

The winning essay in the first Utopian World Championship 2001

The New World Disorder

**A Global Network of Direct Democracy
and Community Currency**

By T.R.O.Y.

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The New World Disorder

by T.R.O.Y.

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The Utopian World Championship

We are proud to present a new, revised edition of the two winning essays in the Utopian World Championship in two separate volumes, an edition that marks that more than eight years have passed since we embarked on a quest for the utopias of the 21st century by initiating a world-wide competition in visionary thinking and writing.

The concept for this project emerged out of an interest among the members of the artist group SOC. Stockholm for alternative societies, visionary thinking and utopian ideas. We launched the first competition in 2001 and have since had the honour to crown two Utopian World Champions. An American student and activist living in Sweden, who submitted his essay under the pseudonym T.R.O.Y., was elected the winner of the first championship in 2001 for his essay *The New Word Disorder*. The Canadian Professor Emeritus in anthropology, Mr Cyril Belshaw, won the second in 2005 with his essay *From Youth Maturity to Global Government: The Utopian Tapestry*.

The first prize in this contest is the equivalent of about 10,000 Swedish Krona in Euro. We also undertake to print the winning essays and distribute them to Heads of State, governments, organisations and other institutions. This reprint enables us to continue that work unabatedly. The documents are also available on our website for anyone to download and redistribute.

The course of the competition has, with some exceptions, been the same for the two rounds that have been completed so far. We have launched each round by issuing a call for entries and by offering those who want to participate to register on our website (www.soc.nu/utopian) during a limited period of time. The participants thereafter had several months to work on their essays and to post them on the website, at which point they also became available to the public. The first selection round produced a number of finalists, elected either by a reference group or by public vote, after which an expert jury and representatives of SOC.Stockholm read and evaluated the finalists' essays with the task to elect one winner. The name of the winner was announced at a public gala night, for which we also printed a first edition of the winning essay. During an extensive period after the gala we distributed the document, before the next round of the championship commenced.

Our quest for utopia has been a very exciting and highly rewarding one. It has been a most extraordinary experience for us to read all the comprehensive, thoughtful and well-written essays that have been submitted to the championship and we want to direct a warm thanks to all contestants for their outstanding efforts. Together, their works form a rich and diverse argument for the necessity of utopian thinking in our time, and a library of utopias that will hopefully continue to grow in the future.

Through the project we have come in contact with thinkers, writers and activists, who are spending their time creating, and studying innovative and beautiful ideas for new worlds or ground-breaking tools for the benefit of mankind, but also those who are putting their visions into practise. Their work gives us hope that the 21st century will become a century where the debate about the good society will flourish and prosper.

We would like to thank all the authors, the jury members and all other people and institutions that have helped us to realize this project. We want to direct a very special thanks to The Foundation for the Culture of the Future (Stiftelsen Framtidens Kultur) for financially supporting the Utopian World Championship and the printing of this edition, which is released in cooperation with Raketa Press. SOC.Stockholm has over the years also been supported financially by The City Council and The County of Stockholm (Stockholms Stad och Stockholms Läns Landsting) and The Swedish Arts Grants Committee (Konstnärsnämnden).

We recommend that you visit the project's website at www.soc.nu/utopian/ where you can get the latest news and detailed information about the project, and read many of the essays that have participated in the competition.

Please note that some of the addresses to internet sites that are included in T.R.O.Y.'s winning essay may not be valid anymore. We have, in consultation with the author, decided not to change these links since they in themselves are documents of the time when the essay was written, and instead refer to an updated link archive on the project's website at the address wwwsoc.nu/utopian/links/.

By Jon Brunberg and Annika Drougge, June 2009
Project managers of the Utopian World Championship

The Jury

Editors' note to the 2009 edition: The selection process of the first Utopian World Championship was divided into two successive rounds. In the first round, internet users nominated seven entries in an online poll. This round was completed by SOC.Stockholm's representatives who nominated another three essays for the final among the remaining entries. The ten finalists' essays were read and evaluated by an expert jury that elected one winner in an internal poll.

Please also note that the biographical information of the jury's members that is presented on these pages, has not been updated for this edition and may have changed since the first edition was published in 2002.

The Expert Jury

Dr. Rebecka Lettevall, PhD History of Ideas, Teacher at Södertörns college

Prof. Edward Soja, Professor at the Urban Planning Department at UCLA

Prof. Sverker Sörlin, Professor, Environmental Sciences and Ideas at Umeå University

Prof. Bo Södersten, Professor, Economics at Jönköping International Business School

One representative from **SOC.Stockholm**.

The Jury's Motivation

T.R.O.Y.'s entry "The New World Disorder - a global network of direct democracy and community currency" has been chosen for the first prize by a clear majority of the eminent jury. The jury finds that the winning contribution addresses important issues belonging to utopian thinking; visions of a better, future world; insights into what is causing problems today; implicit, or explicit, critique on prevailing systems; and last but not least, a location within the realm of possibility. Bo Södersten, the juror who did not choose T.R.O.Y. as one of his nominees, writes: "utopian schemes... can not be completely unrealistic. Utopian schemes will have to – if not having a firm base in reality – at least not go completely against reality, known facts and prevailing scientific views." Jury member Rebecka Lettevall writes: "It

is hard to define Utopia, and that is just the way it should be, as u-topia means ‘no-place’. Utopias may function as critique of the prevailing society, as a literary genre or as a well of future dreams.”

The jury expresses appreciation of T.R.O.Y.’s vision of numerous networks and alliances running the society, connected and functioning through direct democracy. Jury member Edward Soja especially mentions the attention T.R.O.Y. has given the importance of regional organizations and alliances: “...notions of federation or confederation, and of participatory democracy, are given new twists in the creation of a Global Alliance that not only brings together thousands of grassroots community organizations and networks, but also works through the mediating agency of regional alliances.” The jury notes that T.R.O.Y. shows a clear understanding of existing net-societies and grassroots organizations, a scene which already encompasses visions alike the ones found in T.R.O.Y.’s text. He generously refers to various web sites to emphasize the existence of people in this world already on the move towards a possible new world disorder. Edward Soja writes: “I was very impressed by the discussion of globalization and economic restructuring, especially the use of existing grassroots movements to lead the way to a utopian future. The entire entry is marked by a sophisticated understanding of present world conditions...”

The jury reflects upon the events leading up to “the Great Fall” described in “The New World Disorder”. This event is sketched in the text, it is described as unforeseen but also inevitable. SOC notes that T.R.O.Y., in a few sentences, succeeds in communicating his idea of a future scenario and makes it clear that “the Great Fall” is perhaps not any more far from reality than other great events that have already occurred.

SOC.Stockholm and the jury congratulate T.R.O.Y. for his well-deserved prize and conclude with quotations from two of the jury members. Edward Soja says about T.R.O.Y.’s proposal: “What is included and how it is presented combine to produce a most thoughtful and enriching ‘journey’, in the sense of the authors early observations that utopianism is more a journey than a final destination, a way to move through, rather than a point to move to.” And finally Sverker Sörlin describes “The New World Disorder”: “Here is a vision of how life could be in the future. It is clear, it is rich, complex and argued with care and sincerity.”

Compiled by Annika Drougge and Karin Willén, SOC.Stockholm, 2002



Who Am I?

I am a product.

I am a product of Africa, the homeland of all humanity. I am a product of the three islands of my immediate ancestors (Sicily, Ireland, Madeira) and the people before them who chose to move apart from the mainland. I am a product of the United States – a country founded upon chattel slavery and maintained by wage slavery – and all the beauty and filth that it has spawned. I am a product of racism and abolitionism, of democracy, deceit, privilege and passion.

I am a product of wonderful parents who set the standard for compassion. I am a product of nine loveable siblings, full of mischief and creativity, stubbornness and generosity, confusion and humor, devilry and dedication. I am a product of a fantastic partner who has balanced me with her sense of reason, her determination, and her honesty. I am a product of our two children who helped make me who i am with their charm and their challenge.

I am a product of Sweden, the cold darkness of the soul that grows on oneself like frost, the sense of humanity and decency that brought me here. I am a product of all my friends who have perspired, inspired, and expired – the tragedy, the comedy of life. I am a product of an unholy trinity: the Catholic Church, the punk community, the peace and justice movement. I am a product of my choices – choices guided by a respect for the sanctity of self and the sanctity of others. I am the product of the genetic coding that determined my gender, my physical stature, and my confused creativity.

I am a product of sound – fast sound wired to my heart, sporadic sound rewiring my brain, stereo-noise sound calming my nerves, cricket sound flowing through my veins. I am a product of God and nature; entropy, decay, and flowers of chaos.

Like you, i am a product.
Yet none of us need be for sale.

–T.R.O.Y.
January, 2002

The New World Disorder

A Global Network of Direct Democracy and Community Currency

Author:

T.R.O.Y.

Editor, photographer, and partner in dialogue:

Karin Johansson-Mex

Introduction

“There is no alternative.”

– Margaret Thatcher

“All that is held under power must someday revolt.”

– Inayat Khan

“Grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things that I can, and the wisdom to know the difference.”

– Serenity Prayer

Ever since St. Thomas More wrote ‘Utopia’, which can be an allusion to either ‘Outopia’ (no-place), ‘Eutopia’ (the good place), or both, the word has often been associated with the unattainable, the impossible dream. And when one considers that More’s own vision included both slavery and the death penalty one might be happy not to live in his utopia – or even next door.

The Bolshevik dream of a communist and stateless society (that never emerged) was another sort of utopian quest yet, despite establishing a certain amount of economic equality, it resulted in a nightmare for many a soul who lived under its yoke. And is not capitalism itself, with ‘the American Dream’ as its ultimate promise, also a utopian myth of sorts? For we are told, in a grand quixotic challenge to basic mathematics, that all people have a chance of becoming a part of the wealthy minority.

The truth is that a third of the world earns about 90% of the world’s income. That leaves the other two thirds of the people to fight amongst themselves for the remaining 10% and the result is a nightmare that equals its Soviet counterpart in sheer brutality.

People have tried, and are still trying, to create free and egalitarian alternatives. They have demonstrated that a wide variety of community structure is possible. Still others have created partial-utopias based upon one or two aspects of social life. Initiatives such as organic farming, rehabilitation programs,

community currencies, worker-run co-ops, alternative schooling have all come from people who have helped us see new possibilities that are available to us here and now. Their successes and shortcomings can give us insight as we continue our journey towards a better society for all. Through their example we can see that utopianism may turn out to be a journey in itself rather than a final destination point. A way to move through rather than a place to move to.

This Essay

“Which or whose Utopia? The kind of those involved, of course. Many different kinds.”

– Karl Hess, *Community Technology*

“We want a world in which there are many worlds, a world in which our world, and the worlds of others will fit: a world in which we are heard, but as one of many voices.”

– Zapatistas

This utopian vision is not a singular vision but a vision that has space for many visions. It is not a vision of a perfect world, but rather a vision of a possible world. One of many possibilities. It depicts a world that is beautiful and harmonious, yet strange and chaotic. A world where the answers are not given to us but have to be continually created by us. For the challenges, like the questions, never end.

The intent here is not to draw a complete map of a utopian world, rather it is to take a blurry snapshot of an alternative world in motion. The world described herein is, in many ways, not so different than the world as it is. Unlike many utopian dreams, this vision does not require a change in human character, only a change in human organization and the democratization of institutions. It involves projects and visions that are taking place here and now in the world we live in. It involves concrete possibilities within our reach.

The links provided within this essay are portals to other worlds. Real worlds in real-time. These worlds that hide amongst words are steps – steps to the world of greater possibilities, to your dreams, to the

utopian scenario you're about to read, to anyone's hope for a better world. What determines whether or not these worlds are ever attained or to what degree they are attained depends on one factor: what you are willing to do to make it happen.

– T.R.O.Y. 2001

January 12, 2002 Note

This essay was completed in the wee hours of September 1, 2001. It begins with the fall of America and capitalism. Ten days after the essay was sent off came the unexpected tragedy of September 11th. It was, in a sense, a multiple tragedy. First, the horrible attack against American civilians where both military and civilian locations were targeted, followed by the horrible attacks on Afghani civilians where mosques, hospitals, villages and storage depots were bombed as well as military locations, and, in the midst of all this, civil rights across the world came under attack and the mass movement which brought hundreds of thousands of protestors against the G-8 meeting in Genoa, July 2001 became stifled.

I have made minor changes in this essay since then but nothing relating to Sept. 11. The post-Sept. 11 world has been scared and scarred but it does not appear to be fundamentally different than the pre-Sept. 11 world. In fact, it seems to be more of the same.

Lao Tzu apparently sensed the same thing in China 2,500 years ago when he wrote in the Tao Te Ching:

“When the country falls into chaos, patriotism is born.”

It's the End of the History as We Know it!

“The commodity description of labor, land, and money is entirely fictitious. Nevertheless, it is with the help of this fiction that the actual markets for land, labor, and money are organized.”

– Karl Polanyi

“People are the experts; they know what it is they need. It's just that nobody listens.”

