

A CULTURAL PARADIGM SHIFT FOR A GLOBAL HUMAN FUTURE:

The Context and a Generic Goal for Community Development Work in the 21st Century:

SOCIETY- & COMMUNITY-CENTRED ECONOMIES

Ned Icton, MB, BS, DTM&H

Founder / co-convenor Social Developers' Network

Lecturer (Community Development) UNE Armidale, retired

[It is fitting to gratefully receive this contribution from Ned, as the Social Developers' Network was very instrumental in helping out – now seven years ago – with getting the 'New' *Community Quarterly* up and going again. Their financial contribution and the moral support they offered made it all so much easier! Ed.]

This paper discusses the new *chaordic, ecosystemic, network* and '*fair process*' values, understandings and methods for achieving effective social organisation today. It outlines needed personal and societal cultural paradigm shifts; self-transformation methods for achieving them and through such change, a new, secular, spiritually-unified, rule-based global economic system. Then I address the challenge as to *what we social developers can do*: the skills needed, the network realities that underpin all ecosystems including human ones, and in that context, the enhanced levels of emotional intelligence and conceptual systems understanding, that, I believe, together offer a way for managing our human future. I believe that global cultural changes of the kind I'm suggesting here will alone provide space for a mainstream-supported 'community-centred economics' and I regard fostering that shift as a core task for community & social developers at every level.

1. A personal starting point, and the evolution of my own awareness

In what follows *I'm aiming to tell an overarching story which connects everything together in ways you may not have thought of previously*. All of this is a synthesis that has emerged from my experience since my graduation MB, BS, aged 22, in 1953. These understandings have become cornerstones of my personal learning over the years.

From that medical starting point, I came to see that patterns of health and illness - and social creativity & resilience instead of rigidity and weakness - emerge not only from the relevance or otherwise of our overall cultural prescription & practices, but also from the kinds of personal relationships we participate in, in our families, communities and work organisations. Such health emerges in the way Rev. Graham Long at Wayside Chapel, Sydney, describes as '*a two-way deal...all healing together*' in honest mutuality, or instead '*all shrivelling up together*' in negativity and inauthentic relationships. These are two critically different qualities of social systems in the human context. (See Graham Long's piece in the Social Development

Stories section on the SDN/NED website: <http://www.ned.org.au/sdn/sdnstories/wayside.htm>) I want here to assert that helping communities shift into hope, social creativity and resilience, underpinned by mutual, collective healing, is a main task for community and social development at this time of global crisis.

I am an ex-Anglican agnostic since around age 14, but have always felt that the negativities lie with *organised* religion in its various modes, rather than with what Jesus himself - and most other prophets - appear to have been on about. The Christian contamination with the 'shrivelling' aspects of Old Testament Judaism has always been a problem for me, especially when it's emphasised in much 'Christian' fundamentalism, and then fosters fear and 'collective shrivelling' instead of the loving and 'healing together' that was Jesus' aim for Judaism. *This is the context in which I hope for an 'upgrade' in our general level of emotional intelligence*. And as many will know, the argument in favour of this upgrade has been advanced over the years by many great people of Jewish descent, even as the Jewish scriptures remained unchanged.

I believe that positive emotion is always significant in the achievement of any constructive human outcome and that my belief in intelligent, positive emotion is valid, is critical and not 'magical' or mysterious in any way. Those of us who work with groups learn that amazing things are possible when morale is high, but that failure and disaster are usual when morale is low. It's never magical in either case. Genuine high morale goes with both high constructive energy and high creativity.

The farmers' groups I launched around Inverell in NSW were very successful in both conservation and financial terms. When the development bank quoted them statistics which showed that in aggregate there was no money being made in pigs, and knocked them back on a loan, they still went ahead on a self-help basis, cutting timber and running working bees to put up each others' pig-sheds. They then made pots of money because they had established an arrangement (relationship) with a processor who wanted a certain quality of pig for which they would pay a guaranteed price for a specified period and for which the processor would advise on the husbandry and feed requirements.

