



## **Building a More Caring World:**

### **Implications for the Family, the Community, and the Market**

Like other social beings, human beings cannot survive without receiving care, at least in the initial stages of life. We constantly depend on the help, nurturance, companionship and support of others in our environment. In the human world, the processes of care reflect and respond to the full complexity and richness of human existence with its interplay between the physical, social, emotional, intellectual and spiritual dimensions of life. Thus, while on the one hand the most obvious forms of care relate to addressing basic material needs, at higher and more complex levels of manifestation the values and qualities associated with care such as love, reciprocity, cooperation, trustworthiness and commitment can orient relationships, institutions and social structures towards providing the most conducive environment for the development of human potential and the promotion of social progress. This paper has been developed by the Bahá'í Chair for Studies in Development to stimulate reflection and dialogue on the vital importance of building a more caring society and on the processes of transformation that moving towards this vision would entail.

Given that the need for care is ubiquitous and that people require various kinds of care involving varying degrees of expertise at different stages in their lives, a network of institutions and entities are involved in providing care including the family, the community, the State, the market, and civil society organizations. Despite the emergence of a sophisticated care economy and nearly eight decades of efforts the world-over with the promotion of development programs and policies by States and civil society organizations, billions of people worldwide are still deprived of access to essential forms of care such as healthcare and education. Further, in continuation of a long-standing injustice, the burden of care work is disproportionately borne by women and those belonging to socially oppressed groups such as ethnic or racial minorities and those on the lowest rungs of the caste hierarchy.

Building a more caring world clearly requires reversing these injustices by ensuring universal access to care and the equitable distribution of caregiving responsibilities. However, interventions seeking greater equity can only succeed when carried out in the context of a much broader process of social transformation that seeks to affirm the centrality of care for the progress of human society and that seeks to rebuild social structures to reflect this understanding.

A profound injustice that generations of human beings continue to endure is the persistence of social, economic, and political systems that deny or ignore the central, life-sustaining role of care in human society. An appreciation of the importance of care in human life will have to begin with rethinking *uncaring* conceptions of human nature that continue to shape the systems of our society. The myths of *homo-economicus* or *homo-politicus* which posit that human beings are self-interested, power-seeking, competitive and individualistic will have to be set aside. Although crude and simplistic, these conceptions have served as a key basis for theorizations of human behaviour in the behavioural and social sciences, the framing of models and policies based on such theories, and the erection of the social, political, and economic structures that we live within. Such theories, models, and structures, in turn, reinforce self-interested and competitive thought and behaviour and ignore, obscure, or undermine the value of altruistic, cooperative and other-regarding behaviours among people.

Care, on the other hand, opens a new vista on human nature, one that emphasizes the “irreducibly relational nature of human existence” (Tronto, 2013, p.181). It sheds light on the “specific emotions of interrelationships among people, such as lovingness, affection, warmheartedness, friendship, esteem, tenderness, responsibility, concern about someone or something, commitment, and attentiveness” (van Osch, 2013, p. 4). When viewed through the lens of care, people are seen to belong to one human family bound by bonds of interdependence, and yet unique in themselves, with each individual possessing an inalienable moral worth that requires that she or he be treated with dignity and respect. A proper acknowledgement of the place of care in human life would thus necessitate that the capacities for caring be recognized as inherent aspects of human nature that need to be encouraged and developed and that existing structures of society be rebuilt to reflect and reinforce these capacities.

A proper valuation of care would be incomplete without considering the potentially transformative impact it can have on inner life of the individual. As many have pointed out, caring is not just about meeting the needs of the one being cared for. It is a reciprocal process that can have a potentially positive impact on the caregiver as well when care is offered under conditions that are just. At one level, the process of caregiving can help the individual develop a more authentic and spiritually-grounded relationship with one’s inner self and with others. Offering care with sincerity often requires the caregiver to enter the unfamiliar ground of identifying with the perspective and feelings of the care receiver. As the philosopher Paul Ricoeur discusses in his book *Oneself as Another*, immersing oneself in the reality of another human being broadens the individual’s horizons and forces him or her to step out of habitual and one-sided ways of

looking at the world and the self (Ricoeur, 1995). The experience of caring for another can also instil a sense of humility and solidarity born out of a profound awareness of those deeper truths about the human condition that are common to all people— the fact that we are all ultimately frail and vulnerable, that we depend on each other and that death comes to us all, no matter how well we take care of ourselves or others.