– Jean Trickey

Another World is Possible

Nobody saw it coming. Few thought it possible. And yet it happened. It seemed to be sparked by a similar spirit to the one that had brought about the end of the Soviet Empire in 1989. After little more than a decade of free market dominance spearheaded by the United States and powerful trans-national corporations it was capitalism's turn. The Great Fall of Capitalism came nearly as suddenly as its Iron Curtain counterpart. The very market of hyper-capitalism got a global aneurysm and it imploded. When the international economic collapse came about in 2007, national governments, bureaucratic armies, and state institutions were ill-prepared for the chaos that ensued. Their authority suddenly vanished.

Like the symbolic vandalism of the Argentinean parliament in late 2001, people walked into the halls of power – not to take them over – but to spit in them. Corporate leaders and corrupt politicians could no longer sway the public mind with empty promises and the people had to look elsewhere as they sought to fill their basic needs.

It was necessary to find new ways of organizing society and, ultimately, the power of local communities overcame the brutality of bullets and the persuasion of profit-steered organizations. While the former centers of power quickly disintegrated, local organizations and networks had to fill the vacuum that was left in its wake. There was an inevitable power struggle between the haves and the have-nots,

between those who had power and those who lacked it but, as the rules for the game were suddenly changed, the former underdogs gained the upper-hand.

Who were the underdogs? What was the power struggle about? Kevin Danaher, in the book “Democratizing the Global Economy” put it like this: “The mass media talk about globalization as if it were a unified, all-encompassing entity. But there are two kinds of globalization: elite globalization and grassroots globalization. The top-down globalization promoted by the big corporations is characterized by a constant drive to maximize profits...people are encouraged to pursue an unsustainable pattern of resource consumption; and social inequality has reached grotesque proportions.

In the face of this predatory type of globalization, there is another kind of globalization being forged; a globalization that reaffirms the primacy of the ethical principles that form the foundation of true democracy: equality, freedom, participation, human diversity, and solidarity. This grassroots movement is made up of many large movements: the fair trade movements, micro-lending networks, the movement for social and ecological labeling, sister cities and sister schools, trade union solidarity across borders, and many others.”¹

It was these socially active groups who, through their person-to-person contact across the world, developed counter-institutional networks that sowed the seeds for future forms of organization.

1 Page 201, *Democratizing the Global Economy*, edited by Kevin Danaher, Common Courage Press, 2001

Political Organization

“Civilizing capitalism will only be possible globally, if at all.”

– Elmar Altvater

The Global Alliance

The Global Alliance (GA), is the name given to what arose from the pact forged between the World Social Forum www.worldsocialforum.org, Peoples Global Action www.agp.org, and other umbrella organizations and institutions as they gathered up the remains of the United Nations. Many grassroots organizations participated and structural advice on the new alliance came from groups such as the Campaign for a More Democratic United Nations www.oneworld.org/camdun.

The GA came to provide a much-needed stability for the new structure of worldwide interaction and cooperation. All decision-making is now made through direct democracy wherein all participants engage themselves as equal members in a system of rotation that enables a minimum of bureaucracy.

Furthermore, it has maintained, from the very start, a very broad membership policy. The GA allows for the creation and recognition of new nations and new ‘states’ according to a very basic criteria:

- 1) that they agree to the constitution of the Global Alliance which includes the ratification of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights www.un.org/overview/rights, International Covenants on Civil and Political Rights www.unhchr.ch/html/menu3/b/a_ccpr, and on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights www.unhchr.ch/html/menu3/b/a_ceschr as well as Agenda 21 www.un.org/esa/sustdev/agenda21.
- 2) that they consent to monitoring by fellow members, and
- 3) that they see to the provision of the needs and welfare of their membership.

Under these guidelines, nearly any community or group of communities has the possibility to be recognized as an autonomous entity.

Peacekeeping forces, comprised of GA members, are used no more often today than they were during the days of the United Nations and when they are used the emphasis is decidedly on dialogue and peaceful conflict-resolution. All parties are brought into dialogue and not, as was the case in Somalia 1992-95, only those parties who have military or economic power. Internal grassroots organizations, cooperatives, clan/tribal leaders, and cultural consultants as well as non-partisan mediators from outside the area are taken in. It is through the continual networking that goes on in today's direct democratic process that enables an early warning of the build-up of tensions to be quickly addressed. Focus is thus more on pre-conflict resolution rather than the direct use of peacekeeping forces.

Immediately after the Great Fall disarmament became a top priority. If any sort of global security was to be established, it had to be free of the threat of military power and large scale war. The achievements of a universal ban on nuclear weapons followed by a ban on national armies were major victories. The model of Costa Rica which hadn't had an army in ages, proved to be the shining example which everyone else followed. As the bans were simultaneous and universal there was little room for the military to protest. And as this coincided with the collapse of profit-oriented economy there was hardly any economic incentive to maintain military power and the arms industry.

Previously established groups like the Centre for Alternative Industrial and Technological Systems (CAITS) www.shef.ac.uk/~is/caits/caits.html provided support in the transition from a war-based industry to a peace-based industry.

Furthermore the GA, unlike the UN, is neither dominated by nor dependent upon the United States nor does it include any sort of permanent Security Council membership as the UN once did. Direct democracy ensures that the voice of the GA is that of the people of the world and not merely certain heads of state.

Community Networks

“...They had worker's patrols instead of police...There was no unemployment, and the price of living was still extremely low; you saw very few beggars ...Above all, there was a belief in the revolution and the future, a feeling of having suddenly emerged into an era of equality and freedom. Human beings were trying to behave as human beings and not as cogs in the capitalist machine... I was breathing the air of equality...”

– George Orwell (describing what he saw in Catalonia, Spain in December 1936)

The new form of organization turned out to be grounded in grassroots communities. The communities are largely centered around common principles and/or cultural associations. They can be based upon common beliefs, a common trade, a common jobsite, a common neighborhood, a common language etc. A community can also be formed out from an apartment complex, neighborhood area, or plot of land. People are free to choose as to which community they wish to be associated but are limited to one official choice through which their democratic representation takes place.

These communities then coordinate themselves into Community Networks (or Networks for short). Each Network consists of a specific geographic boundary and anywhere from small rural collectives of 100 members to bustling metropolises with over 1 million members. Currently, the Community Networks account for the predominant form of autonomous unit in modern-day society. Community Networks are, quite simply, networks of communities where the basic regulations for the local society are determined.

Networks function as mini-versions of countries and are granted recognition status equal to that of traditional countries in the Global Alliance based, like traditional countries, upon number of members. Members of the communities are thereby accountable to the Network and each Network is, in turn, accountable to the Global Alliance.

The nation-state is, for the most part, gone and in its wake are thousands upon thousands of Networks linked together into various formal and informal alliances. Some areas, however, have chosen to maintain the traditional nation-state structure. These countries are then granted the same representation within the GA as the Community Networks.

Though Community Network is the formal name, it is possible for a single community to register itself as a Network if it is able to fill the basic requirements for self-sustainability and self-governance. What they gain in autonomy, however, they may lose in social, cultural, and economic variety. The larger Community Networks often consist of hundreds of small communities.

These Networks and their subsequent subdivisions have a wide variety of internal structures from consensus-based anarchy to hierarchical, from religious scripture-guided collectives to majority-based democratic rule. The democratic basis for granting autonomy has ensured that people across the world who have been struggling for centuries for democratic self-determination, from the Kurds to the Oglala Lakotas have finally heard their cries answered. In whichever case, the Networks operate on the basis of self-sustainability creating whatever they need for themselves and trading for whatever they can't create.

A final form of organization is that of nomadic communities. These groups form their own Community Network, one that is not formed out from a specific geographic area as is the normal procedure. These people include sailors, circus artists, transportation workers, musicians, Romani, performance groups, hunters & gatherers, and so on.

An odd little development along the way has been the prevalence of micro-nations *www.micro-nations.org* who often exist as mini-nations within nations. Whereas they were previously reserved for eccentric artists and activists they have become a common sight at international gatherings with their flamboyant style of dress and preposterous rituals.

GA and Democracy

“Development must be decentralized in order to involve communities in formulating and implementing the decisions and programs that affect their lives. Such a decentralization need not conflict with a global system and strategy, but would in fact ensure that development processes are adapted to the planet’s rich cultural, geographic, and ecological diversity.”

– *Bahá’í International Community Earth Charter*

By the year 2012 the GA had achieved a stable membership of approximately 25,000 autonomous entities representing more than 6 billion people. And when the GA celebrated five years of cooperation during the same year the mood was festive. It was Porto Alegre’s turn to host the conference and it served as a sharp contrast to the tense atmosphere surrounding many of the large political-economic meetings in the years before the Great Fall. Whereas cities like Washington D.C., Quebec City, and Genoa were made to look like police states in which both taxpayers and democracy itself paid high prices, Porto Alegre 2012 was a city with hardly a police in sight.

Networks are equally represented according to population. Delegations reflect both the numerical proportion of their constituency as well their cultural and political diversity. Often this mix is attained in a single delegate, someone who is appointed by the communities, not for their own personal views but for their ability to relay the views of others. Each delegate is appointed by their Community Network and serves a maximum 6 year term with the possibility for instant recall by their respective Network.

The Gathering, as it is called, begins informally with a series of debates, workshops, seminars, panel discussions, performances, concerts and festivity. The informal context allows delegates to meet each other on a purely human scale before they begin their dialogues.

This dialogue period is, in itself, an extension of the sort of discussions and planning that occur via the Internet discussion groups prior to the actual Gathering. It is during the period of Internet discussion that suggested proposals are sent in and by the time each delegate arrives they have each received an entire list of all the proposals that are to be discussed when the GA is in session. Since the matters being discussed have already been talked about for a long time in advance, the issues have had time to

reach the entire membership behind each delegate and are therefore as democratic as possible. As this method varies little from the previous standard of 'motions', the change from before the Fall has more to do with who participates rather than how they do it.

Then follows a period of 30 mini-assemblies of less than a thousand delegates each. These assemblies meet over a period of days and come to specific proposals on the basis of 2/3 majority rule. If there is any contingent radically opposed to a motion then the issue is taken up, reexamined and a compromise or alternative approach is attempted before a final proposal is formulated.

Though the decision is made by vote, the goal is, in each case, to find solutions that are satisfactory to all. Hence these meetings are mediated by several non-partisan facilitators elected by the assembly whose role is to simply ensure a spirit of cooperation and communication. It is not their place to take sides on any issue but to ensure that all voices are heard and all concerns are dealt with accordingly. At the end of each day of discussion, each assembly is present with information presented instantly electronically as to the developments in the other assemblies.

There is a break for a few days as the seminars, debates and festivities continue and it is also during this period in which unresolved issues are further discussed and delegates have the chance to consult with their communities back home via Internet. Finally it concludes with a series of meetings in which all delegates participate. The proposals are presented and the final decisions are made through a voting process with a required 3/4 majority rule.

The basic intent of the structure is that decisions shall be handled as locally as possible and as few matters as possible should be decided on the structural level of the GA. In most cases, the GA is to provide a statement of general direction and it is up to the more localized regions to interpret each declaration as it pertains to them. In a few cases, such as the decision to employ peacekeeping forces, a specific matter requires very particular attention and, in the case of the peacekeeping forces, a majority 4/5 majority rule is required in order to achieve authorization for deployment.

The ideological base for the GA is that all decisions should be made out from an general interest for the well-being of all of the world's population and a worldwide ecological sustainability and therefore it is essential that all decisions are made by an overwhelming majority of the membership.

The Regional Alliance

“I hear, and I forget. I see, and I remember. I do, and I understand.”
 – Kong Fu-Tse

There is no blueprint for social change. Most of it has to be learned as one goes along. And in this case, as there was no clear plan from the beginning as to how to organize society, such learning became an immediate necessity. Decisions were therefore made according to the needs that arose.

As there became a discrepancy between the Global Alliance and the global masses that it represented, the need arose quite early on to have an intermediary organization that could fill the gap and address the more specific needs of each region. Thus, the Regional Alliance was born and was introduced as part of the Treaty of Global Promise in 2010 as a means to facilitate the direct democracy of the GA and its membership – in other words, to answer to, not preside over, the needs of the various Networks according to their regional location.

The Regional Alliances, of which there are 23 across the world (i.e. East Asia, Eurasia, West Europe, Mediterranean, Central Africa, South India, etc...), have specific boundaries that were drawn up by the various Networks according to continental location.

Regional Alliances have several functions. First, they act as custodians of the decisions made by the Networks via the GA. Secondly, they help mediate inter-Network conflict and dialogue. Thirdly, they administer and regulate regional economy.

Regional Alliances consist of direct proportional representation of the state or Network membership. The positions are rotational so that each community is enabled to participate equally. As the decisions made at the GA level are usually not specific, it is up to the communities that comprise the Regional Alliance to decide for themselves how to best implement those goals.

One such example is the distribution of material wealth. The GA has agreed upon certain principles, such as land that is not lived on cannot be owned but is a shared inheritance and that all natural and human resources belong to all people equally. That much is clear. Yet it has been somewhat of an open question as to exactly how resources should be distributed, where land boundaries should be drawn and so on.

Economic Organization

“Gain by the loss of another is not profitable in the end.”

– Inayat Khan

Macro-Economy

In addition to its political functions, the GA is in charge of the global currency, the TERRA, www.transaction.net/money/book which has its origins in a campaign initiated by Bernard Lietaer. All banks in the traditional sense have been eliminated. After the market economy collapsed, trade and exchange shifted, out of necessity, to a resource-based economy. The very concept of interest was abandoned in favour of a more democratic and realistic approach to economic organization.

