

Contemporary Systems Thinking

Janet McIntyre-Mills

Norma Romm

Yvonne Corcoran-Nantes *Editors*

# Balancing Individualism and Collectivism

Social and Environmental Justice

 Springer

# Contemporary Systems Thinking

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Yvonne Corcoran-Nantes  
Editors

# Balancing Individualism and Collectivism

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*We hope that the contributions will provide ideas for exploring ways to live better lives through enhancing ethical policy making and praxis to address social, economic and environmental justice as a priority. The designs of policy responses and the terms of reference need to appreciate that human beings are interconnected living systems reliant and dependent on ecological systems in which we are a strand, but which we can shape in ways that are positive or negative.*

# Foreword

Reynaldo Treviño-Cisneros

## Ethics and the Anthropocene

### Introduction

The Anthropocene denotes the time period in which the global effects of human activity on the atmospheric, geologic, hydrologic, biospheric and other earth system processes is both apparent and measurable. For Crutzen (2006, 13–18) this represents a new geological epoch. Governing the Anthropocene therefore, may have the following implications: conducting the evolution of planet Earth through human intervention in interactive, properly creative ways over its components: flora, fauna and inanimate things, in order to produce harmony among them, and to secure sustainability of conditions adequate for supporting and expanding biodiversity, intelligent life and the prolonged wellbeing of all living species.

This perspective presupposes that human responsibility is inherent to making good decisions and that a complementary processing of thought and action to maintain attitudes of discernment and commitment is essential. Thus, for it to be executed, this governance requires continuous reflection with respect to achieved knowledge; development of pertinent rewarding skills; design of alternatives for action and foresight into their likely consequences. This would be achieved from a reasonable human standpoint which takes into account an explicit consideration of the values inspiring the successive steps of the transformation of reality. In other words, this process requires the application of both individual and collective learning.

Interconnections will naturally exist. But these connections need to be analyzed for positive or negative contributions. Nonetheless, a focal point of interest stands in trying to insert *positive feed forward* by selecting inputs for the whole Earth system and for the cross-fertilization of its subsystems. Each subsystem has to operate in order to produce what Earth, as a whole, living entity, needs to maintain itself, to enrich its beauty, and to stir up emergent properties useful to its components that can ultimately materialize into coherent states of splendour.

Is destruction a necessary step to attain what *governing the Anthropocene* truly implies? We would naturally wish that we could keep evolution on a developing path where the decay and loss of components could be considered natural, or at least accepted as proportionate transitions necessary to reach superior states of being. We also need hope to maintain experimentation in development. Thus, we need to know what a superior state of being means, or at least have some appreciation of our developing state as being better or improved when compared to past states of being, i.e., that ‘good properties’ should have developed in our planet Earth through the passing of time.

## Going Deeper

‘Anthropocene’ is the widely accepted term for the last millennia of the Holocene era of the evolution of the universe, beginning after the rise of agriculture as the lifestyle model in human communities that replaced hunting and gathering for survival. This transformation to produce the daily necessary nurturing goods for groups of men, women and children, initiated a revolutionary change in the Earth’s landscape that continues to this day. A dedication to agricultural activities was a less dangerous organization of collective daily activities than hunting and gathering. It eliminated the separation of men from women and children during hunting activities and almost permanently secured the provision of food and better conditions for physical and biological reproduction. Since then, the human race has put in motion many relevant processes that can be observed and measured, which in turn have induced a remarkable change in the configuration of our planet.

In terms of demography, there has been an exponential increase in human population all over the world, close to 7.25 billion dwellers in 2015, wherein most are concentrated in cities creating a large scale demand for the use of natural resources and of services within the urban environment. Many rural areas remain with a few poor people who suffer from scarce access to goods and services to facilitate their lives and render them better conditions for living. Migration from farms to more populated centres leaves behind the value of considering Earth a natural environment that offered humans many opportunities to appreciate the grandeur of our Common Home, and it erodes the sense of cohesion and interdependence with our environment. Accelerated depletion of the necessary resources for living, such as fresh water, fertile soil and forests, and the human abuse of unclean sources of energy have induced a likely irreversible process of climate change that is greatly affecting our milieu.

