Chapter 5

The Logic of the Social Collective

Frantz Fanon, speaking about a revolutionary, "fighting" literature, has pointed out that "the understanding of the poem is not merely an intellectual advance but a political advance" (Fanon 1990: 231). Jameson’s theory of postmodernism offers us a comprehensive understanding of the contemporary historical period in which postmodernism is dominant, if not hegemonic. This is the result not of "a retreat from meaning, from material, historical reality, but a critical engagement with the forces of late capitalism" which "might help lead to the successful realization of the collective project to wrest the realm of freedom from the realm of necessity" (Gross 1989: 114). By thus reading meaning in history Jameson has named the system. This system, we have seen, is a "resolutely unsystematic" system in which the circuits of production and exploitation transcend all boundaries and span the globe in such a way that the economic homogenization of the world subsumes all modes of production into a single market. This is a system in which the economic dimension has come to take precedence over, or, is indistinguishable from, the social, political, cultural or aesthetic realm, and where commodification has become so universalized as a result of capitalist penetration that the subsumption of all modes into one world market seems nothing but natural. That is why Jameson says that it is a system where "the rhetoric of the market" is "a fundamental and central component" of the struggle at the ideological level which the Left has to address and that it is a "struggle for the legitimation or delegitimation of left discourse" (1991a:
The lesson to be drawn from this, he says, is that "our most urgent task will be to tirelessly denounce the economic forms that have come out for the moment to reign supreme and unchallenged" (1992b: 212). Jameson insists that when "the dimension of economics" which cannot be challenged on a micro-level is lost no "genuine" politics is possible (1991a: 330). He is sure that this genuine politics that can "shatter such a system is collective praxis or class struggle" (1992a: 24). This call for "class politics of some older type" is, in fact, the call for "politics tout court" (1991a: 331).

The fundamental level on which any genuine political struggle today can be waged, Jameson says, following Stuart Hall, is that of "the struggle over the legitimacy of concepts and ideologies" (1991a: 263). And, it is as part of that struggle that he writes that "The market is in human nature' is the proposition that cannot be allowed to stand unchallenged" and that "it is the most crucial terrain of ideological struggle in our time" (1991a: 263-4). The crucial question that arises now is that of ideology. Jameson says that the ideological dimension is intrinsically embedded within the reality, which secretes it as a necessary feature of its own structure. That dimension is profoundly imaginary in a real and positive sense; that is to say, it exists and is real insofar as it is an image, marked and destined to remain as such, its very unreality and unrealizability being what is real about it. (1991a: 262)

Based on this definition, market can be described as an ideology. The fundamental, and contradictory, features of the market, Jameson writes, are "freedom and equality." Though "everybody wants to want them" they cannot be realized. "The only thing that can happen to them is for the system that generates them to disappear, thereby abolishing
the ‘ideals’ along with the reality itself” (1991a: 262-3). In one of the most important
texts on postmodernism, “Postmodernism and the Market,” Jameson discusses the details
of this observation.

Though the ideologues of the global market consistently produce the high rhetoric
of the freedom and equality offered by the system, Jameson says that the very slogan of
the market has always been “a misnomer” and that the “market as a concept rarely has
anything to do with choice or freedom” because “those are all determined for us in
advance” by the capitalist forces who control the market today (1991a: 266). He has no
doubt whatsoever that the “passion for the market” is “always political” and that this
excitement derives from the market’s “illicit metaphorical association” with the media.
He argues that in this nexus between the market and the media “the libidinal energies” of
one system are allowed “to suffuse the other without . . . producing a synthesis, a new
combination, a new combined language” (1991a: 271, 275). The details of this nexus
have already been discussed in an earlier chapter. How the media perpetuates what is
called the “corporate speech” which is nothing other than a global market rhetoric has
also been discussed. Jameson has repeatedly reminded that “the freedom of choice” which
the market rhetoric orchestrates “is scarcely the same thing as the freedom of human
beings to control their own destinies and to play an active part in shaping their collective
life” (1996a: 33). It is this very market rhetoric that is represented in the process called
“deregulation” in the globalization of capital. This deregulation is, in fact, the
delegitimation of the concepts of the welfare state and participatory social democracy.
That is why Jameson says that any political struggle worth the name against the capitalist
market forces and their cultural counterrevolution will be the struggle for the legitimation
of the concepts of welfare state, planning, and socialism. It is, "at least right now in our current situation" a struggle for the "legitimacy of concepts like planning or the market" (1991a: 264).

It will be very much useful to briefly look at the way the advanced nations took to the concepts of welfare state and planning during the post-war years. One of the reasons why Jameson speaks about the legitimation of concepts like welfare state and planning is that they were the foundations upon which the war-torn European nations were reconstructed and they were the very concepts delegitimized by the market rhetoric of late capitalism during the nineteen seventies. The concept of the welfare state was predicated on the idea of participatory social democracy and was formulated with a view to achieving the welfare of all sections of society ensuring their participation in the process of development founded on the principle of planned economic progress. Social security and social justice for all citizens, provision for basic amenities, education, health care and employment for all were the major ideas involved in the concept of the welfare state. Obviously, the successful implementation of the projects for these depended on the effective intervention, leadership, planning and governance of the state. Thus, the concept of the welfare state was founded on the principle of maximum benefit for the maximum number of people or, in other words, the comprehensive development of the totality called society. It was imperative that the state had to actively intervene, oversee, control and invest in order that these ideas were realized. Thus was born state capitalism and mixed economy. Part of the measures adopted by the states for the achievement of the objectives of the welfare state included the nationalization of heavy industries, electricity, railways and mines. Eric Hobsbawm observes that the narratives of the development and progress
achieved by the advanced European nations during the post war years are the narratives of industrialization done directly by or under the control and supervision of the states (1992b: 269). On close examination, the concept of the welfare state can be seen to have borrowed many of its basic ideas from the concept of socialism and from the model of the planned economy of the erstwhile Soviet Union.

Hobsbawm says that the politics of consensus and the "progress" the European economy attained could not be sustained for long. Because of the inherent contradictions of capitalism it was inevitable that by the end of the sixties fissures began to appear in the economies of the advanced societies which resulted in the breakdown of the Brettonwood Finacial System. Added to this was the energy crisis of the early seventies generated by the Arab-Israeli war. The global economic crisis of 1974 was a combined effect of all these. Hobsbawm says that by 1974 an era was coming to an end. This provided a very congenial atmosphere for the neoliberals to promote the idea of structural changes in capitalist economy in order to overcome the crisis. The concept of the welfare state and state intervention and control and regulation were blamed to be responsible for the crisis and their rhetoric for a free market-oriented restructuring of capitalism gained increased currency among the advanced nations. The process of the delegitimation of participatory social democracy and welfare state at the ideological level had already started and the neoconservative governments of Europe and America were only too willing to adopt the policy of deregulation, liberalization and privatization on the pretext of overcoming the economic crisis. Consequently, structural changes were effected in their economies. Thus was started the process of the decentralization of production, the amalgamation of the hitherto nationally bound industrial and business houses into multinational corporations,
globalization of capital and the formation of a free global market. The explosive development of communication technology and the more influential role of finance capital only helped to increase the pace of these processes. The entry of mass media into the scene and its nexus with the market which has already been referred to completes the circle (Hobsbawm 1992: 270-90).

