

## Abstract

Josef Baum, Austria

Conference “Economic Globalization and Modern Marxist Economics”, April 2st to April 3nd 2006 Shanghai

### **Some contributions to a general world system theory - based on Marxian thinking (theses)**

1. One of the most important cores of Marxian thinking is the labour value theory and based on it the theory of working classes. But to be a powerful instrument for the explanation of reality this cores has to be enlarged by ecological (energy and resources, decreasing potential of resilience of ecological media), gender, and spatial issues.  
In the attached presentation poster (“SOURCES OF ‘WESTERN’ WEALTH IN TIME AND SPACE”) there is a basic scheme of integrating ecological issues in a dichotomic spatial model of “western” and “third world” countries.
2. The historical “world system” theory of Immanuel Wallerstein (“The modern world system”, 3 volumes), Giovanni Arrighi, Samir Amin, Andre Gunder Frank an others is an excellent framework for analyzing globalization today: Every social process on earth has to be seen as a part of a world system. To analyze the main processes it is import to have in mind the historical tendencies of the last 500 or at least 200 years.
3. The historical “world system” theory also is a good instrument to analyze the present and future position and function of the Chinese society in the world system. In relation of the inherent tendencies of unregulated world markets to concentration and oligopolization the Chinese economy can be an important corrective against monopoly prices and monopoly conduct when the instruments of regulations and not-capitalist property are used. More generally China therefore can be an important corrective against political dominance for a new fair world order.
4. Global social development can be explained by 7 levels of interaction and exchange processes: Reciprocal effects of the levels of
  - information
  - energy
  - mass - matter - goods
  - work - work time
  - value – value added
  - (real) capital
  - financial capital.

These levels of interaction and exchange processes are connected together in many forms.

The most general and everlasting basis of social communication is the flow and exchange of information. The power over information and common property on information are important future issues.

The actual position of financial capital is one of domination of all other spheres. So the regulation, democratization and overcoming of financial capital is the next strategic step in the process of emancipation of mankind.

By using this scheme we also can solve the impasses of exclusive consideration of production of goods and long lasting misleading neglecting of services and informational work in decades of value theory

5. Energy is the central question of sustainable development of mankind.  
The general access and use of new energy (coal in steam engines) to substitute labour (from the 19<sup>th</sup> century until now)

- initiated the industrial revolution in Europe
- multiplied the productivity of labour
- was (and is) the basis of (actual) capitalism and imperialism
- at the same time multiplied the harmful emissions to environment
- and at the same time reduced causally the diversity of species on our planet

And remember the (physical) definition of energy: “capacity to do work”. Energy in economy is intrinsically connected with labour and has to be integrated to labour theory. Energy is an important link between economy and ecology. (See also the concept of entropy).

6. The energy question is one, perhaps the central question of the future of mankind. In it actually central problems flow together:

- the environmental and climate question, and thus
- the protection of the largest wealth of mankind, the diversity of species,
- the (regional) employment question by use of regional sources of energy,
- the reinforcement of regional participation by promotion of initiatives and empowerment
- the distribution question between “north” and “south” and thus
- the question of war, terror, and peace (see Iraq)

The energy question can be positively solved on the basis of renewable energies (wood, wind, solar energy, biogas...). Technically and economically the complete world energy supply is possible on basis of renewable energy in medium-term. But this transformation will not be easy because the largest global transnational companies nearly all are active in the traditional energy and automobile industry (combined with energy), and they simply want to use their accumulated capital for high profits as long as possible based on their oligopoly power and last but not least protected by big military machines.

7. To cope with the huge planetary challenges of climate change in the next decades paths of sustainability has to be gone. Some regions will be “first movers”. Western regions actually would have the potential and technology for a radical change of the economic-technological pattern of development towards sustainability but yet the definitive incentives are weak because “traditional” solutions are still possible for a longer time:

- big capitalist companies are tempted to solve these problems by implementation of market power

- big capitalist companies do not strive for long run social optima but for short and medium term high profits
- imperialist countries are tempted to solve these problems by violence and other means of domination
- there are too less national and supranational possibilities of regulations for this aim

In China on the contrary the possibilities of “traditional” solutions will come to an end sooner especially because of the characteristic density of population on the one hand and also the scarcity of some important raw materials and energy resources and the development of the world market prices on the other hand. Though the actual status of environment generally, energy productivity, use of insulating materials to save energy and so on in China now is critical there is the potential to go a world pioneer socio-ecological path because

- China has still the means of regulations and the organizational strength for this aim
- China still can choose an option of a socio-ecological system of transport
- China still can choose an option of a socio-ecological system of mechanisation of agriculture
- China actually seems to be the only country which pursues long run strategic aims and also realizes systematic measures in such frameworks
- And probably as strongest argument: China does not have good other options in the long run.