

Women Thinking Equality – Weave 1

We started out last July with a presentation saying each of the ‘isms’ – each of the strands, is a systemic issue and they are all interrelated. I suggested that they were interrelated in this way (diagram) and it then got adjusted so that Religion or Belief moved out of being blue into being a pink triangle because they are actually part of the structure as opposed to an ‘ism’ in the same way as the others.

Not we’ve got two sessions to examine this ‘weave’ so let’s focus on the issue of systemic. If something is systemic it is a bunch of cogs with one thing leading to another and then another. In systems theory if you remove one of the cogs you can slow the whole thing down or create change. The point is to identify what are the cogs that make this thing spin... for all of it... and what is the one thing we could work on? The one thing that we think is common to all of them.

Thinking about it as a system, what has struck you about all of these that they have in common? Not the discrimination and the way it operates... focus on the system. You each come from different ‘isms’ so from your space what are the key things that your system operates around? Why is there a system around this? It is not accidental it is ‘man-made’.

- I guess it comes back to the whole **money** thing.

So economics, money... I’ll put that in the middle

- **Gendered work** and then paid versus unpaid work. I’ve come up with a little phrase, ‘**sustaining work**’ which is the work we ought to be doing whether it is paid or unpaid and that is different from ‘unsustaining work’ which is things like building warships.
- Sustainable work... building tractors, farming, if you look at a couple of hundred years ago – peasant societies is very much about living as opposed to warships... the financial services, making money out of money... If you look at the Trident nuclear submarine project I think the government spend something like 11 billion pounds a year on that and that is enough to feed, house, clothe and educate every man, woman and child for a year.
- It takes it away from just being the paid and unpaid work divide because some of the stuff that gets paid is useful stuff.

Playing ‘devil’s advocate’ here, this stuff up here you’re saying is what, irresponsible, unsustainable... what’s your language for that? The investment in nuclear warheads or whatever it is?

- Damaging...
- It also kind of maintains **power structure** doesn’t it?

Something about **maintenance**, shall we look at maintenance and **control**?

- Yes and a lot of that work that is done is about controlling other people and not sustaining or helping them...

It is about controlling other people?

- It's about controlling your own sense of power...the defence budget is about controlling power our own sense of power in the world...
- It is also controlling **resources**...

Which is where this could get tricky because people could claim that they are controlling the resources you need for production and it's a spiral to create wealth, land, diamonds, oil etc?

- Control isn't a negative word in itself... you would have to control how you distribute resources, you would have to control how people get the opportunity to interact with one another but of course you can control things in favour of very, very limited groups or control an agricultural system in a way that destroys the forests... So control is a concept, it is not necessarily a value-laden word.

None of this is value-laden yet... For now we are just saying what the system looks like.

- If you look at the peasant societies they only worked what they had to work so they had a lot more leisure time and a lot more festivals.
- Let's gender that, because they are always talking about men's work even when they look at peasant societies and in fact the work that women did was constant time-wise and it didn't stop in the same way. It is easy to have these theories from the past but actually they are very male-orientated because they are only talking about what the male workers did not what the female workers did behind the scenes and she didn't get time off.
- Women have always worked all the time, paid and unpaid work and in peasant societies for a start there wasn't that distinction between work and leisure. The concept of leisure was not one that had any salience because people worked much more according to the seasons, the natural rhythms of things. The festivals were very short breaks in the midst of what was pretty hard working life for everybody and I think you are right, for women one of the issues now is that we still don't distinguish sufficiently between work and employment. There is a **class** dimension, the people who had leisure have always been the ones who controlled the resources, either the land or money and indeed people. The peasants and working class have never had all that much leisure.

- Because Sweden and Scandinavia industrialised very late, they still had lots of small family farms and it was recognised that these were run as a team operation. So they decided as they changed the work that males and females were doing, childcare had to be taken over by some other system and that was the beginning of their different history of providing support for childcare and getting both women and men into work.

So in Sweden, they have taken a lot of the care... they haven't taken reproduction but they've taken childcare and some of the reproductive asset and put it through the market economy. They have given it a market value, you pay for it and you earn money to pay for it...

So that's one model... you could do it like that, in Britain we haven't, we've got two different economies... this (paid) goes through the market and this (unpaid) doesn't. Why do you think we've decided not to do that? Think about this in terms of disability, in terms of all sorts of other things that are going on in terms of exploitation as well.