In addition, climate change is triggering floods; droughts; the impossibility of the seas to absorb the carbon dioxide produced by the use of fossil fuels for industry and transportation; the disappearance of the arctic ice, gigantic beds with noxious liberation of methane and other gases; the rising up of sea levels that might extinguish insular countries; more harmful meteorological events all over the world

such as storms and tornados, and the elevation of the average temperature of the planet past limits that might become irreversible.

The specialization and integration of knowledge by humans has increased, but the former is overwhelming the latter. The need to complement both has resulted in humans having a sense of a totality going in the right or wrong direction many times along evolution. Nowadays, it seems that philosophy with its parts: the theory of knowledge, anthropology, cosmology, ethics, and the prevalence of transcendental thought (the comprehension of the origin of all that exists) over the comprehension of mere isolated phenomena have unfortunately lost attraction to our minds. The segmented studies of abstract and natural sciences and their framing outside the humanist disciplines: history, art, psychology, economy, sociology, communication and politics, have allowed the achievement of very useful and important human skills by individuals and societies. They generate awe every day through communication and marketing, and already include genetic transformations through biotechnology as well as the manipulation of physical materials at nano-scale dimension in order to attain better conditions of life for the human race. Nonetheless, many of these goals arrived with a set of side effects. We have forgotten the vast inequalities in human rights appropriation. We have abided by the sense of commitment with the future generations and their environment. We have unlearned past and present lessons to help us avoid massive harm and ruination in the future. We are now expecting technology to solve what the lack of foresight has unfortunately brought. We left equity as an implicit unsolvable problematic. Human beings do not ponder what a Common Rule of Law could do for the benefit of the Earth as a whole. Respect for diversity, as necessary as it may be, does not mean that people of different cultures cannot recognize how all living beings want to be treated.

Cooperation among human beings of different countries and social groupings within them is just beginning—but with ample backlash—to induce changes within each culture and to spread beyond different cultures. The creation of nation-states, as preferred political entities for groups of populations inside certain delimited territories, introduced the sense of values connected to traditions, place of origin, beliefs, language, art and ordinary habits of people, to convey an idea of appurtenance within a manageable set of variables. However, it has also overemphasized the value of diversity by introducing competitiveness in the development process of countries. The *standard of living* substituted the *art of living*. We began to think that we needed all the goods and services enjoyed by the powerful people on Earth. A misunderstanding of the particular mission of every human being dissolved the longing for communion with Earth and all that exists. Nevertheless, the ideas of complementation and interdependence began to change what was apparently settled. We are relational beings, not isolated units. We know that love is a vehement desire for every one of us. Thus, cooperation should become our next goal in terms of evolution. If we understand and promote cooperation, then a different dissipative social structure will be evident sooner than we can imagine.

## **Proposals Derived From the Ethics Implied in Governing the Anthropocene**

By now, we understand that the last part of the Holocene era has been characterized by a massive intervention of human beings over the components (or subsystems) of our planet. These transformations have influenced life on Earth in different, radical ways. Some interventions, such as world wars, agropecuarian, mining and industrial production, as well as the territorial concentration-dispersion pattern of living species induced by humans have notably affected the supporting life systems of the Earth: fresh water, available energy, quantity of reserves of natural non-renewable resources, forest and sea ecological subsystems, causing great damage to humans, animals and plants. We have directly experienced the loss of some valuable species among its fauna. Research has confirmed that other species of fauna and flora are endangered or in peril of extinction. The sustainability of Earth needs urgent attention if we are to understand that the following generations have the right to receive our planet in similar conditions to those we have enjoyed during our life span, if not better.

Because of our actions through human history, the configuration of Earth has transformed in positive and negative ways. We need to discern between both carefully. We need to eliminate harmful interventions and promote positive ones. This is the 'ethos' of mankind. We must praise and honour it. Awareness and responsibility, both at the individual and collective levels, are inextricably required.