In addition to transforming consciousness, the practice of effective caring can help the caregiver develop a range of qualities such as being kind, considerate, responsible, attentive, consistent, trustworthy, patient and empathetic. This concept of the potential for moral and spiritual development inherent to the voluntary giving of care is one of the core teachings of almost all the world's major religions. The religious scriptures of the world in various ways emphasize the importance of developing the inner qualities of a caring disposition as well as the expression of these qualities in disinterested service to all including strangers.<sup>1</sup>

A word of caution is in order here. In discussing some of the salutary outcomes of the care process, the intention is not to romanticize all kinds of care work much of which in today's world is mired in conditions of injustice and poverty. Conditions requiring care arising out of suffering, sickness, or deprivation and forms of care work that are monotonous, undignified, and prone to drudgery must be ameliorated and transformed through scientific and technological development, appropriate policy interventions, and equitable economic development. While it can be reasonably assumed that care will always be a feature of human societies given that receiving and giving care is so inseparably bound with our social nature, human want, degradation, and injustice do not have to exist for these caring capacities to manifest themselves. The highest expression of care is when human beings support and assist each other to develop their individual and collective capacities and when they collaboratively take responsibility for the stewardship of nature. This sense of care as a guiding principle for building a new world order based on collaboration and trust is captured in the following words of *The Care Manifesto* where care is described as "our individual and common ability to provide the political, social material, and emotional conditions that allow the vast majority of people and living creatures on this planet to thrive – along with the planet itself" (The Care Collective et al., 2020 p.6).

The world today is at a historical juncture where a combination of destabilizing crises has created a new willingness in public discourse for mature and serious consideration of the possibility of building social, economic, and political structures and institutions based on the principles of care. To stimulate dialogue on the implications of building a caring society, this discussion paper has been prepared to explore three crucial contexts where

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<sup>1</sup> Through the example of the lives of the Messengers, Avtaars or Prophets, through stories and parables, and ethical and moral injunctions, countless people have been motivated to engage in altruistic behavior and dedicate themselves to serving the common good. The fact that these perspectives have been historically misused to justify oppressive social structures where care responsibilities are unjustly imposed on one segment of the population does not detract from the signal contribution these scriptures have made to inspire people to care for their fellow human beings and all life forms on earth.

fundamental change is needed – the family, where conceptions, attitudes, and norms related to care are formed, enacted and socialized; the community, where caring relationships based on mutuality and friendship are forged and strengthened and the market, an institution in need of profound change to facilitate rather than inhibit the expression of the caring capabilities of individuals and communities.

### *The family*

Despite its crucial role in sustaining life and developing human capabilities, the true value of care often remains unrecognized. This systemic devaluation of care is closely related to the history of patriarchy. Care work has been devalued due to its association with the household which is considered part of the feminine private domain as opposed to the masculine public domain where work is recognized and valued. Due to care's association with women, even when care work is remunerated or carried out professionally, it is generally lower paid and less prestigious.

In most societies around the world, a woman's gender role has included the obligation to attend to the needs of the members of the family, especially children, the elderly, and the sick, and to manage and carry out various household chores. Women are expected to accept care responsibilities without compensation or acknowledgment since it is viewed as a God-given or nature-ordained duty. Failure to perform such services could invite the penalty of severe censure or even domestic violence.