- As a separate point which ties into that... I was thinking of value in terms of women's position in society or in the family. Linked to that, if you look at feminist popular education which is about social consciousness it seems to me that a lot of the women's movement or feminist movement has been advanced by that. Surely one can only be from a position to recognise these things if they have had that kind of feminist popular education.

Recognise the true market economy... Are we going the Swedish way in saying we want care and sustaining livelihoods acknowledged through the market economy or do we want another value system?

- I'm thinking of education in terms of the markets being introduced there and maybe you could argue there that education levels haven't improved and in fact it's been quite detrimental to universities.

Another cog that props this up...

- And also the problem is the market economy and the relationship between that and the gendered curriculum which is throughout education from early years and including university. This is why I said specifically feminist popular education.
- Something more 'macro' – if you use market mechanisms it always omits lots of 'externalities' and childcare has always been an externality, just like trashing the environment is an externality... the market doesn't pay for that. So we need to bring things back in but you have to be careful in that the market will just take in some externalities that it likes and leave the rest out.

- Have you seen the film (Sex, lies and global economics)... you've got to go and see it because she gives an example of an oil tanker spillage http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Exxon_Valdez_oil_spill and the economists look on something like this as a growth to industry.
- Exactly, but you can take little chunks in and say that the clearing up of the environment is an industry... we'll stop considering it as an unconsidered externality and factor it into the market system. You have to be careful that they will just choose the bits they want...

I'm not arguing for putting it through the market place at all, I'm just asking the question, because that's how the Swedish model goes, you are putting a market value.... It's like what happened in the '70s with the 'wages for housework' argument does it mean you are shifting your values so you can put a pound value to it? And is that the problematic?

- We have focused very strongly on economics as a starting point but what if we start from a social understanding? Start from an understanding of how society should work to begin with and then you look at how economics makes this possible.

So, how should society work, what should it be organised around then?

- We were talking about human life which is not an economic value so that should be the core and human life is valuable whether the person is transgender, disabled, young, old whatever...

What about human well being?

- The Human Rights Charter starts off with, "all humans are born equal and should act toward each other in a spirit of *brotherhood*..."

But 'born equal' implies that if you've got it right in the first place, the value isn't equality because it is already there. The Rights discourse says there's a problem with this and starts to unravel this... Well if you start from a different point, what it *should* look like, the vision would be what?

- Somebody said earlier about mainstreaming equalities... I would have thought that was somewhere in the middle... but what I'm hearing a lot about recently is that the mainstreaming equalities agenda comes from hard work by predominantly the voluntary and community sector.
- You can only make equalities work in the business sector if you can prove that it will create more profit.

That's right... if it is in their interests and one of the issues is, is it in their interests for women to take 6months-1year off – no because they don't see that as productivity, even though it is future labour.

- Well they do increasingly but they simply say that women should do more paid work and have more babies at the same time.

Where does the voluntary sector come in here then? Is it paid or unpaid... some of it is...

- The women's services spend a lot of time constantly struggling to maintain funding. But if you look at the services they are providing...

You have to argue domestic violence in terms of hours lost in the workplace. 'She can't go to work therefore she is not valuable to you'.

Ok so they put some money into this to save the government money... Well they see that but what they are saving is paying out benefits, they are still not making money out of it. All of this within the market system is a loss. Having babies, looking after people, caring for the sick is a waste of money, it doesn't make anything for the market economy especially since we've got NHS here, in America they've got a market economy health system so in fact they get production from humans being sick so they probably see it better, here we don't.

- That's the difference between sustaining work and the work they force you to do to constantly plea for funding which is unsustainable because it is diverting you from doing something useful. It is a tool of political control, so even within an organisation such as a Rape Crisis Centre, this system forces them to do unsustainable work, useless work as well as the sustaining stuff. Most of us don't need to do any more work but we should analyse the tasks we are doing and see what is genuinely sustaining and helpful and what is 'bad' work.

What would you argue is 'bad' work?

- Trying to make money from money. Building nuclear weapons or endlessly going round with the begging bowl asking for scraps of money is 'bad' work. The fact that you have to go round looking for scraps of money means that there is no real political will to give you any. If there was serious political will to help women who were experiencing violence then you would have a nice big fund to do it.

Charity is an outrage... politically, for me... It is an outrage that we need them. But I think you are loading 'sustaining' with a value system because they would say that having nuclear arms sustains their control over a resource which allows the system to work.

