

## ***"Gaian Democracies: Redefining globalisation and people-power"***

### ***Chapter 5***

## **Gaian Democracy**

**"We are dealing with... a systemically interdependent global community. It is this level of [reality] which we must keep before our eyes if we are able to inspire action designed to assure our collective and hence our individual survival."**

Ludwig von Bertalanffy, pioneer systems scientist.

### **Giving 'democracy' a new meaning**

From the outset of our work leading to this Briefing it became clear that if the concept of 'sustainable societies' was to have any real meaning its primary orientation had to be ecological. We then had the task of integrating the political, social and economic aspects of the new paradigm with the primary ecological orientation. From here it was a relatively short step to concluding that what we were working on could best be described as a Gaian model of democracy.

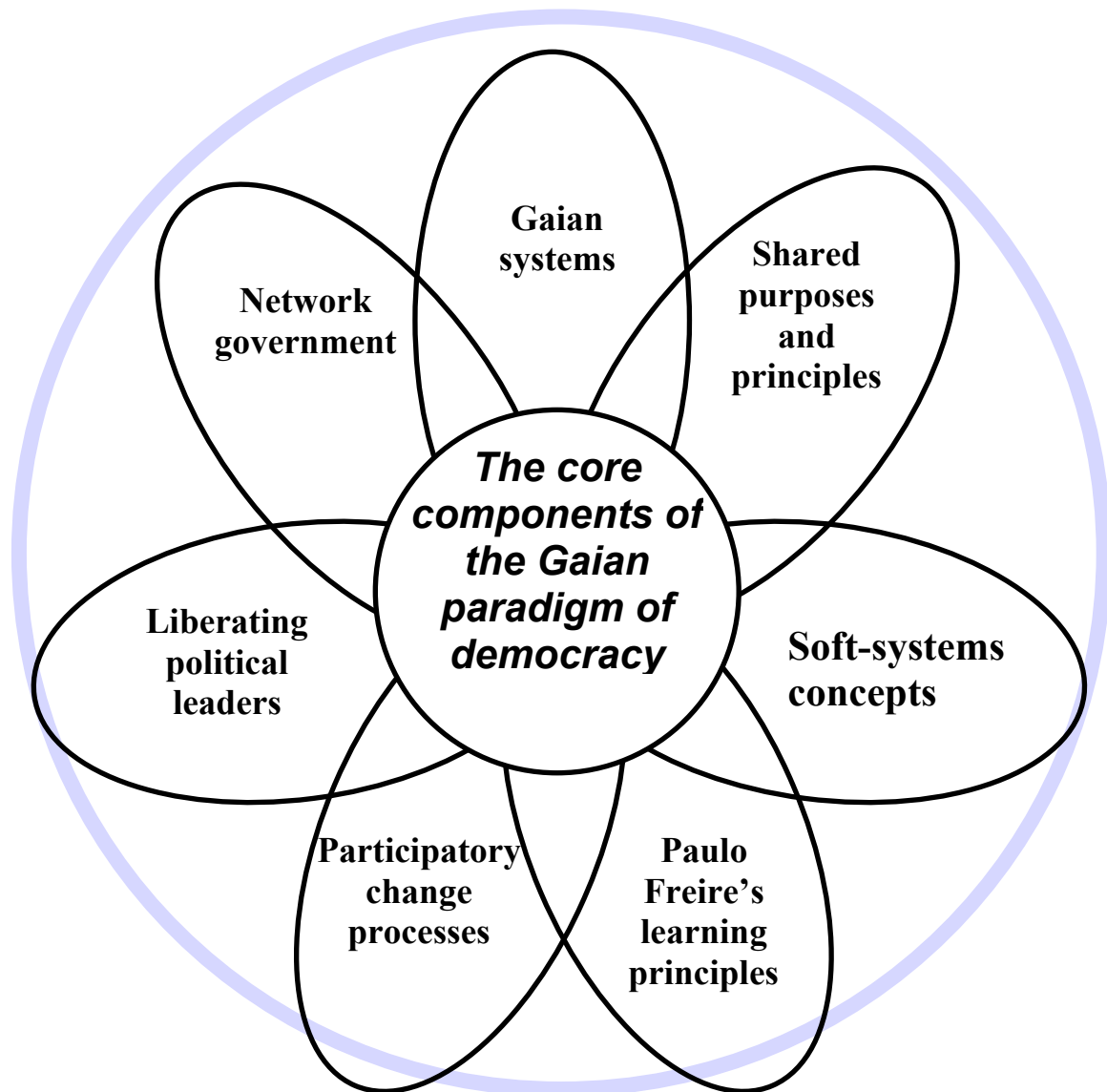
Gaian Democracy is a new theory of democracy, specially developed for the use of human societies in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It should be seen as providing a versatile model that can be adapted to different contexts. It is a systemic framework upon which different societies would be able to build their own Gaian democracies. Thus we have been referring to the model as 'Gaian Democracy' in the singular, but we envisage many networks of Gaian democracies, related to each other on the principle of 'network government' described towards the end of this chapter.

## ***From youthful to mature systems***

When new kinds of complex, adaptive, self-organising systems evolve, or are introduced into an environment, they establish themselves by going through a ‘youthful’ stage of ferocious competition and exponential growth. The youthful stage is essential if the new system is to achieve the condition of viability that enables it to survive in both cooperation and competition with the other systems in its environment. Sooner or later, however, external factors start to limit the system’s growth, and it settles down into a ‘mature’ state of ‘dynamic stability’ in equilibrium with its environment.