While a patriarchal order values achievement, autonomy, and independence in men, self-abnegation, devotion to the family, and sacrifice are expected of women. Women are often expected to assume almost the entire responsibility for care labour at home which comes at the cost of limiting their freedom to choose their life path and missing opportunities to develop their capabilities. Further, the very nature of care work tends to make the caregiver emotionally attached to the person being cared for. This condition makes the caregiver (who is mostly a woman) into what Nancy Folbre calls a “prisoner of love” since she will not be willing to bargain for greater freedom for herself if such freedom imperils the well-being of the one being cared for (Folbre, 2002, p.38). The injustice of being made almost entirely responsible for caring labour inhibits millions of women from pursuing their higher education or participating fully in the work force as equals with men. This is often the case even in countries that have achieved high levels of economic development.

The revaluation of the conception of care thus cannot be achieved without decoupling it from patriarchal gender norms. Such efforts would naturally have to begin with the family, the primary space where both caring needs are addressed and conceptions of masculinity and femininity are formed, acted out and enforced.

Efforts aimed at correcting the discrimination against women in the family usually focus on removing barriers to their full participation in all arenas of life, sensitizing boys and men on the importance of care and equipping them with the skills needed to share equally in all its joys and burdens. The effectiveness of such efforts depends, in part, on a profound consciousness of the many implications of the principle of the equality of

women and men. Appreciating this principle of equality becomes possible when a distinction is drawn between gender which is socially constructed and the inner nature of the human being which consists of those qualities and propensities that are common to all irrespective of sex. While the physical differences between men and women undeniably influences how they experience the world, the soul of the human being – that which is essential to our humanity - has no gender (Institute for Studies in Global Prosperity, 2009, p. 1). Given that the propensity to be caring and nurturing is common to all human beings as part of this shared nature, boys and men can, with the right orientation and guidance, develop and demonstrate the capacities for serving others in all settings.

Transforming gender norms would entail critically analyzing existing notions of masculinity and femininity and the assumptions underlying them against this non-fragmented conception of an essential spiritual identity that transcends gender. For example, some prevalent conceptions of masculinity unduly glorify the values of autonomy, independence, self-reliance, toughness, and individual resilience. While these qualities have their value in particular contexts, their being feted in popular culture as uniquely masculine qualities leads to young boys learning from an early age to regard being vulnerable or dependent on others as signs of weakness that are to be rejected. Indeed, rather than helping young boys develop qualities in accordance with their natural state of interdependence by learning to collaborate and draw on each other's strengths, they are taught to compete and prove their worth on their own. Dependence on others is projected as a pathological sign of dysfunction. Similarly, rather than help men develop a healthy sense of their vulnerability, they are taught to be ashamed of their vulnerabilities or frailties and to portray an invulnerable persona as the mark of their manhood. The burden of living up to these unrealistic and ultimately inhumane standards undermines the emotional and psychological health of men. It impairs their capacities to develop healthy social relationships based on trust, mutuality, and cooperation.

On the other hand, from a young age girls internalize the norms, values, standards of behaviour, ways of thinking and social expectations that are set for them by a patriarchal order. Often their subordination to the will and needs of others can go to such an extent that women are “denied a cultural conception of themselves as individuals” and they “may not even think of themselves as separate persons” (Folbre, 2002, p.6). Both the self-abnegation of the one and the self-aggrandizement of the other are two ends of the same spectrum. They are products of a social order shaped not by a conception of our common humanity but rather by the self-interested motives of patriarchy.

Given that these gender norms are embedded in the structures of society, transforming them is a complex process that takes time. To be sure, groups, organizations, and individuals working over many decades have already achieved significant progress in establishing the equality of women and men as an incontestable normative principle. Yet, much remains to be achieved in translating this principle into action. The surest foundation for replacing oppressive gender norms with egalitarian and just conceptions lies in the concepts and practices that young minds learn from their earliest years in the

family. In this regard, by sharing equally in domestic care work, not only are boys learning to be fair and unselfish and girls learning that they are socially equal to boys, the practice of care by its very nature will call forth and develop the nurturing and caring capabilities within them.

