-1358779216](http://www.nationofchange.org/extremist-cult-capitalism-1358779216)
  Capitalism as Cult
  Examine the extremist cult of capitalism.

  Global Poverty
  Poverty is seen as a global phenomenon and a global issue. It is predominantly discussed as an issue of income. Visit the UNDP Trends in World income distribution. Who decides what is to count as poverty and what might serve as its remedies, are highly contested notions. Whether the intensification of corporate capitalism is a part of the problem or a means to a remedy is debated. To get sense of how poverty is mapped, go to [http://www.ophi.org.uk/multidimensional-poverty-index/mpi-data-bank/mapping-the-mpi](http://www.ophi.org.uk/multidimensional-poverty-index/mpi-data-bank/mapping-the-mpi)
  The growing revolt against being re-defined as ‘poor’ may hold the seed of human emancipation from the colonising influence of neo-liberalism that impoverished more than it enriches. Visit [http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2257715/Study-shows-college-students-think-theyre-special--read-write-barely-study.html](http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2257715/Study-shows-college-students-think-theyre-special--read-write-barely-study.html)

  Climbing out of the Global Recession
A country that appears to have found a way out of its economic crisis is Iceland – and good news stories abound. However, this is not a totally unproblematic story. The greater viability of technology with which to gain access to treasured minerals and so on, discoverable under the ice, is causing tensions between those wanting to extract them, indigenous claims to them, and Danish public interest, because, argue some Danes, their tax dollars have for years underpinned this flagging state. See for example, http://arcticcircle.uconn.edu/intro.html.

  Mining ethically – Yeah Right!
  Mining is South Africa has become a fulcrum for examining ethical corporate practices globally as the sourcing of much of the raw materials for all kinds of corporations are located there. Well resourced self-reports with detailed information suggests that share-holders, stakeholders and citizens alike are able to make informed decisions about the level of investment they wish to make. Parallel to these reports are watchdogs. What part do they play in the control of corporate behaviours? Visit http://www.anngarrison.com/audio/south-african-armed-forces-defend-multinational-mining-interests.

  Globalisation in action
  Globalisation of the pharmaceutical industry.

  UNCTAD 2009 Table of the Top 50 TNCs ranked by geographical spread.

- http://www.weforum.org/
  The World Economic Forum.

  The World Social Forum.

**Actions to take**

- **Contact Brandon Smith** (Brandon@alt-market.co) and learn what it means to step away from the mainstream and to build something different.
- **Explore the idea of the ‘Resource Curse’**.
- **Find sites that suggest Global Citizen movements make a difference to the current trajectory of globalisation and join up.**
- **Become active in unmasking the rhetoric of freedom** when used in the corporate context.
- **Find a Bucky Box example near you and join up/volunteer.** http://www.buckybox.com/.
- **Insist on democratic control over the activities of corporations.** See for example: http://reclaimdemocracy.org/about/; http://act.stopcorporateabuse.org/p/dia/action3/common/public/?action_KEY=13510

**3.4 Would you? Could you? Should you?**

Take the decision to source food that is locally grown, wear clothes that are locally made, vote for people who will prioritise the provision of healthy publically funded water, reliable health services and a vibrant education sector that are accessible by all members of the community over their lifetime.
3.5 Reflection

The fog of war is a fantastic cover for all kind of crime, most especially the economic kind. Sizable wars naturally inhibit markets and cause erratic flux in capital flows … Syria and Iran are, in a way, the first dominos in a long chain of terrible events. This chain, as chaotic as it seems, leads to only one end result: Third world status for almost every country on the planet, including the U.S., leaving the financial institutions, like monetary grim reapers, to swoop in and gather up the pieces that remain to be fashioned into a kind of Frankenstein economy; a fiscal golem. A global monstrosity that removes all sovereignty whether real or imagined and centralizes the decision making processes of humanity into the hands of a morally bankrupt few. For those on the side of Israel, the U.S., and NATO, and for those on the side of the Middle East, Russia China, etc., the bottom line is, there will be no winners. There is no “best case scenario.” There will be no victory parade, for anyone. There will be no great reformation or peace in the cradle of civilization. The only people celebrating at the end of the calamitous hostilities will be the hyper-moneyed power addicted .01%, who will celebrate their global coup in private, laughing as the rest of the world burns itself out, and comes begging them for help. (The Extinction Protocol, 2012)\(^6\)

Growing social unrest will turn critical attention to the system. Not all will welcome such critique. There may be an escalation in violence for its defence, or a selective morality to justify the gathering of the spoils of war. Can such an outcome be avoided?

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