There is no doubt that the neoconservative politics of the Reagan-Thatcher axis that replaced the politics of consensus of the fifties and sixties were largely responsible for the restructuring of capitalism. At the ideological level the abandonment of the concept of welfare state was the most important plank of such a politics. This relieved the states of their basic responsibility of ensuring social justice and security to the citizens. Planning and participatory social democracy were stigmatized as obsolete ideas. Economic growth and development can be ensured only by an open, free market and private enterprises. The state was to function as an agency facilitating the smooth working of the free market and multinational corporations. In other words, it is to function only as another megaphone for the corporate speech. The freedom of the citizens lies in the freedom of the market. Such were the ideas propagated and marketed by the capitalist forces as economic imperatives to successfully overcome the crisis and to achieve sustained growth. Accepting Stuart Hall’s proposition that “discursive struggle” is the primary mode of the legitimation/delegitimation of ideologies he writes:

The saturation with a culture of consumerism was accompanied by the systematic delegitimation of slogans and concepts ranging from nationalization and welfare all the way to economic rights and socialism itself, once thought to be not merely possible but also desirable, yet today
universally held to be chimerical by an omnipresent cynical reason.

(1996a: 18)

It has already been pointed out that the governments of the decolonized Third World countries including India have been only too willing to give in to this orchestrated rhetoric of neoconservative politics. Perhaps the only difference here is that if the restructuring of capitalism in advanced European societies was effected by the neoliberal welfare state governments, it was done under the supervision of the bourgeois democratic governments in the decolonized nations. In both instances the once universally accepted ideals of the welfare state which sought to ensure maximum benefit for the maximum number of people, and which considered it as the responsibility of the state to implement them have now been abandoned. Luis Britto-Garcia finds a coherence existing between postmodernity’s “ideological paradigm” and the delegitimization of metanarratives such as the welfare of the majority. He says that the postmodern ideology “poses a corollary between the weakening of the state and political compromise, and makes an economic doctrine out of the omnipotence of the market” (1993: 517).

It is in this context and as part of the political struggle against capitalist exploitation that Jameson calls for resuscitating ideas like socialism, welfare state, nationalization and planning because these aim at the well being of the huge majority of people. “Our task,” he writes, is “the legitimation of the discourses of socialism in such a way that they do become realistic and serious alternatives for people” (1988d: 359). He insists on this because though he is aware that the West apparently lacks any revolutionary socialist fervour, he is convinced that the desire for collective social reforms is always there although in an unconscious form and always striving to push
history in the direction towards a socialist society (1988d: 358). He is concerned that the "surrender to the various forms of market ideology" even by those on the left is "alarmingly universal" (1991a: 263). Jameson says that even the social democratic programme has a "politically educative value" because it "shows what the system is incapable of achieving and confirms the principle of totality" and because it demonstrates that "even minimal demands for economic justice cannot be achieved within the market framework by committed and 'liberal,' let alone 'socialist,' people and movements" (1996a: 16). Jameson reiterates that in this discursive struggle it is imperative to expose the hollowness of the post-Marxist argument that "classical capitalism no longer exists, and has given way to this or that 'post-capitalism'" which is very much similar to the neoconservative argument that contemporary capitalism has "displaced the older capitalist dynamic of profit and competition." Both, he says, are based on the presumption that there has been some "mutation" in the basic structure of capitalism (1996a: 21-2). Jameson not only refuses to believe these arguments but is unequivocal in his statements that "it is a mistake to suppose that the historically original dynamics of capitalism have undergone a mutation or an evolutionary restructuration" and that "capitalism has not fundamentally changed" (1996a: 22, 23). On the contrary, he asserts, the dependence of late capitalism on science and technology and the "ever increasing tempo of industrial and technological change" on a global scale has only taken the persistent features of capitalism to unprecedented scales (1996a: 22-3). He concludes that it is clearer today than ever before that late capitalism defines itself "at one and the same time in its global dynamics as well as in its internal effects;" and "the former now seem to impose a return on the latter, as when we speak of the way in which an 'internal Third World' and a
The process of internal colonization has seemed to eat away at the First World itself" (1996a: 26). Thus Jameson makes it unequivocally clear that the capitalist structure has "convulsively enlarge[d] with each new phase" rather than passing into a post-capitalist phase as the post-Marxists and the neoconservatives would want us to believe (1996a: 26).

But Jameson does not believe that welfare state and nationalization are sufficient "to define the socialist project." Nevertheless, he wants them to be energetically legitimized and defended because he believes that at a time when big governments are delegitimized and private solutions are encouraged to public problems socialists should ally themselves with liberals in their struggle against the market rhetoric and its ideology. He observes:

The Welfare State was an achievement; its internal contradictions are those of capitalism itself and not a failure of social and collective concern; at any rate, where it is in the process of being dismantled, it will be important for the Left to seize and articulate the dissatisfactions of ordinary people with the loss of those of achievements and that safety net, and not to play into the hands of the market rhetoricians. (1996a: 28)

This is consistent with Jameson's proposition that any fruitful and radical critique of commodification and consumption promoted by the late capitalist market system has to include reflections on an alternative system, say, socialism, as a necessary corollary so that it is not reduced to a mere moral discussion (1991a: 207). These efforts to defend concepts like welfare state and nationalization are only "the necessary reactive strategies" intended to re-create a climate congenial for the projection of "a properly socialist vision"
At the same time Jameson reminds us that in order that the measures of welfare state and social democracy be successful politically for the development of socialism they have to be labeled socialist. For him "not just any change will do; he wants the intended, planned change to a socialist future" (McGowan 1991: 150). Jameson says that socialism is "a total project" the different components of which have to be "registered allegorically, as so many emanations and figures for its central spirit, at the same time that they are justified in their own right, in terms of their own local appropriateness" (1996a: 29).