Caring for another human being requires capability and discipline as much as the qualities of love and compassion. Rather than being temporarily moved by altruistic sentiments, it calls for consistency, commitment, and trustworthiness in the caregiver. The caregiver is often required to place the care-receivers' needs above their own. These capabilities are built through practice over a long period of time, and the intimate space of the family is the most natural setting where this learning process can begin for both boys and girls.

The challenge before the present and future generations is not just to create families where the equality of the sexes is a lived reality but also to build a society where care is highly valued for its seminal role in providing the conditions for the full development of human potential. While care is a means to progress, being caring in the sense of manifesting the qualities and abilities needed to actively support the progress of another person or be a responsible steward of the natural world, is in itself the mark of a morally and socially well-developed person. Thus, in the context of the family, the challenge is not only to ensure that all participate in carrying out domestic responsibilities, but also to raise young boys and girls who aspire to build their capabilities to serve and care for other human beings and the planet.

The above considerations raise several questions. How can a family identify and change pre-existing norms and habits that, in one way or another, devalue care or assign it as solely a women's concern? How can generations of young people be raised with the yearning to serve others, to be champions of justice and builders of unity and not just achievers of professional attainment or economic success? Parents clearly play a signal role in this process. Yet, for their efforts to bear enduring results, they will need the support of the extended family, the State and various institutions of society such as the education system and the media. What is called for is a society-wide reorientation and realignment of values from those based on materialism towards commitment to principles that express the higher potential in human beings. How is such a transformation to take place? How can faith in the possibility of such a transformation be kindled and sustained? Faith in the possibility of change depends in part on how compellingly that change can be imagined or conceived. Imagining an alternative world where the values of care are preeminent will call for new metaphors, vocabularies and new uses of language that can allow us to go beyond the limiting premises of our prevalent culture and open a space for looking at familiar concepts in new ways. The very concept of care and the associated notions of love, collaboration, reciprocity and service, will need to be reconceived to discard the negative or limited connotations attached to them by a patriarchal and individualistic culture and to envision the vast potentialities for individual and social progress inherent to new and more broadened ways of understanding and applying these concepts. How is such an imaginative intervention in the life of society to be initiated?

In many developing countries such as India, the discussions on care in the development discourse focuses almost entirely on its material or economic dimension - ensuring that care work is paid for, the need for care as a precondition for greater productivity of labour and the care sector as a potential source of employment. The economic dimension is no doubt vitally important especially for the vast number of economically underprivileged families who lack even basic access to institutional forms of care provided by the State or the market. Yet the challenge will be to ensure that the conception of care is not reduced merely to its material dimension, essential as it is. If the values of care are to be included in the vision that guides society, they will have to address all dimensions of human existence, including the spiritual and the social. How can more be learned about nurturing the development of human potential and social progress along these other dimensions of human existence without reducing them to an instrument for material progress? Caring for the non-material dimensions of life includes creating structures and environments conducive to social and spiritual development and synergizing such development with material progress in a mutually reinforcing way. How is the learning associated with these dimensions of caring to be generated? In what ways can it begin from the family?

### ***The community***

After the family, it is the community consisting of people living in geographic proximity to each other that provides the most natural setting for building relationships and networks of care. A sense of connection with other human beings is a precondition for relationships of care. In the case of the family, it is kinship that establishes this connection. What connects people in a community is a communal bond formed out of collectively owning and managing common resources, supporting and helping each other in ways that neighbours do, and participating in various forms of collective action.

The community can provide an invaluable support structure to the individual or family, especially in times of crisis. A common saying in India is that in times of need, the neighbour is more important than the family. The fabric of neighbourly friendship is woven by myriad everyday expressions of sharing and mutual support, whether in helping each other, sharing food, watching out for each other, checking on those who are ill, celebrating festivals together, or participating together in the happy and sad moments of life. The solidarity formed through such close ties becomes a powerful source of resilience for the members of the community. Further, the atmosphere of goodwill and trust that such expressions of generosity, friendship, kindness, and hospitality generate provides a strong foundation for collaborating on more complex civic endeavours that require collective deliberation, decision-making, and action. Even where ties between the community's members are not close, commonly-shared conditions and circumstances bind the members together in a shared experience that is real.

