

The Mahesh Chandra Regmi Lecture 2008

WHERE IS THE REVOLUTION?

TOWARDS A POST-NATIONAL POLITICS OF SOCIAL JUSTICE

David Ludden



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Back cover show Mahesh Chandra Regmi in the audience at the inaugural lecture on 24 April, 2003. Photograph by Bikas Rauniar.

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How should we think about today's transition in Nepal? To address this critical question, we would normally choose a conceptual framework bounded by Nepal's national history, but I want to describe another option, a post-national framework.

National maps do not portray spaces of nature, inequality, revolution, and globalisation, which come to light in a post-national perspective. In these spaces, we find that localities and small regions are critically important in struggles for social justice.

Revolutions typically originate in poor country places and transmit their energy to capital cities. Nevertheless, a great distance separates 'the nation' defined in the capital from 'the local' in rustic towns, villages, slums, swamps, mountains, and forests.

That distance creates a conundrum, which globalisation renders more complex: local struggles succeed in altering national politics when leaders in the capital integrate local demands into national policy, but that very integration downplays local distinctiveness and inequalities even as these are highlighted by globalisation. Periodic disruptive political bursts of local radicalism are thus necessary to keep the nation attentive to local realities.

History as a Way of Learning

I grew up in an age of anti-imperial, nationalist revolution. When I was in graduate school, in the 1970s, rustic revolutionaries provided a real-world present and also a historical context for my studies of agrarian history. Peasant wars in Germany, Russia, China, Vietnam, Algeria, Cuba, Mexico, and Nicaragua represented radical agrarian politics; they fired my imagination, opening new worlds of political possibilities; they informed my politics, putting American imperialists firmly on the wrong side of history.

But in South Asia, I found other kinds of insurgency, with limited horizons: they were localised in outlook and conduct, contained within circles of villages, and effective in small regions, in particular bits of state territory. These were not 'real revolutions', as I understood the meaning of that phrase then; and thus they remain obscure, with no great lessons for the world. National revolutions and revolutionaries became famous around the world, but few people care to learn about the Santhal rebels who fought *zamindar* landlords in 19th-century Bengal; or the Moplahs in Malabar who fought the government for land rights for a century into the 1920s; or the Telengana revolutionaries forced underground by the Indian Army in 1950, but who still survive today; or their Maoist cousins in Naxalbari, West Bengal, likewise driven underground in 1971 but who have survived in various forms.

The lessons we have learnt to date from these less-than-revolutions derive from their supposed failure, as described by Ranajit Guha in *Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency*, a book that helped to launch Subaltern Studies in 1982. In that book, Professor Guha catalogues limiting factors that prevented rebels in South Asia from mounting a real, that is, national revolution, against British imperialism. His models of success must be Vietnam and China, which today appear in a rather different light, as we will soon see.

Professor Guha's history stops in 1947. By contrast, my understanding of history comes down to the present, and my motto is well-stated by an American historian, Willam Appleman Williams, who said:

History is a way of learning ... [It] begins by leaving the present; by going back into the heretofore, by beginning again ... [Not by] staying in the present and looking back, [but] rather ... [by] going back into the past and returning to the present with a wider and more intense consciousness of the restrictions of our former outlook. We return with a broader awareness of the alternatives open to us

1 William Appleman Williams, *The Contours of American History*, Norton, New York, 1988, pp.19-20.

and armed with a sharper perceptiveness with which to make our choices. In this manner [we can transform] ... the dead hand of the past ... into a living tool for the present and future.¹

Including the last 60 years of South Asia in our understanding of history reveals that regional movements for social justice, many of which included revolutionary energy, violence and even war, have repeatedly pitted insurgent forces against defenders of the status quo. They have been a major force in South Asia's modern transformation, reshaping political economies in Bangladesh, Afghanistan, Kashmir, Balochistan, Bihar, Punjab, Andhra Pradesh, Sri Lanka, Northeastern India, Burma, Nepal, and elsewhere. The catalogue of peasant insurgencies after 1947 is quite extensive.

In my view, histories of rebellious activity in South Asia from mediaeval times to the present indicate that *spatially limited radical mentalities and practices* are strengths, not weaknesses. Regional and local rebels have succeeded in changing their world. They present useful, positive lessons for political analysts and strategists today.

