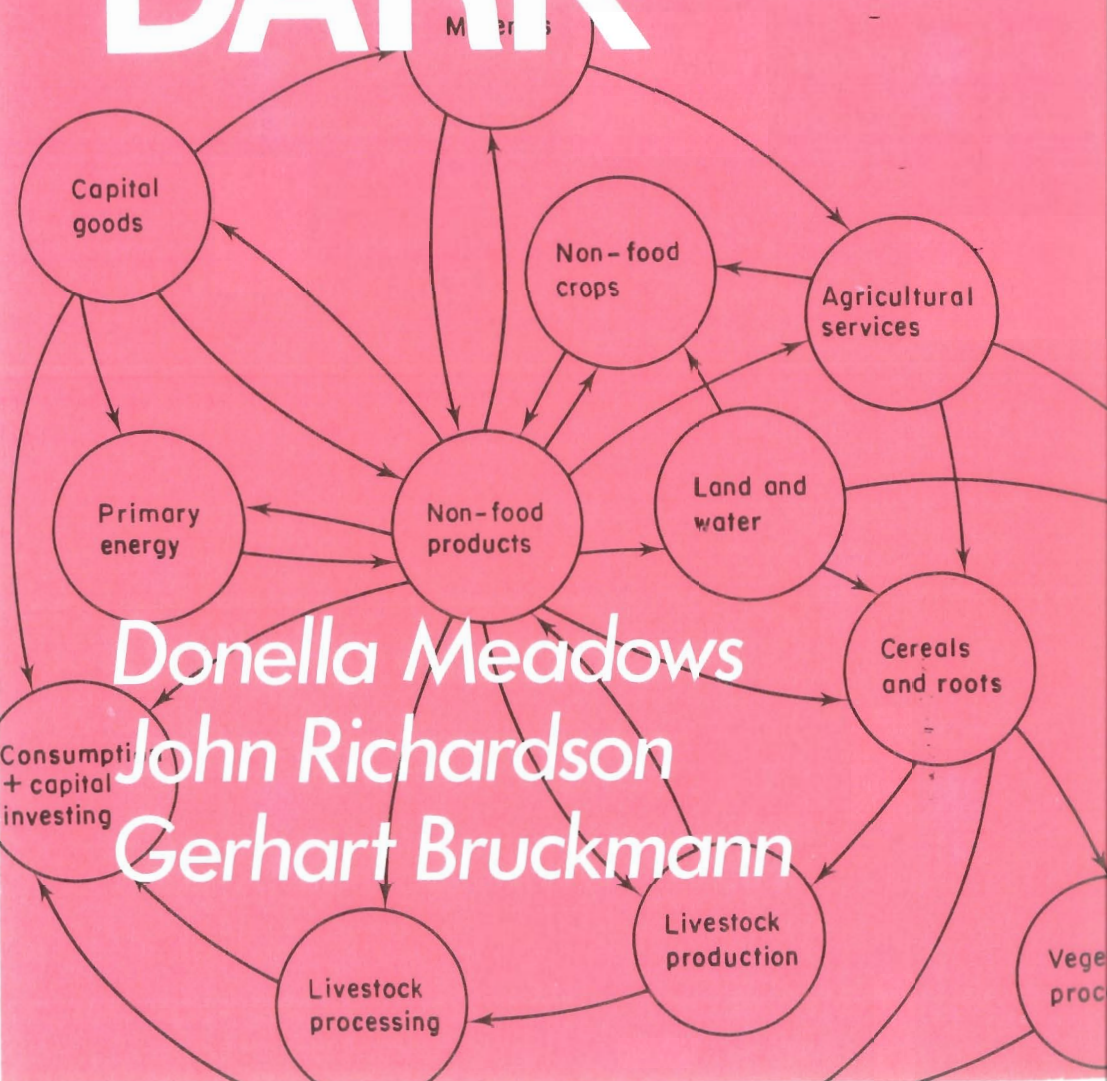
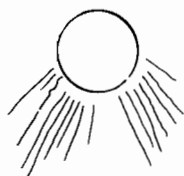


# GROPING in the DARK



*Donella Meadows*  
*John Richardson*  
*Gerhart Bruckmann*

**There is more Light here**

Someone saw Nasrudin searching for something on the ground.

'What have you lost, Mulla?' he asked. 'My key,' said the Mulla. So they both went down on their knees and looked for it.

After a time the other man asked: 'Where exactly did you drop it?'

'In my own house.'

'Then why are you looking here?'

'There is more light here than inside my own house.'

(From *The Exploits of the Incomparable Mulla Nasrudin* by Idries Shah.

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*A fable from the very recent past*

Once upon a time, in the eighth decade of the twentieth century A.D., there was a global modeller by the name of G. He was unhappy. Often at night he lay awake, his eyes open. He was considered a good teacher, capable of communicating complicated ideas to an uninformed or uninterested audience. But, alas, when it came to the concept of global modelling, a subject dear to his heart, he seemed to fail to communicate, over and over again.

He was particularly frustrated when he discussed his craft with a colleague by the name of A, who was also a distinguished scholar and proficient modeller. Both G and A observed a strange phenomenon in their discussions. The words each one used obviously belonged to the English language, their syntax was in order, but somehow the sentences seemed to fly past each other without making any contact or conveying any meaning.

Finally, after an especially sleepless night, G resolved to try again. He invited A for a long walk in the quiet and beautiful park that adjoined their research institute. Once again G explained to A the interconnected complex of the world's problems, the need to operate with a comprehensive picture rather than a partial one, the difficulty of understanding the situation intuitively, and the urgency of taking some action with imperfect models rather than waiting for better ones that might come too late. A listened, carefully and silently. Then A expressed his concerns about the lack of rigour, sparse data, unwarranted assumptions, inadequate validation, and general naïveté that, in his view, characterized global modelling work. To drive his points home, A cited several contrasting examples from his own more rigorous, well-established, and focused field of enquiry.

When A had finished, the two men walked quietly for a time. They had almost reached the back door of the Institute again.

Finally G broke the silence. He said, 'For months we have tried in vain to understand where and how we disagree. Sometimes an ancient fable is more powerful than modern scientific language.' He then told A the story about the man searching for his lost key. He concluded:

'The key both you and I are trying to find is the solution to the critical problems mankind will face in the coming decades. Each of us is searching with sincerity and devotion. What is profoundly different, however, is our basic strategy. You stand in the light, trying to move the lightpost closer to the place where the key might be. I, on the other hand, am

GROPING IN THE DARK.'