The many human failures of the past tend to be a guide to the future only for those who don't learn. The past never *proves*

anything about the future. Instead it can be a guide to better ways to handle the present. Our cultural 'memes' (a learned conditioning process) powerfully determine our behaviour, but are subject to change much more readily than our genes. The issue as I see it is whether those memes express emotional intelligence or its opposite. The new paradigm we require needs us to shift to better intelligence in the role played by our emotions. Although we are genetically unchanged from our cave-person ancestors, we have already achieved through systematised education a massive shift in our level of *cognitive* functioning. It's time to use a parallel method to improve our level of *emotional* functioning. We *have* the hardware to do that. Influenced by my medical, utilitarian background, I regard *any culture as primarily a man-made prescription by which we humans cope collectively with our situation*. Any prescription has of itself NO INTRINSIC VALUE. Its value is in how well it 'hits the spot' with the specific diagnosis. Thus I see the paradigm shifts I argue for here as equating with writing ourselves a newly emotionally intelligent culture ('prescription') so we can cope with a new contemporary societal diagnosis. To achieve global-level change, the change I'm proposing will need to usher in a new, upgraded, shared and evolving 'political awareness' across at least the globally dominant political and economic nations of the upcoming era.

Is what I'm suggesting a believable possibility? What's 'believable' is a subjective matter. Hope largely determines what is believable and hope grounded in factual reality is what I'd call an intelligent emotion. (In advance of his election, many may have thought Obama's push for the US Presidency was unbelievable, but he and his supporters did not! The past can thus inspire hope if we choose appropriate examples.) Mutual support, healing and hopeful action grounded in our best grasp of reality are simply the intelligent thing, for us humans, right now.

I connect this need for a culture of mutual healing and intelligent emotion with the need for humanity at this time also to shift cognitively to a collective general systems paradigm for understanding our reality. It's essential as a way to comprehend and manage the ecosystemic complexity of today. If we are going to manage the biosphere creatively & effectively as a living entity on which we depend, humanity itself is going to have to become a sustainable ecosystem *itself*, as well as in its relationships with those essential global biological support services. And in order to give ourselves space to *see* our wider reality *we'll probably simplify the daily over-complexity by which we currently blind and exhaust ourselves*. We suffer from the excessive choice of affluenza, meaningless planned obsolescence in computers and gadgets, desperately frustrating bureaucratic rules, regulations and red tape, a grossly obtuse, unfair and costly legal system, distracting communications technology that is also full of infrastructure gaps and a universal over-focus on *detail* at the cost of generalist understanding. *We are so busy with all this that anything extra falls in the 'too hard' basket and isn't being addressed*. I'm not aware of any national-level culture - with the exception perhaps of Bhutan - and its primary focus on 'gross domestic happiness'! - which is evolving in the ways that will give us a chance for a future.

Thus a shift to systems thinking, systems intuition and systems strategies at every level from 'big picture' to local, is a core part of my 'prescription'. I believe this defines the cognitive aspect of a paradigm shift that humanity everywhere must make, if we are to have a future as a species. I believe *we must become skilled at making the best generalisations we can*, despite always having incomplete knowledge: systems thinking requires this.

On that line, I have been interested in the general direction that the science of complex systems is taking. Regretfully, those science practitioners seem not to see the applied meaning of their work for how we manage our societies. We aren't hearing from them on how urgently we need to abandon our non-viable behaviours - of unilateralist management, global over-population and planetary destruction. Like our econometricians, the mathematicians who are studying complex systems generally leave out of their models a key uncertainty factor - the choices open to all living entities. This includes the way in which emotionally driven negative human behaviour regularly adds destabilising feedback loops - as seen in late-2008 in the sudden, rapid, tipping into global financial and economic collapse.

The book that originally confirmed the cognitive logic behind my intuitions and excited me was M. Mitchell Waldrop (1992) *Complexity: The Emerging Science at the Edge of Order and Chaos*, (Simon & Schuster or Penguin paperback, 1994). The very bright people described and quoted in that book - many of them Nobel laureates - who came together to launch the Santa Fe Institute, defined *an essential, new, cognitive systems paradigm for understanding our human reality*. However, they have since then failed to advance that paradigm within science and management that their work pointed to; and last I knew they have stayed largely stuck in 'the waiting room' of *mainstream* academia, hoping vainly to attract recognition there - an intrinsic impossibility!