A Post-National Perspective

Their spatial limitations keep localised movements focused on what matters for local people. They follow localised political logics that do not correspond to cosmopolitan ideas of revolution, that is true; but localisation makes them more flexible in the face of changing conditions, sensitive to changing environments, adaptable, and sustainable.

Very old traditions of local assertiveness have changed in form over centuries as they have worked inside mediaeval kingdoms, early-modern empires, modern imperialism, and national states. Waged against the British, they seem anti-imperialist; against the nation, secessionist; and now some appear anti-capitalist, fighting the status quo of neo-liberal globalisation, with its national administrators and imperial armies, UN sanctioned or not.

Politically, localism has many advantages: small regions comprised

of tightly connected localities – filled with people who feel deeply their own cultural, social, and economic commonalities – provide a solid base for sustained solidarity. Small regions are more politically coherent than nations; their communities are based on oral traditions, not literacy, on face-to-face relationships, not media icons and occasional visits by national leaders. Their complicated solidarities – including internal conflicts, which can last for generations – are steeped in multiplex social relations.

Small regions also typically have some kind of official status in the nation – in what Benedict Anderson calls the nation as ‘imagined community’ – and this status provides localities with state legitimacy and official leaders. Local authority can be turned to tasks of state integration, law and order, repression and control, or to resistance and rebellion. Local leaders can organise football teams, business ventures, or struggles for social justice.

Albert O. Hirschman has described three strategic options that are always available for local people and their leaders: (1) they can simply be loyal to the regime; (2) they can make their voices heard in dissent, protest, and demands for change; or (3) they can exit, by renouncing their loyalty, opting out to seek other options.²

Please note: the exit option need not mean revolution. Typically, it does not. Disgruntled people can simply leave, migrating to live and work somewhere else. In pre-modern times, this was easily done: there was a lot of open land for settlers everywhere, barriers to migration were minimal, and people simply left places they did not like living in. Entire continents were populated in this manner, and most regions of South Asia filled up as migrants moved in from elsewhere in centuries after 1300.

Modernity changed that scenario. Little by little, barriers to migration increased, state borders became more rigorous, and state territories became more disciplined. This change accelerated in the 19th

² Albert O. Hirschman, *Exit, Voice, and Loyalty: Responses to Decline in Firms, Organizations, and States*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1970.

century and became universally effective after 1950, when national state borders enclosed human territories everywhere in the world.

Modern exit options continued to include migration but people more often had to choose another way to exit; so they engaged in silent secession, quiet non-compliance, subtle subversion, corruption, social deviance, and criminality. These kinds of 'invisible exit' are what James C. Scott describes as being typical among the mountain people of mainland Southeast Asia; and they are what Subaltern Studies see as being typical of peasants in British India, where outward compliance and secretive inner resistance to colonial domination made British rule culturally illegitimate and denied western hegemony. This is also one way to envision the underworld of governance, run, for example, by the Mafia in Sicily, drug lords in the Golden Triangle, and gang lords in impoverished places like the *chars*, slums, and coastal waters of Bangladesh.

Revolutionary war is rare but illustrates basic features of revolution generally. It always begins in localities and in small regions, when local leaders choose the exit option and *turn to building a new legitimate state regime in the face of violent repression* by defenders of the status quo. Eqbal Ahmad has the best description of this situation that I have read. In 1965, he wrote:

The conditions leading to revolutionary war are not created by conspiracy. They are inherent in the dislocations and demands produced by rapid social change and are predicated on the failure of ruling elites to respond to the challenge of modernisation. The pressures for change in the political, economic, and social relationships of the past inevitably lead to a confrontation with those whose interests lie in the maintenance of the status quo.

In countries and colonies whose rulers are willing to abdicate their monopoly of power and privileges, where genuine reforms are introduced and new institutions begin to provide for a sharing of power and responsibility,

the change is effected in an orderly (if not entirely peaceful) and democratic manner.

But when a ruling class resists reforms (which invariably mean reduction in its power and privileges), its confrontation with the new political forces becomes increasingly violent. A regime unwilling to satisfy popular aspirations begins to lose legitimacy; revolutionary forces deliberately accelerate this process, by weakening the efficacy and cohesion of the ruling elite and by giving form to the amorphous revolutionary conflagration.³

A successful revolution creates a *legitimate alternative* to an existing state. It starts small. To grow, it must scale itself up spatially and institutionally. How far it expands, whether or not and how it subsumes and transforms an entire state structure depends on the extent to which and in what manner the forces of local and regional rebellion can be combined to capture the state apparatus based in the capital city.