The TERRA currency, which is used for inter-Network trading via Regional Alliances, hinders the acquisition of monetary profit. The currency, which exists not in cash form but only electronically via accounts, has a negative interest attached to it (similar to the concept launched by the Argentinean economist Silvio Gesell). The principle is quite simple: that which collects dust should not collect interest. Rather, like mold on an apple, stored wealth loses – not gains – value as time goes on.

Recognizing that transcontinental exchange between countries is not the same thing as buying groceries at the local market, the TERRA is designed exclusively for institutional use. It is not used by individuals for personal consumption, rather it is used to facilitate global trade between separate regions.

Under capitalism interest helped contribute to an environment of false growth, massive debt, and instability. Negative interest, as applied through the TERRA currency, has the opposite effect: it reflects genuine growth, provides independence, and ensures stability. Negative interest encourages long-term investment as opposed to short-term investment. Whereas the old economy centralized wealth into the hands of those that had it, the TERRA system discourages wealth concentration stimulating the owners of the TERRA to invest the currency in real goods and material that grow in value throughout time.

In the market economy the structures were set up to compel people to make decisions based on profit. Now that the structures have changed, so have the decisions. The TERRA system, in contrast to the old economy, encourages cooperation as opposed to competition, it allows for mutual aid as opposed to hoarding.

The logic of the market economy enabled people to earn more money through its disuse (collecting interest), planned obsolescence (low quality products), competing standards, and the manufacture of needs and creation of dependency. The new economy thereby encourages (via negative interest) the use of money, the development of quality products (a return to craftsmanship), and reflects more accurately the actual trade that is occurring (that is, the storage of 100 tons of wheat is just that – storage – and storage has a cost). Attempts to hoard material wealth in this sense result, not in a profit, but in a loss. Thus it becomes more 'profitable' to invest in a local farm who can supply raw goods at a later point in time.

The GA simultaneously regulates trade in a similar manner to the World Trade Organization (WTO). Yet while the WTO eliminated anything, including environmental protection laws, that was considered to be a hinder to free trade, the GA view, on the other hand, is that anything that has not been proven safe to the environment or human and animal welfare is declared to be a trade barrier.

Corporations and co-ops coexist in the modern world with the major difference today being that corporations no longer have the legal status of an individual like they had in the old economy. Corporations, and the people who run them, are accountable for their actions. And in accordance to the prohibition on land ownership there is a similar ban on media ownership in foreign territory. That is, a person or corporation in one Network cannot own media in another. The fact that much of the media today occurs via Internet alleviates the tendency towards concentration of media power.

Independent media is thriving like never before via grassroots organizations like Indymedia www.indymedia.org and the micro-broadcasting movement www.radio4all.org as well as public access television and democratically oriented stations like Worldlink www.worldlinktv.com, which enable ordinary people to participate in the media and the dissemination of information.

Furthermore, the media, like industrial plants, can be charged with severe fines if they are found to be polluting the environment in violation of established codes. Whereas industry can be penalized for polluting the physical environment, the media can be penalized for polluting the mental environment. That is, any

media with a readership over a certain number is bound by certain codes such as: non-partisanship, gender equality, limited ad sales, source information and the like.

Loans and Taxes

“The world has enough for everyone’s need but not for everyone’s greed.”
– Mahatma Ghandi

Money, loans, taxes, and government financing were previously a complicated matter. In the New World Disorder things have become notably simpler. Previously money was created by central banks who in turn distributed it to private banks who both created their own money (credit loans) as well as distributed the money to the general populace who in turn paid a chunk of it to the government who in turn redistributed it back to the people via government institutions, state and local governments, and public welfare. And that is without even mentioning the stock market. This sort of set-up enabled a massive bureaucracy and a tiny elite who made a lot of money for themselves while simultaneously causing a whole lot of headaches and complications for everyone else.

Under the new system, the middlemen (the banks) get cut out of the picture. The government, which has been replaced by direct democracy and a system of rotation, creates money directly and no longer has to either depend upon banks nor does it collect taxes from citizens. Since money is no more than a representation for the allocation of resources, it is only a matter of dividing it up between the members of society. Thus, the GA is able to ‘print’ as much TERRA currency as it needed to fund whatever project is necessary. Likewise the Regional Alliances can do the same with their Aqua currencies (see section on Eco-centric Currency).

When loan has to be made, it is made without interest in the same sort of spirit as the JAK banks of Scandinavia *www.jak.se*.

Micro-Economy

“Boundless individualism, in which law, community, and every activity are radically voluntary, is an adolescent doctrine, a fantasy shopping trip without end.”

– Jedediah Purdy

“See to it that society fulfills its obligation towards individuals and individuals will surely fulfill their obligation towards society.”

– Henry James

When the traditional economy collapsed the alternative economies skyrocketed. A few countries were well prepared. Surprisingly, Switzerland was among these. Despite the fact that Switzerland had been notorious for its world famous bank accounts, it also held a secret security against the failure of the free market economy. It is a barter system call WIR that started in 1934 and operates to this day. In 1999 it had 65,000 corporate members. And in a country the size of Switzerland it proved to be more than sufficient.

Similar systems such as LETS in areas previously known as Canada, England and Australia www.letslinkUK.demon.co.uk, SEL in France www.selidaire.org, SINTRAL in Latin America ccdev.lets.net/latin/latin, the Tlaloc in Mexico www.laneta.apc.org, and HOURS <http://lightlink.com/hours/ithaca-hours> in the US also began to flourish and root themselves in the daily lives of ordinary people.

Nowadays each Network or nation is responsible for the creation of its own local trade-based economy. Such emphasis upon the local area compels people to take more responsibility for their region. One's own home is no longer a commodity but something very personal that is meant to be cared for rather than merely used.

Those communities that do not create their own currency usually rely on a simpler approach akin to the 'gift economy' of indigenous peoples. After all, the idea of a currency is to facilitate exchange. It is

a way of symbolizing a trade that has occurred. In communities where goods are shared freely or where the emphasis is placed upon ‘giving’ as opposed to ‘getting’, there is little point in having a currency.

The Creation and Distribution of Wealth

“Because things are the way they are, things will not stay the way they are.”

– Bertold Brecht

“And the day came when to remain tight in a bud became more painful than the risk it took to blossom.”

– Anaïs Nin

With the demise of the market economy went an awful lot of baggage that was attached to it. A wide array of social institutions either phased out or became greatly reduced. This includes a long list from the casino industry to the advertising industry, insurance companies to the drug trade, from cash crop dependency to the entertainment and media industry. It was as if the hysterical rat race came to a screeching stop and people got to feel, as if for the first time, what life could really look like if everyone stopped running. Climbing the ladder of success suddenly became irrelevant in a world where the most successful were now the least successful. The golden calf of profit became seen for what it was: a false idol with a false promise of a better life. Wealth has come to be defined more out from what people have in their hearts and their heads rather than what they have in their wallets.

This new revelation (for some) and sudden shift of priorities freed up a lot of human energy, time, and natural resources to be used in other areas such as developing alternative/ecological housing, alternative medicine, crisis aid, strategies against deforestation and soil erosion, medical research, renewable energy, energy efficiency, literacy programs, permaculture, ecologizing existing products, conflict-resolution, and so on. Sustainable abundance became attainable in the immediate future through the reorganization of work and distribution of resources.

In the 1990's the world military expenditures were so high that they were annually costing the planet ten times the cost of what it would have taken to provide clean running water, eliminate starvation and malnutrition, and provide adequate shelter and health care to everyone in need across the globe.

Now that all people have an equal representation in the GA the ultimate decision has been to distribute the wealth of the world both equally and ecologically. This resulted with the primary distribution of basic material goods according to the needs of every man, woman, and child on the planet allowing each Community Network to be able to provide a very basic standard of living for each of its members.

The logistics of this distribution entailed the establishment of clean drinking water to those areas that did not have it, basic electricity, basic medical care, basic Internet access (for democratic purposes), and other essential infrastructures such as the initiation of sustainable agriculture in areas that needed it. On top of this a basic sum (Global Citizen's Salary) was provided for minimum food requirements. The specific financing of basic infrastructures across the world was regarded as a collective global investment. This investment occurred via direct material and service shipments and was terminated when the goals were reached.

Now that these infrastructures have been achieved, all autonomous areas are expected to more or less provide for themselves. All that remains of the 'welfare system' is the basic sum for food. This means that each Network has to make its own internal decisions about how to organize the necessary work to provide for the rest of its needs. This balance of distribution of wealth and decentralization, welfare and independence has proven to be a key factor in the success of Community Networks.

The Global Citizen's Salary and Eco-centric Currency

*"The root cause of hunger isn't a scarcity of food or land; it's a scarcity of democracy."
– Frances Moore Lappé, World Hunger: Twelve Myths*

The mechanism for distributing wealth was the establishment of a Global Citizen's Salary which allots a basic payment to all members in the Global Alliance. It is then up to each Network to account for the internal distribution of these payments.

As the TERRA currency is used only electronically and only in order to fill the needs of major inter-continental and inter-Network trade, a new means had to be devised. In order to perform the distribution of wealth a second form of currency was created. That form is called the Aqua. It is not the currency itself – only a type of currency. Each Regional Alliance has its own name for their particular version. In the North West America Alliance for example, it is called BREAD, it is SALT in Western Europe and it is TADPOLES in the Polynesian Alliance.

That the names all have some connection to nature is probably no coincidence. The Aqua is the first form of large scale eco-centric currency ever devised. Whereas community currencies are valid within their own Networks, the Aqua currency takes the idea to the regional level.

The concept behind the Aqua is an effort to balance inter-Network trade with a bit of bio-regionalism in the mix. After all, the inherent value of many goods tends to increase the farther away it travels. "You can't sell ice to Eskimos" is the old saying. Subsequently the Aqua form of currency was specifically devised to offset this effect while still enabling trade between relatively distant Networks.

Whereas the TERRA currency decreases in value over time, the Aqua currencies decrease in value over space. That is, in a similar fashion to trade tariffs, the Aqua currencies decrease slightly in potency the farther away from home that they are used. Therefore, they have the most value when used regionally or in directly neighboring areas. A system has been set up whereby the Aqua maintains its full value within 50 kilometers of the regional borderline.

In this manner there are 'buffer' zones that prevent those who live near the border from having to pay more for trading with nearby neighbors who live across the borderline. After the 50 km. buffer zone the Aqua loses value in accordance to distance (approximately minus .1% per kilometer). Thus a system is manifest wherein trade according to locality is prioritized.

The concept is not as odd as it may sound. Many currencies had a similar tradition in the old economy. For example, foreign currencies like the German Deutschmark and the Swedish Crown could be accepted by certain Danish businesses that lay near the national borderlines. Yet these businesses often extracted a small fee for accepting the neighboring currencies.

The Aqua form of currency is the major form of paper currency today. It is used to trade primarily within each continental boundary yet not between continents (with special reservations made for islands).

In the market economy it made sense for Asians to manufacture cheap toys to be shipped across the planet in order to be briefly used by millions of North American children who would quickly dispose of the low quality items and thus turn them into tons of garbage burdening society with further economic and environmental costs. Likewise, according to the principles of free trade, it was common for countries in Africa and South America to produce fruit to be packed and transported into the Northern Hemisphere where they were sold cheaper than locally produced fruits of similar quality. In fact, in several clearly documented cases in recent years before the Fall, people died of starvation in poor countries while plenty of locally grown food was being exported to wealthy nations.

Through the implementation of the Aqua currency, all of these things are now impossible. Locally grown food is consumed locally or regionally. The same goes for toys, clothes, machinery, etc.

International trade still occurs by means of the TERRA currency but it is strictly reserved for large amounts of raw materials and goods that cannot be produced regionally. Of course this also means that things like bananas are extremely expensive in places like Northern Europe. Yet it also means that workers in Central America are no longer compelled to grow bananas for foreigners while their own children go hungry. It also means a safer, cleaner environment as excess transportation has been cut dramatically.

The Aqua currency is also used as a medium between Networks who trade in TERRA currency. Acting as a distributor of the goods of the Network the Regional Alliance negotiates global trade in TERRA while paying Networks in Aqua currency.

All money, however – even Aqua currencies – can be regarded as power. Hence, concentrated wealth equals concentrated power. Therefore, regulations have arisen with regard to limitations in income disparity. This amounts to a sort of income-cap, limiting how much money a single individual or business can accumulate. Some Networks choose to impose taxation in such cases whereas others simply democratize the industry in question, opening it up to public accountability. Still others require such persons or businesses to provide free services to the Network they live in (such as storage services, technical aid, or new construction). Similarly, Networks that accumulate much greater wealth than others are required to contribute a certain amount of TERRA to poorer Networks.

In the instances where neither of the three major forms of currency fill society's needs there are still other forms that have developed. One is an electronic currency that circulates as a global community currency addressing the needs of those who offer global services such as web page design, translation, consultation services and so on.

Others have created a sort of cultural currency based on 'art money', which, because it is art, has a value in, and of itself. This money is used to exchange small goods such as collector's items on a global basis between individuals who can pay in neither TERRA nor Aqua forms of currency.

The World Outside the Global Alliance

“The meaning of life is to struggle and to enjoy that struggle.”