Jameson is aware that planning is a concept which has been stigmatized as promoting a "command society." He says that this is one argument to be countered by the endorsement of socialism which formulates a "collective project in individualistic terms" so as to ensure the full development of the individual. Socialist planning is a culture by itself that aims at the "liberation of individuals by the collective and an exercise in new political possibilities," but not by any means an "ominous regression to the pre-individualistic and the repressively archaic" as it is made out to be by the neoliberal market rhetoric (1996a: 32). Jameson says that "in a truly revolutionary collective experience what comes into being is . . . a new level of being . . . in which individuality is not effaced but completed by collectivity" (1998b: 10). This is an Utopian vision of a genuinely egalitarian society which would foster the true development of all forms of identities and differences. This socialist vision recognizes that if the unique difference of every individual is to be respected its ethic must be extended universally. Jameson says that in it there is the realization that what emerges out of the revolutionary collective experience is not a mass but a new individual being, "what Deleuze, following Eisenstein
calls the Dividual" (1998b: 10). Discussing the question of "Difference" in a socialist society, Terry Eagleton says that socialism is not interested in "equality" because it cannot treat two people "as equal individuals" but only as "equally individuals" which means that "difference is natural to us" and that all individuals will have "the freedom, protection and resources they need to develop in their own different ways." In a class society like the late capitalist one which is supposed to encourage pluralism and differences, individual development is "inseparable from the exploitation of others, a point the liberals refuse to recognize" (1997: 116-18). He goes on to argue that "difference is not the final political goal" of socialism. Differences, Eagleton writes, cannot be meaningfully developed "while men and women languish under forms of exploitation; and to combat those forms effectively implicates ideas of humanity which are necessarily universal" (1997: 120-21).

So it is as political and economic alternatives to these forms of exploitation and the "corrosive act of universal commodification and the market system" which dissolve and fragment all cohesive social groups that Jameson wants the concepts of welfare state, planning and nationalization to be legitimated in the discursive struggle (1992a: 15). Collective solidarity on which these concepts are predicated can break through the reified atomization of late capitalist social life thus activating the process of class struggle and the development of class consciousness. This is, in fact, a definition of the vocation of the world "in terms of collective social life and of planned productivity, the reduction of human labour, and a vision of human control over history." It is to restore a utopian vision and "to make possible again the picture of an alternative future" (Jameson 1998b: 169). This projection of an alternative to the contemporary system as part of the
discursive struggle is very much in the spirit of Gramscian ideas on revolution that “focus on the concept of hegemony--- as counterhegemony.” Leslie Good observes that for Gramsci “the key struggle takes place not in the realm of militancy, but instead, in the realm of ideology” and that “the ‘hegemonic crisis’ leads to a struggle over competing definitions of social reality.” Such a definition of social reality is an imperative in the struggle against bourgeois dominance and by this strategy “an alternative concept of society is created--- one which assaults bourgeois hegemony in a ‘war of position’” (Good 1989: 63). The socialist system which Jameson projects as an alternative future generates “a culture which somehow neutralizes” the influences of the “superstructural corruption by commodity fantasies” and the “catastrophic effects of the market” including the “the devastation of the social and cultural habits of commodification” in a “vital and positive way, as a collective choice rather than a regime of censorship and secession” (1996a: 32).

Jameson has consistently insisted on the necessity of the reinvention of the Utopian vision in any contemporary radical counterhegemonic politics. This renewal of Utopian thinking is, in fact, a “creative speculation” regarding the place of the subject in “a social order that has put behind it class organization, commodity production and the market, alienated labour and the implacable determinism of a historical logic beyond the control of humanity” (1988a: 110). In other words, Utopia is “the political and social solution of collective life.” Jameson does not mean that Utopia is devoid of “tensions and unresolvable contradictions” but says that it “exacerbates those and allows them free rein, by removing the artificial miseries of money and self- preservation” (1995a: 110). In Jamesonian terms Utopia is a “transparent synonym for socialism itself” (1988b: 77). The
Utopian impulse, Jameson claims, awakens people to a consciousness of the contemporary reality of society and of the necessity of collective action in order to transform it to a system where there is “a withdrawal of effective power from those with a vested interest in the reestablishment of the older order” and which involves the “collective re-education of all the classes” (1988b: 145).

Jameson speaks about the reinvention of the Utopian vision because “all significant manifestos of postmodernism celebrate” the “end of ideology and of Utopia.” To the neoconservatives Utopia in the post war period meant “any revolutionary attempt to create a radically different society.” Though the sixties witnessed a renewal of Utopian thinking and imagination the disparate Utopian impulses did not coalesce into a political movement that could be instrumental in transforming the social system but produced “a vital range of micropolitical movements . . . whose common denominator is the resurgent problematic of Nature” in a variety of forms (1991a: 159-60). Modernism, Jameson reminds us drawing attention to Perry Anderson’s argument, was “intimately related to the winds of change blowing from the great new radical social movements.” High modernism, he continues, “emerges in a space opened by them, and its formal values of the New and of innovation, along with its Utopian sense of the transfiguration of the self and the world” are to be understood as “echoes and resonances of the hopes and optimism of that great period dominated by the Second International” (1991a: 312-13). Following John Berger Jameson refers to the Utopian vocation of painting embodied in Cubism and says that it “expresses a Utopian impulse that we have not yet been able to reinvent.” The “explosive negativity” of Dadaism “embodies the very dynamic of history itself as the ‘unceasing overthrow of the objective forms that shape life of man’.”
Utopian vocation of surrealism,” writes Jameson, is “in its attempt to endow the object world” of the fragmented industrial society “with the mystery and the depth, the ‘magical’ qualities . . . of an Unconscious that seems to speak and vibrate through those things” (1991a: 172-3). He argues that this “new Utopianism” of modernist art is “only in part a glorification of new machinery, as in futurism;” in fact, it “expresses itself across a gamut of impulses and excitement that ultimately touch on the impending transformation of society itself” (1991a: 313). Jameson claims that these Utopian texts can be understood as “a determinate type of praxis, rather than as a specific mode of representation,” a praxis that has more to do with “a concrete set of mental operations” to be performed on those “collective representations of contemporary society that inform our ideologies just as they order our experience of daily life” (1988b: 81).

It is this Utopian vision that is repudiated by postmodernism. Jameson says that “the intellectual repudiation of Utopia” cannot be separated from “a fear of Utopia, which is a thoroughgoing anxiety in the face of everything we stand to lose” in the course of the radical transformation that will “leave little intact of current passions, habits, practices and values” (1995a: 60). This is a fear or fantasy of the neoconservatives that a Utopian society

will somehow be a place of renunciation, of the simplification of life, of the obliteration of exciting urban difference and of the muting of sensory stimulus . . . a place, finally, of the return to . . . “rural idiocy” from which everything interestingly complex about “western civilization” has been amputated. (1991a: 335)
It is this enervation of Utopian thought in the postmodern times and its emphasis on "groupuscules" that promote a mode of depoliticization against which Jameson is advocating the regeneration of the Utopian vision. Erik Olin Wright observes that a vital belief in a Utopian ideal is necessary to "motivate people to leave on the journey from the status quo in the first place, even though the likely destination may fall short of the utopian ideal" (2000: 1). Jameson has no doubt that for progressive people committed to systemic change the immediate and primary task is to tirelessly "analyze and diagnose the fear and anxiety before Utopia itself" (1995a: 61). But this is an "introspective and self-critical process" as well which performs a kind of "collective therapy" on the "victims of depoliticization, a rigorous look at everything we fantasize as mutilating, as privative, as oppressive, as mournful and depressing about all the available visions of a radical transformation in the social order" (1995a: 61). Jameson insists on such a process because he knows that it is important to reawaken the dormant "mental and imaginative function" to envision the future and to examine "the various ways in which our society represses...the Utopian principle and the Utopian imagination," and also to realize that "the status of the idea of the future has very real practical as well as theoretical consequences, for the quality of social life itself as well as for the strategy of a cultural politics" (1976b: 55-6). Vincent Leitch comments that the "inability to picture Utopia as something other than a regimented commune established by means of bloody revolution signals a disastrous atrophy of ideals" (1992: 120). And, as John O'Neill says, Jameson's effort is "to refurbish the Marxist vision of a collective Utopia" (1989: 151).