What is vital here is the shift into routine society-wide systemic thinking and intuitive understanding - a shift that I see as essential for our human future, and so difficult to foster; it is called 'both-and' thinking in contrast to 'either-or'. One major reason for our difficulty is that we are growing up fearful and emotionally inauthentic in our relationships, instead of engaging in the kind of two-way authenticity, i.e., 'all healing (and developing) together', that Graham Long describes. This makes it difficult for everyone, including risk-averse scientists, to 'step out of the mainstream paradigm taken for granted.' As well, folk in CSIRO, for example, have faced actual genuine suppression or de-funding during the time of the recent government, when - just as in a communist or fascist society - their science - and their pronouncements - was and were required to be subservient to politics.

A related reason for delay may relate tangentially to what we are coming to know about the effects of male and female hormones on brain development. *Male hormones* push the brain toward systems thinking, but often it is towards a deep *cognitive-only* understanding of such systems. In extreme cases, the resulting passion is for *depth and detail* in that understanding and *away from* breadth and big-picture

generalist understanding. Along with this there's a relative lack of emotional awareness, social systems sensitivity and intuitive vision. On the other hand, *female hormones*, we learn, foster the development of emotional awareness, empathy and social systems sensitivity¹. These hormonal influences may possibly also affect the extent to which we operationalise the differing potentials of the right and left sides of our brains.

In a culture that fosters an 'either-or' approach, many male decision-makers thus have come to see the world in very 'either-or' terms. By contrast, an intermediate type of brain, produced by a more balanced level of male and female hormones, is postulated as 'both-and'-balanced' between those two extremes. In theory, the majority of us, male or female, should cluster close to the mid-point of a bell-shaped curve. From my standpoint, our society needs a majority of what I call 'both-and' people. But because there have been great particularistic benefits from narrow specialisation, we have moved our culture and our expertise too far in that direction, and into 'either-or' ways of seeing reality. This makes our culture unfit for dealing with what we face today.

I believe that global cultural changes of the kind I'm suggesting here will alone provide space for a mainstream-supported 'community-centred economics' to emerge and I regard fostering that shift as a core task for community & social developers at every level. Throughout the recent neoliberal capitalist era, 'community-centredness' was anathema - and politically incorrect.

2. The Multiple 'Tipping point' Crises that Threaten Humanity's Future:

What many people find hard to grasp is that *climate change is a 'tipping point' phenomenon*, just like living ecosystemic phenomena generally. Tipping points are mysterious to those who think only within the mainstream mechanistic paradigm. Only 'new paradigm' systemic thinking clarifies these phenomena. Slow changes lead into tipping points where a massive change occurs suddenly and 'without warning.' A heart attack or stroke only happens after a long period of unrecognised deterioration, then, suddenly, the conditions exist for a massive shift and a person is knocked out or has died. As the temperature of ice warms, it stays as ice until, at the critical temperature, *suddenly* it melts. Water stays as water as the temperature rises, right up to the boiling point, at which *suddenly* it becomes steam. A frog will stay in warming water without jumping out, right up to the boiling point, by which time it's too late. Like 'old paradigm' contemporary global power elites, *the frog doesn't understand.*

The geological record shows that very rapid climate changes have occurred in the past. Sometimes what 'pressed the button' can be deduced from the record, while at other times it can't. Most past civilisations seem to have disappeared when they did not adapt to portents whose obvious implications were inconvenient. Frequently, those civilisations therefore caused their own demise. As a generalisation, all significant past civilisations did this. They failed to maintain the necessary mutual and evolving interdependence with the ecosystems which supported them.

As with the climate change now affecting southern Australia, *we also* have failed to foresee that a *brand new* tipping point - i.e. the Victorian fire-storms - could potentially result. Will *we today* adapt wisely - or not?