In 2013, Bethania Arango Hisijara and I, with the kind editorial help of Kenneth C. Bausch of the Institute for 21st Century Agoras, published the first volume of the monograph series, *A Social Systems Approach to Global Problems*.<sup>1</sup> In this monograph, we developed an articulated strategy to cope with the 15 monumental global challenges postulated in 2010 by Millennium Project researchers Jerome C. Glenn, Theodore J. Gordon, and Elizabeth Florescu.<sup>2</sup> These researchers have led a Delphi study since 1996 that included the participation of more than 3000 people around the world. Every year, this survey has been updated and the number of people who have participated in it has increased. Taking this study and combining it with the 49 Continuous Critical Problems conceptualized in 1970 by the great planner Hasan Ozbekhan in his paper *The Predicament of Mankind* presented to the Club of Rome,<sup>3</sup> Bethania and I, with the aid of CognisCope II™ software, mapped a vision of the actions to solve that set of problems, which unfortunately, still remain. We assert that this articulated set of actions constitute a global strategy that could work to solve the global problematic. However, we also felt compelled to search the point of view of diverse local, national and international groups of stakeholders, who would also be interested in discussing the whole issue and arrive at their own conclusions. To that end, we recommend for future works the use of the methodology of Structured Dialogic Design (Christakis and Bausch 2006<sup>4</sup>; Christakis and Flanagan 2013<sup>5</sup>), because we consider that this methodology can be used successfully to manifest each group's own vision and to make the contents of possible new insights explicit.

Elaborating further on the proposals arising from our research, we can approach the extraordinary complexity of *governing the Anthropocene*. Among a set of 60 actions, Bethania and I identified 20 as driving factors to secure the global democratic organization of a wide array of human activities. Incorporating democracy as an omnipresent trait of collective life is the best human way to cope with local, regional, national and global problematic, in spite of the many difficulties implied by the different degrees of comprehension of reality.

In the following paragraphs, I will present a proposal: We need to establish a common global value system that incorporates the following guiding principles:

- Global sustainable development
- Equity
- Peace
- Wellbeing
- Gender equality
- Mutual respect for cultural differences, and
- Harmony

The above statement is comprehensive and involves the necessary care for preserving our planet from dysfunctionality or destruction of its life-supporting ecosystems.

Since several of these guiding principles can seem very abstract in nature, let us clarify one of them, harmony, as it could eventually encompass all the others. Harmony, refers to human relationships that praise permanent trust; solidarity in cases of disaster; love for complementarity; permanent inclination to eradicate poverty and sickness; tuning in with continuous improvement of life conditions; enriched beauty of human settlements; an always higher state of conviviality; respect and honour for beings other than human; continued cultural development; preservation of the hereditary treasures of the past, and, recapitulating, sensibility to the signs of the times. A good metaphor for 'harmony' as a development goal is the beautiful emission of glorious music played by a symphonic orchestra that replenishes the ears and heart of its listeners. In order for that to happen, multiple factors have to come together in mutually enhancing ways: energy of the musicians, multiple individual efforts, numerous rehearsals, beautiful and original composition scores, the synchronization of many different players and their instruments, a magisterial conduction as a service for modulation and excellence, enthusiasm, everyone's best effort during the concert, and the arousal of sighs from the public. The unity of these elements in one single presentation is a fine expression of 'harmony'. We should find their correspondence in what we mean by 'sustainable development'.

Since the creation of the Club of Rome in approximately 1970, the need for a holistic conceptualization of the world's problematic took form in the minds of scientists and planners first, and later in those of many people. Some of the people involved tried to design strategies that could overcome the challenges presented to humankind in a collective yet systematic way. Our planet Earth began to be conceptualized as a web of intrinsically interrelated facts along its pattern of evolution.

Were those facts completely separate from each other? Were those facts connecting each other in such a way that anything occurring in one corner of the planet exerted a measurable influence over the rest of the facts involved in ulterior stages of evolution? Could a fact or group of facts influencing Earth enter in action irreversibly, and bring it to an unstable and degrading form of existence? Are humans responsible for contributing to the harmony or to the ruination of Earth? Thinking of today's global conditions, which of the consequences would be the most likely to occur? How can we become responsible for Earth's sustainability as a whole?

From time to time, these questions have entered the minds and hearts of social leaders and members of society, particularly when they joined to cooperate with many others in order to change what they had perceived, understood or judged as wrong or unfair towards future progenies about the actual state of affairs.

This ethical manifesto has been an attempt to offer proposals to address those questions, for the benefit of Earth as a whole entangled Web, which is in the ongoing movement. To *govern the Anthropocene*, we offer what we believe are impartial, honest and applicable answers generated by an ever-increasing number of communities that can finally make a difference in re-directing Earth's evolution to its most harmonious path of development.