Philip Goldstein criticizes Jameson's "pursuit of a utopian realm" as "an ultimate indifference to practical action" which renders "this pursuit apolitical" (1989: 257). John
McGowan also has leveled similar charges against Jameson (1991: 157, 180). Cornel West argues that Jameson's Utopianism is "bad" because it "rests on no specifiable historical forces potentially capable of actualizing it." It is also bad in the sense that his works have "little or no political praxis as texts;" that they do not refer to any "political movement or formation in process with which his texts have some connection;" and that they do not provide any space for "highlighting issues of political praxis" nor do they address "modes of political praxis in its own academic setting" (1986: 140). These are neither a fair nor a just evaluation of Jameson's politics, for he is not only not indifferent to practical action but realizes well the significance of action in any Marxist vision of politics. His critique has the power of not just delineating some utopian ideal to be striven for but of revealing a critical understanding of the corrosive effects of late capitalism. It is this synthesis which makes his work distinctive as a form of praxis. He is aware that any Marxism worth the name cannot be severed from political struggle in the present and the need to project alternate visions of future. That is why he says that Marxism is a "unity-of-theory-and-practice" and that the projection of a qualitatively different image of an alternative social order is its ideological function (1996a: 19). Jameson's projection of an alternative vision of society is, in effect, a reinvention of the Utopian impulse of Marxism. It is also to be mentioned that Marxism understands that the future is "structurally inherent in the present" and that the transformation to this future can only be achieved by the "revolutionary means" of a historical agent (Jameson 1976b: 54). This agent is a global proletariat whose emergence Jameson witnesses in the contemporary world of multinational capitalism. If Jameson says that the reified state of capitalist social institutions imposes "structural limits" on "praxis," as Goldstein points out, he is only
being realistic and not overly optimistic in the light of the penetrations and conquests that capitalism has made in the postmodern times. McGowan himself says that Jameson believes that "mere textual resolutions of the 'real' historical contradictions cannot actually solve [the] experienced necessities." He is sure that "only some kind of political action by a collective group (not a single author) can effect social change" (1991: 152). In 1986 when he leveled the charge against Jameson, Cornel West could not have taken Jameson’s views on the action of the political formation of the League of Black Revolutionary Workers of Detroit into consideration for they were expressed first in 1988 in his essay on “Cognitive Mapping.”

Jameson realizes that the postmodern times present new challenges to social theory and radical politics and proposes a theoretics and politics of “cognitive mapping” as a means to challenge the limits set by late capitalism. His notion of cognitive mapping is predicated on a dialectic of immediate perception and imaginative conception, the ability to extrapolate from the mental map of the immediate perceptible situation to a larger imaginative spatial context. It is, in other words, the shift from the immediate environment to “that mental map of the social and global totality we all carry around in our heads in variously garbled forms” (1988d: 353). In the context of the postmodern conditions engineered by the globalization of capital when a political activity confined to social relations within the local and national boundaries may not be effective, we have to map our individual social relations in terms of the totality of class relations on a global scale. Any failure to achieve such cognitive maps will be detrimental to socialist projects in the postmodern. Jameson advocates such cognitive mapping because “the nation-state itself has ceased to play a central function and formal role” in this period of the
prodigious expansion of capital beyond the national boundaries (1988d: 350). This new global space, Jameson says, involves "the suppression of distance . . . to the point where the postmodern body . . . is now exposed to a perceptual barrage of immediacy from which all sheltering layers and intervening mediations have been removed" (1988d: 351). Spatially this new global system presents a "historically original dilemma" that involves the insertion of individual subjects into "a multidimensional set of radically discontinuous realities" as divergent as "the still surviving spaces of bourgeois private life" and the "unimaginable decentering of global capital itself" (1988d: 351). In this experiential dilemma the appeal to a real referent is impossible because, as we have already seen, the distinctions between representations and their objects cannot be sustained in a world predominated by simulation models.

There is no denying the fact that since the ascendance of capital the ruling conditions of existence of the individual subjects have been those produced by the agendas of capital itself. As they are more and more integrated into the mechanisms controlled by capital the history and meaning of individual subjects and their cultures reach beyond themselves. In his essay on "Cognitive Mapping" Jameson presents a spatial analysis sketching the historical changes that space has undergone during the three stages of capitalist development and suggests that each stage has generated a space unique to itself. They are all "the result of discontinuous expansion" of capital, and its "penetration and colonization of hitherto uncommodified areas" (1988d: 348). We can see that there is "a growing contradiction between lived experience and structure" as capital expands and brings more and more realms under its control. What Jameson means is that the subject's real conditions of existence become absent from his/her own perceptual
capacities and s/he has no immediate access to reality because the subject becomes a structural element in the service of capitalist expansion and the truth of the individual experience "no longer coincides with the place in which it takes place" (1988d: 349). The dilemma caused by this disorientation is not only experiential but analytical and political as well. It is a manifestation of the individual's inability to position him/herself individually and collectively within "the great global multinational and decentered communicational network" of late capitalism and "its local, national and international class relations" (1991a: 44, 52). This postmodern hyperspace vitiates the individual's capacity to act. It is in the face of such a dilemma that Jameson proposes the solution of cognitive mapping of the social and global totality which privileges a spatial politics whereby individual subjects will be able to map their place in society. It is "a model of political culture appropriate to our own situation" which raises "spatial issues as its fundamental organizing concern" (1991a: 51).

