



The Politics of Connectivity

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Abstract

This article is an exploration of humanity's evolution from our earliest expansion out of Africa to today's colonization of planet Earth. It traces how humanity's success was predominantly based on our ability to bond, communicate, share and cooperate in ever larger organizational forms. Competition was also key, along with individual creativity, as our forebears developed the technological prowess now dominating all species and ecosystems in today's Anthropocene age. The article also explores why our cognitive abilities have lagged behind our technological reach, so that humanity now faces its final existential challenge: our self-inflicted crises of biodiversity and species loss, climate change and our behavioral and cognitive limitations. We possess all the technological and organizational means to create our next stage of evolution, as embodied in the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). If we reach the maturity and wisdom needed to overcome the global political and educational imperatives for our survival, we might then graduate to become a suitable inter-planetary species.

We humans are facing ourselves as we deal with all the crises we created with our global technology and connectivity.* The old adage “we can't live with each other and we can't live without each other” took on a new meaning as we evolved over millennia from small roving bands of nomads to big city life, and now as a 7.5-billion-member global human family—all thrown into new relationships in today's 24/7 technological connectivity.¹

Today we are facing up to the oldest puzzle of our species: individual freedom and rights in our various relationships with community, groups and societies within the now global context. Individual action, expression and creativity flowered as our species evolved—driving our societies to colonize every region of our home, Planet Earth. This triumph of humanity over other species was achieved through ever more sophisticated, cooperative forms of organization and social innovation[†]: from settled village agriculture to towns, cities, guilds of craftspeople, sharing knowledge, the rising scale of technologies based on scientific research—all expanding human awareness and cognition as our forebrains developed.

Thus, humans have always been collaborating in groups and extending their forms of organization and societies. Globalization began when humans trekked out of Africa into

* See for example, Capra, F. *The Turning Point* (1981) and my *The Politics of the Solar Age* (1981). Both identify humanity's crises as rooted in our limited perception.

† The Darwin Project (www.thedarwinproject.com) highlights Charles Darwin's view that humanity's success was due to the ability to bond, share and cooperate.

Europe and Asia, and crossed the Bering Strait, thereby populating the Americas. Throughout, humans have always needed each other. Our biology dictates cooperation, since humans are not born with the ability to take care of themselves, as with some other species. Our young are born helpless and require decades of care to reach adulthood.² Today, when jobs require ever more knowledge to compete, reaching full autonomy takes even longer. The human brain is not fully formed until age 25.* Thus we see Margaret Thatcher's error in proclaiming "There is no such thing as society ... only individuals."[†]

These kinds of ideological struggles peaked during the Industrial Revolution about who owned the new technological means of production: the lathe, the spinning jenny, factories, steam engines and railways, canals and the new infrastructure. How should the fruits of productivity be shared? Which activities and assets should be controlled by individuals as private property, others as public amenities vital to the society?[‡] Battles raged between the "isms": communism, capitalism, socialism, agrarianism, libertarianism, continuing well beyond the Cold War of the 1990s. Today in the USA, we face up to racism, sexism, ageism and elitism, while property rights clash with amenity rights. Tea Partiers and Occupy Wall Street protesters join in opposing big banks, while their rich executives fight against "big government" and clash with civic groups focusing on inequality. The "99%", justifiably feel left out of productivity gains, join with middle class advocates for fairness, community values of education, healthcare for all and protecting affordable housing, public transit and environmental resources.

Today, advanced societies and their elite are challenged by the new "populism" demanding new and different financial, economic and social reforms and how to create global prosperity with fairness and human development without wrecking our planet.⁴ Thus, the elite are recognizing the truth that we humans are all in the same risky⁵ boat and it is pointless to ask which end is sinking. Extreme individualism and demands for untrammelled free markets find fewer places to colonize. Silicon Valley libertarian billionaires hoping to live on private islands or create them, will face new realities with hurricanes and rising sea levels due to climate change. We are not yet mature enough to be an interplanetary species.

As we are thrown together in new forms of connectivity, we are looking at ourselves and learning to understand our own behavior, brains and cognitive processes. Younger populations embody many new values across race, gender and cultures as "grassroots globalists" sharing, campaigning for environmental causes and social justice.[‡] They are advocating diverse, decentralized societies based on distributed renewable resources from solar, wind and organic agriculture, beyond centralized technologies like nuclear and fossil fueled power plants, industrial monoculture foods and commodities.[§] Ever larger numbers of "global citizens" are joining with them in facing up to climate change, inequality and the need to transform finance and corporations to reflect our true situation on this planet and how our living biosphere is abundantly resourced from the daily free photons from the Sun.[¶]

* Gesell, A. "The Maturational Theory" of child development, 1925, *Wikipedia*.