As we celebrate this year the contribution to science made by Charles Darwin, we need to distinguish between what he *actually* said and various misconceptions about evolution. John Collee described Darwin's conclusions thus in the Weekend Australian of Feb 7-9, 2009: "*What Darwin was describing was a system of mutual interdependence that had governed life on Earth for billions of years; ... a set of principles that could be discerned ... and which ... might ensure man's continuing survival on the planet. Species that ignored these rules were quickly extinguished. ... Their fate - extinction - had been suffered by the majority of plants & creatures that had ever lived on Earth.*" The basic overall message is that competition is always secondary to co-operation. If a living organism's collective 'prescription' overall matches the requirements for survival in their environment, they survive and multiply, and then if the environment changes slowly enough, they can undergo an evolutionary differential selection process by which to keep changing and keep succeeding. But programming errors can occur and species have often gone extinct. Individual cells are recurrently dying and new ones born, but the larger system maintains itself.

Evolution as a theory is actually very secure, in that we can observe examples of it happening all the time, where the mechanism is quite simple. For example, in the case of germs that cause illness, there is enough variability that although most will be killed by a particular antibiotic, a small minority will survive. If the particular antibiotic then is provided all the time, the survivors will multiply until all the germs around are descended from them - all antibiotic resistant. This is what I mean by a '*differential selection process.*' Years ago I worked in a hospital in Scotland where I found that all the bugs were resistant to penicillin, which was the only antibiotic we had. I persuaded the professor that we should stop giving penicillin to every woman whose waters had broken, but who wasn't yet in labour. We should give it only when there was a sign of actual infection, such as a measurable fever (i.e. rarely). It was agreed; after six months of minimal use of penicillin, the majority of germs evolved back into being sensitive again. Both phases are what is meant by '*natural selection.*'

In sociological systems, again, individuals die and new people are born, but the larger system, on which all of society depends, tends to maintain itself. There's an analogous process with the biological, but there are not only genetic factors at work here but also *memes* (socialisation and value factors) which are both cultural and personal. These provide us with a mechanism for much quicker adaptation to a changing reality than genetic evolution. Again programming errors can and do occur. Another serious myth exists about the nature of science; science doesn't ever *prove* facts but only offers *probabilities*. It is always saying "*reality is most probably like this*" for these reasons - until such time as other contrary evidence comes to hand that can be explained only by expanding or modifying the hypothesis in some way. So science doesn't actually *prove* facts. This questioning continues until the old hypothesis has

too many points of evidence against it and somebody comes up with a totally new way that more satisfactorily explains all the related evidence. The result is called a paradigm shift and is always resisted by those whose reputation rests on their expertise in the old thinking.

Once one realises that whatever we know, our ignorance remains always infinite, you know that *everything we understand is always provisional* – i.e. until we know better... and that's an endless process. *Right now it's clear that humanity needs to be newly organised on a global basis and needs to make some serious global-level decisions in favour of survival.* This applies to all the major issues - such as climate change, Peak Oil, population control, refugee flows, currency rorts, finance and corporate rorts, drug cartels, secret service shenanigans and human rights abuse (Zimbabwe, Guantanamo, Israel-Gaza, Dafur, Iran, Afghanistan, China, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Burma, North Korea, Fiji, etc.) Terrorism is of minor importance by comparison, but it also needs a global policy approach. *Mutual interdependence globally is the issue we must face up to.* It's a very Darwinian idea and requires us to change our habits in order to survive. (Even Mao said, but didn't always act upon "Co-operation first, competition second.") Perhaps it is only *the concept and application of international simultaneous legislation that can make these necessary global policy decisions feasible* (check out the idea on the Simpol website, at <http://www.simpol.org>).

Realistically, our chances of turning global society around are slim, but we cannot say it is impossible unless we fail to act appropriately. Whatever may be 'more likely' is still a long way from being a certainty. The option of doing nothing is what will guarantee our failure. Hope is just as contagious as despair and, for me, hope has more meaning and as it happens is also an absolute requirement for success. So a complex global transition is required on many fronts if we are to have a species future.