But if we look today at the complex, adaptive, self-organising system we call ‘humanity’, we see that in spite of having met with the problems described in Chapter 2, its youthful growth stage is being driven ever faster by the Global Monetocracy. Unless we act ourselves, ‘humanity’ will soon meet the same fate as any other system in a vicious downward spiral mode. If that were to happen, it would be extremely painful for billions of us. Far better, in our view, to use our systems knowledge to consciously evolve from youthful exponential growth to mature dynamic stability.<sup>1</sup> It will not be the end of the ‘growth’ of human societies, but instead of the growth being **quantitative** through ever more rapacious consumption of our environment, it will become **qualitative** in terms of constantly rising levels of shared understanding and societal learning, through thousands of self-organising Gaian democracies. In this chapter we explain how thinking in terms of the Gaian model of democracy could help us to achieve that transformation through conscious evolution.

**FIGURE 4: The Gaian paradigm of democracy**



The model has both a political and a systems dimension. Its purpose in political terms is to initiate the co-creation of just and sustainable societies; in systems terms the purpose is to facilitate the purposeful evolution of our societies, from youthful systems pursuing exponential growth to mature systems in a state of dynamic stability in equilibrium with our environment.

## Notes on FIGURE 4

As with the diagram of the Global Monetocracy, the components of Gaian democracies are shown as separate but overlapping. They cannot be thought of as bits that can be disconnected from the whole. In the diagram we show them in two dimensions and static. In the real world, they will be dynamic, nested, inter-acting, multi-dimensional and constantly evolving as the system as a whole learns and adapts. We will describe the various components in turn, starting with Gaian systems and proceeding clockwise.

It is worth noting that a broad distinction may be made between Gaian systems and network government, and the other five components. For Gaian systems and network government we are relying on the broad systems concepts described in the first few sections of Chapter 1. The other five components are in a different category: they are concerned with the way human systems work and how they can be changed. For these components we need to make use of the soft-systems concepts described in the last section of Chapter 1. The combination of these two strands of systems science is what gives Gaian democracy its power.

## The new paradigm

### ***Component 1: Gaia***

Key propositions:

- Gaia is a system of interacting biological and material subsystems that have co-evolved together over billions of years and depend on each other.
- Human beings are a species that has evolved like any other species, with all that implies in terms of interdependence, self-organisation and the other characteristics of evolved systems.
- The Gaian system as a whole appears to be approaching one of its periodic system-shifts, a process which our industrial and agricultural activity is accelerating.

It is widely recognised outside the current Global Monetocracy, and in a fatally qualified way within it, that our industrial and economic systems must be re-configured to work with natural systems, instead of treating them as an inexhaustible resource. Our human societies must somehow reconnect with nature.

The characteristics of Gaia as a system, and of human beings and human societies as sub-systems of Gaia are deeply significant in relation to democracy. The capacity of Gaian systems to self-organise is the key to their capacity for survival and adaptation. Our democratic systems need to be configured so as to aim towards achieving ordered relationships between the self-organised actions of the members of a particular democratic system, the democracy of which they are a part, and the Gaian system to which we all belong.

Many will optimistically agree with James Lovelock's view that, "Potentially, at least, we have the intelligence to learn how to work with Gaia, rather than undermining her".<sup>ii</sup> The intelligence? Yes. But systems for co-learning how to use it? No. Under the Global Monetocracy there is no possibility whatsoever of that potential being realised. The only chance, we believe, of averting the disaster that a Gaian system-shift will spell for the human family, is a system-shift in our democracies. In that sense, we are in a race to reconfigure our democratic systems before Gaia launches on her own systems shift. All we can hope is that Gaia does not get there first.

In our current state of knowledge, it is impossible to say whether the Gaian-shift will result in a new ice age, or the melting of the polar ice-caps and the drowning of millions of low-lying islands and coastal cities, towns and villages. It is important to note that the shift is an example of Gaia's balancing feedback mechanisms in operation, and that, because of the phenomena of systems lag, it may now be irreversible. Even if our outputs of carbon dioxide and methane were reduced to pre-Industrial levels tomorrow, the amounts that we have already added to the atmosphere could be sufficient to trigger a Gaian system-shift. Unfortunately, because of the complex nature of the systems involved, no one can predict when the shift, if it occurs, will happen. When it does come it will happen quickly, in a matter of decades. At that time, if the human family has reconfigured its societies into Gaian democracies, their chances of adapting speedily and creatively to the new Gaian environment will be vastly improved. If today's Global Monetocracy still holds sway, the consequences of the Gaian shift are likely to be horrific.

## **Component 2: Shared purposes and principles**

Key propositions (see also Chapter 1):

- Gaian democracies will only become increasingly just and sustainable if their citizens understand, are committed to, and share, a set of purposes and moral and ecological principles.
- Purpose and principles cannot be handed down from above. They must be developed through intensive participative processes.

- Plans, programmes and policies are meaningless unless they have been derived from a shared set of purposes and the principles.

As we saw in Chapter 3, the value program of the elite consensus ensures that the Global Monetocracy's purpose is presented as an inevitable fact of life. In Gaian democracies, citizens will arrive at and frequently review their purposes and principles through intensive participative processes. In doing so, they will gain a shared understanding of the relevance of purpose and principles to every aspect of their societies.