† Thatcher, M. "1979 Conservative Party Manifesto", Politics.co.uk

‡ See for example Henderson, H. "Grassroots Globalists" *InterPressService*, 1993 and www.350.org, www.nexusglobal.org, www.netimpact.org

§ See for example, Friedman, T. "The Green New Deal", *New York Times Magazine*, 2017 and www.greenforall.org

¶ US Office of Technology Assessment, "Assessment of Technology for Local Development" (1980) *University of Florida Press-Ethical Markets* (2015).

We humans are also slowly transcending tensions and earlier arguments between individual autonomy and the need to coordinate our activities to benefit our societies.⁶ Movements of ethical investors are slowly redirecting profit-driven corporations, advertising, news and social media, which are tracked by Ethical Markets in its Ethical Markets Awards and annual Green Transition Scoreboard® Reports.* The \$9.3 trillion of private investments we tracked in 2018 in green sectors worldwide and the trans-partisan support in the US Congress and Senate illustrates the existence of a broad national coalition for the Green New Deal.† Backlash from Congress members representing fossil and nuclear interests raised familiar fears of cost and “socialism”.

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We have created many such coordinating processes ranging from various kinds of families and communities and their values to social norms of behavior, religious belief systems, altruistic philosophies and charities, cultural narratives, political parties and coalitions. Networks facilitated by the internet, cellphones, and personal media enhance trust-building, transparency, legal and social contracts. Clubs, associations, corporations, advertising and market messaging extend connectivity. National and global research groups, alliances, including the European Union, ASEAN, MERCOSUR, now collaborate in all the international agreements, peace treaties and space agencies under the United Nations umbrella.‡

All this social coordinating has developed with ever more protection of the sanctity of individual autonomy, from the Magna Carta and habeas corpus English laws settled in 1215, to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948. Thus, individualism is affirmed and best recognized by community validation. Individual achievements are honored widely, by awards, academic degrees, while good behavior, volunteering and altruism are celebrated, if not monetarily rewarded, in most communities worldwide.⁷ Individual rights together with our human responsibilities are coded in the 16 Principles of the Earth Charter, ratified in 2000 by civic groups, politicians, municipalities, companies and academia worldwide (www.earthcharter.org).

Thus, human connectivity and ethical progress continue even while violence, cruelty, domination by “might is right” methods are ostracized and regulated where possible. But

* Ethical Markets Media, www.ethicalmarkets.com Green Transition Scoreboard: 2018

† Rep. Ocasio-Cortez, A., D-NY, 116th Congress, “Resolution for a Green New Deal” <https://www.congress.gov/bills/116th-congress/house-resolution/109>

‡ The United Nations was founded in 1945 (www.un.org)

these primitive behaviors still exist along with exploitation, threats, imprisonment, torture, still employed by dictatorial regimes. Often they are driven by our wide misunderstanding of money systems, and how currencies created by governments to facilitate their economies, also control resources and populations, and are widely misused by unregulated financial exploitation.* Money, a special form of connectivity, is not wealth, but simply a tracking and scoring metric, which is mystified and thereby mistaken for the real wealth of human creativity and our abundant planet.† Currencies, including blockchain-based cryptocurrencies, are social protocols, the prices of which are based on network effects and fluctuate with levels of users' trust.⁸

Research by scholars from Russia's Peter Kropotkin (1902) and Pitirim Sorokin (1957); US psychologists Abraham Maslow (1968); Clare W. Graves (1970); Steven Pinker (2011) and Daniel Kahneman (2011); my futurist colleagues: Barbara Marx Hubbard (1993); Jean Houston (1982); Jeremy Rifkin (2009), Donella Meadows (1972), Elise Boulding (1990); Alvin and Heidi Toffler (2006) and others envision humanity's future possibilities. Sweden's statistician Hans Rosling (2018) as well as many philosophers and ethicists worldwide have tracked the long painful progress of human knowledge, science, and technology toward greater wisdom. Possibilities for progress envisioned by Charles Darwin are advanced by human ability for ethical behavior and empathy, based on biologists and endocrinologists' discovery of hormones, oxytocin, serotonin and the brain's mirror cells. All this research invalidates most of the so-called "economic laws" still in textbooks taught in many business schools.‡ Yet politicians still parrot defunct economists to resist any social reform programs with the familiar "Where's the money coming from?"

