

***Democracy's Dilemma: Environment, Social Equity, and The Global Economy*, by Robert C. Paehlke, Cambridge: The MIT Press (2003).**

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Robert Paehlke's new book *Democracy's Dilemma*, despite its progressive, left-of-center view of atomic age politics, remains an optimistic appraisal of modern humanity's prospects for true individual self-fulfillment. Paehlke views globalization, like many pundits, as an inevitability. Yet, his book offers the chance to avoid the mistakes of humanity's last economic transformation: that of craft-based economies to industrial capitalism. Presently, industrial capitalism has itself given way to "electronic capitalism," according to Paehlke.

Paehlke paints the world as a loose confederation of "economistic" nation states, emphasizing economic valuations over social and human factors. While governments slavishly pursue policies to make their countries seem more economically competitive, little thought in twenty-first century social engineering seems to be given to human and environmental needs. One of the main problems with electronic capitalism and the present world order is that there is no effective global democracy. Paehlke points out that in the age of industrial capitalism, the needs of the non-capitalists were met with nationally-organized labor unions. In today's global economy, no effective global voice for workers exists. The world is, according to Paehlke, one-dimensional. It should be three-dimensional; emphasizing social and environmental concerns along-side the economic motivators.

Paehlke's real contribution to an era of cynicism is his obvious conviction that choices have yet to be made which may sway the human experience from the economistic to a more holistic one. He emphasizes a "redirection" rather than "resistance" to globalism. For example, under the "California-effect," large economies such as California or Germany have or may still influence surrounding economies' environmental standards for the better. Put simply, large, attractive economies where the populace is sufficiently concerned about the environment have the power to entice outside capitalists to accede to their higher environmental standards.

Certainly, Paehlke's point on the ability of California-like economies to enforce tougher environmental standards is well taken. Yet the future of the third of Paehlke's three dimensions of society, the human one, presents greater uncertainty. Industrial nations with progressive labor and welfare standards have done little to induce the same behavior in the United States or developing countries. Forcing others to make more environmentally-friendly goods for sale in your jurisdiction is one thing. Forcing them to ensure better conditions for their workers remains another matter. Paehlke is still optimistic on this front too though. As he points out, the first problem with a one-dimensional economistic view of life is that it ignores the accepted psychological hierarchies of human need. But further, empirical evidence shows that people, even in the United States, do want to work less and have more time for their families. Experience in Western Europe has shown that some reduction in workers' pursuit of economic gain has led to enrichment in their personal lives. The problem then, appears to be one of information. Electronic capitalism is what it is, in part because capitalism saturates the airwaves, influences consumer preference, and manufactures want itself. The difficulty ahead lies largely with combating the domination of the media by corporate interests.

Paehlke brings together a wealth of empirical studies concluding everything from economism's ability to destroy the American family to the increasing lack of correlation between wealth accumulation and human happiness. The strength, number and breadth of Paehlke's citations alone is remarkable given the subjective nature of his topic. All the while Paehlke is careful to keep his ideology vaguely to the left, relying on empiricism to carry the day. This book should be required reading in university economic classes. The fact that it likely will not be is proof that we still have far to go to realize the possibilities to which Paehlke alludes.