Purpose and principles constitute what Dee Hock calls the 'genetic code' of a purposeful human system.<sup>iii</sup> They bind the community together. It is against them that all decisions and acts will be judged. Moreover, he says, "A compelling purpose, and powerful beliefs about conduct in pursuit of it, seemed to me infinitely more sensible and robust than mechanical plans, detailed objectives and predetermined outcomes." We profoundly agree with Dee Hock when he also declares: "Without a deeply held, commonly shared purpose that gives meaning to their lives; without deeply held, commonly shared, ethical values and beliefs about conduct in pursuit of purpose that all may trust and rely upon, communities steadily disintegrate, and organizations progressively become instruments of tyranny. This isn't a bunch of platitudes, but a manifesto of what the people in the organization believe in and care about in their gut. And getting there is going to be downright excruciating... What we're trying to do is build a community. And it's only when that community has solid agreement on purposes and principles that you can start talking about the concept and structure of the organization."

Because it can take some time to arrive at a shared understanding of the purposes and principles of the re-configured system, the difficult task of working them out may arouse deep impatience. It is all too easy to by-pass this stage in the re-configuring process in order to commit our valuable time, energy and resources to **actually doing something** about the host of chronic problems that cry out for urgent attention. The main reasons why this stage is so significant are these:

- As we work towards increased understanding and a greater sense of shared purposes and principles, we gain a growing awareness of the web of interdependencies within the system, and between it and its environment - a greater understanding of the way the whole system works, and of our part in it.
- In the light of the shared purposes and principles, we are able to tackle the system's most difficult problems with much more confidence and produce more effective results in a much shorter time, while at the same time learning from the mistakes that will inevitably occur.

- Because we are working on a complex adaptive human system of which we are active components, we can never precisely specify the outcome of the re-configuration process. The Indian philosophy of ‘doing work independently of the anticipated outcome’, applies here. But without shared purposes and principles we can never know how well we are doing, and what changes we should make to our strategies.
- Without shared purposes and principles there can be no community, no society. With shared purpose, the system comes to life. Shared purpose defines what life means for the system. It provides the inspiration.

### Component 3: Soft-systems concepts

#### *Key propositions:*

- Soft-systems theory provides the basic concepts and processes for thinking, acting and learning together to understand the configuration of the existing system and to embark purposefully on re-configuring it.
- By understanding the difference between ‘wicked’ problems (arising from non-linear systems complexity) and ‘tame’ problems (arising from the characteristics of linear system), citizens will be able to think, act and learn together successfully.
- Successfully reconfiguring our unjust and unsustainable Global Monotocracy and tackling the wicked problems it has created requires the adoption of a ‘purposeful’ or systems perspective, rather than mechanistic one.

We have shown two soft-systems concepts, ‘shared purposes and principles’ and ‘participatory change processes’, as separate components of the Gaian democracy paradigm. This more general heading brings in the other insights of soft-systems thinking that we introduced in the last section of Chapter 1.

These soft-systems concepts can be used to reconfigure any complex human system from a school or a hospital to a government department, from a neighbourhood to a city to a whole nation. They provide the practical frameworks through which the citizens engaged in participatory change processes keep in close touch with the realities of the system that they and their liberating leaders are trying to improve. They build the knowledge and competencies needed for citizens to work creatively on their ‘wicked’ problems while observing the shared purposes and principles of the system as a whole.

Through their individual and collective success in reconfiguration processes, citizens and their liberating leaders gain in knowledge, competence and mutual trust. Thus equipped, they are able to tackle ever more complex and difficult ‘wicked’ problems in their society.

The idea that government could become a learning experience for all concerned, including the leadership, is wholly foreign to command-and-control leaders. The application of these concepts to the political field will transform the way democracy and government works.

### ***Component 4: Paulo Freire's learning principles***

Key propositions:

- Dialogue liberates; monologue oppresses.
- The best way to start learning is as part of a dialogue-rich group.
- The richest learning begins with action, is shaped by reflection and leads to further action.

The influence of the Brazilian educationalist Paulo Freire in Latin America and Africa has been enormous. Working originally in the state education system, Freire conceived and developed adult literacy programmes whose purpose was to assist the poorest people to learn to read and write through helping them to respect their own everyday language. Freire insisted that the function of education was to build on the language, experiences and skills of the 'educatees', rather than imposing on them the culture of the 'educators'.

Freire took education out of the classroom and created 'the culture circle', where learners used their own ways of speaking to articulate their shared understanding of how their world came to be like it was and how to act to change their future. From being a monologue process, education became a process of dialogue in which educatees and educators engaged in mutually respectful learning. Through the culture circles process, people progressed very quickly: in Brazil illiterate adults learned to read and write in 30 hours; and in Nicaragua illiteracy was reduced from 40% to 13% in two months.<sup>iv</sup> Freire pointed out that the astounding results achieved by the culture circles were a consequence of offering literacy as a tool through which groups, rather than individuals, could be empowered. In culture circles, everyone makes good progress, not just a few isolated 'star-pupils'.

In 1979 Freire became directly involved in politics and helped to build the Brazilian Workers' Party into the highly effective political movement it is today. His emphasis on the crucial connection between theory and practice can be seen in the way in which the party's mayors introduce radical initiatives like the Participative Budget. From the very poorest to the richest of citizens, they are engaged in a group learning process that will transform their understanding of themselves, each other, their community and the world around them.

A core component of Freirian theory is that learning begins with action, is then shaped by reflection, which gives rise to further action. Learning is thus a continuous

process, directed at enhancing the learners' capacity to act in the world and change it. For Freire, whether it is called literacy or learning, this is the principal political task of any society committed to people-power.