At the deepest level, we humans are growing up while the planet serves as our programmed learning environment.⁹ We are overcoming infantile fantasies and accepting our responsibilities for the changes we have created and our interdependencies, within our families, workplaces, communities, as well as our countries. Nation-states too are facing their interdependence created by human technologies, global corporations and financialization with round-the-clock high-speed trading, currency speculation and derivatives. The global transition is underway from fossilized industrial economies to the inclusive, cleaner, knowledge-richer, greener, sustainable societies envisioned in the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)[§] of the planetary Solar Age.

In today's Information Age, we all live in "mediocracies," whatever our ostensible form of government is, and participate in their "attention economies".¹⁰ We all face similar threats to our hard-won democracies from big data, biased algorithms, control over our personal information and struggle with internet issues: privacy, surveillance, hacking, fake news, robotization and other profit-driven digital takeovers of many sectors of our economy.¹¹ We find ourselves responsible for devising new forms of work, incomes, self-employment in

* Brown, Ellen, *The Public Banking Solution* (2013); Silver, N. "Finance, Society and Sustainability" (2018); Pettifor, A. "How Governments Finance Their Spending", blog, Oct, 2018, www.annpettifor.com; Mazzucato, M. "The Value of Everything" (2018); Dowbor, L. "The Age of Unproductive Capital" *Cambridge Scholars Publishing*, UK. (2019)

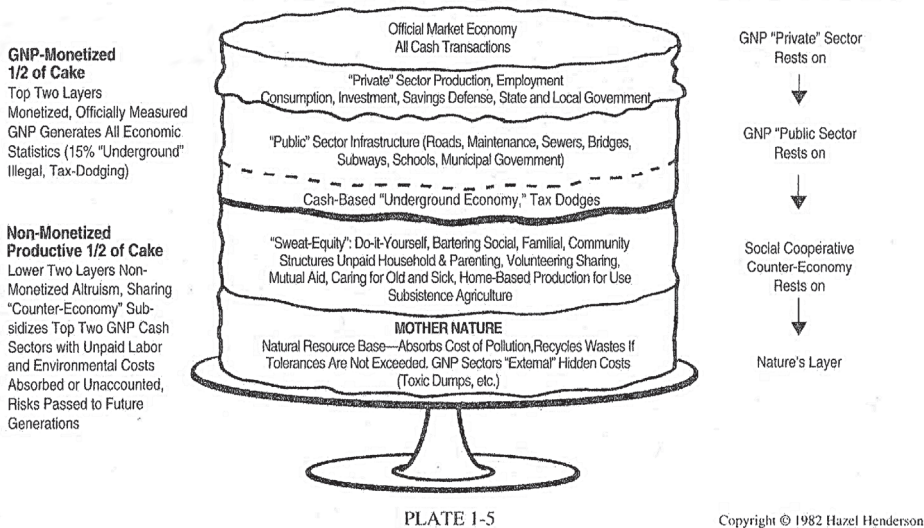
† Hazel Henderson, "Money is not Wealth: Cryptos v. Fiats" (2018) <https://3blmedia.com/News/Money-Not-Wealth-Cryptos-v-Fiats>

‡ Henderson, H. "Mapping the Global Transition to the Solar Age". *ICAEW, Tomorrow's Company*, (2014)

§ The Sustainable Development Goals were ratified by 193 UN member countries in 2015

“gig economy” sectors while urging new ways of maintaining purchasing power through universal basic incomes or guaranteed social service schemes to maintain aggregate demand for all the cornucopia of automated goods and services.*

Figure 1: Total Productive System of an Industrial Society (Three Layer Cake with Icing)



Most deeply-embedded in human cultures are the beliefs and narratives that underlie our subconscious cognitive biases and limitations, rooted in our ancient experiences and fears of “the other” tribe, sect, cult, or ethnic group. Behavioral scientists are uncovering these brain structures, endocrine systems, and emotional states and how they shape our social and economic structures.^{12,13} This is helping us understand the motivations of power, ego and domination hierarchies based on patriarchy, gender, race and ethnicity. All this is deeply concealed in economics texts which assume that human nature is based on greed and self-interest in competition for scarce resources. The new understanding beyond scarcity is based in increasingly knowledge-based societies where information is “non-rival”, i.e. if you give me information, this benefits me but you also still have it and our knowledge can be expanded *ad infinitum* by sharing. Meanwhile, obsolete economics textbooks categorize cooperative, caring work in families: raising children, maintaining households, caring for the sick and elderly, community volunteering (assumed as women’s work) as “non-economic” because it is unpaid.