Arriving in the capital and changing politics there mark steps on a long road that leads back to localities. New regimes must begin by consolidating a command structure to institutionalise the regime in localities and regions. The survival of a new regime depends on its work in localities and regions.

Political analysts typically focus on events in capital cities and in the nation as a whole, and most analysts deploy Cold War classifications to separate communist regimes like China, Russia, and Vietnam, from non-communist ones, like India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh. These stereotypes are not very useful. It is more useful to observe that regimes of whatever ideological sort share a common trend of regionalisation.

In its early days, the new national state regime works to ensure that all regions follow a national model of development. But then, little by little, often without proclamations, but with quickening pace, power

3 'How to Tell When the Rebels Have Won', in *The Selected Writings of Eqbal Ahmad*, edited by Carolle Bengelsdorf, Margaret Cerullo and Yogesh Chandrani, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2006, p.17.

and authority devolve to regions and localities. The reason is simple: the central management cannot accommodate local demands for resources and flexible local decision-making. The solution is for regional and local authorities to take more responsibility. This process was visible everywhere in Asia in the 20th century; each national regime worked out interactive accommodations between central state authorities and regional groupings of local social forces.

Neo-liberal globalisation has accompanied this decentralisation, pushing it along, as businesses seek to reduce costs in expanding global networks. Globalisation has also benefitted from the expansion of state powers in regions and localities. In this light, the end of the Soviet Union appears not so much as state failure or collapse as administrative reorganisation, another phase of change in the relationships between Moscow and the regions around it. Cold War ideas that Socialism and Communism are dead need rethinking.

In the last few decades, under communist and capitalist regimes alike, regions and localities have increased their powers and responsibilities in relation to the central state administration. This *does not mean the state is weaker* or less expensive or even less controlling of local outcomes. It rather means that *the locus* or location of state power is shifting towards localities and small regions.

The rise of the locality marks an intersection of globalisation with national regimes. As investors seek opportunities in specific localities, which need regional infrastructure, states seek to provide attractive localities. Urban hotspots like Bangalore, Bombay, and Hyderabad occupy networks of cities through which move the capital, labour, communications, and culture that constitute globalisation.

New kinds of localities have resulted, called Economic Processing Zones and Special Economic Zones: in the 1960s, the world had only ten EPZs; in the 1980s, there were 176 in 47 countries; and in 2003, there were over 3,000 in 116 countries. We can also consider US military facilities as special-purpose global-localities, and now several hundred 'cover' the globe.

Localities and small regions thus gain new prominence under

globalisation, and so do local struggles for social justice, such as the ongoing fight over farmland seized by the communist government in West Bengal for Special Economic Zones, and over wages and working conditions in garment factories in Bangladesh. These struggles, like those of the Zapatistas in southern Mexico, make headlines because they confront national states with political interests focused on global investors and foreign governments as well as on local citizens.

Localities and small regions are thus not only parts of nations and national states but also of larger spaces of globalisation. In this context, we need a post-national perspective on struggles for social justice. Today, politics is not only national: it is local, regional, national, and global, all at the same time. National regimes derive their vitality from activity that also moves among local and global spaces.

My post-national perspective focuses on localities and small regions in national and global contexts. Doing so puts the spatial limitations of movements that I used to think of as being ‘less than revolution’ in a much more positive light. I now want to valorise *spatial limitation as a virtue and strength* in the post-national politics of social justice.

The concept of spatial limitation—like the terms ‘local’ and ‘regional’—makes sense only in larger spatial contexts. Spatial limits form constituents of national territories and networks of globalisation. The spatial limitations that make localities and regions derive in part from state delimitation but more deeply from language, communication, and social networks. All across Asia, local politics and state authority operate in spatial limits set by linguistics, literacy, and mobility, which in turn operate inside nature’s geography.

Politics and Nature’s Geography

All of Asia’s capital cities lie in fertile lowlands, from which the power and authority of states, empires, and nations radiate outward. Literacy, population, routes of transport and communication, and investments of all kinds concentrate in the fertile lowlands. This is where all the big cities are, at strategic points where routes of mobility meet fertile land for cultivation.