In Freire's terms, learning based on group dialogues is liberating for everyone involved in the process. By contrast, teaching based on individual monologues in an imposed language leads to silence and apathy, and is the ultimate form of oppression. In his analysis of the dynamics of power, Freire reserves the term 'oppressed' for those whose own voices are silenced because they are forced to speak with a voice that is not their own: "The oppressed are not only powerless, but reconciled to their powerlessness, perceiving it fatalistically, as a consequence of personal inadequacy or failure. The ultimate product of highly unequal power relationships is a class unable to articulate its own interests or perceive the existence of social conflict." <sup>v</sup>

### ***Component 5: Participatory change processes***

Key propositions:

- Participatory change processes enhance the capacity of complex human systems to self-organise, by building ever more precise levels of shared understanding.
- Participatory change processes enable people to thrive in a situation of constant open-ended change, building optimism and trust, commitment, confidence and competence.
- Participatory change processes nurture future liberating leaders.

Command-and-control political leaders often claim that they are willing to consult the people they lead. They do so with a variety of techniques such as polls, surveys or focus groups, by running question and answer session at public meetings, receiving delegations or inviting written submissions to specific proposals. Other forms of consultation favoured by more progressive command-and-control leaders include Community Forums, Stakeholder Conferences, Community Planning and joint working parties. The agendas of these processes are usually closely controlled, responsibility for their design and implementation is usually delegated to relatively junior staff, their budgets are niggardly and their impact on core

strategies virtually nil. Command-and-control leaders rarely, if ever, take part in them and invariably reserve the right to ignore or veto their outcomes if they are not to their liking.

In these circumstances, it is important to make a clear distinction between what are frequently - and revealingly - called 'participation **exercises**' and the kind of participative change processes that will be a core component of Gaian democracies. 'Participation exercises' rarely produce high levels of shared learning and understanding between the command-and-control leaders, their officials and technical professionals and the people who are lured into offering their contributions.

Liberating political leaders will devote major resources to participative change processes in terms of adequate budgets, high-level expertise and, crucially, their own presence and credibility. Moreover, participative change processes will be the principal means by which core-operating strategies are shaped and monitored by people-power, at every level from the neighbourhood to the society as a whole.

The central design principle of participative change processes is that they should use Paulo Freire's concepts of liberating dialogues as the vehicles through which participants can use their own ways of speaking to articulate their shared understanding of how their world came to be like it is and how to act to change their future. By integrating participative change processes with soft-systems methodologies, the quality of the resultant shared understanding between the participants will be immensely enriched. In practical terms, participative change processes may take just a few hours, a few days or a day a week spread over several months. It could be an open-ended series of processes that go on for years. The number of participants can vary from a small team, to a few dozen to a few hundred, to a few thousand to a few tens of thousands, to - with the help of network and cable TV - hundreds of thousands.<sup>vi</sup> Scale is an issue only in terms of the demands it makes on the skills and resources available to the liberating leaders who are responsible for initiating, supporting and sustaining the process.

In all effective participatory processes, the participants do a lot of work in small groups - very like Freire's Culture Circles. The group-work is facilitated to ensure that everybody's contribution is encouraged, heard and respected. A typical process might start with "What are the five most important things we want this process to achieve, for us, for our community, for our children?" The facilitation role is one that requires considerable skill. It may be rotated between the members of the group if they have sufficient confidence, trust and cohesion. Alternatively it may be best for the facilitator to be a skilled 'outsider' whose job it is to serve the group as a whole and not be concerned with making his or her own contribution or getting across a particular point of view.

A typical small-group session lasts about an hour. The general pattern of the process is for the outcomes of all the groups to be openly reviewed at a plenary session in which there are opportunities for further reflection and clarification. The plenary may then break up into

another group session and the participants may go back to their original group, or they might randomly re-arrange themselves to form new groups. Different groups might call for specialist advice on some aspect of the system they are re-configuring. They might call for the production of additional data to clarify a particular issue. If the process is integrated with a soft-systems methodology, the groups might talk about and draw pictures of the systems or sub-systems that need to be changed.

In this way, as the participants think, act and learn together, their shared understanding of the existing situation, and of how to change it for the better, will become ever more precise. Whether there are fifty or five hundred or five thousand or five hundred thousand participants, liberating leaders will devote the time, skills and resources needed to ensure that the participative change processes arrive at good decisions. Such decisions will genuinely reflect the shared information and understanding of the direct participants and their fellow citizens.

At first, many people find such processes confusing and even chaotic. They seem to produce far more energy, information and ideas than can ever be contained and directed effectively. Margaret Wheatley addresses such worries as follows: "I have been in enough experiences with groups of people where we have generated so much information that it's led us to despair and led us to deep confusion. I now know that that's the place to be if you want to really be open to new thoughts, if you want to be totally open to a total reorganizing of your mental constructs or your mind maps, or whatever you want to call them. You can't get there without going through this period of letting go and confusion. For somebody who's been taught to be a good analytical thinker, this is always a very painful moment."<sup>vii</sup>

As more and more Gaian citizens actively participate in re-configuring the systems on which the future of their society depends, instead of resisting change, they will positively welcome it. Because they stem from shared purposes and principles, the changes arising from participative change processes are usually more comprehensive, radical and sustainable than those which arise from the non-participative change strategies imposed by command-and-control leaders and their enforcers. Moreover, people-power ensures that the changes are implemented much more quickly, easily and economically. The implementation of the changes flows on from the participative process in a natural and unforced fashion.