- Ok, well I'm not arguing that at all... my sustaining is a good thing it sustains other people.

If they are talking about maintenance and control over power and resources, for them, having a nuclear submarine is of economic value because it means they can control the oil and they can get it into our cars therefore we can all

get to work and produce biscuits, or whatever it is we want to produce. And people will buy them... you create a desire for buying through advertising... it is a market economy. So they would argue that it isn't negative work... its positive!

- Well it's not because (1) it kills people and (2) you have to break most of the democratic rules in order to impose that sort of control
- On the other hand, possession means that your family and loved-ones don't get killed because you've got that protection.
- How many times have we seen millions of people marching in London and the government goes ahead and does it anyway... what about democracy, aren't we supposed to live in a democracy?
- The bottom line for a market economy is 'make more money' not 'do better for society'. The market economy makes more money and it doesn't matter how it does it... that's the ultimate goal.
- They use exactly the same argument in saying, 'you've got to allow me to work for the nuclear weapons industry because I'm protecting other people.' This is built on dependence... the man says 'I must have my weapons because I'm going to protect other people... what an altruistic person I am'... 'I must have this job that digs up the minerals and then just dumps them in the sea after we've made a bit of money because I support my family... I'm an altruist'. And this is the whole thing about having male and female in a control and dependency position...
- If you are talking about productivity, having children... they are contributing something to the economy when they grow up, get an education, and get a job whatever.
- At the moment people are saying that the populations in Europe may go down and they never specify why that is supposed to be a bad thing because it is all built on this unspoken agenda that a strong nation has plenty of people. Ultimately that is because they can go to war for you.
- But again there is an economic imperative in that in so-called affluent countries where the numbers of children per family have declined. You have big families where life-expectancy is shorter and the children are economically valuable in the family and we see that in terms of not only looking after older people in the family but also in child labour.

So they are creating a dependency...

- And it comes back to this altruism excuse... 'I'm hiring these children because otherwise they wouldn't be able to survive...
- You can call that dependency as well... false consciousness...

Yes it is about dependency... to sustain they are dependent on this system...

- Because the market economy only suits that minority at the top...

Even employing children does... doesn't it?

- No, employing children supports poor families. You can't move in and say, 'children shouldn't be in the workplace' because you are destroying a social and economic context where the families are dependent on that income. So you need to dig deeper to consider how bringing about change, the impact of that and how that will pan out... I don't know the answers but it's not just about that control over the resources.
- The 'altruism' is a con... it says, 'I can do something bad because I am helping somebody else...'

At some point in history they decided that men would be part of the market economy and women would be part of a social reproductive economy. At some point that started to shift because there was abuse in that... it was exploitative and women were very, very vulnerable so women started to fight back and move into the market economy and that has shaken the system quite dramatically.

- They needed the labour of women, in the 1950s they had to move into the economy because the service sector and manufacturing was declining...
- And with the Swedes, they wanted everybody to be in the factories when they were industrialising... it was the same thing...
- As you were saying, women had been part of the market economy before then because in rural societies their labour was much needed...
- Children as well... children grew up and learned to take on responsibility for labour, whether it was paid labour or not...

But was it a market economy or was it some sort of local survival, sustainable economy? Like subsistence farming in Africa where people just feed themselves...

- It's not just women; it is also migrant workers...
- There's still a very deep feeling about the male 'breadwinner'... If there is not enough paid work to go around that must be reserved to the men and the women can go back to being dependents.

- But the other side of that is, what we haven't done in terms of the feminist movement is reached the stage where childcare and unpaid work are not women's issues they're everybody's issues. Women have campaigned strongly to get into the workplace; you don't see men campaigning to take on the domestic issues.

Because there is no profit in that... according to them...

- I remember that the EU in 2004, having done the statistics, said, 'women in our society are an over utilised resource in terms of time'. They said, 'we are looking at these problems and women do more work than men.'

That's a measure of time and not money...

- It hasn't got very far but at least at one level in the European Union they have acknowledged that women spend more of their time working than men...

What's the problem if you start measuring time as an equal value? If you say nobody's time is worth more than anybody else's... that's what you are arguing. What are the problems for these guys if you say everybody's time is equal?

- Well I would say it wrecks the system... just last night I read that our Department of Transport when it is doing it's audit statistics about how it decides to build roads has decided that certain groups of people's time is more valuable in cash terms than others...