– George Lincoln Rockwell

Though the GA does represent more than 6 billion people via direct democracy, there are still patches of the global population that have chosen to remain outside of its membership.

Dissidents Against Direct Democracy

The Old Worlders, people who try to cling onto a world that no longer exists, make up a small but cranky minority. This mixture of nationalists, old school capitalists, nostalgic patriots, and fundamentalists allied themselves in a Federation of National-States and attempted to recreate the sort of nation-state structure that once dominated the planet. Being so few, (a couple hundred million) in a world that is now run by more than 6 billion people actively engaged in direct democracy, means that they have very little influence upon world events and, at most, manage to cause a bit of hassle at the local level.

In fact, it is ironic that some of these entities that call themselves ‘states’ number only a few hundred individuals and are dwarfed by neighbouring Networks which number in the tens of thousands. All the major industries are geared towards the rest of the world and therefore they have neither the economic nor technological capability of expressing more power than they actually have in numbers.

Other dissidents are even smaller groups who operate as sects with charismatic leaders isolated from the entire world. Some of these manage to develop good relations with their neighbours and thrive while others, completely intolerant of those outside their own membership, have tended to gradually die out.

The Old World Economy

While traditional currency, such as the US dollar, was not worth much more than toilet paper directly after the Great Fall, it saw a slight upsurge in the year 2009 when the dissident states consolidated themselves into the Federation. They attempted to revive the use of traditional currency. Since there was no functioning international banking system to regulate trade they agreed to fix the exchange rates at the level they were at prior to the Great Fall.

The biggest problem for them, however, is not the value of the currencies towards each other nor the regulation of trade amongst each other but the lack of currency-value (not to mention trade) with the rest of the world. Any region that rejects the platform of the Global Alliance is blacklisted from international trade. The best that this motley crew of dissident states can do is hope for sympathetic neighbours who are willing to barter.

The Federation accounts for less than 10% of the world's population and they are scattered across the globe. This is a troubling fact for them. All the major industries operate on the TERRA and Aqua systems. Since traditional currency is invalid outside of the isolated regions of the Federation the strength of the economies based on traditional currencies deteriorated again after 2011.

Society in General

“People will talk about empowerment, they will talk about learning organizations, but it will be mostly talk. Only a few will have the courage and patience to move ahead. Those that succeed will, I believe, have unique advantages in the twenty-first century, because they will harness the imagination, spirit, and intelligence of people in ways that no authoritarian organization ever can.”

– Peter Senge

“Thus, the problem ...concerns both how we should imagine society and how we may recast it in the mold of the imagination.”

– Roberto Unger

Voluntary Associations

In addition to the formal democratic structures that exist are the myriads of voluntary associations that overlap social, cultural, ethnic, and political boundaries. These associations can revolve around an interest (such as archaeology), they can be based on job-related developments (such as the sharing of technical information), they can be based on creative activity (such as sport clubs), or they can be based on cultural bonds across political boundaries.

Many of these associations have grown out from some sort of social activity that directly or indirectly relates to the general democratic climate of mutual aid and participatory global citizenship. A large portion of these associations deal with social or political questions. For example, The Friends of the Earth www.foei.org monitor treatment of the environment and technological developments while MADRE www.madre.org monitors the status of women amongst the various Networks.

With the virtual evaporation of advertising, activists involved in Adbusters www.adbusters.org use their skills in graphic design to create poster campaigns for animal rights groups like People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals www.petaeurope.org or media watchdogs like Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting www.fair.org.

A lot of energy is put into preventing ethnic hostilities from flaring up and many groups, from the Baha'i Faith www.bahai.org to the UK-based Searchlight www.searchlightmagazine.com, are involved in various ways. The memories of what happened in Rwanda, Bosnia, Palestine, and Albania are still fresh in people's minds so a lot of energy is laid in the area of inter-Network/inter-cultural relations and it has paid off.

Some of the work has developed from programs initiated by the Quakers www.afsc.org/pindx/conres.htm whereas other work takes non-traditional approaches such as the use of theatre in resolving conflict such as those according to the model of Augusto Boal www.toplab.org. Large-scale conflicts have greatly diminished and Peace Brigades International www.peacebrigades.org does not have to send out as many observers as they used to.

Work, Insurance, Pension, & Child Care

"Steel can be produced by little companies and it can be produced by big companies – both using the same technology. If there is a difference, it would be simply that the smaller companies would be more likely to be inventive, innovative, and vigorously competitive."

– Karl Hess, Community Technology

"Equality is not a matter of mathematics."

– Kibbutz resident

Some Networks require up to 35 hours of work per week of their members while others require only a bare minimum of work hours in order to fulfill their basic needs. People have more time now to focus on hobbies, sports, socializing, creative activities, exploration, and so on. Without having rent to pay every month, interest upon loans, and jobs that seem completely meaningless, the demands of life are reduced to bare necessities such as the creation, reparation, and maintenance of technology, agriculture, mutual services, storage, decision-making, and so on. A life of leisure for all has been established and those who want to acquire more 'luxuries' have only to work accordingly to achieve it.

People's time and labor are, for the most part, counted equally so trading costs between Networks are established accordingly. One hour's work is generally worth one hour's work with few exceptions. A departure from this principle has occurred due to practical requirements in some communities. Instead of the principle "To each according to their need", it has become "To each according to their work" (with obvious exceptions for people who are unable to work).

How each community determines their work hours and conditions is determined by themselves alone (providing it does not infringe upon the GA guarantee for human welfare). One of the inspirational models for worker-run industry is the Mondragón Cooperative system www.mondragon.mcc.es in the Basque area. Another sort of system that has proved a helpful model is Barataria www.socsystem.org.uk, a system for business bartering that started back in the 1990's.

To offset distaste for labor and fatigue it is quite common for work structures to be set up so that each person is able to engage in a balance of different types of labor. This also helps balance people's inner lives as they perform a greater variety of tasks. As was common amongst kibbutzim, workers often perform both physical labor as well as mental labor – sometimes in the same day. This policy is applied to delegates as well. There are no full-time politicians. All delegates work in the community where they belong. There are, of course, administrative jobs at all levels that are maintained in order to guarantee organizational stability but the voice of the people remains free of institutional bondage.

Since education, like all resources, became equally accessible to all people the problem of paying back enormous study loans suddenly vanished. In fact even the day-to-day living costs are taken care of by the local community/Network. In a similar fashion elderly and disabled persons are looked after. The building of communities and Networks enables the sort of social roots that once existed in primitive tribal societies to provide for the needy, with a human – not a bureaucratic – helping hand.

All forms of dependence, whether they be education, child care, sickness, etc. are addressed by a group of people who know that they too will need the same sort of support and that they too will find it within the very same community.

A major concern in the old economy was that a growing number of elderly was to be cared for by a shrinking work force and how this crisis could be resolved. Now that the matter revolves around the

mere allocation of available resources and the profit motive is gone, the dilemma no longer exists. For the ones to provide the answers to the questions are no longer politicians with specific political interests, nor companies or workers with an economic interest, but a community of people who happen to have a direct social interest.

As money is no longer a scarce commodity but is a symbol for the collective resources to be allocated, there is no hinder for each community to share the necessary housing, technology, medical equipment, and so on between themselves in order to address whatever social needs arise. This includes moments of crisis, war, and natural disaster in which all communities and Networks send whatever aid they can.

The question is no longer one of financing but of organizing. This means that a special disaster fund, not of money but of raw materials, is established in all areas. Subsequently, there is no need to seek special 'Disaster Area' status or global media attention in order to receive support. When catastrophe strikes the materials are available within the Regional Alliance and the workers on duty (who consist of a rotating shift of various Alliance members) organize immediate aid to the area in need.

Health and Medicine

"It's no measure of health to be well-adjusted to a sick society."

– *Lorca's Norvena*

"The one who goes slowly is the one who goes healthfully and goes a long time."

– *Sicilian proverb*

Though the benefits to previously poor nations are quite obvious, the general health conditions have improved even in formerly wealthy sectors of the world. Comparative research of global living conditions is made by organizations like Social Watch www.socwatch.org, Red Cross www.ifrc.org, and

Citizens for Health *www.citizens.org*. The general conclusion is that, in spite of remaining disparities between North/South, male/female, etc..., enormous progress has been made. Basic health care is now available to all, population growth has begun to stabilize in most regions, and the rate of water/air/soil pollution has been dramatically reduced.

Some of the factors that have affected the improvement in modern health conditions are: less cars (less accidents), more education (better hygiene), less war, more precaution (better job safety codes), less poverty and careerism (less stress), better eating habits (more raw fruits and vegetables), more varied lifestyle (better exercise), less industrial production and transportation (less pollution), more trees (better air quality), and less cigarette smoking (due to higher prices).

Often clothes are washed by hand but people spend no more time washing clothes today than they did when washing machines were popular – they simply wash clothes less often. Previously, many people overwashed their clothes and their bodies which led to higher rates of allergies and skin problems. As Dr. Hillard Pearlstein once said, “We as dermatologists see more problems from the overuse of soap than we ever do from the lack of it.” Excessive cleaning also killed the ‘good’ bacteria as well as ‘bad’ bacteria. This was great for the economy (creating a need for more products, medicines, and so on) yet it was a burden on the human condition.

An important change also came about in the medical industry. Before the Fall health was an industry like any other industry back then: it was profit-driven. This meant that there was very little interest for companies to actually heal people completely and actively engage in disease prevention (in the form of vaccines or preventative care). A company could make very little money off of a vaccine but could generate plenty of profit through the production of medications that had to be consumed repeatedly – preferably weekly.

Nowadays, preventative care, lo-tech treatment (such as herbal medicine, acupressure/massage, and diet), vaccine development, water purification, and healthy living are at the top of the list. Furthermore, disease is often viewed in a holistic context and various matters from job stress to family relations, living conditions to lifestyle are examined in order to properly treat serious ailments. *www.holisticmed.com* There are also special ‘clinics’ that may focus on a specific method such as Ayurveda, hypnosis, or

physical therapy. Even the use of Internet for coordination, information and the development of alternative methods has played a role. *www.healthy.net*

Basic home care as well as dietary habits are taught in most schools and hospitals are given the time and resources to focus on emergency cases and specialized care. For example, hospice units can now provide more intimate personal care for people in their last days of life. An effort is made to integrate social and health awareness throughout society. Many schools offer basic medical and emergency training for students in their late teens.

It is relatively common for Networks to create Health Councils that help formulate health policy. The Councils are composed of local medical administrators, health care workers, researchers, community activists, physically challenged persons, the terminally/permanently ill, and other people concerned with health care policy. The purpose of the Council is to serve as a forum for developing short and long-term policy as well as a facilitator of dialogue and coordination between policy-makers, administration, workers, various clinics, and patient/community interests.

Some Networks offer certain health services (such as radiology or advanced surgical operations) to other Networks, in which case the Health Councils help facilitate cooperation and exchange. In cases of acute need Regional Alliances sponsor medical teams such as Doctors Without Borders *www.doctorswithoutborders.org* to the areas in question. These units are often trained, not only in medicine, but in social care as well. As Dr. Cynthia Maung, of the Burmese Refugee Care Project, has said: "You can't improve the health of the people without improving their community." *www.burmacare.org*

Land and Life

“People seem to be very loose and playful with each other, as if they had endless time on their hands to explore whatever possibilities might come up. ...a mighty boulevard striking through the city down to the waterfront has become a mall planted with thousands of trees. The ‘street’ itself, on which electric taxis, minibuses, and delivery carts purr along, has shrunk to a two lane affair. The remaining space, which is huge, is occupied by bicycle lanes, fountain sculptures, kiosks, and absurd little gardens surrounded by benches.”

– Ernest Callenbach, *Ecotopia*

Land is regarded as no one’s property. The old Swedish “Allmönsrätt” policy that guaranteed the rights of all people to journey through and even camp upon private land (provided they respected both the land and the owner’s personal space) served as a guideline for how to treat property in the new society. This meant that people could own land-space, the rights to personal land usage, privacy, and temporary access but that they cannot own the land itself, nor can a person own land that they neither use nor live on.

Natural Reserves are of course still forbidden to live on but all other land is open for people to claim as they see fit. In the beginning there was quite a lot of disputes over land use and land rights and which community had the right to use which land but in the end the mediation committees finally caught up with their workload and more cases are now resolved than new ones arise.

The choice of land and method of claim has varied. Some communities simply took over the neighborhood blocks where they lived. The new rule of housing became a slogan coined by Muammar Quaddafi: “The one who lives in a home is the one who owns it.” Squatting was now the rule and landlords became a social construction whose day was done. Since many people moved out of the cities there is more urban space available than ever before and cities have sprung to life with all the vacant lots transformed into gardens and art parks.

Nevertheless, some Networks were not content to take over the remains of the old society but set out to build an entirely new sort of society from the ground up. An early initiative was the Venus Project. www.thevenusproject.com Social experiments like these created entirely new architecture and city planning in order to manifest a new utopian life. Others tried the approach exemplified by Twin Oaks www.twinoaks.org and other communes www.thefec.org or www.ic.org including the trend in ecovillages www.gaia.org. Still others followed the model of the eco-industrial village in Kalundborg, Denmark www.symbiosis.dk where separate industries are made to complement each other, saving resources and saving energy by having the material (or energy) refuse from one building be used by another in a symbiotic cycle.