Political territories in Asia are strategic assemblages; their spatial designs change over time, but they always retain nature's imprint. Two good examples that I will return to below comprise (1) a collection of coastal river basins that became the Indian state of Tamil Nadu, which were each settled separately and very loosely connected until inland transportation knitted them together in the 19th century; and (2) deltaic Bengal, whose physical uniformity as a rice-growing floodplain sustained a cultural vision of political unity, which like Tamil Nadu, was based on a single literary language, but whose geographical patterns of social mobility and solidarity produced a political partition in 1947, dividing the Bengal delta between West Bengal and Bangladesh.

All around Asia's fertile lowlands, Asia's high mountains have distinctive political qualities: mountains separate mountain populations from one another and raise mountain localities apart from the plains. Likewise, in contrast with fertile lowlands, vast open dry steppe lands filled historically with nomadic peoples have distinctive political qualities derived from their inhabitants' peripatetic ways of life.

The contrast between fertile lowlands, on the one hand, and mountains and steppes on the other, is critically important in Asia. Bringing mountain people and nomadic people into state territories based in the lowlands has been a very long process and is far from over.

Building Asian states entails the mingling of distinctive political worlds, which typify mountains, fertile lowlands, and nomadic steppes, respectively, each filled with its own kinds of localities, its own ways of life, languages, and circuits of social interaction. Localities in the fertile plains provide the substance of the nation's imagined community in the cultural produces of literate elites; while in the mountains, locals inhabit illiterate social spaces of enclosure and separation, which anthropologists often describe as another world separate from the national mainstream.

Bringing mountain peoples into conformity with state norms and elite ideals might seem to be a simple continuation of the project of economic and social development in which nations embrace the low-

lands. It might seem that national states embrace mountains and plains in one continuous political space. That appearance is deceptive, however, because mountain regions are always distinctive and typically more difficult for lowland states to integrate effectively into national territory.

We can appreciate this distinctiveness by looking up into the mountains from the Indo-Gangetic lowlands. Since ancient times, high mountains have marked the borderlands of Indo-Gangetic state expansion, from the Hindu Kush in the west to Assam in the east, and from the Himalaya in the north to the Vindhya in the south. The integration of mountain peoples into the Indo-Gangetic lowland states occurred where lowland people conquered and settled in the mountains, and that kind of integration has always been contested locally, as it is today all across Northeast India and in the Chittagong Hill Tracts of Bangladesh.

Looking further east, we see similar dynamics in all mountain ranges that connect South, Southeast, and East Asia. Since the 18th century, China has been expanding across mountains by building roads, expanding lowland settlements in the highlands, and bringing mountains into the Chinese economy. As a result, the distinctiveness of the mountain cultures has diminished, to the dismay of anthropologists and local resisters. The same thing is happening in Vietnam. By contrast, Burma, like India, has been upset for 60 years by its inability to integrate mountain peoples in regions that connect South and Southeast Asia, where war in the mountains against lowland states is quite normal.

The Nation as Process: Centres, Networks, and Localities

By erasing nature's geography, official maps of national state territory distort our understanding of political space, and disorient our perspective on revolution. They do further damage by erasing inequality.

National maps show every nation's territory as being composed of exactly the same substance: the flat and homogeneous colour of the nation spreads evenly from border to border, symbolising the equiva-

lent status of all citizens under national institutions and leaders in state capitals. We imbibe the logic of these maps from an early age. From our early school days, we learn that the nation is natural, inevitable, if not god-given; it is naturally peaceful and harmonious; all citizens are as one, all part of our nation. Rebels appear on the scene as disruptive, destabilising, painful, like infections, demanding a cure.

It is important to note here how neo-liberal globalisation resonates with this vision of national individuals. Neo-classical economics conceives the world as being composed of transactions among equivalent individuals in equivalent national places. Markets operate in a world where nations make laws and progress derives from laws which enable rational individual market actors to allocate resources most efficiently in free-market transactions.

We can better orient our minds to the problem of revolution by inserting geography and inequality into maps of political space. In reality, nations do not appear from nowhere; they have been assembled by power and conquest, by people who are not equal to others, in places that are not equal. In reality, every national territory on earth has an imperial history and retains characteristics of imperial territory.

Imperial territories are composed of transactions within ranks of inequality; empire is a process of producing and sustaining ranks that distinguish people with unequal power and authority.