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Our thanks to these contributors and to the many other colleagues and graduates who have contributed to this volume which aims to share original ideas and or critical review essays on ways to govern the Anthropocene and to live in ways that are egalitarian and non-Anthropocentric.

## Acknowledgements of Visual Materials

Unless otherwise specified all the diagrams and photographs are created by the authors of each chapter. In chapter 4 some of the diagrams have been created by Rudolf Wirawan in some instances he has drawn on figures in Wikipedia commons, unless otherwise cited. In Chap. 5 the artists are cited by Veronica McKay are Samantha van Riet: Figures 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 9, 12, 15, 16 and Tasia Rosser: Figures 6, 8, 10, 11, 13, 14.

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# Prologue

## **Balancing Individualism and Collectivism: Towards Non-anthropocentric Stewardship Rights and Responsibilities**

The volumes in the series comprise: (1) *Balancing Individualism and Collectivism* and (2) *Planetary Passport: Towards Representation, Accountability and Re-Generation*. They address the paradox raised by Wadsworth (2010: xvii) that ‘we want change—and yet we do not want [to] change’. Democracy and governance need to be open to diverse views but democratic governance also needs to provide a public education role where people think about the consequences of their social, economic and environmental choices and the implications for this generation within nations and regions.

The links across Systems Thinking, Participatory Action Research and Mixed Methods are well established by Wadsworth in the *Systemic Practice and Action Research Journal* and by Robert Flood in the *Action Research Handbook* as well as in the *Consciousness Journal*. By definition systems thinking is transdisciplinary and spans a range of variables and addresses interrelated concerns. Working in participatory design teams makes sense and so the papers sit well together.

Contributors of this volume add to our understanding by working across cultural studies, women’s studies, development studies, biology, physics and environmental studies. The scope of the volume is rethinking boundaries, interconnections, relationships, flows, the nature of consciousness, identity, anthropocentric, and non-anthropocentric knowing. We address ways to learn from a changing environment and how to translate decision-making into praxis at multiple levels applied to multiple forms of intervention.

The challenge is to develop new approaches to address needs comprising many interrelated variables that are perceived differently by different stakeholders with different life chances and different capabilities. Significantly we seek to establish whether participatory democracy enables participants to consider the consequences

of socio-economic decisions for long-term sustainable wellbeing versus short term acceptable coping strategies (McIntyre-Mills et al. 2014) and thus to ascertain if it supports the will to manage the consumption of resources carefully—as opposed to denying or brushing aside the role we could play or the voluntary changes we can make as individuals and as conscientious ecological citizens (Dobson 2006, 2007).

Balancing individualism and collectivism addresses the social and environmental justice challenge to live sustainably and well by:

- Considering the consequences of our social, economic and environmental policy and governance decisions for this generation and the next.
- Testing out ways to improve representation, accountability and re-generation. It addresses the need to take into account the ethical implications of policy and governance decisions in the short, medium and long terms based on testing out the implications for self, other and the environment. The work of West Churchman on a Design of Inquiring Systems provides an approach to balancing individual rights and responsibilities with collective rights and responsibilities by working through questions that consider the implications of policy decisions by means of ‘what if’ scenarios that take into account the perceptions, values and narratives of diverse stakeholders (irrespective of socio-demographic and cultural characteristics). A policy decision that supports social and environmental justice is informed by the axiom that we can be free and diverse to the extent that our choices do not undermine the rights of others and the environment in this generation and the next. Papers that explore complex social and environmental justice issues at a local, national and international level are discussed. Expanded Pragmatism dedicated to sustainable social and environmental justice is more important than ever.

In the wake of the elections in UK, Europe, and USA people have demonstrated the depth of their dissatisfaction that Rorty (1999) summed up in ‘Achieving Our Country’. He stressed that ‘something will crack’ as follows:

“The non suburban electorate will decide that the system has failed and start looking around for a strongman to vote for—someone willing to assure them that, once he is elected, the smug bureaucrats, tricky lawyers, overpaid bond salesmen, and postmodernist professors will no longer be calling the shots.”