Some communities have managed to create a blend of the two variations. As each Network is, in a sense, its own country, an amazingly rich variety of communities has sprouted up in only a few years time. The new state of affairs seems to have liberated, not only the people who previously lived in poverty, but also those who once supposed themselves to be wealthy.

The fact that the people who live in the formerly ‘wealthy’ sector of the planet now have less of a commercial variety has not necessarily meant a lower standard of living – only a different standard of living. As the world is so decentralized now it is difficult to adequately describe the many different approaches that individual communities have taken to this change. The general theme though seems to be learning to enjoy the benefits of simplicity and innovation.

Throughout the world one can see goats replace lawnmowers, needle and thread replace sewing machines. Homemade pottery and knitting replace habitual shopping while books, art, exploration, theater, performances, storytelling, and guitars replace televisions. Graffiti and public art replace ads and billboards. Plazas, parks and squares replace malls. Games and sports, and manual labor have replaced exercise gyms and the spectator-based sport industry.

Travel and Borders

“International solidarity is not an act of charity. It is an act of unity between allies fighting on different terrains toward the same objectives. The foremost of these objectives is to aid the development of humanity to the highest level possible.”

– Samora Moises Machel

Unlike the previous concept of ‘nationality’, which enabled a citizen of one country to live in another country, members of Community Networks had to decide which community they wanted to adhere to and then that was where they would live. With the demise of the nation-state and the establishment of smaller Community Networks the bureaucracy surrounding issues of citizenship went along with it. Each Network now decides for themselves the conditions for membership acceptance, change, expulsion, and so on. Some are more restrictive whereas others have created open-exchange agreements that allow members to travel, move, and live within selected Networks without extensive bureaucracy.

Networks are aligned through a series of basic agreements and their relationships are strengthened by various pacts, economic treaties, mediators, and special ‘diplomats’ referred to as Social Bridges or, more simply, Bridges. The Bridges are the members of each Network who maintain official ties with neighboring Networks. There are also ‘Butterflies’ who maintain ties with sister cities or sister Networks. The job of the Butterfly is to facilitate social, economic, and political ties with distant Networks and nations. Mixing work and pleasure is strictly encouraged.

As agreed upon in the Global Alliance each Network is granted 3-7 distant sister cities/Networks. A lot of this was made possible with the support of Sister Cities International www.sister-cities.org and similar organizations who have been doing this sort of work for years. Travel to these sister city/Network connections is provided by the Regional Alliances and each Network can decide for itself how to use that travel time. The entire air travel industry is now run by the Regional Alliances, not as a profit-driven system, but as a global resource for all people.

Through the limitations of the sister-city pact, tourism has become a greatly reduced fact of life. On the other hand, alot more people are able to do it – not just those with money. In addition, tourism has become exclusively reserved for the sister communities. This means that the people who travel develop special transcontinental bonds with both the people whom they visit as well as the people whom they receive.

A lot of this organizational work is carried out by groups or people who previously worked with matters such as relief work, fair trade, or Eco-tourism such as Catholic Relief Services www.catholicrelief.org, United Students Against Sweatshops www.usasnet.org, Global Exchange www.globalexchange.org, Christian Aid www.christian-aid.org.uk, the Fair Trade movement www.transfair.ca or www.fairtrade.org.uk or www.eftafairtrade.org, Tourism Concern www.tourismconcern.org.uk and others.

Though travel and transportation has been greatly diminished, the telecommunication industry remained not only intact but greatly strengthened by the Great Fall. As air travel, car use, and shipping companies dwindled virtual conferencing, telecommuting, and Internet media have bloomed like never before.

School and Education

“Education is what survives when what had been learnt has been forgotten.”

– BF Skinner

“To teach is to learn twice.”

– Joseph Joubert

“My grandmother wanted me to have an education, so she kept me out of school.”

– Margaret Mead

Relieved of the profit motive, the development of the human mind seems to be flowing like a river after bursting through a dam. All of the pent-up creativity has begun to be unleashed. One of the tools for channeling that creativity has been the implementation of educational models and school curriculum that suit the needs of the modern person. Previously schooling was often an unpleasant arrangement which obliged teachers to act primarily as disciplinarians and students as pupils of obedience. John Taylor Gatto, the New York Teacher of the Year in 1991 said this about the old school system: “Schools and schooling are increasingly irrelevant to the great enterprises of the planet. No one believes any more that scientists are trained in science classes or politicians in civics classes or poets in English classes. The truth is that schools don’t really teach anything except how to obey orders.”

The demands of the market created a need to produce obedience more than foster creativity and learning. The first step towards a good career was the ability to endure at least a decade of compulsory submission to the school hierarchy. Obedient individuals would be suitable for anything from waiting on tables to factory labor to military service. Creative critical thinking could be considered a hinder to such enterprises and, when it did manifest, came about despite, not due to, the formal educational system.

With the demise of centralized forms of authority, society is now compelled to cultivate individuals who are both more independent as thinkers as well as more responsible as caretakers for the world

that they live in. The process begins when children are young, not through compulsory education, but through the exposure to the sciences, a widespread availability of learning tools and materials, and the freedom to choose to develop their own interests. Being respected, children learn respect. Being seen, they learn how to see. Through support by the community, children learn the importance of support and how they can play a role in contributing to the needs of the community.

With the profit-motive gone children are no longer forced to work against their will in dangerous, stressful, or exhaustive labor. Children have the option of working when and how they want to. This gives them non-school experiential education, a sense of what life has to offer, an opportunity to explore and also can integrate them gradually into a sense of responsibility in such a manner that relieves them of the counterproductive schoolwork and obligatory labor.

Children have more room to experience childhood and grow at their own pace and parents have more opportunities to bond with their children and assist them in a learning process that suits their particular needs, abilities, and interests. In practice, certain parents spend more time with the neighborhood children than others just as some parents help out more with reading skills while others prefer to take kids out on nature excursions.

For the children who want to extend their learning there are plenty of opportunities available. Children can attend specialized workshops, any number of schools or learning centers, engage in homestudies, take Internet courses, visit jobsites, explore nature on their own, join reading circles, discussion groups, or become junior apprentices at local workplaces.

From child education to adult study programs, a wide spectrum of possibilities are available throughout the entire life of the average person. The actual quality and use of these services varies according to Network. Networks, like individuals, develop their own personalities and the sort of educational milieu that exists within any particular Network is often a good statement about its character. Some Networks pride themselves on their educational systems which can draw in students from other Networks.

One such university is URACCAN www.yorku.ca/cerlac/URACCAN/URACCAN.html which has been offering courses in autonomous self-government, indigenous lifestyles, and ecological prosperity for many years prior to the Fall. Likewise, the Barefoot College www.barefootcollege.org has been teaching

communities to provide for themselves through practical innovation since 1972. Of course such an approach starts long before the university stage as the Schools for Environment project has demonstrated through its experiences with young school children in Jamaica. <http://64.45.40.146/pages/sep.htm> Other examples of integrating education with ecological practicality are the Green University www.peace.ca/greenuniversity.htm and the Local Environmental Action Programs. www.rec.org/REC/Publications/LEAP_Guide Additionally, there are organizations that offer courses in specific subjects such as conflict-resolution www.trainingforchange.org.

In order to give ordinary people a better opportunity to participate in the decision-making process there has grown a need to provide all people with a working knowledge of pertinent information with regard to their locality and its relation to other localities. To meet this need locally focussed books have been produced that describe a locality's ecological status, energy sources/usage, import/export facts, social demography, history, administrative structure, sister cities' descriptions, as well as regional and global information. Like other educational literature, emphasis is placed upon quality, form, and presentation of information in order to maximize the absorption of knowledge and enrich the learning process.

Yet educational innovation does not end with textbooks. Much of modern-day schooling is a well-integrated process of participation and experimentation, praxis and theory. For example, the study of physics can be combined with concrete applications in plumbing or blacksmith techniques. Often a person who wishes to study medicine or any of the natural sciences first works as a nurse assistant, tending to patient's social needs for a certain period of time, before continuing their studies. In this way students both develop a deeper understanding for the processes which they are studying as well as help contribute to filling local needs.

Though a more holistic integrated approach is applied to education, there are still specialized studies. In fact, specialized school councils exist whose function is to study and dialogue with local administration in the area of special services. For example, a school program may study economy, ground contamination, or social work. Rather than first spend years studying theory, students are enabled to integrate theory with practical application. The class may undergo intensive study along with a local civil organization and, similar to the concept of Health Councils, participate in the development of local administrative policy by evaluating the status of contemporary policy, engaging in comparative

study of alternative approaches being applied by other Networks, and assessing long-term costs, effects, and possibilities.

This helps decentralize the school experience from a physical location to a general social process interwoven with society – both locally and globally via various blends of formal and informal education www.infed.org. The actual physical school locations also tend to be structural networks of libraries, information exchange databases, workshops, music studios, storefronts, and telecommunication/media production centers physically interfaced with the local community as opposed to monolithic ‘ivory towers’ isolated from the rest of society. Hence, a certain amount of general commerce takes place in the ‘school’ area. For example, a crafts shop can engage in study and production at the same location and when townspeople want to purchase some pottery (or make their own) then that is the place they go to. The same principle is applied to all locally produced technologies and minor industries.

Formal education itself certainly takes place in classrooms as it did in the 20th century yet the emphasis now is not on careerism and the rote memorization of facts and figures, rather it is on learning in many different ways. Former teacher, Grace Llewellyn, has pointed out: “Answers are dead ends, even when they’re ‘correct’. Questions open the galaxies.” It is about developing EQ as well as IQ. It is about communication, social skills, respect, and critical thinking. It is about discovery, trial, and error. And it is about exploring the world of education through hands-on experience. It is about cultivating a sense of awe, a permanent state of curiosity rather than merely pumping in more and more information. As William Butler Yeats said: “Education is not the filling of a pail but the lighting of a fire.”

It is not unusual for academic philosophy to be introduced to children at an early age in the form of practical application and real-life questions. The intellectual development of philosophical matters then continues throughout a lifelong education with the ideas based in earlier experiences and dialogues. Certain types of education are better learned outside of the traditional school milieu. For example, as Aristotle pointed out: “Anyone can become angry – that is easy. But to become angry with the right person, to the right degree, at the right time, for the right purpose, and in the right way – that is not easy.” Sometimes techniques for adult organizational development, such as the Work Group for the Study of Leadership and Organization www.agslo.org, are brought into schools in order to accommodate students to higher levels of autonomy, understanding of group behavior, and organizational

analysis. Such educational services that previously costed a lot of money and were reserved for a tiny elite are now available to the average person.

Various schools place emphasis upon different pedagogical techniques from Forum theatre to natural systems-based analysis and hands-on environmental management. Though many schools make use of several approaches there are still specialized programs available which offer higher-level university training. In fact, some communities are formed in correlation to universities. Still other universities employ the use of LETS to enable students to exchange knowledge and skills with each other (or provide other services instead of paying tuition).

In addition to extending extracurricular options, there has also been an increase in interdisciplinary studies. There is even a strong tendency towards what Barry Commoner (Center for the Biology of Natural Systems www.gc.edu/CBNS) refers to as 'adisciplinary' when he describes the center's purpose which is to focus on solutions of real-world problems as opposed to academic problems defined by a discipline. He says, "Our approach to this problem then is to solve it, not to write a paper that will fit into a particular discipline or even a combination of disciplines."

Thanks in part to the widespread use of 'soft' technology there is less work that needs to be done and more leisure time. This allows for people to devote themselves more to creativity than to productivity. This allows for a balance between physical activity and solitary study, between the social and the academic, between the practical and the fun, all of which help create an atmosphere of vitality within the learning process.

Schools have not only decentralized on the local level but also globally with various Internet universities offering complete programs available to students across the globe. This has not, however, meant the complete demise of location-centered schooling rather it has opened up space for non-traditional pedagogies to develop as a complement to highly academic Internet study. Alternative schooling systems and pedagogies such as Storyline www.storyline.org, Summerhill www.firstask.de/summerhill2001, Pestalozzi (Ecuador), Paolo Freire www.paulofreire.org, and Waldorf www.wtda.org have all spread out a good deal to become accessible to most Community Networks. In regions of conflict schools are formed in the spirit of places like Givat Haviva Peace Education Center and Talitha Kumi www.talithakumi.org which create space for educational encounters between Palestinians and Israelis. In the end, the most essential form of schooling is life itself and the learning never ends.

Technology and Scientific Development

“Chaos seems to provide a bridge between the deterministic laws of physics and the laws of chance, implying that the Universe is genuinely creative and that the notion of free will is real.”

– Paul Davies

“All things are connected. Whatever befalls the Earth befalls the children of the Earth. Humankind did not weave the web of life but is merely a strand in it. Whatever we do to the web we do to ourselves.”

– Chief Seattle

“Imagination is more important than knowledge. Knowledge is limited. Imagination encircles the world.”

– Albert Einstein

In the days of the old economy it was possible for a government to allocate billions of dollars to space programs that would send huge chunks of hi-tech machinery – and occasionally people – off into space while there were simultaneously millions of people here on Earth who were suffering for lack of clean water, food, or basic medical care.