What's more valuable?

- The time of people who earn more...

What jobs do they do? What makes them more valuable?

- Qualifications and education...

There's that bit of it, so what other things make high value workers?

- Banking (much laughter). The more you contribute to the economic model, makes you more valuable.
- It's being part of a network I think more than qualifications because for example those head bankers didn't have qualifications.

They are all 'yes men' and 'yes men' go up the system. They say 'yes' to this and they don't question it...

- They say they have skills...

- They are able to move within the system that already exists.
- And it comes back to valuing skills because some people are very good at pointing the nuclear weapons...
- Those skills are valuable because they contribute to the market economy.

They do, because by having a nuclear weapon you control the price of oil and if you control the price of oil you control the cost of production.

- With the banks collapsing because of the credit crunch it is a timely moment because people are asking, 'how can one person be worth that amount of money?'

So why do we all put up with it then?

- Yes, why do we?
- Bonuses and that stuff came in to defeat the equal pay laws. When the equal pay laws were beginning to bite they developed a new system which is you have a discretionary part of your salary that you as an individual have to fight for. Your boss can decide to give you a bit extra as a bonus for your personal contribution. This all came in with the Equal Pay Act and it was saying we are determined to value the traditional work of men and what they do is more valuable.
- I read the other day that 80% of skilled workers are men and what I think is interesting is if you take that in relation to the fact that since 2003 the number of lap dancing clubs has doubled. We are supposed to have equality of opportunity, well where are those opportunities for women to go and be plumbers and joiners?
- It is also where it is recognised... I know in health care and in certain parts of social services they recognise the skills of women who have stayed at home and done child care and negotiation between family members and organisational skills, negotiating with schools, youth clubs and so on that those are very positive skills but again it is very gendered because it is within health care, social services etc. So women can apply for jobs there but can they apply for a job to manage a bank?

Well they can... one of the arguments is that women do get into the market economy now so what's your problem? The problem is that all this is still not valued and we should have that as well.

- What about the former Soviet Union where the majority of doctors were women and doctors were lower status?

Why would that happen, why did it become a lower status?

- Because of the value of 'women's work'
- Years and years ago in this country it was women who took to do with health in the villages and they were burned as witches as a result. Then men took it over and mystified it and it became like you needed all these qualifications and be an academic to do it. It has created a hierarchy...
- This is true today, women are the biggest users of the health services and they are also the biggest providers because they actually provide the basic health services for their families.
- And what you'll find now is that women have been pushed out of the health service a lot in the respect that a lot of voluntary organisations are taking to do with 'promotion of health' and the alternative type variants of it, massage, acupuncture, relaxation... all that kind of stuff... women are more valued in the voluntary sector in that respect than in the NHS.

So we've got a system here with a market economy and up here you've got power, maintenance and control by the educated and elite professionals and they set the value of other people's work. Then there is exploitation in there and women, if they come into the workplace, migrant labour, slavery, child labour etc. And also we've got a gendered analysis of what the system looks like so what does it look like in terms of other 'isms'? Disability, how does that fit in there? What's the problem if you are disabled... and what's the asset if you are disabled, to this system?

- There is a hierarchy of disabled people isn't there? There are disabled people who are accepted... Disabled people who are productive... who can work are more valued than those who are not able to or perceived as not able to.
- I think that comes down to visual disability... you know the perception of how useful you can be. If you don't *look* disabled...

That's where mental health comes in isn't it? This whole problem with mental health because people are not sure if you are productive or not and integrating you into the system is dodgy... you could go off on one and that is quite scary. It is better to take someone in a wheelchair because you know what you're getting... you can create an environment for that. The perceived unpredictability of someone's mental health is quite scary for the market economy.

- I read somewhere that black men were more likely to be diagnosed as schizophrenic than any other group in society. The thing is there are arguments about schizophrenia anyway and social conditions and you look at the way that black people are treated in society. The minority of people within those networks whether they are disabled or black or

gay... I noticed that Obama at his inauguration speech had a gay priest and that is what Ali Jarvis said... you can get some people within the different strands in privileged positions, but what about the majority.

Actually one of the interesting things that came out of that discussion was how it doesn't matter if you are gay as long as you are happy to act as a white heteronormative male to the extent of going into civil partnership and adopting kids.