Because they encourage dialogue, participative change processes are quite revealing for everyone involved. They provide a multitude of opportunities for citizens to demonstrate their potential as the kind of liberating leaders that Gaian democracies need. In effect their fellow-citizens will identify and encourage them because of the

qualities, knowledge and skills they have shown when they were all thinking, acting and learning together.

## Component 6: Liberating political leaders

Key propositions:

- Liberating political leaders release the potential of the people in a purposeful human system.
- Liberating political leaders are committed to their own learning through engaging in the re-configuration dialogues with their fellow-citizens.
- Liberating political leaders replace a command-and-control culture of monologue with a culture of dialogue.

We gave examples of liberating leaders and how they work in the Summary and Introduction. Good and bad leaders are all around us. Whether they are leading a tennis club, a choir, a hospital, a school or a government department, the differences between good or bad leaders are easy to spot. Ask any group of people to spell out the differences between good leaders and bad leaders and this is the kind of list that they will produce:<sup>viii</sup>

**TABLE 1: Leadership**

<b>good leaders tend to</b>	<b>bad leaders tend to</b>
be flexible	be inflexible
be competent	value status above skill
be sensitive to people and situations	be aggressive - even physically violent
have clear values and philosophies	have no clear values
admit their mistakes	believe they are infallible
trust and value the people they lead	secretiveness
be decisive - takes decisions well	have no direction, unpredictable
praise more than criticise	play favourites
be versatile	be emotionally blind
be committed to their own development	be lazy
challenge you	make a fool of you in public
listen well and encourage involvement	be remote
be open about their own needs	be condescending
be not afraid to use their power	bully you
be not afraid if you use your power	undermine you
be humble	be humourless
be tough	be ruthless, cowardly, insecure
be able to take criticism	be unable to accept the buck
be stable	be depressed
take risks	be careerists

think clearly	lie to you
delegate and encourage leadership	use calculated abuse
be imaginative	be locked into being 'strong'
protect you	let you down
be approachable, reachable	will not communicate: send you memos
mentor you	talk too much

There are many good leaders in today's society. The organisations they lead perform consistently well over many years on many criteria, showing outstanding creativity, innovation, efficiency and resilience in harshly competitive environments. These are the kinds of leaders that Gaian democracies will need to develop over the coming years.

One of the most interesting examples is Herb Kelleher, founder and Chief Executive of Southwest Airlines based in Houston, Texas. Since 1970, Southwest Airlines has become the fifth-largest US airline in terms of passengers boarded. It has never had a crash. It has never laid off employees. By 1998, the number of employees had multiplied from the original 195 to 23,000. According to research by Dr Reginald Bruce Management:<sup>ix</sup>

"The employees of Southwest enjoy a casual, fun-natured work environment that is celebrated publicly and hard to duplicate. The development of Southwest's company culture emerged when they adopted a philosophy that they wouldn't hide anything, not even any of their problems, from their employees.

"Herb Kelleher's leadership style is the opposite of the many autocratic leaders that have thrived in business for centuries. He does not 'rule' over his employees but rather, rules with his employees. Kelleher believes that leadership is the job of every employee, not just upper level management.

"Kelleher believes that every employee should have the ability to ascertain situations and be able to act on their own decisions. Employees should be able to lead other employees to make decisions.

"Kelleher's describes Southwest Airlines as "an upside-down pyramid. At the bottom, are the upper management personnel and at the top are the front line employees. These front line employees are "the ones that make things happen". He considers his front line employees the experts in the organization and top management the support help. The heroes are the front line employees. Kelleher's ability to lead is supported by the leadership offered by all of the employees in the organization.

"...listening to all employee ideas facilitates leadership. Once employees feel that they have been heard by co-workers, they will be more willing to listen to ideas from others."

Why do the Herb Kellehers of this world resist the pressure to conform to the dominant command-and-control school of leadership? The answer is that their own values and core beliefs are sufficiently powerful to make them search for different ways of running the organisations they lead - more powerful than those of their peers. Such leaders are in a minority among the vast mass of politicians, bureaucrats and executives whose values and beliefs faithfully reflect those of the elite consensus.

But, although driven by what Peter Drucker called 'an ethical imperative', liberating leaders have a high need for both power and achievement; they are by no means a pushover.<sup>x</sup> The difference lies in their commitment to exercising their power for the benefit of the organisation and fellow-employees, rather than for personal aggrandisement. Most of all, they do not just talk about their values, they constantly and consistently demonstrate them in their behaviours and in the decisions they make. In place of the 'participation exercises' favoured by command-and-control leaders, liberating leaders develop 'a culture of dialogue' in which change comes about through people-power and soft-systems methodologies. The effect on every member of the organisation of being encouraged to think, act and learn is to constantly improve the efficiency and creativity of the organisation as a whole. For the individuals involved there is an end to the frustration and repression that comes from being undervalued and ignored. As Paulo Freire says, through 'problematizing dialogues' (or in our terms soft-systems methodologies) all the parties begin to liberate themselves from ignorance, fear, injustice, incompetence and prejudice as they learn together.<sup>xi</sup>

Soft-systems processes can be roughly equated with Freire's 'problematizing dialogues', because both seek to "associate the entire population with the task of codifying total reality into symbols which can generate critical consciousness and empower them to alter their relationships with nature and social forces". Thus the men and women who take responsibility for initiating, resourcing, sustaining and legitimating 'a culture of dialogue' can fairly be called 'liberating leaders'.

At present liberating leaders operate almost exclusively in commerce and industry, though there are inspiring exceptions, such as the Workers' Party in Brazil, and doubtless there are some hidden away in the public services of many other countries. But, if Gaian democracies are to replace the Global Monetocracy, liberating leaders will be needed at every level and in every sector of politics, government, public service, finance, industry and commerce.