Rorty said ‘nobody can predict’ what such a strongman would do in office, but painted a bleak picture for minorities and liberal causes. “One thing that is very likely to happen is that the gains made in the past forty years by black and brown Americans, and by homosexuals, will be wiped out,” he wrote. “Jocular contempt for women will come back into fashion.” (Rorty 1999: 87–91 and cited by Helmore 2016).<sup>1</sup>

People in Western democracies have voted for national identity and prioritizing local jobs. The so-called ‘deplorables’ whom Hilary Clinton stereotyped in the

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<sup>1</sup>Helmore, E. 2016 <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2016/nov/19/donald-trump-us-election-prediction-richard-rorty>.

bitter presidential election of 2016 as ‘racist, sexist, xenophobic, Islamophobic’ and inward looking have gained a voice in the UK and in the USA. The fact that Rorty predicted this makes it all the more important to take note that cultural leftism expressed in policies that do not make a difference in the run-down inner city areas makes it all the more important to demonstrate transformation through practical interventions that provide the basis for learning what works why and how. Dewey’s pragmatism and agency remain important ways forward to develop agency for the future of democracy. Rorty criticizes the lack of agency in academia.

The volumes in this series propose agency for both social and environmental justice through practical interventions. The focus of this volume is on the need to take into account the views of those who feel left out as demonstrated by the extent to which recent polling resulted in the British Exit (Brexit) from the European Union because people feel left behind by the global economy.

The same trend has resulted in the election of Donald Trump<sup>2</sup> in the United States. Some would argue that democracy has failed because it has allowed a small majority to say ‘no’ to business as usual. Those who are forgotten within the boundaries of the nation state have spoken out, but the problem is deeper than the lack of representation within nations. It includes the lack of representation of people within regional areas that are facing social, economic and environmental conflict, disaster and upheavals that translate into the challenge to survive. Human beings have diverse values, but they have in common the need for food, energy and water security.

The divisions caused by elitist globalized economic decisions needs to be redressed through job creation that focuses on protecting social and environmental justice. People who are left out because they do not have skills or who are excluded need to be enabled to create opportunities. As Pauli (2016) stresses ‘There is no unemployment in ecosystems’. The next point is that ecosystems do not stop at the boundary of the nation state. The divisive us/them or containerist thinking will not help to meet the needs of the excluded. What is needed is a re-framing of society and economics based on integrating a respect for the environment and living systems of which we are a strand.

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<sup>2</sup>O’Sullivan, J. 2016 ‘Identity politics crosses the floor as the invisible people find their voice’ *Weekend Australian*, 12–13 November, pg. 17: “... Patriotism and popular democracy are reborn with the rise of Trump and Britain’s Brexit vote....But when David Blankenhorn set out to find out why people supported Trump in a tour of the American south he discovered that his supporters... liked his candour...They were the invisible victims of the policies of social interventionism and control driven by identity politics—the politics of race, gender and class—that the US government has progressively imposed in the post-Reagan era. Most obviously, they are not members of the ‘protected’ groups that benefit from affirmative action...They are the people who feel themselves to be the people who sustain this structure of controls and social benefits with their work and taxes without benefiting proportionately from it...As this identity regime spreads from bureaucratic arrangements across much of employment, academic and public life to political rhetoric, some people feel left out...In all these cases this aggressive identity politics sets group against group and divides traditional social groups from those organized by the states along quasi ethnic lines...The Trump campaign, Brexit...and the refugee row in Europe have signaled the rebirth of patriotism and popular democracy against progressive global governance and its forced transformation of societies...”.

This is the focus of the second volume which develops a form of participatory democracy and governance links to Sustainable Community Development through triple bottom line accounting to help people to identify sources of abundance in terms of what they have, what they need, what they are prepared to add or discard from their lives, turning points for the better and worse and barriers. The software generates EXCEL sheets with weightings (McIntyre-Mills et al. 2014). I see the potential for this to be also linked to a decision-making and design tool with co-operatives as it is a form of inclusive triple bottom line representation, accounting and accountability see [http://wirasoffoundation.org/en\\_GB/web/smartenergy/plenary-presentation](http://wirasoffoundation.org/en_GB/web/smartenergy/plenary-presentation).

The volumes extend the work conducted in several workshops with academics, students and practitioners in Indonesia and South Africa as well as the work of the Special Integration Group: ‘Balancing Individualism and Collectivism’ that I have chaired since 2006 for International Systems Sciences conference and papers delivered at the conference ‘Governing the Anthropocene’ (McIntyre-Mills 2015). This last session was co-chaired at my request by Prof. Norma Romm.