Our job in community and social development must be to help citizens generally understand our predicament, be resilient in the face of it and act together, guided by hope and creativity. The first aspect of the required transition is economic and industrial, but it is connected to everything else:

1. A global **economic transition** must be made to **one which** reduces material consumption to a sustainable steady state and which **fosters economic growth in all areas of quality of life, but** within at most a *steady state quantity. Material growth has to cease.* The general public is already coming to terms with this, but it is emotionally more of a challenge for our power elites.
2. As part of this, a **trade-off will have to be made between the quantity of our population and quality of our lives.**
3. A global **energy transition** must be made which achieves a lower, steady state in the atmospheric levels of CO₂, methane and other atmospheric hot-house gases. *Greenhouse gas levels must fall.*
4. A major adaptive change will have to be made to cope with whatever **climate change** is already 'in

the pipeline.' *Large population transfers may need to be negotiated* to respond to desertification, river failures, flooded coastlines and disastrous weather events. Every country is likely to be affected and we'll need to help each other. *We Australians must rethink and re-plan what we'll do about our huge, probably unviable, southern cities. Rolling scenario-writing and action learning will help us manage the transition - a huge task here for community and social development, involving direct participatory involvement..*

5. **Human self-management on the planet** must now display competent ecosystemic awareness, commitment and skill. As mentioned, *unless we act to simplify our own lives, we'll be unable to respond to the extra complexity in the global reality we face.* Our life support systems - climate, weather and food production - have to be managed as global ecosystems that are not amenable to our unilateral control and which normally manifest tipping points into major transitions which occur very suddenly, as the result of very minor 'final straws.' We need to adopt a new mode of response-able human self-management which recognises that humanity itself is a subset of all the other ecosystems, which in combination allow us to be part of a living planet. Living or non-living, everything is connected across the planet and beyond and change anywhere affects everywhere else, in ways varying from minimal to massive, but often unpredictably, because the complexity is infinite and our ignorance is likewise, no matter what we know.

3. Needed: A New Cultural Paradigm for Managing Ourselves and the Planet:

Managing ecosystems including human societies cannot be done successfully using contemporary industrial era approaches, where the universal model was a non-living machine. As Einstein said, 'Problems produced by one system of thought cannot be resolved within that system of thought.' So *today, management at every level is failing* and because of the over-complexity introduced by our intellectually sophisticated technology and the resulting globalised over-integration, it is failing sooner and more catastrophically than previously. A global financial system was built which has had no global-level management and whatever national-level management there was had no understanding of the underlying ecosystemic/network science realities that effective management would have tackled.

Successful management - for ourselves and the planet - now needs to be based on completely new, post-industrial, ecosystemic principles and Darwin's theory actually foreshadows this. *The main feature of stable ecosystems that is totally new to us is that they are self-organising, non-hierarchical and participatory and are destroyed by attempts at unilateral control.* They are *participatory democracies*, i.e. not even *representative democracies*. In such ecosystems, every living entity is an active part of the control system *at each level.* The implication here is that *a higher-level, citizen role will be required of all of us, at every level and it will demand*

from every citizen a major new participatory responsibility. Social and community development, here we come!

One of the books on my list is that by Dee Hock; it provides great detail on how a global organisation was built which could succeed only if the participants behaved in active, creative, participatory and cooperative ways and adhered to a defined, over-arching cultural prescription. They did that and Visa became the biggest economic entity on Earth. Thus a key new cultural principle *has* already been tested; however a past adaptation such as that does not prove that any solution exists for what we face today. Nobody could prove that, but as an example, it's certainly useful and a source of hope.