First of all, liberating leaders will be needed to initiate and grow the local, national and international political movements that will carry the message of Gaian democracies to every corner of the Global Monetocracy. Liberating leaders will be needed to stand as candidates in local and national elections. The political movements they lead will use the basic components of Gaian democracies to configure themselves so that the process of thinking, acting and learning is as natural as breathing to the members and their supporters.



## **Component 7: Network government**<sup>xii</sup>

Key propositions:

- Network government will enable Gaian democracies to incorporate Schumacher's principle of 'subsidiarity' at every level from the local to the global.<sup>xiii</sup>
- Network government enables participatory democracy to be extended beyond the local scale.
- Network government improves societal efficiency, effectiveness and learning by minimising information overload within the different parts of the system.

'Self-organising' and 'self-governing' are different concepts. Within any complex system, it is possible and desirable for sub-systems to be wholly self-organising, but impossible for them to be wholly self-governing. In systems terms, each player in a football team is a self-organising sub-system. But no player is entirely self-governing because there are rules and constraints that have to be obeyed in order to be able to take part in the game.

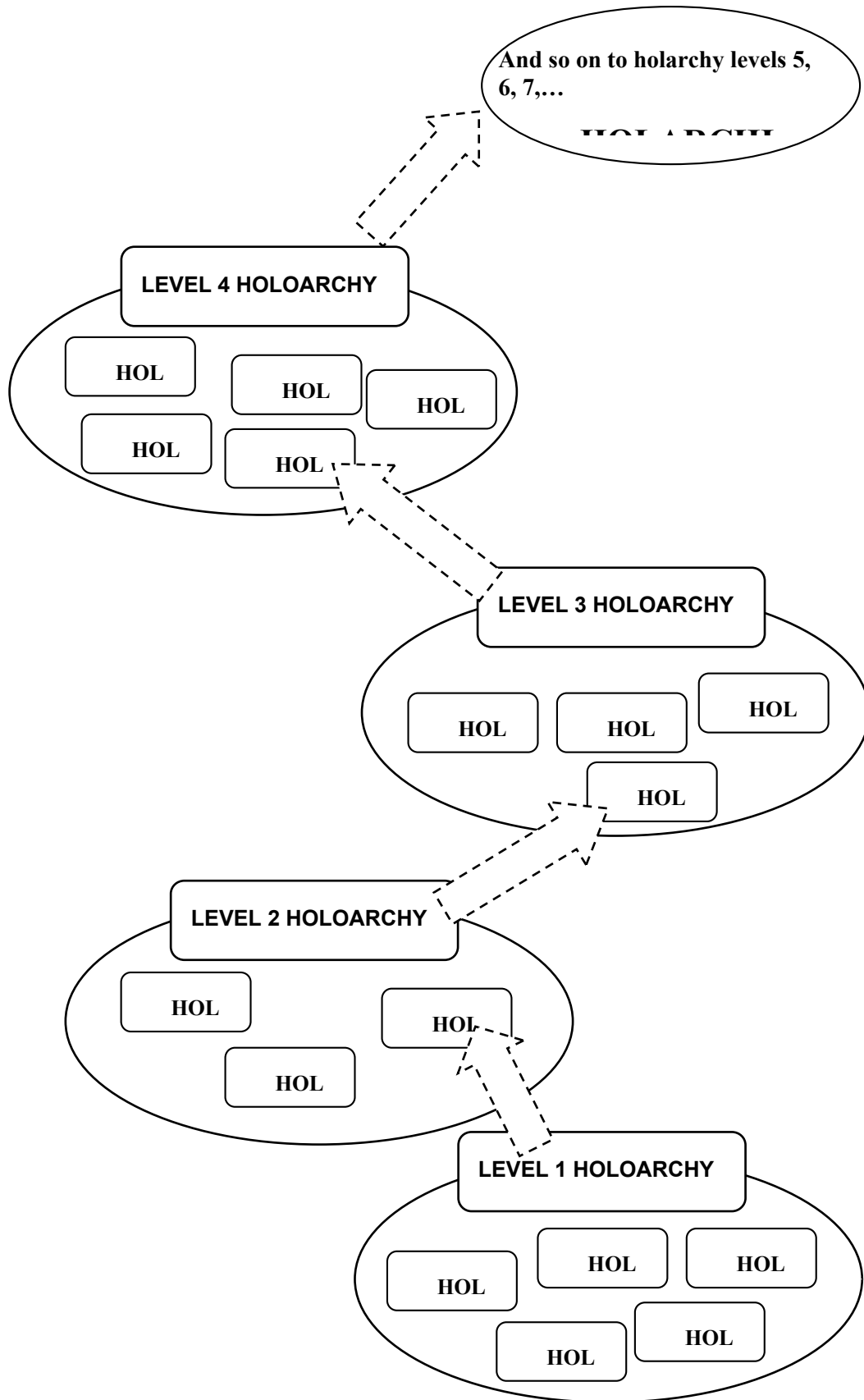
The Hungarian author and philosopher Arthur Koestler devised the term 'holon' (from the Greek 'holos' meaning 'whole' and the suffix 'on', meaning 'particle' or 'part', as in 'neutron' or 'proton') to describe entities that are simultaneously self-contained wholes as viewed by their subordinated parts, and dependent parts when seen from the inverse direction. In other words, he was describing the basic unit of organisation in biological and social systems.