Jameson's call for cognitive mapping is, in fact, a call for a new postmodern aesthetics and politics, a politics of aesthetic representation which "foregrounds the cognitive and pedagogical dimension of political art and culture" and which will provide "one possible form of a new radical cultural politics" (1991a: 50). He is concerned that of the three traditional formulations of the uses of a work of art---"to teach, to move, to delight"---the pedagogical function has almost been eclipsed from contemporary theory and criticism (1988d: 347). John Hartley says that Jameson is right in the sense that "the most advanced contemporary theory and criticism has retreated into monastic scholasticism, communicating only fear and loathing to the outside world." In the theoretical, critical and creative work of the postmodern times this refusal to teach is
evidenced by the conscious effort to resist what is called "the tyranny of lucidity" (1995: 133). Jameson proposes the aesthetics of cognitive mapping as an attempt to recover the pedagogical function of art. Jameson refuses to believe the poststructuralist claim that the world is nonrepresentable and argues that while we may never perfectly or completely be able to apprehend it we still live in a mappable world. Cognitive mapping helps us to gain significant knowledge of our disoriented social reality and in that sense it is pedagogical. The perceptual confusion and representational dilemma postmodernism has created makes it imperative for the political artist to be pedagogical, to provide cognitive maps that will help to grasp our positioning as individual and collective subjects so that we regain our capacity to act. Philip Auslander says that Jameson's implication is that the critical artist has to incorporate "the functions of positioning the subject within dominant discourses and of offering strategies of counterhegemonic resistance." This, he does by "exposing the processes of cultural control and emphasizing the traces of nonhegemonic discourses within the dominant without claiming to transcend its terms" (1992: 24). Jameson's texts on postmodernism fulfil this function and that is why they deserve to be considered a form of political praxis.

Jameson's theory of cognitive mapping, no doubt, is part of his politics of totalization and hence has attracted a lot of criticism from writers as varied as Barry Smart, Victor Li, Sean Homer, John O'Neill and Radhakrishnan all of whom charge that Jameson subordinates different forms of subjectivity and generalizes too much (Smart 1992: 189, Li 1992: 137, Homer 1998: 139, O'Neill 1995: 122-3, Radhakrishnan 1989: 324). Cognitive mapping, no doubt, calls for a politics of totality and Jameson's logic of totalizing has already been discussed. He has repeatedly given expression to his
incredulity towards what he calls "any single-shot, single-function" perspective of politics which, he says, is "worse than misleading" and "draws its power" from "the desire to show immediate results, feel some ego satisfaction, make the tangible mark right now." Jameson says that "the mirage of the great single-function political 'line' or strategy" comes from the "impatience with the mediated, with the long-term" (1982c: 75). Jameson is aware that "we are all fragmented beings, living in a host of separate reality-compartments simultaneously" and that "a certain kind of politics is possible" in each one of them (1982c: 75). But, he says:

In a society colonized by reification--- that is, by fragmentation, by an infinite divisibility of social relations, space, and consciousness (and the Unconscious itself)--- in a society whose mode of reification has become dialectically intensified and raised to a whole new level in the world of the media image and the simulacrum--- the attempt either cognitively or imaginatively to totalize becomes one of the preconditions for political action let alone aesthetic production or theoretical analysis. (1982c: 87)

An "aesthetic of cognitive mapping" is "an integral part of any socialist political project" and "without a conception of the social totality (and the possibility of transforming a whole social system), no properly socialist politics is possible" (1988d: 353, 355). Once we are able to map the postmodern social totality and thus understand the new cultural and sociopolitical space it will be much easier for devising radical cultural politics and other political strategies because superior command over space is "a fundamental and all-pervasive source of social power" and an "important weapon in class struggle" (Harvey 1989: 226, 294).
Jameson's proposal of cognitive mapping is significant in a world where capital has conquered "culture and its traditional spaces and instruments" and culture has become "cotemporaneous with the social field as a whole" and where the "older models of both politics and culture may no longer be completely relevant" (1982c: 77). In the disorienting and decentered space of postmodern hyperreality cognitive maps help to overcome the disorientation by representing unrepresented phenomena and by relating seemingly diverse and separate "strings of events, types of discourse, modes of classification, and compartments of reality" (1991a: 372). Cognitive mapping can be described, in other words, as a kind of cure for reification which, Jameson says, is "a disease of that mapping function whereby individual subject projects and models his or her own insertion into the collectivity" (1982c: 86). This is the reason why Jameson says that cognitive mapping is "nothing but a code word for 'class consciousness'" which proposes "the need for class consciousness of a new and hitherto undreamed of kind." that is to say, of a global kind (1991a: 418). He insists on it because, as pointed out earlier, Jameson does not believe that "class" is an obsolete social category. On the contrary, he affirms that the postmodern society "is a class society and thus 'by definition' class struggle continues at every instant" and that it is "premature to deplore the weakening of class consciousness in our society today" (1982c: 77).

The spatial destabilization that the globalization of capital has been able to effect, the decentralization in the process of production in late capitalism, the international division of labour, "the crisis in national production and thereby in the institutions of a shrinking national work force" all bring into being new "international forms of production with the corresponding class relations." It is inevitable that in this new global
system a “new process of global class formation” is at work. Jameson agrees that the “geological tempo of such class formation” is imperceptible and that there are “representational dilemmas” caused by this (1996a: 39). It is in order to overcome this dilemma that Jameson proposes the method of cognitive mapping. David Harvey observes that though Jameson “exaggerates somewhat with respect to the uniqueness and newness” of postmodern spatial experience “the dilemmas which [he] depicts are exact and capture the drift of postmodern sensibility as to the meaning of space in contemporary political and cultural as well as economic life” (1989: 305). He warns us about the “omnipresent danger that our mental maps will not match current realities” (1989: 305). It has to be said that Jameson foresaw this danger much earlier and proposes cognitive maps as probable solution. Harvey says that we cannot ignore that the “intersecting command of money, time and space forms a substantial nexus of social power” and that “mapping” opens up “a way to look upon space as open to appropriation for private uses.” Mapping can never be ideologically neutral and it allows us “to take effective visual and conceptual possession of the physical space in which we live and also strengthen the sense of individual and local powers” (1989: 226, 228). There can never be any politics of space independent of social relations and Jameson’s cognitive mapping is proposed with a view to conceptually possessing and representing the new social relations in the postmodern hyperspace.

Reference has been made to Jameson’s view that a global proletariat is in the process of emergence. He says that though global capital is now enjoying the greatest freedom in the history of its development, and though working class movements and insurgencies, socialist parties and socialist states and other such resistance movements
seem to be in disarray today, these “threatening forces” that capitalism “generated against itself in the past” have not been “effectively neutralized.” It is after taking this inherent crisis into consideration that Jameson defines postmodernism afresh as “little more than a transitional period” of capitalism, in which “the earlier forms of the economic” are being “restructured on a global scale, including the older forms of labor and its traditional organizational institutions and concepts (1991a: 417). He claims that “only an ostrich will wish to accuse” this of “pessimism,” referring to charges that his critique of postmodernism is utterly pessimistic (1991a: 417).

