

BULLETIN #2

I think it is important that the group we are putting together is international in flavor. I like the idea of the organization being based in Kenya. To me that says this group is open to ideas coming from around the world a group not limited by borders. The ideas needed to solve the problems facing the world and even to categories the threats facing the world go beyond borders beyond these are human problems and we need solutions that work for people not nations.

I am born and bred and educated as much as I am in the west I have worked and lived for many years outside of the continental US but still much experience in those areas have been colored by my basic upbringing and the fact the white westerners have dominated the world for at least the last 150 years. So where ever I go I still to a degree carry that envelope of white western dominance.

I like to think I view things from from a non bias position a position free from being white and westerner a position that my education in the anthropology department spent time trying to beat out of me. But lets be honest that bias or at least elements of that bias are part of whom I am.

Operating from that understanding I have come to conclusion that a number of the solutions to the problems facing humanity are not going to be solved by using are relying on traditional solutions even traditional knowledge. These problems in many cases are from changes in the environment that humans have not faced in the last 10,000 years and many of are traditions that are various communities are based around and on where not developed or evolved to face such threats. So the challenge is many fold one we have to first identify the nature of the threats then the severity and immediacy of the threats to the life of a community then how do we mitigate those threats by finding ways to help literally in many cases the life of not just the community but the individuals.

My feeling and concern is that the nature of threats will result in many communities have to either physically migrate or culturally migrate but the later I mean develop new traditions that allow the community to function and continue to live in the original physical area. But even if the community has to physically migrate it will in many ways have to alter develop a new set of traditions to respond to the changes in environment both physically and culturally.

My 2 concerns about housing and farming are based around the necessary solutions to these needs that will probably result in requiring alterations in the traditions of a community. When it comes to farming the world is facing in the not too distance future the real possibility of famine on a huge scale. We are losing thousands of acres of productive land in overbuilding of cities the destruction of the environment and over use of the land. This does not even include the coming loss from sea level rise changes in weather patterns like temperature and rainfall.

I grew up in Nebraska and the agricultural economy was largely based on irrigation from the Ogallala Aquifer. This is based largely on water from the melting of the glaciers after the last Ice Age. We are pumping it dry and estimates on how long we can use it to irrigate crops varies but at least one gives us 50 years at the most. This water provides a lot of the food for much of the world the farm and of Nebraska and Kansas and the Dakotas depends to varying degrees on this water and without it these areas would be back to being dry land farming which will not produce the volume of food that we do today. The point is that our traditional farming systems which have changed drastically over the years are going to have to do even more radical changes to be able to feed the world. This will be the need around the world.

I look towards High Rise Urban Farms to help provide a new basis for food production. The benefits of High Rise Urban farms is that the structures would be built next or in the cities which would mean that the farms would reuse the water being necessary for the city and not in competition with the cities for water. In addition the farms would be built next to the market so you would lose less material in transportation and you would not need pesticides and you would be able to double crop ie having more than one growing season. The problem and drawback would be the cost of construction and the cost of energy. But the energy cost can be reduced by several factors which include a design for allowing many crop areas to be exposed directly to sunlight and using fiber optic cables to transfer sunlight from exposed areas to the growing floors. Also by placing helical wind turbines and solar panels as part of the structure energy from fossil fuel sources could be reduced. The cost of producing food in the high rise setting would be reduced by not having to have fencing and the massive equipment for plowing and harvesting and moving such equipment and the food from areas to areas.

This raises some of the issues about how high rise farming would impact the general economy. I think food cost would go down but the part of the economy that is based around the equipment and movement of goods and services would be severely impacted and maybe parts eliminated. Then in that vein lets talk about the impact on the people who are actually farming in modern day economies. Here in the states a lot of labor is done by machines. But many types of crop production still require on hand workers. I would assume that in places like Kenya use more human labor than is typical for western farms. So if Kenya moves to High Rise Urban Farms and I think Kenya has no choice than to move some sort of different techniques to grow food what will happen to the traditional farmers and the communities that revolve around those farmers? What ever moves Kenya makes in efforts to be able feed its populace the traditional farming communities are going to be affected and a serious concern is how to mitigate the impact on those communities how to develop ways to make them an intricate part of new food production techniques or how to create new opportunities in the general economy.

I have a personal level of experience in the effect changes in farming techniques can have on a community. My ex-wife parents ran a general store in a small southern community and a large part of the client base was farm workers and at that period that class was largely made up of blacks. In the late 50's and early 60's mechanization started to become more and more prevalent in use by farmers and the farm laborers had to find new areas to work in and many either left the area to seek employment in the city or became destitute and either way my ex-wife's parent's store suffered severe economic pain and had to reduce its space etc and survival became an issue. So if and when Kenya has to move into new forms of agricultural production and I am sure it will have to deal with the impact through many levels of the current economy will have to deal with a variety of concerns. How it deals with those issues of impact on the environment and the communities involved will be dependent on how it will be open to new ideas and new techniques and new focus. I do not think that Kenya can depend on traditional farming knowledge and techniques to feed itself anymore than Nebraska in the coming decade will be able to feed us using the current knowledge. People for some reason like to eat find it important and this is going to be an issue that needs to be on the front page of concerns and an issue that needs the freedom to look at all options. And one important factor is once it is determined on what technology is found to be the solution for feeding the population it will be important to figure out ways to help mitigate and even transform the traditions the individual communities as well as the nation in general have developed over the years that are a part of the cultural structure. Traditions are what in many ways define a community and these traditions are not easily changed and forcing change will often result in serious turmoil in a community loss of organization and social structure and social identity and can and has led to serious violence.

So in my opinion the world will not be able to rely on many aspects of traditional farming to feed the populace and if we limit ourselves to trying to feed the world by continuing to just use the current technologies we will have massive famines and massive migrations and massive insults to the economic systems. But if we move towards developing and using new and investigating technologies we will be able to feed the populace but we can lead to serious holes in the culture and social structure of a society. Famines resulting from using old technologies and ruptures in social structure from using new technologies will both result in massive violent reactions. So we need to find ways to feed people and find ways to repair the damage to the social structure from the new technologies.

I think the solution to this problem of feeding the world is going to take discussion and meetings and research by groups from around the world not all technologies for farming will work every where and not all efforts to repair and mitigate damage to the social structure will not work every where. This is not a western solution or an African or Asian solution but a world solution.