In network government terms, every player in our football team is a 'holon', i.e. they are each, in the words of John Mathews, "endowed with (their) own processing ability, (their) own autonomy and (their) own 'mind' or 'intelligence'".<sup>xiv</sup> The team of which they are self-organising holons is called 'a holarchy'. A holarchy is also self-organising by virtue of the nature of the relationships with its holons. Taken to the next level, the team itself is a holon within its own holarchy (or local league). In its turn, the local league is a holon within the holarchy of the national league, and so on up to FIFA (International Federation of Association Football).

Within each holarchy, all the holons have the same basic system-configuration. The basic configuration of Gaian democracies will stem from the seven components we are describing in this chapter. It is a model that offers unlimited scope for diversity, just as the sol-fa system

of musical notes has given composers, from Bach to Brubeck and beyond, the framework for unlimited creativity. Even though each Gaian democracy will develop its own local character and dynamic, communications between different levels of holon and holarch democracies will be highly efficient because their basic configurations and self-organising will help to reduce 'noise' and increase 'signal'.

**FIGURE 5: Network government**



**Notes on FIGURE 5**

The illustration of a network of holons and holarchies is purely diagrammatic and extremely simplified. It is only intended to show that a holarchy at one level is a holon at the next higher level in the system. The diagram omits any reference to other elements within the system, such as:

- the fact that all complex systems are multi-dimensional, not two-dimensional
- movement and change within and between holons and holarchies
- material inputs and outputs
- information channels and flows
- scale and size
- the variations between holons within a holarchy and between holarchies

**TABLE 2: Applying holon-holarchy terminology to levels of society and government.**

<b>LEVEL</b>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; border-radius: 15px; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;"> <b>HOLONS</b> </div>	
1	Neighbourhoods	Borough
2	Boroughs	City
3	Cities	Region
4	Regions	Nation
5	Nations	Federation
6	Federations	Global Network

Making the right decisions as to what functions can or cannot be undertaken at a higher level is a key factor in ensuring the system as a whole is configured so as to maximise its capacity to process complex information and deal successfully with the increasing variety of its

internal and external environments. Research by Shann Turnbull on the Mondragón cooperatives and Visa International shows that by adopting a system of network government, the tendency to tackle ‘wicked’ problems through top-down decision-making is minimised. It is also clear that without being configured for network government, complex human systems will increasingly fail to identify, generate and process the information they need to make good decisions. On the other hand, with their limited viewpoints and inadequate capacity to process information, there is no way that top-down decisions-makers can make good decisions. In effect they are overwhelmed by the complexity of the system.

The concept of network government will allow the self-organising holons and holarchies of Gaian democracies to make good quality decisions and manage their systems’ complexities successfully rather than being overwhelmed by them. In democratic terms, the more self-governing holons there are within the system as a whole, the better it will manage complexity. Today, political units are tending to become bigger, more centralised and remote. By applying the principles of network government, Gaian democracies’ holons will become both smaller and more self-governing, and thus more accessible. What are now big, unmanageable cities could become holarchies, of which the holons are networks of ‘city-villages’ based on the old ones that the city once swallowed up. At one level this would make for much greater complexity, but through applying their purposes and principles, and the participative change processes and soft-systems methodologies of Gaian Democracy, at every level and between levels, the cities would be much simpler to run.

Within the holarchies we now call nation-states, the holons could be the cities themselves, forming new kinds of democratic-economic systems with a shared purpose and a shared Gaian model of government. Such a political environment should encourage diversity and innovation to flourish, while contributing to the purposes of the system as a whole.

It is impossible to state at this point the principles that Gaian democracies would adopt to regulate relationships within their networks of holarchies and holons. We have already referred to the principle of subsidiarity. Drawing on the experience of Mondragón and Visa, other possibilities include:

1. No individuals or groups or sub-systems should be able to dominate democratic deliberations or control decisions.
2. All holons and holarchies should incorporate frequent self-critical evaluations of their performance against openly determined multiple criteria.

By disaggregating today's centralised power structures, and placing responsibility for decision-making at the level of the holons and holarchies, Gaian democracies will be shaped by the participative processes through which Gaian citizens have been thinking, acting and learning together. Where there is need for decisions to be made at the level of the whole system, the design of the decision-making process will be undertaken participatively by groups of citizens, professionals and political leaders drawn equitably from its constituent holons and holarchies.

## **Conclusions**

The future is highly unpredictable, and thus every Gaian democracy will be an open-ended learning journey. But there are some things that we can say with confidence about the differences between today's Global Monetocracy and Gaian democracies.

### **The economy**

The most dramatic difference relates to the purpose of the system. The Global Monetocracy is dominated by its purpose of economic growth in order to maintain the debt-money system. As we saw in Chapter 3, it is the controlling imperative for all political and business leaders. As long as the Global Monetocracy remains in being, there is no way round it. And, at the moment, there is no political route out of it.

The very different purposes and principles of Gaian democracies will be developed through the consistent use of people-power. They will reflect the whole range of social, ecological and economic realities with which people and societies have to contend. An early phase in that process will be to take steps to ensure that the Global Monetocracy's growth imperative is switched off or brought to rest. There is no insuperable technical difficulty about this.<sup>xv</sup> What is lacking at the moment is not the know-how but the participative change processes, through which citizens can design and implement the transformation.

Ending the creation of debt-money will not necessarily lead to a no-growth economy. The difference will be that, instead of economic growth being shaped by the banks, new forms of economic activity will emerge that reflect their societies' shared purposes and principles. Vibrant and far more diversified economies are likely to develop. Principles concerned with

justice and sustainability can be openly discussed and given due weight. The alleviation of all forms of poverty will be a priority both on the grounds of justice and in order to enable all members of the community to participate fully in their economic and political systems.