- One way that women do get into this system is to start their own business. An increasing number of new businesses are being started by women because it offers the kind of opportunities that the current market place doesn't give them.
- Can I go back a bit to disability... there is an entire industry developing now to get disabled people right across the spectrum into work. It is to do with the market force to get people off benefits and the whole thing has just hit the wall because of the credit crunch.
- I think that is going to create more divisions... you see all the stuff in the news about migrant workers, the union workers complaining that they were getting more jobs or whatever...
- The market is unsure about disabled people because they don't fit into the 'making money' frame and they leave their care to women – unpaid work, because that indicates that they are not valuable people.
- But that movement was created by the economy and at that time there was a shortage of skills. They wanted more women into the market and they wanted people from Eastern Europe to come over to take up jobs. They wanted disabled people into the workforce and they were complaining that there weren't enough children being born... they wanted the labour market to grow but now the thing has collapsed they don't need them anymore so what's going to happen?
- It is still rolling on, there are still civil servants wittering on about 'employability' and actually we are not improving employability, we are just giving them a hobby. They are going to college so they have something to do, we know we are not going to get them into employment.
- It is like the Jobcentre Plus... have you seen the consultation on lap dancing? It seems like the government is pushing women into lap dancing just to get them into the labour market and add value to the economy.

Legalising prostitution would have the same effect.

- In order for a market economy to work does it have to be the case that there is a continual flow of money within it?

Yes

- So, George Galloway noted that the divide between rich and poor is greater now than when Charles Dickens wrote 'Oliver Twist'. Now, if you look at incomes of those on the higher echelons... if you give money to the rich they don't spend it, there's no 'trickle down' so it's not in the market. I think the reason we are in a recession is because there is less money down here, because if you give money to the poor they spend it. They need to, they need clothes, and food etc. but you give it to the rich and they put it away and don't spend it so the market stagnates...
- We have a regressive tax system, which means the poor pay more comparative to their income than the rich do...

But what's the main way you get people to spend money? How come people, if they are that poor aren't living under the same circumstances as when Dickens was writing.

- They borrow it...

They borrow it... you create desire and you create credit... You lend several thousand but you damn well make sure they give it back and then some...

- I don't think that applies to all of the people... There are some people who can't get credit. If you are on benefits you can't go and get a bank loan..
- But you can go somewhere else... there are all sorts of companies springing up to offer credit and there are loan sharks etc.
- There are people who just go without...

They do but we have this vision that we are 'better off'... people buy into the picture... they've got light, heat and water... But if you look at say, Africa where people are thought to be destitute, they have land, they are producing their own food and they are beholden to nobody. They are richer than *me* because I've got debt!

- We are sold a lifestyle... you know these designer bags and such like. If you really can't afford it then why purchase it? The thing is we desire or want this lifestyle we want the big house and all that entails. A lot of working class people are buying second or third properties to rent them out... they become little capitalists themselves.

The dependence on the market economy means that you have got to create desire... One of the things with the credit crunch they started lending money here to poor black people who didn't have the wherewithal to pay it back and who created a 'bling' lifestyle. And what have they been sold? They are

being sold 'Pimp my ride' and all sorts of music videos about 'bling' and gold. It is visible, you can see it walking round the streets in black communities. They wear it on the outside... this vision that they have been sold that may not even be real... they've got all this 'bling' and they are living in council estates not being able to pay the rent.

You get a huge amount of buying if you create this expectation of opportunity and lifestyle, but it is a myth.

- I agree with the point of challenging consumption-ism but at the same time, why shouldn't the poor be able to live in a house that isn't a rabbit-hutch?

The point is we are all assuming that by doing that you will get happier. There was research done by the New Economics Foundation, a fascinating bit of work from 2004.

http://www.neweconomics.org/gen/news_wellbeingmanifesto.aspx

Basically they've looked at well being indicators, happiness indexes, that sort of stuff and what they've seen is that money has gone up, people are earning more but happiness has stayed the same. None of this other stuff makes us any happier.

- But people aren't earning more... the rich are earning more not the poor.

Well they are earning more, relatively to what they were earning. It's still not enough in terms of the state of inflation etc. There is a very interesting debate around increased income does not equal happiness whereas people assume that the reason we are engaged in this is that it will make us all much happier and wealthier and healthier...

Our politics isn't around equality and a principle of well being, relationship and care... the political structure is here...

- Because money buys you access...

For this particular government this is the main reason to make policy.