- ◆ In imperial territory, voluntary social transactions include coercive capacities, above, and subordinate adaptations, below.
- ◆ Imperial societies are composed of structured power relations among explicitly, officially unequal actors, whose transactions dramatise their inequality.
- ◆ Places are also unequal in imperial space: people and assets travel up and down among places ranked by wealth, power, status, authority.
 - Rich neighbourhoods in capital cities are on top, and slums and poor remote villages, at the bottom.
- ◆ Unlike national territory, empire is always mobile and never has

fixed boundaries; it operates in shifting, layered territories, where borders faded into frontiers, and

- where territory is never controlled evenly: some places are centrally important in empire, others too distant, poor, marginal and unruly to treat as anything other than a law-and-order problem.

Rebels appear rather differently in this light. They emerge within ranks of inequality, from obscure, remote, local origins. Their assertion of power represents the rise of local demands for recognition, for the redress of grievances, and for reform; in short, for a redistribution of power – expressed by people in lower ranks to those above, who must respond. The rebel's goal is to 'speak truth to power' and convince people of higher rank that local demands need tending to, that inequalities need fixing.

Rebels take on new meaning when national ideas take hold, forcing the issue of national unity by revealing stress among the people. Revolutionaries strive to turn *unequal imperial subjects* into *equivalent national citizens*. If the nation is to become what it claims to be, this kind of revolution is necessary. The nation is a project in which revolutionaries expose imperial obstructions and opposition.

In the national project, the spatial limitation of radical politics marks the exposure and reproduction of spatial inequality. If inequality were totally eliminated, if all people and places in national territory were identically equal, local politics would be unnecessary; policies devised in capitals would suffice for everyone. Until then, we need localised politics to represent particular interests of specific groups and in different kinds of places – for instance, in rural and urban places, and in mountain villages and lowland cities – and also to challenge inequalities that continue to raise some people in some places over others. As we will see, globalisation is increasing inequality as it also accentuates the importance of localised radicalism.

Thinking of the nation as a fundamentally egalitarian project that we undertake in a context of deep, widespread inequality implies that

nations require serious struggle to become what they claim to be. That is what makes national maps so problematic: they depict the nation as static. We imbibe this imagery in school, where loyalty seems a prime virtue. Less-privileged, less-educated people in poor, marginal, remote places, invisible in elite schools, seem more likely to experience the inequality of the nation. They are more likely to generate radical energies that nations need to progress.

National regimes portray the nation as the natural unity of people and state. But without revolutions, nations retain imperial inequalities personified by elites in capital cities whose power is anchored among local leaders, elites, and power structures. Imperial ranks thus permeate the nation. Nations around the world retain empires inside.

Purging empire from the nation is complicated by the fact that modernity itself has deep-seated imperial qualities. Modern political territories emerged in the 19th century as imperial state territorialism became more stringent. Modern state powers of resource control underlay modern ideas and institutions of development and modernisation. Social access to goods and services came to depend more and more on state sanction. Localities became sites of state discipline. Local elites became state officials. Local elite wealth, power, and privilege became intimately entwined with state power.

This modern setting spawned revolution. The nation emerged inside the modern state, as people within state territories imagined themselves to be citizen rulers. Struggles ensued to confront imperial inequalities in localities and in states.

Nations followed different trajectories based on their imperial heritage. Russia and China were old empires, which national revolutions had to conquer. In newer empires built by Europeans, nations invented themselves during struggles for independence. Independent kingdoms moved smoothly into national statehood.

Struggles for social justice acquired different forms and meanings in different kinds of national transition. Everywhere, struggles against imperial inequality took regional forms. Two examples from British India indicate some similarities among these struggles, their shared

confrontation with national conservatism, and their diversity of outcomes.

In the Tamil-speaking region of South India, unified politically for the first time under British rule, local officials who provided revenue and administrative services for the modern state were also old landed and service elites, Brahmans and high-caste non-Brahmans. The circular migration of these elites to and from cities, towns, and villages formed networks of recruitment and of social mobility that produced South India's urban middle class.

In the capital, however, Brahmans had unequal advantage: they controlled educational resources, state offices, and professional careers available to Indians. They joined the Indian National Congress to press for more opportunities. Upward social mobility for non-Brahman elites faced serious obstruction in the form of Brahman privilege in the capital, which the Congress implicitly accepted. The Justice Party rose against this inequality in elections held in 1920, and from then on, removing caste barriers to upward mobility became a core demand of radical politics in South India, Western India, and then India as a whole. Caste continues to frame struggles for social justice in India; localities are the frontline, where caste violence and repression remain basic features of inequality.