There is no lack of ideas about the changes that could be made in the money, currency and tax systems in a world freed from the debilitating imperatives of the Global Monetocracy. Several ecologically- and human-friendly systems have been described by James Robertson and Richard Douthwaite in earlier Schumacher Briefings.<sup>xvi</sup> For example, an international trading currency linked to Gaia's capacity to absorb global warming gases, concurrent money systems and a citizen's income. The existing money system is of course very convenient for the wealthy and successful. But there is no reason why systems that do not rely on debt for the creation of money should not be just as convenient - perhaps even more so - for them, as well as for a far wider class of user.

Other proposals generally vetoed by the Global Monetocracy include taxing landowners on site values, community-owned banks and the localisation of economic activity in general. With a global network of thousands of Gaian democracies, these and many other ideas could be explored, adapted, refined and implemented with local variations.

Diversity will be the one feature of the economic systems of the future that can be predicted with confidence. That is how Gaian systems achieve order and flexibility. That will be the inevitable result of addressing 'wicked' problems with a soft-systems approach. Network government will encourage creativity and freedom in the design of all economic systems, in industry and agriculture as well as finance. What we are predicting here is the gradual emergence of a very different world. But it is not one that can be specified, or 'imagineered'. In systems terms, imagineering is inevitably a linear process, and as such cannot take account of the complex adaptive nature of human societies.

There is also a profoundly systemic reason why the components of the Gaian model of democracy do not include a theory of economics. The current neo-liberal theory of economics is derived from a particular set of political purposes and principles that are based on the absolute primacy of private property over all other political and social considerations. They have served the purposes of national - and now global - Monetocracies for over two hundred years. Throughout that time, apart from a few brief intervals, our democratic institutions have been shaped by the imperatives of the debt-based money system. In Gaian democracies, economic instruments and policies will be designed to serve the purposes of justice and sustainability. By changing the purposes of our societies, Gaian democracies will change the basic orientation of our economic instruments and principles. In consequence, new economic theories will be amongst the many emergent properties of our new system of democracy, not one of its basic components.

**Global problems**

The biggest question that any alternative to today's Global Monetocracy has to answer is: How will your ideas deal with the global problems that are de-stabilising Gaia and driving the human family to species suicide? Since these are enormously complex, long-term 'wicked' problems, there is no quick or simple answer to that question. The Global Monetocracy is blind to these issues. Its purpose of economic growth is directly opposed to Gaia. Its command-and-control leadership culture is not competent to address the problems we face. It has to be replaced as a matter of urgency. What we hope to have made clear is that the best chance of bringing that about lies in the rapid emergence of a global network of Gaian democracies. Through being highly efficient, flexible and innovative in pursuit of justice and sustainability, the relationship between the human family and Gaia's systems can be brought into balance. This is our best strategy.

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<sup>i</sup> See Eugene Odum, 'Environmental Ethics and the Attitude Revolution' in William Blackstone (ed.), *Philosophy and Environmental Crisis*, University of Georgia Press, Athens GA, 1974.

<sup>ii</sup> James Lovelock, 'Elements', *Living Lightly*, Issue 19, Spring 2002, p 17.

<sup>iii</sup> See Dee Hock, *Birth of the Chaordic Age*, Berrett-Koehler Publishers, San Francisco, 1999.

<sup>iv</sup> See Paulo Freire, *Cultural Action for Freedom (Harvard Educational Review Monograph Series No 1)*, Harvard Education Publishing Group, Cambridge MA, 1970.

<sup>v</sup> Ibid.

<sup>vi</sup> For examples, see [www.gaiandemocracy.net](http://www.gaiandemocracy.net)

<sup>vii</sup> Interview with Margaret Wheatley, op cit.

<sup>viii</sup> Responses to initial discussions at leadership workshops conducted by Roy Madron.

<sup>ix</sup> See Eun Kim, Fred Liggin, Genita McKinney, Keith Norris & Sonya Owens for Dr. Reginald Bruce Management, 'Southwest Airlines 25 Years of LUV'. see <http://cbpa.louisville.edu/bruce/cases/swa2/swa2.htm>.

<sup>x</sup> See Peter Drucker, *The Practice of Management*, Heinemann, London, 1955.

<sup>xi</sup> See Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Continuum, NY, 1970.

<sup>xii</sup> Much of the material used in this section is taken from Shann Turnbull's paper to the first Global Brain Workshop, Brussels, July 2001: 'Design Criteria For A Global Brain (revised Sep 2001)'. See <http://pespmc1.vub.ac.be/Conf/GB-0.html>

<sup>xiii</sup> See E.F. Schumacher, op cit.

<sup>xiv</sup> John Mathews, 'Holonc Organisational Architecture', *Human Systems Management*, Vol. 15, No. 1, 1996.

<sup>xv</sup> See Joseph Huber & James Robertson, op cit.

<sup>xvi</sup> James Robertson, *Transforming Economic Life*, Schumacher Briefing No. 1; Richard Douthwaite, *The Ecology of Money*, Schumacher Briefing No. 4; Aubrey Meyer, *Contraction and Convergence*, Schumacher Briefing No. 5. See also Alan Twelvetrees (ed.), *Community Economic Development: Rhetoric or Reality?*, Community Development Foundation, London, 1998.

## **Chapter 6: From Principles To Practice**