Such an extravagant waste of resource and disregard for human life is unthinkable today. Yet now that the vast majority of people’s needs are being met there is a growing interest to start looking into the possibility of reinstating a space program of some sort. These ideas however – despite their increasing popularity – still take a distant backseat to the more pressing issues of the day such as ecological farming, energy-efficient devices, new vegetarian/vegan alternatives to meat, bio-degradable products, water purification, waste control, transportation, medical research, robotic machinery for hazardous jobs, toxic waste elimination, hi-tech diplomacy, and telecommunication. In fact, there happens to be a larger interest in developing on-line interactive games than there is in developing a new space program. The UFO clubs have waged a pretty heavy campaign for re-entering space but they have had trouble arousing large-scale interest.

Furthermore, technological development is a matter no longer reserved for specialists but for students young and old. It is a matter for all people, whether it is about ingenious new ways of designing solar panels

from tin cans or whether it is kids innovating ever new uses for old washing machines or discarded parts from refrigerators. Scientific education, for many, is integrated in the basic necessities of daily life.

Science has become a highly localized art. Much of the economic focus is now on bio-regionalism and there is a large need to figure out new and better techniques for transforming local resources into a wider range of uses. This can mean turning hay into insulation blocks for housing or creating self-contained bacteriological toilets that function completely independent of the traditional sewage system. It can involve the creation of small ecological chemical factories or converting agricultural by-products into packaging material. In Southern Africa they have created a method for turning old automobile tires into stylish shoes. Some technologies are used almost all over the world such as the technique for turning local garbage into fuel via the construction of neighborhood methanol plants.²

Ideas and innovations are spread across the globe by means of organizations like the Centre for Alternative Technology www.cat.org.uk, The International Network of Engineers and Scientists for Global Responsibility www.inesglobal.org, and Internet-based idea exchanges such as the Global Ideas Bank. www.globalideasbank.org

2 *Community Technology*, Karl Hess, Harper & Row, 1979

Art and Culture

“The real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes but in seeing with new eyes.”
– Marcel Proust

“If your life was made into a movie, would it be worth watching?”
– CrimethInc.

The current emphasis upon practicality stems, in part, from experience. After the Fall there were a number of areas who had registered as Community Networks and they had enthusiastically ascribed to very democratic principles but, for one reason or another, were unable to match theory with praxis. Some succumbed to drug problems while others imploded due to internal strife over informal hierarchies and unclear agreements concerning authority and responsibility.

Many had high ideals such as free love, consensus with large groups, lack of work obligations, informal organization, drug tolerance, and so on but the utopian dreams turned into nightmares for their residents when the idealistic intentions were not backed up with realistic goals, transparent structures, and practical initiatives that effectively fill the needs of all people involved.

Yet none of this means that pragmatism and bureaucracy have drowned out the vibrant joy of life. To the contrary, cultural expression and social innovation have exploded as people feel like they have both more time and more autonomy. For example, the opportunity to design and display absurd and useless clothing is no longer reserved for elites and high brow culture. Anyone with the will and creativity can do it – and they do. Surrealistic fashion parades usually coincide with local festivals or celebrations about four times a year. In the larger cities, the streetside catwalks made by young students pop up in the form of impromptu fashion displays whenever the kids feel like setting them up.

New music, dance, theatre, and video-art spread primarily over the Internet as well as through tours and festivals. All kinds of subcultures thrive as new styles pop up and cross-fertilize with the old. Simultaneously, the increased sense of urgency concerning energy conservation has also seen a rise in

the use of acoustic instruments and street performances. Sometimes people even take instruments like guitars with them to the job-site and take musical breaks from tedious tasks. The widespread participation in culture has, in itself, helped foster an interaction between the arts and pragmatic approaches to social needs. One example is the transformation of trash into art. Artists like Carol Tanzi www.goddessoffgarbage.com and Bodys Isek Kingelez www.carnegieinternational.org/html/art/kingelez.htm have become experts at turning scraps into art while enthusiasts manage to be able to turn the most mundane objects of daily use into fantastic displays of creativity www.cyclecide.com. Across the world, everything, from avenues to apartment complexes, has become a haven of art. One example is the Chapungu Sculpture Park near Harare www.chapungusculpturepark.com. The same is true for trucks, city walls, and telephone poles that have a habit of falling victim to 3-D graffiti. The social landscape seems to have taken on a life of its own. The fact that the world is better off than it used to be has not, however, diminished political activist art forms from continuing to invade all areas of life. Notable examples are the Fanclubbers www.fanclubbers.org and the Cacophony Society www.cacophony.org. Also, the legendary RTMARK www.rtmark.com, which has been stripped of its corporate veil, still functions as a breeding ground for creative mischief.

The Internet has also played a role in the grand interface between society and art. Through simulation programs and video games people engage in alternative social structures, community building, conflict-resolutions, and problems of legalities. In 2008 a website was launched called Utopian First Aid (UFA). The purpose of UFA was to offer support and counsel to newly started Community Networks across the world. Through the website people from any Network on Earth have access to a massive database of information concerning any sort of question or problem that might arise for young communities.

The database is filled with FAQs, statistics, and tips supplied by users. This means that if a Network, community, co-op, or work association has a problem with anything from land disputes to personality conflicts they can search the database for information as to how other people have resolved similar problems and what the results were. Such information is culled, not only from real life society, but also from online communities such as MUDs and MOOs (Multi-User Domains, etc...) whose legislation as well as experience occurs exclusively online.

One can even calculate possible future developments for various local or global regions using the Pole-Star program. www.seib.org/polestar Additionally, the UFA website offers a chat room for communi-

ties to talk to each other and a counseling service for online consultation and mediation. Many of the online counselors have been living in intentional communities for years and/or specialize in conflict-resolution or questions of legality and international pacts. Some communities present themselves and their particular approach via various forms of 'auto-documentary' films which are then shown on stations like the Global Access Television Network. www.wetv.com

Security and Defense

"You have a very complicated legal system. It is not that way with my people. I have always thought that you had so many laws because you were a lawless people. Why else would you have so many laws?"
– Native American referring to the United States

Despite the large outcry against armies and weapons of mass destruction people of the world initially opted to treat guns as a temporary necessity in order to ensure stability. In the absence of a strong police state people largely police themselves taking turns in patrolling their communities. The widespread presence of guns however meant that more than one family fight turned into a bloodbath and some small groups were found to be hoarding weapons. At the GA Gathering in Bangalore in 2010 Community Networks across the world agreed to impose universal firearm regulations, restricting usage to licensed owners and having most firearms stored away and guarded under the authority of each Community Network.

The mobile phone system that was set up enables local people to have simple easy access to whoever was on duty at the time. Patrols usually carried no weapon at all. Rather, in the absence of a lot of work, people rely on numbers. Hence, patrols tend to activate themselves with other interests while on duty. They can involve themselves in inner-city gardening or street cleaning or games or just sitting at a café reading a book. It doesn't really matter what they are doing as long as they are easily accessible in case of emergency. And since patrolling is a rotational duty all citizens take part – no internal police

cliques have been able to develop, no resentment against police, and any accusations of brutality by an individual on patrol is addressed by an independent council.

Occasionally roving mobs of gangsters try to take over a community or steal its supplies and it is during these rare occasions that the guns actually see the light of day. The gangs, however, are usually nomadic groups of rugged individualists who refuse to settle down into a Community Network and tend to make quick hit-and-run attacks. Though they can cause quite a stir when they come by, they pose no real threat to society.

Most crimes are prevented by three factors:

- 1) The initiation of Networks enabled tight communities to form which acts as both a protection against outside crime as well as an insurance against internal crime.
- 2) The introduction of the Global Citizen's Salary and the build-up of self-sustainable infrastructure largely eliminated crimes rooted in poverty.
- 3) Since the drug trade was dependent upon the profit motive, it (and a lot of drug-associated crimes) was dramatically reduced when the new economy was established. (Many communities grow their own hemp but this rarely leads to any problems. In fact, alcohol – which is still largely available – is a much greater social dilemma and source of dispute. Drugs like heroin and cocaine are nearly unheard of even in the areas where coca and opium plants are grown).

In addition to these factors, assaults against women have declined, in part, due to popular (and in some cases obligatory) courses in mental self-realization and self-defense, gender relations, communication skills, and anger management. This has helped to balance out some of the previous inequalities that occurred in conflicts between men and women both in and outside of relationships.

As each Network decides for itself what sort of justice it shall impose communities have been free to dream up their own methods. Some have adopted techniques that resemble that of the native Alaskans who settle all disputes (except murder) with a song duel in which the two opponents hurl insults and lampoons at each other in front of the community. Others have a Council of Matrons as was used by

the Iroquois Confederacy. In fact, in the absence of proper financing for prisons, most communities, like traditional 'primitive' societies, are obliged to discover their own means of preventing and resolving conflict as opposed to punishing it.

The less creative a community is or the more heterogeneous it is, the more stringent methods are the methods that tend to be used. Yet so long as it does not conflict with the by-laws of the GA and the resolution of human rights, it is to be permitted. Most communities try to rely heavily on the conflict specialists and dispute mediators in order to arrive at decent resolutions that appease all parties involved. Rather than simply dealing with the matter at hand, the conflict specialists often try to go deeper into what may be lying at the root of the problem and address the cause rather than the symptom.

Justice and Rehabilitation

"Throw away industry and profit and there won't be any thieves."
– Tao Te Ching

Though the New World Disorder certainly did not end crime and anti-social behavior it did have a strong dampening effect. Currently, the crime rate is far below that of what it once was in the nineties. One might suppose that with the general dismantlement of the prison industry, crime might have risen yet that was not the case at all. It turns out that a large number of people behind bars were there due to nonviolent crimes (often convicted for doing things that are now completely legal in certain Networks such as smoking marijuana), others were wrongly convicted, and still others were serving time for crimes committed as minors or for crimes which they had long ago repented.

Now the prisoners that were released had a clear choice: they could join a Community Network as responsible citizens, they could join a dissident state and abide by their strict rules, or they could join a nomadic gang of outlaws. Given such a choice most chose to make an attempt at leading normal lives

often looking up former lovers or friends or following fellow prisonmates in their quest for a new life in freedom.

A tendency soon developed among some Networks to tattoo special markings on the backside of the hand of repeated troublemakers in accordance to the severity of the crime they were convicted of and then, if the crime was severe enough, expel them from the community. Though it continues, this practice has been widely condemned as inhuman and creates more problems than it solves. Occasionally such people who get expelled end up finding a community where they fit in and settle down but the general tendency is for these people to become outcasts and end up either as wandering hobos or as part of a gang of outlaws.

If severe crimes continue by any particular individual or gang then the security forces of the Regional Alliance is triggered into action. Like the local patrol duty, service in the Alliance security force is rotational. Members are taken from various Networks and undergo special training. They are on duty, not to interfere with internal community disputes, but rather to address serious large-scale criminal activity. This can even include the rare instances when certain communities engage in hostile activity toward other communities. Hijacking, hacking, sabotage, assassination, grand theft, terrorism, are all under the jurisdiction of Alliance forces.

Often these problems stem from neighboring conflicts with Federation members or terrorist activity sponsored by Federation states. The engagement of community patrols and active role of ordinary citizens enables regions to keep the level of criminal activity by outlaw gangs down to a bare minimum.

When outlaws are captured by Regional Alliance forces they are separated and each case is examined individually. A distinct effort is made to avoid the pitfalls of the prison industry in the Old World where prisons actually perpetuated crime and increased the individual's tendency to identify themselves as a criminal.

Modern facilities are not like the traditional prison system but more like a highly structured mix between a hospital, rehabilitation center, and job-site training in which each person is given not only access to professional counseling, but also trade opportunities. This may include various forms of community service in which the individual can set about learning a trade of their interest that may make

them of particular value to certain communities and enable them a better chance at being accepted back in. Currently it is common to use various approaches of restorative justice. *www.restorativejustice.org* This can involve Victim and Offender Mediation which gives offenders the opportunity to meet with their victims face-to-face in the presence of a trained mediator. This process can help reduce the victim's fears, while establishing accountability and reparation for the crime. Similarly, Family Group Conferencing brings together the victim, offender, family members and supporters for more holistic encounters attempting to address deeper issues. Another form is Circle Sentencing which involves community members who actively assist rehabilitation facilities with options for integrating offenders back into society. Then there are Community Sentencing Panels which are comprised of volunteers from the community. They suggest various restorative measures such as restitution, reparation, mediation, community service options, and victim involvement.

New techniques are constantly being developed for addressing this complex matter and a few organizations devote themselves to researching the effectiveness of various methods used in diverse Networks. One such group is the International Centre for Prison Studies. *www.prison-studies.org*

For those prisoners who have served their time and received a public evaluation but have not found a Network or nation who is willing to accept them, they are obliged to remain in the rehabilitation facilities. Much support has come from organizations that work around prisoners and the investigation of alternatives.

This system is made possible by the fact that there are far less prisoners today than there were before the Fall. The number of prisoners that are in such a predicament today amount to less than 1% of all of the people that were behind bars in the year 2000. In fact the total number of prisoners today is less than 10% of the number of pre-Fall prisoners with about half of those being found in Federation states.

The death penalty is forbidden amongst all GA members. It is, however, still a common practice amongst Federation members and the issue has been a continual point of contention between the two poles.