In the context of care, the importance of strong communities with established practices of reciprocity and mutual support cannot be overstated. For example, during the second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic in India, this was evident in how community members helped each other find medicines, oxygen tanks, and hospital beds when the State's

resources were overwhelmed by the magnitude of the crisis. In addition, they helped each other meet basic necessities such as buying groceries or cooking food and provided each other with much-needed emotional support.

The crucial role of the community in ensuring individual and family well-being is not restricted to times of crisis. Families come together in villages and urban neighbourhoods to help each other with everything from informal arrangements for child care to financial security, especially in cases of socially and economically underprivileged communities. In the long-term development of human capabilities, the community's contribution is vital even when it takes an indirect form. This wisdom is captured in the African proverb which states that 'it takes a village to raise a child.' The healthy growth and development of a child is as much dependent on the care and attention that the child receives from parents, extended family, teachers, neighbours, and friends as from the social atmosphere of the community in which he or she grows.

In various ways, the policies shaped by the dominant economic order which prioritizes profits over people, discourages and disincentivizes the development of vibrant, inclusive, and diverse communities based on shared civic commitment. Increasing privatization of the commons threatens to reduce the public spaces where members of a community can socialize, deliberate and collaborate. Due to the economic insecurities and the competitive pressures created by the existing economic structures, people feel compelled to focus on themselves and pursue their own self-interests, leading to isolation and loneliness and making it harder for them to form communal ties. Without a proper appreciation of the value of communal bonds, relationships, and indeed the community itself, can be instrumentalized as a means to some form of individual (and often economic) gain. In addition, the existing structures of employment often necessitate or encourage the movement of people in response to job insecurity, the movement of capital or in pursuit of better prospects which dilutes an individual's sense of connection to geographic communities. These conditions, which breed individualism and apathy, cause a decline in participation in civic action and a weakening of community bonds. At the same time, due to growing polarization in society and insecurities and anxieties created by current economic policies, there is a growing tendency to form insular communities around the identity or interests of particular ethnic, religious, racial, caste-based, or class-based groups. A sign of the crisis facing the inclusive and egalitarian community is the growing segregation of peoples along ethnic, religious, and class lines, the increasing popularity of gated communities, the ghettoization of those belonging to communities considered part of the 'Other' and the shrinking of spaces where people can interact and collaborate across social, religious and economic lines.

Thus, most communities today are in a state of crisis, with growing individualism and apathy on the one hand and the increasing trend towards insularity and parochialism in social relationships on the other. The challenge then is to develop purposeful, cohesive and inclusive communities where all are valued and cared for equally irrespective of their social, economic or religious backgrounds. It calls for the cultivation of a consciousness of oneness that elevates one's attachment to a particular group or community above any



form of chauvinism and that imbues one's motivations to serve one's fellowmen in local settings with the noblest of sentiments. It is a kind of consciousness most expansively described in moral counsels such as these found in the world's sacred scriptures:

Be generous in prosperity, and thankful in adversity. Be worthy of the trust of thy neighbour, and look upon him with a bright and friendly face. Be a treasure to the poor, an admonisher to the rich, an answerer to the cry of the needy, a preserver of the sanctity of thy pledge. ...Be as a lamp unto them that walk in darkness, a joy to the sorrowful, a sea for the thirsty, a haven for the distressed, an upholder and defender of the victim of oppression. ...Be a home for the stranger, a balm to the suffering, a tower of strength for the fugitive. (Bahá'í Holy Writings, n.d., para. 3)

At the same time, consciousness is intimately connected to action. One of the most powerful ways of strengthening the bond between the individual and the community is through creating avenues for meaningful and effective civic participation that address the caring needs of community members. During the pandemic, for example, one area where the need for community support in the provision of care became clear was in supporting the education and development of children who, for extended periods, could not attend in-person classes in schools. This need was particularly acute in cases of children of economically underprivileged families.