- What are the reasons that we as women buy so much?... We were talking about credit and there is a massive industry just based on women buying stuff. Why do we have all these industries based entirely on women's spending on clothes, shoes, household goods... stuff...
- Because it is a gendered assumption that that is what we are interested in and you are brought up as a girl to go shopping...
- But we do literally buy into that... we all do it...

- Well it is just because there is a different focus in the market place. They will sell other things to men... the electronics industry for example is selling to men so it's no different really.
- If you look at Peter Townsend's index of relative deprivation <http://www.blacksacademy.net/content/3264.html>

He states that if a family can't afford to eat out once a fortnight, they are living in poverty. And how many people can't afford to do that?

- A lot of it is short-term gratification because as a single parent with two kids working non-stop I would maybe come to the weekend and think, 'I may not be able to pay into a pension fund every month but I can buy myself a new CD.'
- I would suggest that the working class today aren't particularly better off than they were in the days of Robert Owen <http://www.historyguide.org/intellect/Lecture22a.html> when people started work at 7 o'clock in the morning and worked till 10 o'clock at night. Because now they have to travel further to get to work, they quite often have to do unpaid overtime and take work home with them. Then, in my own case you've got two kids you've got to sort out and by the time you've done that you're knackered so you go to bed and the weekend you spend catching up on housework, visiting an elderly mother and Sunday you spend getting ready for the week ahead.

In fact it is worse in some ways because to be able to manage some of it you have to engage in the market economies.

- You have to feel 'lucky' that you are in a position to do that as well.
- And just to finish the shopping thing... shopping is seen as the woman caring for the family. So much of the shopping you are doing for other people so they look smart and well dressed, well fed and whatever...
- And it is also linked to conspicuous consumption and we're all culpable of that in that one of the things we've allowed to happen is for people to feel that the way you demonstrate your caring and affection and concern for your children is by them having the goods.
- It's very hard for professional middle class women working with low income women to say, 'actually you don't need to give your kids bikes and things for Christmas' when you know their response will be, 'It's alright for *you* to say that!'
- We also need to take into account the shift in class over the last four decades. Actually now if you look at the distribution of the population you've got a much larger middle class and a much smaller working class. And those that have made it into the lower middle class are

going to hang onto what they have achieved through the education system in terms of opportunities for employment and so on.

- Is it going to stay like that though? Because this summer, 600,000 students will be graduating from Universities and looking for jobs and the Jobcentres themselves are already saying there just aren't the vacancies.
- But this recession is nothing new... it has happened before. When I graduated in the 1980's there was recession then and a shortage of jobs. It is cyclical and this is just another era of it...
- Apparently now because of the economic situation applications to universities are up by 40%. What's happening at the moment, because of this huge number of students ... the middle class students can live at home and afford to do unpaid jobs since their parents are supporting them. They can then go into the job market and say they've got experience....
- How are you defining middle class?
- I'm talking about it in terms of the Registrar General's social classification <http://sru.soc.surrey.ac.uk/SRU9.html> which is a technical definition... it's crude and has got all sorts of anomalies...
- Is it just education and finance that makes someone middle class? You see I think these terms don't really apply any more and yet we continue to use them...
- A lot of what we call middle class people are the work-force of the economic market.
- I think it is about the lifestyle, with the 4 bedroom house and whatever...
- Is it the postcode as well, some of it is around that...
- It's based on economics but we use this term class now but really the problem is the economic model...

But this system doesn't want everybody to become middle class... it can't function if it doesn't have working class. Who's producing all these goodies for people to buy if there aren't people working at the bottom? It is not possible... you have to exploit for this system to work. There has got to be people down here earning £9,000 per year, or less, because they are working off the record.

- I think there is even less room to manoeuvre now than there was 20 years ago. People say there is less social mobility and I don't know if

there is or there isn't but from my point of view it starts with housing... it starts with council houses being sold off. If you are poor, working or not, on low wage or on benefits you are very, very restricted in where you get to live and all the nice houses have gone. Many of them have become quite middle class, you drive through the areas and know you are not going to get a house there... The crappy estates on the outskirts are what's left and that's where refugees, asylum seekers and people with mental health problems get dumped... If people from there are lucky enough to have jobs they are allowed to come into the city from the outskirts to do their crappy jobs as long as they all go back out again.