New Traditions and Social Codes

“Do not accept what you hear by report, do not accept tradition, do not accept a statement because it is found in our books, nor because it is in accord with your belief, nor because it is the saying of your teacher...Be ye lamps unto yourselves.”

– *Buddha*

In the absence of traditional ‘law and order’ a plethora of social codes and alternative traditions have popped up. Obviously it is impossible to list even a small portion of the wide range of codes but here are a few:

Treat others as they want to be treated. This has become a modern version of “Do unto others as you want them to do unto you.” If someone wants to be left alone, let them be alone. If they want food then let them eat. This requires communication on both sides. For each person must be able to both hear and respect the desires and boundaries on both sides. This is where respect and self-respect come in.

Trash is dumped where trash is made. The idea of one country sending their trash or toxic waste to another country is gone. Each Network or nation is responsible for its own waste disposal. This, in itself, has put a lot of pressure on communities to diminish their consumption and minimize their non-organic, non-biodegradable waste. Some Networks, especially those based in the city, still rely on neighboring Networks to dispose of their waste. This is not as problematic as it sounds. With the introduction of the Global Citizen’s Salary many cities had their population nearly cut in half as people moved out to the countryside.

Electricity Fast. Most Networks and nations celebrate the newly acquired ecological lifestyle with an even greater cutback upon personal luxury: electricity. Some Networks do it once a month and hold bonfire celebrations and parties without any electricity whereas others do it only once a year. The insight is simple: sometimes it takes the loss of what little one has to realize how much one actually does have.

Give of the heart and not the hand. Previously celebrations such as birthdays and Christmas were, in the over-developed nations, often surrounded by a sudden frenzy to buy presents for one's loved ones. Nowadays, people tend to give non-material gifts during these celebrations such as experiences, personal services, or rituals of forgiveness. Material gifts are still given occasionally but these are often hand-crafted and given randomly throughout the year.

Communal guidelines:³ some general rules of thumb for newly organized communities have been 1) the more people, the more structure is needed 2) the less thoroughly members know and understand each other, the more structure is needed and 3) the less time members spend together the more structure that is needed. Many groups had a lot of falling out in the beginnings when people thought that too much structure would stifle the community and that certain principles and values could be taken for granted. Miscommunication, misunderstandings, and a lack of experience in dealing with those issues caused a few communities to learn the hard way.

More communal guidelines.⁴ The second phase of new close-community guidelines that have been learned go something like this: 1) Develop communication skills – this includes self-communication, listening, and assertiveness 2) Respect the needs of all individuals for differing amounts of personal time and space, etc...and learn to comfortably express your own needs 3) Acknowledge differences and conflicts and deal with them – preferably with the help of a mediator and determine whether these differences are destructive/exploitative or a potentially compatible diversity 4) Take personal time for walking, writing, meditation, music or whatever helps calm your mind 5) Establish weekly meetings for review and discussion for both internal matters as well as global, local, and regional 6) Plan monthly retreats for couples, families, parents, friends and individuals to get relaxed time together 7) Live simply – the less one demands materially the more one demands spiritually 8) Provide hospitality to all 9) Create joint activities with neighboring communities 10) Plan ahead – figure out all of the community's needs and determine well in advance how they will be achieved, who will do what, back-up plans, and so on making sure that all members are aware of the decisions 11) Set aside regular times

3 *Communes USA*, Richard Fairfield, Penguin Books, 1972

4 Most of this is a heavily edited version of Dan Gobbet's *Guidelines for Co-operative and Communal Living*, adapted from the original six guidelines by the Taizé Community, Diggers & Dreamers, 1991

to participate as a group in a community service i.e. fixing a street, building repair, etc. 12) Celebrate together – avoid dogmatism, enjoy each other.

Declaration of Interdependence. One of the proposals that came from the GA was that each Network, community, and nation write their own ‘Declaration of Interdependence’. There were no further guidelines and the proposal was more of a general suggestion than a requirement yet the vast majority of the GA membership complied nonetheless and a tradition developed to post the declaration at entry points.

With each group having written their own unique take on a common theme it has become a trivial pursuit of travelers to compare the various compositions. Examples: “We are ecologically interdependent with the whole environment; we are socially, culturally, and economically interdependent with all of humanity; sustainability, in the context of this interdependence, requires partnership, equity and balance among all parties.” Excerpt from the Declaration of Interdependence by the World Congress of Architects; “We are the earth, through the place and animals that nourish us. We are the rains and the oceans that flow through our veins. We are the breath of the forests of the land, and the plants of the sea. We are human animals, related to all other life as descendants of the firstborn cell ...We are learning from our mistakes, we are mourning our vanished kin, and we now build a new politics of hope... All this that we know and believe must now become the foundation of the way we live. At this turning point in our relationship with earth, we work for an evolution: from domination to partnership; from fragmentation to connection; from insecurity to interdependence.” Declaration of Interdependence, David Suzuki Foundation

Burning Man. *www.burningman.com*. The Burning Man festival in the deserts of Nevada have not only continued but have inspired similar projects across the globe. The idea is simply to arrange space for self-organized events, performances, music, and general chaos. A blend between hi-tech and primitivism, anarchism and modern day paganism.

The Right Livelihood Award. *www.rightlivelihood.se* Not only has the global Right Livelihood Award continued but it has spread to include regional awards as well honoring those who work on practical and exemplary solutions for real problems facing the world.

Case Stories

Tanya, 35 & Michael Evans, 33

East D.C. Propers
North-East America Regional Alliance

Tanya and Michael take a break from their rooftop gardening and sit down in the shade with a glass of ice cold lemonade in hand. Michael picks up the yarn and starts knitting on the sweater he's been working on while Tanya tells him about her class in conflict-resolution and critical thinking. In the middle of the conversation their daughter Amanda walks in with a painting she made. "Beautiful, honey!" says Tanya while Michael says "Hey, that's nice – where'd you make that?" "Down at the kid's corner." says Amanda in a casual tone and walks back out with a subtle air of pride.

The 'kid's corner' is where the neighborhood kids gather each day. Not actually a corner but a large park area where there are activities organized each day by the community children's group. Like many other services, the work with the kids is rotational and usually the shifts operate around a neighborhood basis keeping the adults as close as possible to the children's home. They offer meals, rooms to rest or study, and a playground and a wide range of adults and kids of all ages to look after them. It's a general meeting ground for kids to come to after school. And in no time at all Amanda is back down there.

Elisa Gomez Libertad, 41

Zapatista village
CA Regional Alliance

For Elisa, not much has changed since the Great Fall. The most notable change is the feeling of security. There were a few dissident military communities in the South such as Sendero Luminoso and a few paramilitary groups who belonged to the Federation of National-States but they posed no threat at all to the Zapatista communities in Chiapas. The lack of Mexican aircraft flying above as a threatening

reminder as to who has the most weapons, the lack of a mainstream media that trickles through with distorted and hostile coverage of their situation, the knowledge that her way of life was now understood – or at least accepted – by the majority of the planet, all these things helped her sleep better at night. The plumbing system now works better, some new farming equipment and solar panels have arrived, and they have recently gotten a couple computers from La Peña Cultural Co-op in Berkeley and mobile phones in the village. Such things have made life a bit easier but it really doesn't change a whole lot for her.

She had never been out of the country but when she came back from the corn fields today she got word from Pedro who had checked the communal e-mail, that the Regional Alliance has allocated their village three plane tickets to West Europe and Eurasia next year. This had not come as surprise however. She knew about it for a while. The village had already talked about it and agreed that she and two others will be making the journey which will be a mix of business and pleasure. She will be hosted by several West European/Eurasian Networks whom she will be speaking to about the Zapatista way of life, organization, history, Mayan culture and so on. She will also be speaking about living the Simple Life. This is perhaps the most inspirational part for the Europeans, some of whom are still trying to grow accustomed to getting by on less.

After enduring decades of intense commercialism, careerism, and pursuit of happiness via material gain, people in what was once called 'the First World' are finding themselves lagging behind in the mental resources needed to adapt to the new circumstances. Put simply, they are going through withdrawal symptoms ever since their addiction to materialism got suddenly shut off and the euphoria of the 'revolution' has worn off.

Now they need coaching and support – people who can help them calm down their material desires, increase their spiritual insights, and readjust their expectations and perspective of life. To do this they are importing storytellers, activists, and ordinary workers from countries where people have been living with less for millennia.

For the so-called 'Westerners' who have difficulty getting used to the basic idea of living in the same area one's entire life, the coaching system is an important contribution. Needless to say, local people are often enlisted as well. For example, farmers in all countries, tend to live a bit less hectic and material-

istic than city-dwellers. That former city-dwellers are often now compelled to do some soil-tilling of their own is a helpful fact that brings the two worlds a bit closer together. Nonetheless people from the former regions of poverty are imported and members from the Zapatista communities are especially popular as their history of struggle and shining example of direct democracy provides both inspiration as well as a dramatic historical context to match their city lives.

Yet people like Elisa have no city in their vicinity. Their way of life is grounded in a colorful mix of ancient Mayan tradition and modern hi-tech society. She is a global citizen with her feet planted firmly in the soil where she was born. The thought of travelling all the way to West Europe and Eurasia is a bit mind-boggling for her. She's never flown before. She walks down the shady path and goes back to her hut. On the way she passes her youngest child building a tree house with some friends. One of them throws a mango to her, she thanks them and walks on while wondering if they have mangos in Eurasia...

Martin Ekström, 54

Karlstad Collective
Scandinavian Regional Alliance

It's morning. Martin opens his eyes in the bright sunshine burning through the window. He feels happy and restful knowing that he doesn't need to wake up to an alarm clock anymore. Still, he feels a bit resentful that he can't count on having his morning cup of coffee like he was so used to. Coffee shipments only come twice a year to the Scandinavian Regional Alliance and each shipment is then rationed out at the beginning of each month with the majority portion reserved for the cold, dark months of winter.

Nonetheless, he has a day of activity which he looks forward to. Martin is part of an eco-data co-op who sells to foreign computer manufacturing co-ops. He's excited about the shipment of his latest project which leaves today for Brunei: compact degradable plastic derived from corn coated with safe, ecological alternatives to the flame retardents previously used (such as TBBA, Trichloretylphosphate, and PBDE) and designed to be used in the manufacture of computers.

As there is no coffee he opts for a pistachio-apple protein drink created by some innovative entrepreneurs near Istanbul. This reminds him of the fact that there have been some recent skirmishes with a Gray Wolves dissident ‘state’ and he hopes that all is still well with Zulfu who works at the pistachio drink collective.

He checks his e-mail before he goes out the door and notices that the date for Social Pulse conference has been set for July 21, 2013 in Gdansk. It’s to be a big event and he plans to take the ScanRail down to Hamburg and then bike the rest of the way, not because he has to but because it’s summertime and biking is a good way to see that part of Western Eurasia. He hasn’t been down there since before the Great Fall and thought he’d look up some old acquaintances along the way. He shuts down the computer and goes out the door where the notice that says “No Ads” is still posted as a reminder of how things used to be. On the way out he passes Hedvig who has a letter for him.

The postal delivery system drops off the mail at each Network receptory and each community has its own system for getting the mail to individuals from that point. Though the tradition of stamps has largely continued, in an artistic sense more than a formal sense, all regular mail – under two kilos – is delivered free of charge (with the exception of certain large Networks who extract a small fee for the service).

Martin thanks Hedvig and looks at the letter which is covered with bright red and orange stickers. He notices that it’s from Tennessee and stuffs it into his pocket for a more relaxed moment in which to read it. He gets out to the corner just in time to miss the 10:45 electric bus to the station. He calculates for a minute to think about whether now is a good time to read the letter or not. Though the next bus comes in 12 minutes he decides to hop on his bike instead.

On the way through the central square he passes a pair of old men playing the huge chess game that has been built as a permanent part of the square. They’re both deep in thought and seem oblivious to the world around them. Soon he arrives to the lab where he’ll be on clean-up duty with Urban. As all workers are obligated to clean up their own workplaces he and Urban decided to get it all over with early in the day and then hook up with the rest of the guys to play football at four o’clock.

Cindy Chan, 36

Oakland Municipal Community
NW America Regional Alliance

Cindy is sitting, talking on the phone in front of a poster of a blue cow also talking on the phone. Next to the cow is a quote from Marshall McLuhan: “Stop talking about whether it is good or bad and start talking about what it means.” She tosses some Subgenius literature on the floor and shuffles through the rest of the papers on her desk.

“No, the shipment hasn’t come in yet. I can’t seem to locate my copy of the order right now but as soon as my computer is up again I’ll give you a call.”

She hangs up the phone and goes out to the water fountain to relieve her headache where she meets Jason. He starts talking about the party he was at last night – a tribal-techno dance party where people got naked, painted their bodies, and played live samba-techno.

Some local artists were showing off some of their latest robot constructions and a couple of off-duty circus artists started juggling fire. The whole party started out in a warehouse and then moved out into the street where some of the neighbors joined in the celebrations while others shouted complaints from bedroom windows. Cindy breathes a sigh of envy as she thinks about how she had to spend the evening working.

The phone rings again. It’s Mustapha from Brihama, their sister city in the West Africa Alliance. They’ve just completed the building of the steel factory and he wants to know if she can manage to find a way on the next scheduled air flight so she can join the opening celebrations.