These considerations raise a number of questions. How can supporting the care and development of vulnerable segments of the population in a community, such as children, the sick, and the elderly, become a long-term avenue for civic engagement (and not just a reaction to a crisis) through which the identification and commitment of individuals to the community are strengthened? How can caring, egalitarian and inclusive communities be developed by people in urban neighbourhoods and villages that build solidarities across social, economic, and religious divisions, avoiding segregation and fostering intermixing of peoples of all backgrounds in collective endeavours? How can such communities consisting of people of diverse backgrounds champion the cause of justice without sacrificing the unity between them?

### ***The market***

The crisis around the provision of and access to care in our society cannot be fully understood or resolved without a profound understanding of the market, in its modern capitalist avatar, which has become the dominant institution mediating the pursuit and fulfilment of almost all aspirations and needs, including those related to care. There is no denying that the market plays an important role in the efficient distribution and exchange of goods and services. Yet, in a society that places singular emphasis on unlimited economic growth as the central process of social existence, the market assumes a dominant position among the institutions of society, and its influence pervades all aspects of individual and collective existence. Historically, markets have always been embedded within social relations and a region's cultural and ecological matrix. While facilitating economic transactions, they served a vital social and cultural purpose in strengthening

social relationships and perpetuating cultural values. However, in its free-market capitalist avatar, the market is posited to function as a purely economic entity disembodied from its social, cultural and historical context. It is envisioned as an impersonal arena where buyers and sellers pursue their self-interest in a rational, calculated, and self-maximizing manner. The emphasis on self-interest and material gain, which the turn towards materialism normalizes and encourages, has a profound influence on the values of society reflected not only in popular culture but also in policy frameworks and institutional structures. Greed and selfishness are fostered under various euphemisms as the fuel that drives the economy forward. The ruinous social, moral, and ecological consequences of the reification of markets over many decades can be seen in a whole range of seemingly-disconnected crises facing humanity, whether it be the increasing concentration of wealth in the hands of a few, the catastrophic degradation of the natural environment, the breakdown of the social fabric, the alienation and loneliness of contemporary life, and the loss of trust in institutions of society.

In the context of care, critics have pointed out that the very nature of care goes against the cold logic of capitalist markets. Effective care work often involves personal engagement and emotional investment. It flourishes in an atmosphere of love, compassion, and patience (The Care Collective et al., 2020). The increasing marketization of care, which turns it into a service to be provided for material gain, can distort the motives of the care provider and the integrity of the care process by undermining or obscuring the importance of the emotional, social, and spiritual aspects of caring. Care work is carried out for a range of intentions, many of them noble and unselfish. In many ways, the well-being of the care receiver is positively affected by the unselfish motives that inspire the caregiver. By emphasizing calculated self-interest and material gain as the driving motives behind caring, the market in its present form not only fails to recognize or reward altruistic and unselfish motives, it can also lead to situations, especially in institutional settings, where out of the desire to rationalize business operations and cut costs, decisions can be taken that gravely imperil the wellbeing of the care-receiver.

Another important criticism of marketizing care is that it deepens existing societal inequalities. When the market becomes the main channel for providing care, purchasing power determines who gets access to care, how much, and of what quality. This, in turn, exacerbates existing inequalities. For example, those with access to greater wealth can give their children high quality education, child care, and health facilities, while the poor will have to be content with overcrowded facilities and lower-quality services. As a result, children of the well-to-do develop their capabilities to a much higher degree than those enmeshed in poverty and this would only widen the disparities between the classes over generations.

In recognition of the mounting and multiple crises caused and exacerbated by a political economy that is singularly focused on relentless economic growth, accumulation of limitless wealth, and rise in Gross Domestic Product (GDP), there are increasing demands for a radical change of existing economic arrangements to align them with principles of justice, solidarity, and environmental conservation. A growing number of

economists and social scientists, whether under the banner of the degrowth movement, doughnut economics, social and solidarity economics, feminist economics or care economics, are demanding that economic structures should serve social, environmental, and moral interests and be constrained by them and not the other way around. In line with this, there have been proposals for measures and tools that measure progress towards a much broader conception of development that includes the material, social and spiritual dimensions of human existence and that accounts for the balance needed in humanity's relationship with nature.