This patriarchal legacy is due to earlier biological conditions of male and female roles and the decades of nurturing needed for human maturation.¹⁴ This circumscribed women’s roles reproducing our species while male skills were honed in hunting, protection of the tribe and territorial conflict. Today, the universal right of habeas corpus to own one’s own body

* Henderson, H “Facing Up To Inequality” (2015) and Skroupa, C., FORBES Interview (2017)

includes all humans regardless of gender (although still not recognized for women by some religious sects). This law needs to be extended to recognize ownership of our brains and information in today's digital societies.* Technologies of contraception and these advances in human rights are bringing women into equal roles in most organizations and societies. Yet we still see the earlier cognitive biases emerging in patriarchal backlashes opposing women's leadership now evident in science, technology, governments, finance, business, law, academia and belatedly in corporations and some male-dominated countries. Anand Giridhararas examines how global patriarchal elite maintain control through markets, networks of corporate and financial executives meeting in exclusive clubs and venues.¹⁵

“We already possess all the technological tools, innovative social strategies and human knowhow to achieve more equitable, sustainable global societies. What we need now are willpower, democratic political leadership and widespread participatory vision.”

Governments and politicians will increasingly face women's demands for relieving their unfair family burdens with more shared family leave, childcare, public social programs, safety-nets, healthcare, education and environmental protection. Patriarchal libertarians, their advocates and organizations, will continue to oppose such government infrastructure they label “The Nanny State”, possibly reflecting their early childhood experiences of “Mommy's” control over them, however necessary.

Examples of these subconscious gender politics were evident in the US 2016 elections, where many older voters (including older white women committed to being housewives, dependent on their male providers) stated that they could not conceive of a woman being president and that they voted for Trump as a sort of “Daddy”. These “Mommy-Daddy” themes and double-standards are still present in US politics, for example, pitting US Speaker Nancy Pelosi against Donald Trump in advertising and campaigns and having the response to Trump's belated 2019 State of the Union speech given by a powerful African American leader, Tracy Abrams. The spectacle of leaders accused of racism and sexism in Virginia exposes the underside of US history—also illustrating how male privileges persist in patriarchies.

A new, deeper, painful politics recognizing our cognitive limitations and biases is now emerging. Our global connectivity at every level is driving all our various extended human relationships toward greater maturity as we recognize that “the other” is now our neighbor. Short-term profit-seeking economic globalization and money-measured GDP growth goals[†] lead to global financialization, which exploits real economies. Meanwhile, entrenched elite and long-standing political conflicts over resources have driven millions from their ancestral

* Hazel Henderson, “The Idiocy of Things Requires an Information Habeas Corpus” (2017)

† Henderson, H. “GDP: Still a Grossly Distorted Picture” *CSRWire*, (2013)

homes looking for safety and a better life.¹⁶ In the USA, we are beginning to acknowledge that the only citizens who can claim original status are Native American people and that we must now learn the full underside of our history, as recounted by historian Jill Lepore in *These Truths* (2018).

The many aspects of global connectivity, with all its promise, will need careful governance, with full assessments of all technological components and their social and environmental impacts, in order to steer humanity toward long term public goals. A hopeful sign of political maturity is the efforts in the USA to relaunch the Office of Technology Assessment (OTA), which collated the best research from US universities, think tanks and other civic and professional groups to inform the US Congress of the likely longer term social and environmental effects of new technologies before they were deployed by profit-making private interests.¹⁷ This kind of assessment might have steered Silicon Valley away from its disastrous business models based on selling users' data to advertisers and markets.¹⁸ The earlier subscription-based models did not require advertising to hype profits to please shareholders. Many such models can be cooperatives or run by municipalities already offering broadband and electricity services. Today, more people are employed in cooperative enterprises worldwide than in all the for-profit corporations combined.* My further assessment of these issues is in "The Future of Democracy Challenged in the Digital Age."[†]

The stakes for our common human future on this planet are higher than ever, and as Albert Einstein reminded us, the race is now between education and survival or extinction.[‡] We already possess all the technological tools, innovative social strategies and human knowhow to achieve more equitable, sustainable global societies.[§] What we need now are willpower, democratic political leadership and widespread participatory vision. The invocation "*E Pluribus Unum*" (out of many, one) may take on global meaning.

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Notes

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