It was just what she needed to hear.

Chart of the New World Disorder

Note: The Global Alliance represents more than 90% of the global population while the Federation of Nation-States account for less than 10%.

	Local:	Regional:	Global:	Other:
Government	Community Networks (CN)	Regional Alliances (RA)	Global Alliance (GA)	Federation of Nation-States (FNS)
Economy	Local currencies, bartering systems, or 'gift' economies.	Aqua, regional eco-centric paper currencies that lose value according to distance from home region.	TERRA, global electronic currency which has a negative interest, decreasing value over time.	US Dollar
Security & Defense	Community patrols, dispute mediators, and conflict specialists.	Alliance forces, dispute mediators, and conflict specialists.	Peacekeeping missions comprised of various Alliance forces, observers.	Police forces and soldiers

April 24, 2002 Note

“The spark is necessary, but without air and tinder there would be no flame.”
 – Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi

I have taken the opportunity of time between printings to listen to some critique towards my paper, rearrange the paper a bit, clarify a few sentences, and make some additions that were previously missing. Amongst the changes are new sections (Health and Medicine, Art and Culture, School and Education) while some old sections have been slightly modified in order to clarify the original intent.

This period (since my note of January 12, 2002) has been exciting. I have seen signs of hope across the world. One of them, which has had a profound impact on me, is the World Social Forum.

In February, more than 60,000 farmers, activists, union organizers, researchers and others from 150 countries gathered in Porto Alegre, Brazil for the second annual World Social Forum. And i was there. The World Social Forum concept played a pivotal role in the utopian vision of this essay. To be a part of it felt a bit like travelling through a time machine to a possible scenario in the near future.

My visit there challenged and expanded my understanding of the strengths, difficulties, and opportunities of the social movements that have come together to help create another world. It was mind-blowing. On Feb. 1st 2002, at two o'clock in the afternoon, the Forum had just begun and i counted 138 workshops to choose from – they all took place at the same time. The topics included everything from 'Aluminum Production Chain in Amazonia', 'Community Banks', and 'International Trade Accords in Africa' to 'Teacher Training and Education Policies', 'Participatory Budget in Brazil' and politically-oriented theater and dance. Overwhelming. There were 138 workshops and i could pick just one.

As it was, i had the privilege of being able to stay at the home of an old friend and political activist. Our own internal dialogue helped make sense of the unfathomable enormity of the Forum. When two o'clock rolled around we chose to go to the workshop “Alternatives to Economic Globalization” which offered a booklet of the same title. Both the booklet and presentation were a joint effort between vari-

ous international activists. Their organization is called the International Forum on Globalization and their call for society to rest upon certain principles echoed the sort of vision i have tried to write about here. Hardly new, these principles pretty much sum up the sort of goals that have long been animating the social movements that came to Porto Alegre.

Those principles are:

1. *New Democracy* (hallmarked by accountability to people not profit)
2. *Subsidiarity* (keep power and decision-making as local as possible)
3. *Ecological Sustainability* (human needs are filled in sync with the eco-system)
4. *Common Heritage* (societal resources such as health, education, public safety, social security, culture, and knowledge as well as physical resources such as water, land, air, and forests are to be shared equitably by all – not exploited for profit)
5. *Human Rights* (not only civil and political rights but economic, social, and cultural rights as well)
6. *Jobs/Livelihood/Employment* (securing the rights of all workers to live and work in dignity)
7. *Food Security and Food Safety* (with emphasis on local production and local control)
8. *Equity* (cancel illegitimate debts and reduce the gap between rich and poor nations)
9. *Diversity* (maintaining cultural, biological, social, as well as economic diversity)
10. *Precautionary Principle* (new practices or technologies must be proven safe before implementation)

They also make concrete suggestions as to which steps could bring us closer to such a society. Among the suggestions are a call for restructuring corporations, replacing the World Trade Organization with more democratic and transparent alternatives, and the creation of an International Insolvency Court to respond to the over indebtedness of low income countries.

(To which i would add the universal ratification of the International Criminal Court www.brw.org/campaigns/icc for addressing war crimes and crimes against humanity regardless of whom the perpetrator is. Seven countries voted against the ICC at the United Nations: Israel, Yemen, Qatar, Libya, China, Iraq, and the United States. Until they have ratified it, these nations cannot be brought to trial.)

You can read more and contact the International Forum on Globalization at www.ifg.org

When i came back from Porto Alegre i witnessed something else that was taking place here in my hometown. A network of mostly environmental organizations gathered to have a people's council present proposals before the UN summit in Johannesburg on environmental sustainability. I could see how people who work with specific issues are gathering together with no more than their dedication, experience, and knowledge as their mandate. They are forming national and international networks and coalitions that can seriously address issues at all levels from the local to the global. I had a vision of these sorts of civil meetings interfacing political institutions and serving as official people's councils with regard to public policy. Like the neighborhood meetings in Argentina (see below), these are some beginnings to the sort of structures i have written about.

All of this has deepened my experience and belief in social change. It has also confirmed my view of utopia, not as a place, but as a process. I see utopia as the opposite of democracy, like Yin is opposite to Yang; polar opposites that complement each other to form a greater whole. The union is not static but in constant motion and constant interaction. I believe that this dialogue between our dreams and our needs can help see us through the storm.

"To talk about the future is useful only if it leads to action now."

– E. F. Schumacher

Here are a few other inspirational events that have happened between January and late April 2002.

Venezuela, the only country in South America to resist IMF's Structural Adjustment Program (as well as thwart the interests of the United States concerning its oil industry), was rocked by a military coup. Fortunately, massive demonstrations (coordinated in part by cell phones and fax machines) brought the democratically elected government back to power a few days later. East Timor voted peacefully in the first free elections since Portugal took it over 400 years ago. A border dispute was settled between Ethiopia and Eritrea in a novel manner: they took their dispute to an international court and both parties accepted the outcome. One million Italian workers took to the streets in Rome in protest of Berlusconi's policies and many more participated in the general strike. The crisis in Argentina has only deepened. The peso has plummeted and created an immense need for an alternative economy and an alternative political structure. Hundreds of thousands of people are now using local currency systems while demonstrators express their discontent with the entire political system chanting: "All must go!"

Instead of heeding government warnings and intimidation people have organized themselves into neighborhood associations with weekly meetings and rotating representation. Like the Zapatistas who remain steadfast in their struggle for land and life, the courage and innovation of the Argentineans sets a standard for the sort of change necessary to bring about a better world.

At the same time, the ripple affects of September 11th (itself a result of unsustainable political and economic policies) and the WTO meeting in Qatar spread throughout the world. Violence escalates in places like India and Palestine while the US plans for an apparently imminent invasion of Iraq. The determination to uphold an unjust and unsustainable system seems to be bursting at the seams. How long can it hold?

The situation reminds me of what Pavel Curtis, founder of the online role-playing community LambdaMOO, wrote when he described the point at which the oligarchy behind the scenes chose to give up their power and open it up to the will of the participants: *"We were fighting an increasingly losing battle to control and accommodate and soothe a larger and larger, more and more complex community. We were trying to take responsibility for, now, the behavior and mores of over 800 people a week, connected from almost 30 countries of the world. We were frustrated, many of the players were frustrated; the center could not hold."*

When clear alternatives rise from the grassroots it will, perhaps, be easier for the centers of power to relinquish control than attempt to maintain it. Considering the very nature of modern society, it is also likely that mass resistance will continue until significant change occurs.

E. F. Schumacher, author of "Small is Beautiful" lists the four 'evils' of modern industrial society as being *"1. Its vastly complicated nature; 2. Its continuous stimulation of, and reliance on, the deadly sins of greed, envy, and avarice. 3. Its destruction of the content and dignity of most forms of work; 4. Its authoritarian character, owing to organization in excessively large units."*

To which i would add: *"5. Its mass-production of poverty, displacement, and alienation through inherently imbalanced political and economic structures (such as the corporate institution, the World Trade Organization, etc...); 6. Its cancerous growth rate which creates a speed of technical development and social change that accentuates existing disparities, cripples the democratic process, and promotes unsustainable policies and lifestyles."*

These structural faults are ingrained in the profit-based economy and cannot be eliminated through small reforms. Who knows what will be necessary to sway the hand of disaster? Ted Kaczynski warns, “Never forget that the human race with technology is just like an alcoholic with a barrel of wine.” Must we wait until we hit the wall before we change course? Perhaps. As Thomas Fuller said, “We never know the worth of water till the well is dry.”

Yet we can already see how shallow the water is. We know our time is short. Will this awareness be enough to strengthen our resolve and stir us to action? If it does, there is certainly no shortage of potential steps we might take.

Here are a few possibilities:

Implement an income cap, a Tobin Tax, Agenda 21, and a global Marshall Plan. Create independent agencies for the review of police brutality. Scrap corporate ‘limited liability’ rights, nuclear weapons, biotech/nanotechnology research, and the IMF’s Structural Adjustment Program. Nationalize banks and currency control. Grant tax exemption status to small-scale LETS/local currency trading. Slash military budgets. Eliminate corporate campaign financing, tax havens, and corporate tax loopholes. Build fewer roads and plant more trees. Replace the free-trade ideology of the WTO with a democratic ideology using degree of implementation of the UN Declaration of Human Rights and Covenants on Civil, Political, Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights as a basis for a sliding-scale prerequisite to trade rights and back it all up with WHO treaties, UNICEF codes, ILO standards, and the hundreds of multi-lateral environmental agreements that already exist.

We can take some (or all) of these measures now or we can wait until the bubble of unsustainability pops and just hope that we don’t pop along with it.

I don’t know what the answers are but i do know that we have choices – choices that we make every day. And i do know that, ultimately, the shape and character of the world to come will largely be a result of what we choose it to be.

“One way or another, the choice will be made by our generation. But it will affect life on earth for all generations to come.”

– Lester Brown

More about the Utopian World Championship

By Jon Brunberg and Annika Drougge, June 2009

History of the Utopian World Championship

The Utopian World Championship was created by SOC.Stockholm, which was a Swedish artist group with the members Jon Brunberg, Annika Drougge, Pernilla Carlsson, Anna-Lena Lundmark, Johan Malmström, Tobias Sjödin and Karin Willén that existed between 1999 and 2006. The group had its base in an old shopfront store in central Stockholm, which served as its working space and public venue. Annika Drougge and Jon Brunberg continue to manage the project since SOC.Stockholm ceased to exist as a group in 2006.

We launched the first championship on March 10, 2001 – in cooperation with the artist group Swe. De – with an event at the venue Culturen, in the Swedish city of Västerås, and by issuing a call for participation that was distributed mainly through the internet and e-mail. The call resulted in a steady influx of registrations to our website and by the time of the deadline on June 30 2001, 78 people had signed up, of which 18 went on to post essays to our website. The election process commenced after the website was closed for submission in the end of August the same year. In the first selection round, internet users elected seven finalists in an online poll, and representatives from SOC.Stockholm completed the round by choosing three essays for the final among the remaining entries.

In December 2001 an expert jury began the work to select one winner from the ten finalists. The members of the jury were Rebecka Lettevall (PhD History of Ideas, Teacher at Södertörns college), Edward Soja (Professor, Urban Planning Department at UCLA), Sverker Sörlin (Professor, Environmental Sciences and Ideas at Umeå University), Bo Södersten (Professor, Economics at Jönköping International Business School) and one representative from SOC.Stockholm.¹ The winner, T.R.O.Y., was announced at *The Utopian W.C. 2001 Gala* at Gallery Enkehuset in Stockholm on January 19, 2002.

During the following years we presented the project in many different contexts. We took part in exhibitions and events in Stockholm, Reykjavik, Dublin, Helsinki, Riga, Toronto, Melbourne and Göteborg, and held a number of lectures about the project. We travelled to Australia to interview visionaries, academics, artists and activists and visited an intentional community in Findhorn, Scotland. We sent the first edition of the winning essay to Heads of State all over the world and delivered the document to Iceland's President in person.

1 Please note that the biographical information describing each jury member's profession and title has not been updated since the first edition of the document for the 2001 championship.

The second championship was launched in September 2002 at Kulturhuset (the House of Culture) in Stockholm as a part of the exhibition *The Public Opinion*, and was further promoted in other exhibitions, for example at Gallery Hlemmur in Reykjavik (2003) and Temple Bar Gallery & Studios in Dublin (2004). 153 people signed up for participation this time and 23 of them posted complete essays on the deadline April 30, 2004.

This time we invited four people to form a reference group, together with three members from SOC. Stockholm and the first champion, with the task to elect five finalists, which was accomplished by mid-October the same year. Two expert jurors; Tom Moylan (Professor of Contemporary Writing in English and Director of the Ralahine Centre for Utopian Studies at the University of Limerick), and Dr. Lyn Carson, (Senior Lecturer in Applied Politics at the University of Sydney),² evaluated the five finalists' essays and cast a vote each for their favourites. The reference group's favourite received a third vote. Cyril Belshaw was declared winner with two out of three votes with Per Norbäck as the runner up.

Mr. Belshaw was announced champion on a gala night at Färgfabriken in Stockholm on April 2, 2005, and travelled from Canada to receive his prize.

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2 Please note that the biographical information describing each jury member's profession and title has not been updated since the first edition of the document for the 2004 championship.