In the context of care, there have been calls for fundamental change in the structures of society to reflect the centrality of care to human life. In such an alternative paradigm, the imperative of meeting the caring needs of human beings would “set the limits within which other concerns: economic growth, ‘work’, social institutional organization, take their frame” (Tronto, 2012, p. 34). Achieving this would call for broadening the conception of care to include “everything that we do to maintain, continue and repair our ‘world’ as well as possible” (Fisher & Tronto, 1990, p. 40). Without such a broad and encompassing view of care, it becomes possible for narrower conceptions of care to be “too easily assimilated into a political economy of unlimited growth” (Tronto, 2012, p. 34).

Recognizing the centrality of care for human life also has implications for how economic institutions function. At present, qualities and values associated with care, such as altruism, love, compassion, reciprocity, honesty, and trust which are indispensable for communal living, are either ignored or treated as external to the economic system. It is assumed that the existence of these values and qualities in the social order can be taken for granted irrespective of the economic arrangements that are in place. Yet, in reality, economic institutions and structures can either strengthen or weaken these values by the kinds of behaviours that they reward or incentivize. Thus, for example, the market in its present form rewards selfish behaviour and focus on material gain, and disincentivizes unselfishness and altruism. Economists will need to recognize the existence of these values and qualities in society and ensure that policies and institutional structures facilitate their growth and development. In this context, care would be seen as a “propensity that can be defended and developed—or weakened and wasted—by economic risks and rewards” (Folbre, 2002, p.210).

The path towards more just and caring economic structures would thus require new learning on a massive scale. Many questions arise when considering the kind of learning that needs to be generated. What economic systems, structures, principles, and practices would allow individuals, organizations, and institutions to express values of reciprocity, love, trust and generosity while at the same time being inclusive and efficient? What kind of social experiments would allow such learning to emerge and how can individuals and communities participate in these processes? What forms of ownership are more conducive to justice, solidarity and the community's participation in economic processes? What can be learned in this regard from some of the most promising and innovative experiences with organizing collectives and cooperatives around the world?

Building strong local economies that interact with regional and global economies from a position of strength are vital for securing people's sense of agency and control over economic processes. The merits of the localization of markets in terms of equity, efficiency, ensuring local cultural and political autonomy, and responding to local conditions and challenges are well known. However, much remains to be learned about sustaining viable local economies in an age of globalization. With localization there is always the danger that local vested interests can more easily capture such markets. Even when this is not the case, the effort, knowledge, time and resources that goes into successfully resisting the pressures of large business interests and sustaining local market structures often makes it a space where only a small privileged class can participate. What kind of structures would need to evolve to make local economies viable as an arena for the production and consumption of goods and services and as a source of employment? Further, many development endeavours require levels of expertise and coordination for which the local community is inadequate. What, then, would be the right balance between localization and centralization when it comes to the scale of economic activity?

Much has already been learned about building more ecologically sound, unifying, and just economic structures through initiatives of civil society organizations and social movements worldwide. How can these various initiatives be interconnected in networks of common purpose, sharing learning, supporting each other, and contributing to a collective advance for all humanity? How can the most promising experiences be applied more widely in a context-appropriate manner? How can individuals and communities be involved in such a universal and long-term process of learning to contribute to such complex processes of change?

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This paper is a modest attempt to highlight some of the implications of building a caring world for three critical social spaces where change can and must be initiated— the family, the community, and the market. There are other vital institutions and agencies associated with the care process, such as the State and civil society organizations, whose contributions to building a caring world will no doubt have to be systematically considered. Such a consideration is, however, beyond the scope of this paper. It is hoped that this paper can contribute to the ongoing efforts of individuals, institutions and communities that are striving to build a better and more caring world, confident in the learning they have generated so far and in their capacities to eventually fashion a whole new society on the principles of oneness, equality, justice and environmental stewardship.

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