

**Peter Timmerman**

### **Old Wisdoms, New Thinking**

My contribution would be to urge the embracing of the original impulse at the heart of the Bhutanese government's initiatives, exemplified by their work on Gross National Happiness and this project. It is a combination of old wisdoms and new thinking. What we find exemplified among many traditions - religious, pragmatic - is a determination, born out of embedded understanding and out of pressing need, to live courteously and with gratitude with the other beings with whom we share this planet.

To undertake this traditionally required learning a "feeling for the way of things", as well as social processes that ensured that nothing went out of control, that nothing wreaked havoc on the healthy constitutive finitude of one's surroundings. The model of the human -- and human wellbeing in these societies reflected this worldview. This was part of old wisdoms.

What is missing in the material on the NDP, though elements of it are scattered here and there, is a recasting of the current model of the human being promulgated by the economic and social paradigms hegemonic in our culture -- a runaway model of self-interested consumers, whose rationality is devoted to the fulfillment of infinite desires. This both reflects and generates the runaway quality of our situation. In traditional societies, people with these characteristics would be mad, outcast, and considered to be dangerous to the wellbeing of the society as a whole.

The "New Development" Paradigm would do well to draw upon the traditional and indigenous ways and practices more directly as source material for new thinking about how to live within what I call "the new finite". We should be looking for a hybrid -- the best of the old wisdoms, and a recasting towards the new thinking -- in the same way as the government of Bhutan has, in its own way, been moving forward. That is the strength of its innovations, and should be celebrated as such, openly, in the NDP.