Philip Goldstein argues that Jameson’s “pessimistic belief that the reified state of capitalist social institutions precludes practical action or, as he says, imposes ‘structural limits’ on ‘praxis’” (1989: 257). Sean Homer’s complaint is that the “rather bleak and pessimistic scenario” of postmodern antinomies that Jameson sketches “seems to have paralyzed [his] political imagination.” Jameson’s proposal, he says, is that we must try to “detect and retrieve from within the fragmented, schizoid and heterogeneous elements” of the postmodern “the smallest remnants of a repressed collective experience, a collective experience that will allow us to once more think the alternative to a global capitalist system” (1998: 148-9). Mike Davis and Victor Li also level similar charges (Davis 1985: 82-5, Li 1991: 137-40). Criticisms like these are, no doubt, exaggerated. It is true that Jameson’s historical analysis of postmodernism presents the hitherto triumphant expansion of capitalism and its hegemony. But that doesn’t mean that he does not see any hope for collective resistance against the reifying forces of capitalism. All through his texts on postmodernism Jameson has insisted on the need for an alternative to the capitalist system. But it is not an easy walk over to the alternative socialist system. Nor is
it something that will happen overnight. He has repeatedly reminded us of Marx’s warning about the great resiliency of capitalism in his *Grundrisse* which, Jameson says, “better accommodates” its “new vitality and dynamism” in the postmodern times (1988a: 48). Jameson has repeatedly said that Marx was never tired of insisting that capital’s ultimate horizon and its ultimate crisis situation is the “world market” which only a process of its globalization can achieve (1991a: xix, 1995a: 27, 1996a: 17, 1998a: 68, 139). So, Jameson’s analysis of late capitalism and his views on its penetration of the hitherto uncommodified areas including the Unconscious are consistent with Marx’s prediction of the global expansion of capital. Hence, charges of pessimism against Jameson seem to be unfounded. On the contrary, his is a warning against any facile conception of a systemic change from capitalism to socialism. Perry Anderson’s comment that “[c]ategories such as optimism or pessimism have no place in Hegel’s thought” can, in fact, be applied to Jameson as well and, it can, without fear of being contradicted, be said that his “politics have always been realist” (1999: 77).

Jameson is very much conscious of the fact that History “sets inexorable limits to individual as well as collective praxis” and that the subjects of history have to learn lessons from “the determinate failure of all the revolutions that have taken place in human history” (1981a: 102). Marx’s insistence on capital’s tendency towards the outer limit of a global market, he says, implies that “socialist revolution and a socialist society are not possible until capitalism has become a worldwide and global fact,” a situation in which “universal commodification is combined with a global proletarianization of the work force, a transformation all humanity (including the peasants of the Third World) into wage workers.” Though this relegates the chances for socialism to a distant future
the "ominous nature of the current 'total system'" is encouraging because it "marks
precisely the quantum progression toward that final global state" (1988a: 48).

No one can deny the reorganization of business and industry taking place all over
the world in the name of globalization and liberalization, the integration of Third World
countries into a global system and the development of new social relationships across
national boundaries. Jameson writes: "That a new international proletariat (taking forms
we cannot yet imagine) will reemerge from this convulsive upheaval it needs no prophet
to predict" (1991a: 417). He says that it would be "surprising" if they "were unable to
develop new and original ways of reasserting their own interests" (1996a: 39). The global
reorganization of capital has produced masses of structurally unemployed people and
Jameson says that they "have now come to seem more plausible agents of political action
(or 'subjects of history')," and their "new dynamics are registered in the emergence of the
radical new category of marginality as such." But Jameson observes that all "the inherited
wisdom of political organization" has been acquired "on the basis of wage work and the
spatial advantage it presents" (1996a: 39-40). Only the notion of class allows us to grasp
the nature of the social as a "systemic entity which can only be changed in a radical and
systemic way" (1996a: 43). This is why he prefers a totalizing politics based on global
class formations and the development of a genuine class consciousness. Best and Kellner
say that Jameson is "committed to a more traditional class politics" and, in his texts on
postmodernism "we find the evocation of a form of proletarianization and class struggle
that interprets the 'new subjects of history' within the framework of classical Marxism"
"Given the space of postmodernism," Lambert Zuidervaart asks, in Jameson's view, "what are the possibilities of a new political culture?" He alleges that Jameson's answer is "excruciatingly tentative" and it is "a delicate dance, calling for a new political culture while declaring it all but impossible under current conditions" (1989: 218). Jameson's notions of a systemic politics and the emergence of global proletariat have already been discussed. But in response to the allegations referred to above, it has to be pointed out that however the ideal of socialism and global proletariat is conceived, Jameson maintains that political realism compels the preservation and defence of the concept of revolution and revolutionary institutions (1983a: 291-2). He recognizes that Revolution is "the central concept in any Marxian 'unity-of-theory-and-practice'" and any meaningful defence of this concept requires it to be grasped as "an elaborate and complex process" rather than as "a punctual moment" in history (1996b: 5). Social revolution is to be "affirmed" in terms of the necessity of "absolute systemic change" in the "synchronic system in which everything holds together and is interrelated with everything else" (1996b: 5). Jameson insists that the concept of the system or totality has to be derivations from "practical, social and political experiences" which tell us that the logic of profit is incompatible with social motives and "a will to cooperation," and, this means that there has to be an "immense moral and collective fervour" to be mobilized to achieve basic social changes and "social construction of new collective forms of production." Within the existing bourgeois democratic system any seizure of power by left forces through electoral victories, Jameson says, have to be taken as "signals" for "radical claims" on a "sympathetic government" that must be "radicalized in its turn" (1996a: 36-7). Jameson continues:
The revolutionary process in this sense is a new legal dispensation in which repressed popular groups slowly emerge from the silence of their subalternity and dare to speak out--- an act which can range from the proposal of new kinds of laws to the seizure of farm lands . . . democracy necessarily means that kind of speaking out, which can also be identified as the truest form of the production of new needs (as opposed to consumerism). (1996a: 37)

Jameson also says that though this “disorderly process” of “revolution” may seem to “threaten and overwhelm control in all directions” it is “thoroughly consistent with democracy as such . . . in terms of which all the great revolutions can be rewritten” (1996a: 37).

There is also another implication of the concept of Revolution which Jameson refers to, as equally important as the above one. This, he observes,

takes the revolutionary process as a whole as the condensed figure for the recovery, by the social collective, of the very possibility of praxis, of collective decision-making, self-formation and the choosing of a relationship to nature. Revolution in this sense is the moment in which the collective takes back into its own hands a popular sovereignty . . . in which people recover a capacity to change their own destiny and thereby to win some measure of control over their collective history. (1996a: 38)

Jameson is very much aware that people feel more powerless these days and their confusion and helplessness are inspired by the technological, cybernetic processes in the
convulsive expansion of capital on the global scale. It is this capitalist expansion to a hitherto unfamiliar new scale, beyond temporal and spatial limits that human beings can imagine, that has created some sort of suspicion in the adequacy of the human collectivity as the agents of political action and thereby of revolution and systemic change.