I think we have a tripartite state, I'm convinced of it... You've got your producers at the bottom... the people who go out to work, whether they produce care or babies it doesn't matter, they produce for very little money. Then you've got your consumers, what you call middle class, people who get money and spend it then you give them credit to speed it up, getting them into debt so they have to work harder to spend more. Then you've got your profiteers, the people who just 'cream off' the profits from there... because they don't produce anything and they don't necessarily consume they buy up and they don't pay tax and they get bonuses.

- But some of that is also happening at the bottom too...

Sure, because otherwise we wouldn't do it... we have to buy into a desire, where all the bling comes from, the idea that you might get it...

- Going back to the house issue, a lot of working class people have bought 2nd and 3rd properties and have then got an investment in that system. The people they are renting out to are on benefits, are refugees and people on low incomes... So they have a vested interest in this division too...

Because we all think we can work ourselves into the consumer class... if we work hard enough... and that's what we tell them at school, if you work hard, study hard and get your exams...

- But that's not true...

I know it's not!

- It's one of the challenges facing schools at the moment actually... kids excluding themselves from school because kids see right through that now. They know it's an absolute con and teachers can no longer say, 'behave yourself, work hard, do well and you'll get a good job at the end of it.' They're response is to say, 'get a life! And by the way I learn more from the internet than I do from coming to school.' But we still persist with these old ideas...
- Work hard and you could become a millionaire...

- Is it really young women who think they can become millionaires?
- I don't think they think they have to work hard either... a lot of young girls want to be like Jordan or Cheryl Cole. You don't have to work you just have to appear in a magazine, a TV show or become a WAG.
- This is just another thing that maintains the power structure isn't it?

Well you could win it! The lottery... the national government sponsored lottery... you could win it.

- I go to a lot of business functions and their language is very different. They are already in the model and when they earn enough they say, 'earning is not enough, you've got to enjoy what you are doing.' That is why women start up their own business, they find something they enjoy doing and then they make money out of it. Then they may move into social enterprise businesses where all monies earned are ploughed back into the social enterprise. So some of them are prepared to 'give back' but they will only do so within the business model.

What is the difference between that and charity?

- Because the business makes money to make the charity work, so you are not dependent on funding. You raise the money within the business and that feeds back into what you want to do...

Is that not what Oxfam does with its shops?

- Well there's lots of social enterprises... this is a new developing entrepreneurial market...

But it is about putting this stuff (charity) through the market economy...

- Bringing the market economy down into this area of life, that's the way I see it. That's the way these people see it... they are bringing the market economy back down to areas of life where it has previously been excluded.
- But we have to recognise that it means loss of democratic control which is the difficulty with these entrepreneurs who *choose* what they want to fund.

But they are working from a business model so they are still having problems with women taking time out to have babies... they have the same market-focused agenda don't they... or not?

- Does the market economy business model not create the poverty in the first place, that they are putting into in terms of charity money?

- That is the USA and to some extent UK Victorian Philanthropic model and Carnegie in Scotland is one of the best examples http://www.paytonpapers.org/output/ESS0041_1.shtm ... he made his money out of exploiting the steel workers in Pittsburgh but then his decision was to found the libraries and educational trusts and charities and so on. That for us is a very American idea 'individualism' – anybody can be president, anybody can work their way up and make all their money but why should they give it to the State? They should be allowed to decide how they dispose of it.
- But with entrepreneurs it is mostly men again... because men are more likely to take risks... they are more likely to get finance from the banks to get started...

Philanthropy and that sort of charity doesn't change the state's approach all it does is make you feel better about your oppression... the way you oppress people, the way you exploit... So you exploit Africa and then you feel better by sending them something...

So why do people move into social enterprise do you think?

- One of the reasons that social enterprises are set up are it gives people who are excluded from the economy an opportunity to develop their own self-worth through work. That then enables them to do the same for somebody else.
- It has to work as a business, it can't depend on external funding. Most of them start from the premise that by doing something like this you are giving back something to people who have previously been excluded...

That's where it started... disability groups, homeless people, people with mental health problems etc. But that is not where it is now... social enterprises are being set up by quite big businesses now.... Some of them are huge!

- Yes, but most of the social enterprises are run by people who are from the voluntary sector. A lot of them start out with people who are already involved in some kind of third force work anyway and they in some way get the investment to start up a social enterprise.

It brings charity into the market economy...

- Profits from the profitable side of the business often go into something that has more social impact. So it means you are able to do activities which are not necessarily making money but which are about helping people to get skills or work in the market. The profit from the other part subsidises this...