In Bengal, more violent upheavals occurred, and, in general, more violence and a more revolutionary rhetoric arose in regions of British India where *zamindari* landlordism produced tenant struggles that acquired political expansiveness with nationalism. In British Bengal, the circulatory movement of literate, upwardly mobile high-caste Hindu *bhadralok*, many with *zamindar* origins, provided educated elites for the British government and for Indian nationalism. Their moorings in *zamindari* privilege prevented Congress leaders from embracing tenant demands.

In the eyes of the Congress, India was one nation whose unity was paramount. Congress leaders believed that Indian unity would suffer if particular local demands favouring lower castes and *zamindari* tenants informed the nationalist programme. The Congress embraced a

totalising vision of the Indian nation. Bengali tenants then embraced non-Congress regional parties and many joined the Muslim League. This anti-Congress trend led both to Partition in 1947 and to the eventual creation of a communist government in West Bengal.

In the 1950s, the same struggle for social justice overthrew the Muslim League in East Pakistan and launched the movement for Bangladesh. Again, the issue was recognition of local demands for representation. Pakistan refused to recognise that Bengalis had specific needs and legitimate demands. The politics of recognition, which demanded devolution of state power in East Pakistan, met implacable opposition, and war ensued.

A similar progression is visible in Sri Lanka, Northeast India, and Kashmir. In each case, loyalty and voice came together initially, but voice move towards exit when demands were not met for the recognition of grievances. In all these cases, the vision of the nation is radically different in the capital and in localities. In the capital, the nation is a singular whole, but in localities, it is composed of unequal parts, which must speak to one another.

Conclusion: Where is the Revolution?

Now, I approach this question very differently than I did 40 years ago. Now, I do not think modern revolutions should be thought of as war to create a radically new kind of government, culminating in a single dramatic moment of regime change. Now, I think it is better thought of as a forced – and thus awkward, contested, and sometimes violent – intervention to purge empire from the nation. If a nation is to include all citizens, they need to be able to express and remedy their exclusion, marginality, and deprivation. We can think of revolution as organised political action to make that happen.

Large-scale military revolutions can overthrow imperial systems but they spawn military and bureaucratic regimes which however progressive and responsive typically enforce loyalty, squash dissent, and maintain imperial ranks of command. Liberal democracy is responsive to various voices demanding change but elected officials must trans-

late and repackaged radical demands to suit a majority mainstream, which limits their capacity to transform imperial systems of inequality. Autocracy and democracy both get stuck in ruts and need serious pushing from the margins.

A relative increase of power in the lower ranks of state authority has attended the recent devolution of state power from central governments to regions and localities. It is noteworthy, however, that demands for devolution are also being resisted militarily in various parts of Asia, now as in the past. It seems that devolution is feasible only where regional and national systems of power operate in mutual interdependence. Devolution is simply not allowed where it increases autonomy in dissident regions, until the cost of suppressing regional aspirations becomes unbearable, as it did in the Soviet Union.

Globalisation is complicating the situation by financing devolution with the acceptance and support of national state regimes. This trend is creating new regional diversity, such as in India, where a murderously anti-Muslim capitalist regime in Gujarat thrives in the same country as an impoverished feudal regime in Bihar and a communist regime in Kerala. Disarticulations of globalisation are in effect turning both India and China into mosaic nations where activism and investment are local, regional, national, and global simultaneously.

In all these arenas — local, regional, national, and global — economic inequality is growing with widening disparities between rich and poor. Poverty is declining in absolute terms in most of Asia, but gaps between rich and poor people and places are growing.

These increasing inequalities follow old imperial patterns of separating metropolitan centres from remote rustic peripheries, increasing the relative poverty of minorities, and channelling new wealth disproportionately into the hands of richer people in richer places. Many analysts see this trend as the logical result of increasing economic growth through resource allocations in a market economy.

The question then becomes how poor people in poor places can effectively participate in the nation by fighting the continued reproduction of imperial inequality. This remains an open question. One

answer is that we must address human needs one individual at a time, through markets, NGOs, and electoral politics. This presupposes, however, that people live as individuals in global and national territory, but people living in mountains or in slums or in swamps or in forests do not live in abstract localities, but in real ones that exist prior to the nation.

The spatial limitations of movements that I used to think of as being 'less than revolution' are thus *virtues* for strengthening in the post-national politics of social justice, which needs to energise local demands to redistribute national wealth and power so as to benefit people who remain trapped in the lower echelons of imperial modernity.