This is the postmodern political space that Zuidervaart refers to and Jameson says categorically that it demands "a politics of ambivalence or ambiguity (assuming the word dialectical is still unfashionable)" with an "emphasis on a great collective project" which realizes the "essentially cultural nature of late capitalism, the mass democratization of the world market by world information technology on the very eve of mass starvation and the permanent downsizing of industrial production as such" (1996a: 54). Such a collective project organized by those on the Left has to "articulate the dissatisfactions of ordinary people" and "defend big governments" against the attacks of the market rhetoric that present their drawbacks as the "failure of social and collective concerns" (1996a: 28). "Big governments," Jameson says, "should be a positive slogan" and bureaucracy "rescued from its stereotypes" has to be "reinvoked in the terms of the service and class commitment it has had" at times in the past (1996a: 28-9). There is no doubt that the postmodern social order is richer in information and much more literate and "socially, at least, more ‘democratic’ in the sense of the universalization of wage labour" (1991a: 306). These new forms and "the transnational organization of radical intellectuals" they make possible have to be used "positively" by the Left in a political praxis that would successfully translate the great collective project. In this great collective project, Jameson says, "an active majority of the population participates, as something belonging to it and
constructed by its own energies" and sets social priorities of its own deliberations (1991a: 278).

These prolegomenous remarks of Jameson on the nature of the new politics demanded by the postmodern space have been vindicated by the democratic decentralization programme of Kerala. It may be coincidental that Kerala has been witness to the organization of a great collective project almost exactly in the nature of the one envisaged by Jameson. This massive project popularly known as “People’s Campaign for Decentralized Planning” emphasizes the role of the decentered collectivity in, to use Jameson’s language, a “politics of ambivalence” which articulates the desires of the silenced majority and defends big government and deepens democracy in a political praxis translating the collective project. In the postmodern times the role of an activist state has been defamed and rendered ineffective and the capitalist market has become what Karl Polanyi calls “a Satanic Mill” (quoted in Fung and Wright 2000: 2). It is at such a historical juncture that this state sponsored movement of People’s Campaign for Decentralized Planning in Kerala attempts to generate a new civic culture as part of a more intense political struggle to wrest the realm of freedom from the world of necessity through a participatory, activist and empowering intervention in the process of planning and development, and thus to defend an affirmative state. A “remarkable radical experiment in democracy,” this movement mobilizes the energy of thousands of activists and volunteers, and, promotes and supports “the spontaneous release of local initiatives” in the efforts to build “a more just, egalitarian, democratic, and sustainable future for the world and its people” (Franke and Chasin 2000: 1). In the postmodern geopolitical context of a unipolar world and the enfeeblement of national governments and the
delegitimation of the concepts of participatory democracy and welfare state, this collective project strongly buttressed by state support widens the powers of a democratically elected government in their efforts to intervene meaningfully in social welfare activities and mobilize and control resources so as to implement welfare schemes. The maximization of welfare can be effected only by providing services that are consistent with "the spatially differentiated tastes and preferences of the people" (Issac and Franke 2000: 5). In this process is involved a strong defence of what Jameson calls the big government and its radicalization in the sense that the movement provides the opportunity not only for the articulation of the desires and hopes of a silenced subalternity but also for their effective realization. With the potential for generating and "nurturing useful state-civil society synergies" from the "interpersonal relations or small group and community networks" involved in community participation, decentralization is not only instrumental in making the state more effective but is also a "strategic response of the 'affirmative democratic state' to the neoliberal onslaught" against state intervention in developmental and welfare activities (Issac and Franke 2000: 6). The active involvement of the collectivity in the process of planning both at the stage of making demands and in taking decisions and implementing them widens and deepens democracy so that the state is effectively enlarged as an institution obedient to the claims and rights of the majority of the citizens.

Conceptually different from the traditional forms of resistance or revolutionary movements, this mass movement recognizes the fact that the process of globalization does not include in its agenda the welfare of the silenced majority. It has been pointed out above that in the triumphant march of late capitalism and its market rhetoric it is concepts
such as national sovereignty, democracy, socialism, and welfare state which have been either delegitimized or buried as outmoded. In effect, this movement reinvents those concepts whose legitimation, Jameson says, “at least right now and in our current situation” is part of the political struggle against the ideology of the market at the fundamental level (1991a: 264). It is worth remembering that these were concepts very closely linked to the idea of national freedom and hence high on the agenda of liberation movements in almost all Third World countries and they were considered worthy to be embraced and implemented during the period immediately after decolonization. The circumstances under which they were discredited have already been referred to. This movement is an effort to legitimize those concepts and thus to reclaim the people’s economic, political, social and cultural rights and, thus, to design their own destiny.

This movement of resistance is obviously very much different from the traditional forms of political struggle. Confined neither to the urban industrialized centres nor to the countryside this revolution is carried out in what may be called a sort of Utopian space by a collectivity whose attempt it is to set right an unevenly developed world and transform it into a new social formation where the goals of socialism are achieved. The agents of this historical struggle are all new “revolutionary” subjects forged in the process of planning from its inception to its successful implementation: subjects from the social fabric of peasants, workers, volunteers, the unemployed, technicians, women, students, intellectuals, bureaucracy, professionals and other personnel. There is thus a genuine collectivity involved in the new culture and politics of planning which is effectively a reinvention of collective life in which, as Jameson says, “the subject is therapeutically ‘decentered’ by other people, but which amounts to a whole new mode of being on which
people can live” (1982c: 82). Taking these facts into consideration this revolutionary movement of Kerala can be regarded as something akin to what Jameson refers to as Regis Debray’s notion of a revolution in revolution in the sense that spatially it is neither urban nor rural, and, agency wise it is not the struggle of an urban proletariat against the bourgeoisie nor that of a rural peasant movement as in the Chinese experience (1984b: 333-4). The alternative social realm of freedom that is aimed to be constructed by this movement is also, to use Jameson’s language, a “collective realm in which a whole community is able to master ‘necessity’ and to set its own collective priorities” (1982c: 82). This radical subject of the new social collective, thus, recovers the possibility of collective decision-making, of democratic participation in developmental process and thereby the possibility of political praxis. This is, in fact, what Jameson terms the effort by the social collective to take back “into its own hands a popular sovereignty” (1996a: 38).

There is an important distinction to be made here. Decentralization is a process that “holds up the promise of a reordering of political space and a revitalization of ‘the local’” and constitutes “a fluid and flexible discourse that can be utilized by different ideological interests” (Mohan and Stokke 2000: 4). International financial and trade institutions involved in the propagation of market ideology like the World Bank, International Monetary Fund and World Trade Organization are in the forefront of advertising the benefits to be gained out of decentralization. But it is to be understood that what these organizations ask for and encourage is administrative decentralization which will help in accelerating the process of deregulation and of opening up protected national markets thus allowing the free flow of capital. These agencies which call for
devolution of powers are promoting structural changes in national economies that “undermine the dream of ending poverty and weaken the support systems needed for maintaining and expanding democracy.” In other words, they urge the states “to abandon their social responsibilities” (Franke and Chasin 2000: 15-17). This purely administrative idea of decentralization “treats the local as a functional, economic space with policies designed to increase the efficiency of service delivery” and the market is seen as “a universal principle without any ‘geography’” (Mohan and Stokke 2000: 5). Such administrative and economic reforms help only to weaken and subvert national sovereignty and sabotage the concepts of welfare state and participatory democracy. The whole process of democratic decentralization that has been started in Kerala, on the contrary, is founded on the concepts of participatory democracy and welfare state. That is why Franke and Chasin write that “Kerala’s state-supported decentralization offers an alternative” (2000: 17). Sponsored by the state this popular movement aims at the creation of a new egalitarian civil society and civic culture in which all sections of society are encouraged to participate actively in the process of social growth and even development. This process of empowerment of the subaltern is aimed at the emancipation of society from the vicious circle of the capitalist market that promotes a culture of consumerism. Hence it can be said that the Kerala model of decentralization is a “discourse that combines ideas of collective empowerment, democracy and socialism” (Mohan and Stokke 2000: 3).

