

Time for Paradigm Shifts

We live in a time of great upheavals, of seismic changes in the global economic and political system. The protests against Wall Street in New York, and the toppling of outdated potentates in the Arab states are merely signs that the old paradigms are not working.

For a time in the 90s, there was optimism that globalization would 'lift all boats,' following the collapse of socialism and the resurgence of neoliberal economics. Two decades after, the under classes in the United States and Europe are kicking against a system that bails out the rich and their institutions and in the process lets the poor fall through the cracks without mercy.

In this country, side by side with reports of GNP growth—as with that released for the year 2007, the highest in 30 years—is the shadow of increasing hunger as the number of food-poor Filipinos rose at about the same time. It is evident that something is very wrong when luxury vehicles parade down potholed streets bordered by congested communities with no potable water. Street children come crowding around our car windows. Poverty continues to coexist alongside the glitter of newly-acquired wealth among more privileged sectors of society. These sights bring to mind the biblical story of the rich man who, sumptuously dressed and feasting daily, remained indifferent to the plight of Lazarus, who sat at his gate. Covered with sores, the poor Lazarus longed to be fed from the scraps that fell from the rich man's table.

How do we begin to address this inequality? How do we generate growth that takes seriously the concern for equity? How do we see to it that our governance is responsive to the needs of the poor while releasing entrepreneurial energy towards wealth creation?

For a start, we propose that some major shifts need to be made in our economic paradigms. In the following series of editorials, we outline some changes that need to be made, both in our development paradigms and in our economic behavior as a culture and as a people. In the process, we hope to surface some alternative images of what the future can be like.