A major reason for the 'surprise' over the current global depression is that the economic models in use, involving sophisticated mathematics, ignored the unquantifiable 'uncertainty' aspects of human behaviour. Unlike machines, human and animal behaviour is driven by emotion and it's not always intelligent emotion. This is especially true of our contemporary power-elite citizens, manifesting at first as fair-process-denying greed and later its obverse, in the same people -- devil-take-the-hindmost fear. These folks' behaviours are unpredictable and impossible to model mathematically and are ultimately destructive. They certainly do not display the qualities of a theoretically '*rational economic man*.' Instead they introduce recurring, powerful feedback loops in a destabilising direction. The main thing we can observe is that *there has now been an extended repeat manifestation of the pattern up to 1929* – i.e. a slowly accelerating inflationary build-up, governed by fair-process-denying greed, into an inflated 'bubble', followed by its sudden rupturing and collapse and a shift into timid, panic-driven, conflicted, blaming behaviour, now governed by devil-take-the-hindmost fear. One risk here is that global corporations and neoliberals will use the *public* fear caused by the crash to fight a rearguard action and again restore the system that caused our problems!

Instead, to escape these errors permanently and manage our societies and our economy viably for the future, *we must build into ourselves an appropriate higher level of emotional intelligence*. This will result in our adopting a secular, spiritually-unified, moral system of life-affirming values for global self-management. *Doing this will require that changes be made in how we manage our socialisation. We need to reprogram our cultural memes. The methods required are already well established in demonstration mode*. They cover changes in such areas as parenting, relationships counselling, the management of schools and educational institutions so that they teach 'fair process' experientially and introducing similar changes in the operation of our policing, our courts, penal arrangements, corrective services and across bureaucracy generally. These changes can directly raise the level of emotional intelligence for the rising generation and for the average adult citizen. Once people are routinely experiencing and observing in themselves - and in those present from whom they are estranged - the emotional states that make mutually helpful relationships impossible, both sides can then cognitively recognise the harmful responses they are displaying and they can be freed to make self-chosen,

'heart-level' changes. My point really is that I don't believe that affective deficits can be filled with solely cognitive inputs, no matter how much the latter are about emotional or 'heart' matters. I believe that our emotional conditioning is an experiential rather than a cognitive process and so also must be our efforts at remediating that adverse programming.

We'll then be able to transcend our fears, strengthen our democracy, and exercise the necessary courage to deal with what complexity *normally* delivers - the unexpected! *Our individuated spiritual development, as part of emotional intelligence, actually provides our only source both of inner values judgment and of intuitive, prescient, direct knowing as to 'how these systems' realities probably are.* (Remember that most of the original *creative* scientists - including more recently Einstein - were intuitive, insightful visionaries.)

4. As Social Developers, what do we need to encompass as our Skills-Base?

My interest has been always in the theory of *personal professional practice* rather than abstract theory and it has been based on the recognition that *the core of the human development process is personal relationship*. *So, developing our personhood as mentor-practitioners is central; and the core aspect of this is our emotional intelligence and social intelligence*. These require that we become emotionally self-aware, self-accepting and open. We are born with hardware that makes it possible for us to learn these things, but the skill of emotional intelligence actually does have to be learned: it's not innate.

How is this learned and how can we help ourselves become self-aware and enabled to transcend the flaws, conditioned from birth onwards, in our original unconscious emotional programming? What are the principles and values that we deploy in mentoring the active citizens on whom all community development depends? How do we find a way to help *ourselves* learn the self-awareness and self-acceptance that must come first, before self-reprogramming is possible? How do we learn to find our way towards understanding and being able to act out the pro-social, negentropic, spiritual values of life itself that are the motivation for community and societal development? All this involves the emotionally intelligent and '*common sense*' aspects of our personhood as practitioners and applies whether we're paid workers or active citizen volunteers.

What is our *philosophical* motivation? Are we clear that always in successful community and social development, we waltz with the non-hierarchical, self-organising, liberation-plus-mutual-control principles by which ecosystems operate? Since 1975, we in the Social Developers' Network have been learning how to manage ourselves collectively in this manner. This has involved emotional learning (see the SDN website

<http://www.ned.org.au/sdn>). Our 'contract' guidelines for our workshops spell out our 'genetic code' for doing this - a defined, over-arching cultural prescription.