One of the issues about the voluntary sector and 'charity' work is that it was sitting on the loss side of the economy. It didn't have a value in the market

economy but the idea of social enterprise is to bring it into the economy so you can see where it fits in with the overall model. It actually starts to re-acknowledge on the balance sheet.

- If the voluntary sector was acknowledged in economic terms, wouldn't that lift the country out of the recession?

Don't know...

- The voluntary sector is now so integrated with the public sector... a lot of the voluntary sector receives public money...

That's the problem with it... it is a 'double drain'... doing charitable work and using public money...

- I think it is more appropriate to call it 'third sector' as otherwise a lot of people still think it is all about volunteers. And although within the third sector you do have a huge volunteer force in many ways the voluntary sector just operates like an arm of the public sector. And that is a weakening of the Welfare State.
- If you value time... like women's time and voluntary time, yes you could change the balance sheet of our country.

What happens if you look at age in this model then?

- In purely practical terms... you know about the independent living fund? You can get a fund like that up till you are 65... if you need £2,000 per week to keep you going you will get £2,000 per week to keep you going. Once you get to 65 that will be £360-£600 per week... the rate that you would have to pay to go into 24hour care.

Because you are non-productive, you are not seen to be useful... the idea of independent living being that you *might* do some work and even if you don't it doesn't matter...

- Is the argument, there are far more people over 65 needing help but we can't afford to give them £2,000 per week so it's got to be just care home fees?
- It's back to the male career model... again we haven't seen men rushing to the fore to ask for time off for paternity leave... there is a bit more agitation about it now but a lot of that campaigning is done by women. Similarly for care leave for elderly parents... I used to think that as the population aged and men were confronted with the reality of the elderly parents and looking after them they would have to take on more of the issues but I don't think that happens, it still falls on women. Men still try to maintain their jobs regardless. In the Netherlands they have just introduced a scheme whereby you have to pay into an insurance fund. It is similar to your pension but you are paying an

amount regularly which then entitles you to use it in all kinds of different ways, maternity leave, and leave for elderly care or leave for study without losing continuity or your long-term benefits. But you've actually paid for it yourself... Life-cycle finance

- So are we saying this model doesn't work? Do we have to dump it or is it a matter of throwing a spanner in the cogs?

What sort of spanner would you throw? What is this system organised around?

- Labour

Systems theory says, 'what is the main thing that the whole thing is organised around?' If you can collapse that, take that out... you can start to change people's belief about that then the value system will go. So if you organise around money, or making more money then doing that makes everyone happy... that's the belief... that's the value in it and we all buy into it on some level. How would you get poor people who are really struggling, to believe that money is not the issue?

- Not accepting grossly distorted valuations of people's time...

That could be very interesting...

- Behind it all is power... you can use any system you like, all that it ever does is create a power structure.

Some people are valued more than others...

- Some people were valued more because they had land... it was just a different criteria, you were valued more because you had land and therefore you had a bigger voice.

Through that land you had control over production, resources and so on...

- But we are talking about working and particularly that more women should be in the workforce but that doesn't solve the problem because the time they spend in the workplace is valued in the same way in money terms...

And it doesn't decrease the time they have to spend at the home... which is still undervalued whether women or men do it. It is not seen as a productive thing to do.

- And the thing they say now about the gap between a manager and his lowest paid worker was something like 20 times years ago and now it's like a 1,000 times or something... That's all about the valuation of time.

Production and car workers are losing jobs big time aren't they? Telephone workers and service industries are going, it's only the banking system that is taking out the top.

- People like Asda are expanding... they are opening thousands of new stores this year. Because they provide to the lower level of the economic system whereas the car production provides to the higher level... If you are at the high end of the market in a recession that will go first.

But it doesn't mean that poorer people are spending more money it just means that middle class people are starting to shop there. They have over-borrowed so they are having to shop elsewhere. Shopping down... shifting where they are spending.

- That's what the business community are saying, the recession does not mean that you have to stop doing business, just move your business to another area where you can make money.
- That's what the whole system's built on, creating markets so that when one dries up you just shift along...
- (DIY shops closing)
- (Marks & Spencer's) Aspirational food – back to basics

In this system if people don't spend the whole thing collapses...

- Another point, they are still saying they want more children to increase the labour force...
- White children...

The question that we need to come back to is the one that you were asking, 'Can we create a model that is socially just? Can we fix it or is it about revolution?'

BREAK