One of the most significant ways in which this collective project functions as a counterhegemonic movement is by the production of what social theorists call “social capital.” According to Robert Putnam social capital refers to “features of social
organization, such as networks, norms and trust, that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit" (quoted in Mohan and Stokke 2000: 9). It is “a stock of resources upon which mutual aid, cooperation and collective action depend” (Fung and Wright 2000: 43). B. Fine observes that social capital is “attached to the economy in a functionally positive way for economic performance, especially growth” (quoted in Mohan and Stokke 2000: 9). Mohan and Stokke refer to the World Bank social capital website which defines social capital as “the institutions, relationships and norms that shape the quality and quantity of society’s social interactions” which, they say, “can be found in families, communities, firms, civil society, the public sector, ethnicity and gender relations” (Mohan and Stokke 2000: 10). In the democratic decentralization project of Kerala the state is actively involved in the process of generating social capital which promotes civic engagement and empowerment of the deprived sections of society. It is this radical notion of empowerment involved in this decentralization project of Kerala that makes it a revolutionary form of political praxis. Erik Olin Wright says that the ideal of “empowered deliberative democracy” involves a form of direct democracy in which ordinary citizens are involved directly” in public deliberations “in the formation and implementation of policy” (2000: 8). This process “focuses on ‘bottom-up’ social mobilization in society as a challenge to hegemonic interests” and involves conscientization and collective identity formation around common experiences with economic and political [and cultural] marginalization” (Mohan and Stokke 2000: 2-3). Rather than “converting capital into an ahistorical category independent of social relations” this participatory element of the project and its function of empowerment transforms the social capital involved in the people’s campaign into a potentially
revolutionary “sate-civil society synergies” and thus into a counterhegemonic force (Issac and Franke 2000: 6). With its concern for the social structures of public action the project itself becomes, in effect, a process of political praxis.

This process of democratic decentralization envisages what Erik Olin Wright terms “Real Utopia.” Utopias are “fantasies,” he writes, “morally-inspired designs for social life unconstrained by realistic considerations of human psychology and social feasibility.” On the contrary, real Utopia is based on “the belief that what is pragmatically possible is not fixed independently of our imaginations, but is itself shaped by our visions.” The kind of ideals that the People’s Campaign project of Kerala envisages are “grounded in the real potentials of humanity, utopian destinations that have accessible waystations” (2000: 1). Wright observes that the fashion of the postmodern world is to ridicule radical ideas of social change. He writes:

Along with the postmodernist rejection of “grand narratives,” there is an ideological rejection of grand designs, even by those still on the left of the political spectrum. This need not mean an abandonment of deeply egalitarian emancipatory values, but it does reflect a cynicism about the human capacity to realize those values on a substantial scale. This cynicism, in turn, weakens progressive political forces in general. Envisioning real utopias is a way of countering this cynicism. (2000: 1)

Conceived to be counterhegemonic, the People’s Campaign for Decentralized Planning in Kerala envisions real Utopia and embraces the tension between dreams and practices. This is evident from the positive results the project has achieved during its first years
This does not mean that the project by itself is a perfect model of an alternative to the hegemonic capitalist global system. There are problems and weaknesses inherent to the concept that need solution and strengthening (Issac and Franke 2000: 328-35). But what it proves is that Jameson’s proposal, discussed above, that the repressed collective experience need to be retrieved from the fragmented, reified and schizoid culture of the postmodern, that only the social collective allows us to think of an alternative to the capitalist system is not altogether impractical. As a kind of revolution rewritten in terms of democracy it illustrates that it is still possible to mobilize the “immense moral and collective fervor” that Jameson prescribes as imperative for the achievement of any “fundamental social change” and to arouse “the moral and political passion” necessary for effecting systemic change (1996a: 36). It has proved to the world that despite its many shortcomings it is still possible to recover and strengthen the welfare state and its institutions weakened by late capitalism, and to organize a revolutionary movement involved in the new culture of the political activism of planning and development and thereby to reclaim the right of the deprived majority to be directly involved in the process of the creation of their own history. There is no denying that this is a “struggle” at the “local” and not at the systemic level as Jameson wants it to be but in his own terminology it is waged “within some common project that is called, for want of a better word, socialism” and, this “immediate project is a figure for that total transformation” (1988c: 360). The political culture that this great collective project of Kerala attempts to cultivate
is "pedagogical" and it "seeks to endow the individual subject with some heightened sense of its place in the global system" (Jameson 1991a: 54).

Jameson's observations on the possibility of political praxis by a social collective with a moral and political fervor and a passionate desire for change, discussed above, are enough to prove that criticisms that he is indifferent to practical action and that he does not highlight issues of political praxis are unfounded. It may be true that he has presented only a very vague picture of the global proletariat which is in its early stages of evolution. He has pointed out that what forms this new international proletariat will take "we cannot yet imagine," and, no one can blame him for not being specific about something that is unspecifiable at the present historical juncture (1991a: 417). He knows that the imperceptibility of this global class formation and its "inaccessible reality" create "representational dilemmas," and, as mentioned above, it is in order to overcome this dilemma that he proposes the transcoding methodology of cognitive mapping (1996a: 39). In a sense, the movement for democratic decentralization in Kerala is a form of cognitive mapping in that it enables the individual subject to project his/her own insertion into the collectivity as a means of overcoming the reifying and fragmenting powers of late capitalism. The dilemma caused by the insertion of the subject into a multidimensional set of disparate postmodern realities is overcome by the recovery of the social collective. In this decentered collectivity, "the individual subject shifts from purely individual relations to that very different dynamic which is that of groups, collectives and communities." In this shift is involved a "genuine transformation of being" empirically experienced by participation in "group praxis" (Jameson 1982c: 82). It is this group praxis that effects a radical transformation of the system that the Jamesonian texts on
postmodernism have been advocating. Kerala's experiment of decentralization is very much consistent with Jameson's logic of the social collective; it corresponds to the Jamesonian concept of rewriting revolution consistent with democracy with its immense moral and collective fervour. It aims at what Jameson calls the recovery of the social collective and the possibility of counterhegemonic political praxis.