Parallel with that, an *action-learning orientation* is another key to success, on the *cognitive* front. How do we understand the unique process we are dealing with, in each involvement? Knowing that our ignorance remains always infinite, no matter how much we know, *what is our strategy for knowing the most useful things we can know, within the normal surround of incomplete information and a constantly evolving reality?* I think of this as 'strategic knowing'.

Have we genuinely abandoned the old habitual intellectual paradigm of *linear* thought? *Have we operationalised instead the essential 'living ecosystems' or matrix mode of thinking about social reality and its context?* Do we always see that everything is connected\ and seek to recognise and adapt to the reality of those connections? Are we working at better understanding the non-hierarchical 'networks and hubs' reality of any participatory citizen world? *Are we looking to recruit and bring together the few key persons with their special skills, who can catalyse major change - the folk who can launch beneficial societal tipping points?*

5. One Contemporary 'Big Picture' Analysis of our Global Predicament:

David Korten is travelling throughout the US and Canada presenting the ideas of *The Great Turning: From Empire to Earth Community* -- a powerful framework for understanding the critical choices before us (see previous issue of NCQ and see also this issue). Future generations, if there is a liveable world for them, will look back at the epochal transition we are making to a life-sustaining society; and they may well call this the time of the 'Great Turning' (Joanna Macy; see <http://www.thegreatturning.net/>; the book was published in 2006).

David Korten's classic bestseller, *When Corporations Rule the World*, was one of the first books to articulate the destructive and oppressive nature of the global corporate economy; ten years later, Korten shows that the problem runs deeper than corporate domination, with far greater consequences. In *The Great Turning*, Korten argues that corporate consolidation of power is merely a contemporary manifestation of what he calls 'Empire': the organisation of society by power hierarchies of domination grounded in violent chauvinisms of race, gender, religion, nationality, language, or class. The result has been the same for 5,000 years: fortune for the few and misery for the many. Increasingly destructive of children, family, community and nature, the unilateralist way of Empire is leading to environmental and social collapse and this time the scale is global (see <http://www.davidkorten.org/Books/greatturning.htm>)

The Great Turning makes the case that we humans are a choicemaking species, which at this defining moment faces both the opportunity and the imperative to choose our future as a conscious collective act. We can no longer deny the need nor delay our response. A mounting perfect economic storm is fast approaching. According to Korten, a convergence of climate change, peak oil and the financial instability inherent in an unbalanced global trading system will bring an unravelling of the corporate-led global economy and a dramatic restructuring of every aspect of modern life. We cannot avoid this unravelling, he says; we can, however, turn a potentially terminal crisis into an epic opportunity to bring forth *a new era of Earth Community, grounded in the life-affirming cultural values shared by almost all the world's ordinary people* and eloquently articulated in the Earth Charter.

6. What then do I want to suggest we each should be doing?

1. I appreciate the various others who have been hanging in with me over the years. *So I hope you will hang in with each other and with other potential activists you come to know, knowing that this 'hanging in' is a core part of the process of social development. Some of these colleagues and citizen friends will become active social developers and others will disappoint you; but you can't tell in advance.*
2. There have been enough folk over the years to support *me* in my original belief that I wasn't mad to be committed to applying the positive values expressed in well-functioning communities, groups and families, despite being regarded widely as an unrealistic nut. *So I hope we will always support people as individuals and as groups, when they show a commitment in this direction. Open-minded and open-hearted people with commitment will always recognise their errors as they go along. That is the essence of action learning. Question: Are we on track to renew our civilisation?*
3. At some level I always knew the world would come to the dire position we're now in and that it would be useful for us then to understand our process in ways that would show us how to act constructively and competently in response. *If social development is your passion, please recognise that now is the time for you and your friends to dedicate yourself to it whole-heartedly. Every level of change is relevant and necessary, from local to global: I suggest we work at whatever levels are open to us. Life-promoting energy and hope is needed everywhere.*
4. Despite my original conditioned emotional press to fix and control things, I always knew at some level that this 'press' aspect was an error. It was a major flaw in my unconscious emotional programming as a child. Reprogramming it is an ongoing task, still requiring vigilance. In parallel, I knew also at another level that *what we do and how we do it*, - i.e. the quality of our

relationships - is just as important - or more so - than abstract sociological theory about the developmental process. In fact, **what we needed and did not have was a developed, explicit theory of personal practice**, additional to any abstract general theory. *Let us work at building our theory of personal practice and our idea of our meaning to ourselves (a collective task, in mutual support with others).*

As we do so, please recognise that another of my original programming flaws is probably also the main cultural flaw that we must all leave behind. That barrier to societal effectiveness is a culturally programmed fear in all of us against emotional self-awareness and against open emotional honesty. That fear has caused us to aim for what might be called 'the good life', focused on physical and psychological comfort and the addictive consumption of experience. Now that we face the global crunches that we do, perhaps it's time to choose instead 'a meaningful life' -- and transcend those fears.

5. I believe that my cognitive style has tended always to be different from the mainstream. I call it 'both-and', holistic, generalist or matrix thinking. By contrast, I believe that having a mix of *deeply detailed awareness of some areas of reality, but no understanding at all of other areas and how they all connect*, is basically an error, or shows a lack of 'common sense' and emotional intelligence. This is, as I see it, because our awareness and grasp of reality is only as good as the weakest link in the chain of our *overall understanding*². *On the cognitive front, for all of us coming out of the obsolete cultural paradigm that originally programmed us, I suggest it is vital that we work systematically at developing our routine ecosystemic thinking. This will guide us toward what I call 'strategic knowing' - a vital learning strategy, whose importance will be clear to us as soon as we accept that, whatever we know, our residual ignorance remains infinite!* As community and social developers our job must be to help local citizens make this transition.

Can we ask ourselves, what am I doing that addresses these big issues? Do I recognise that it is citizens at every level who must make this transition? Can I monitor my own performance in this regard? Am I helping the people understand and effectively do what they can, on this track? What are the outcomes I'm looking to facilitate, beyond small-scale local problem-solving?

6. I know that all of us have our own unique unconscious programming errors which undermine our optimal effectiveness in various ways and I've sought to understand that problem - as it has affected me personally - and to learn how to overcome it. I hope that the methods I've learned so far can be useful to others, but I know that both the content and the emotional drivers of our passion are unique to each of us, so that *the task*

is always an individual, personal one, even though we seriously need others' help to do it. Please be aware that developing our unique selfhood is always our primary personal task and responsibility, but that as a social species, we can't actually do it without the love and support of others and in mutual co-operation with them. I wonder, do the values in our culture today really support us in that goal? At whatever level we work, I consider that promoting the needed paradigm shifts is our key social development task.

7. Summary:

My main argument is that there are two essential parallel dimensions to the global cultural change that we need to choose at this time, to give us a chance at survival:

1. A shift into explicitly developing our emotional intelligence, our integrative, loving commitment to humanity and to the planet as a whole, into developing our *personal* skills for peaceful and effective relationships with all humans on Earth and with the Earth itself, and to developing our individual visionary insight and creativity. The other is
2. Adoption of a revised understanding of our governing reality - i.e. that we must understand and manage ourselves as individual members of ecosystems, within other ecosystems and within yet larger systems, where *what we and the citizens we mentor will aim for, always, is to exercise the most consistent, constructive participatory influence* we can exercise, each at our own level.

These shifts in our cultural paradigm, needed within all cultures around the globe, are, I think, the main goals we must help our citizen friends understand and achieve, *at the same time* as we help them tackle the evolving local nitty gritty of the day-to-day. *Global cultural changes of this kind will, I believe, alone provide the option for mainstream-compatible 'community-centred economics'.*

"Believe nothing, no matter where you read it, or who said it, no matter if I have said it, unless it agrees with your own reason and your own common sense." --

Buddha.

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(Endnotes)

- 1 For an angle on how the *absence* of emotional awareness affects our competence, see Damasio's *Descartes' Error*. 'Common sense' practical context for assessing the real world applied value that emerges from what the narrow specialists have discovered, from their deep, cognitive-only focus.
- 2 (but of course I *now* see reality not as 'a chain' but as 'a matrix'!...)