The challenge for governing the Anthropocene is one of moving away from disciplinary and functional differentiation, in order to achieve transdisciplinary knowledge spanning biological, psychological, social, cultural, spiritual, political, scientific, economic and environmental dimensions to support living ethically in ways that redress the worst aspects of modernisation (Berger and Luckmann 1966). Thus the threefold aims are to:

- Deepen our understanding of how people perceive local climate challenges and experiences (Hulme 2009, 2010; Nazarea 2006; Satre 1976; Vaske and Kobrin 2001) through multispecies ethnography (Raikhel 2010) and an adapted version of Soft Systems Mapping (Checkland and Scholes 1991).
- Explore the social influences (Berger 1974), customs and behaviours (Hogget 2010) that potentially shape attitudes and emotions towards consumption with a particular focus on discourses about rights and responsibilities.
- Investigate the dimensions of face-to-face and digital public engagement that could encourage people to explore ways to live simply and well through caring for diverse others (Donaldson and Kymlicka 2011).

To sum up these volumes explore:

- A priori norms for ecological citizenship at the local level and
- A posteriori performance measures for ecological citizenship.
- New ways to protect future generations through remembering our heritage, re-connecting to others (including sentient beings) and re-generating the gendered ecological.
- Alternative forms of praxis inspired by leaders such as Wangari Maathi, Vandana Shiva, Dorothy Bird Rose and Donna Haraway as a way to preserve a sense of our connection with the earth and waters on which we depend.
- Ways to decolonialize knowledge formation in public policy

- The case for an alternative approach to governance and democracy that takes into account a range of local people's perspectives.

Drawing on and adapting Hofstede et al. (2010) this research extends the approach to consider the consequences of different cultural values for governing the Anthropocene. The approach is to work with diverse people who have experience of living in urban, suburban and regional areas and to explore the way in which they think in qualitative terms food. Unlike Hofstede's research, a qualitative approach is used to explore perceptions. The volumes aim to explore the extent to which people understand the implications of their choices. Wangari Maathi founded the Green Movement and stresses that the simple act of planting trees in Kenya could make a difference through mobilizing people to take action and to make a small difference. She calls this 'the humming bird approach', because these actions (although small in themselves) can make a collective change. Besides it is better to make a small contribution than to do nothing. In taking action we can inspire others to join us. In her Nobel Peace prize speech she invites us all to think about the sort of environment we want for the future, one in which children can play safely in water and in which they can watch tadpoles grow. The magic of being shown how a tadpole grows into a frog is one I associate with my childhood, playing in a river bed. My grandfather showed me how they change as an introduction to the notion of the sacred and the way we are all part of a process of transformation.

Vandana Shiva's work provides another source of inspiration through reminding us that we are all seeds for change and that we are reliant on water, earth and seeds for our survival. Whilst the work of Deborah Rose Bird on multispecies ethnography suggests a way to help us think about non-anthropocentrism, 'caring for country' and then working towards what consciousness of trans species interconnections means for governance and democracy in the future. Donna Haraway's understanding of hybridity provides a starting point for this discussion in volume two.

Perhaps one of the most insightful contributions to the book was made from the margins when discussing with Prof. Veronica McKay the process of developing and teaching children at school in South Africa. Veronica discusses the hidden and explicit curriculum of her workbooks that construct a model for human interaction in the new South Africa that is non-racist and non-anthropocentric in a society that respects gender, age and diverse species of life. The workbooks provide interactive exercises linked with a curriculum and classroom guides for teachers. The engagement with the hidden curriculum was discussed spanning human rights (gender, race, class, culture, language) as well as the rights of sentient beings and the environment. In conversation with Veronica about the books Romm and I commented on the quality of the books which would bring joy to a classroom and that the notion of sentient beings was extended through a sense of solidarity with all forms of life including plants that were depicted in the workbooks with scientific accuracy but which also included a sense of 'play' and perhaps 'hyperrealism' through depicting non-human life communicating positively with human beings. The energy of positive relationships plays out in how we relate to others and the

reverence we show for all forms of life by acknowledging our interdependency and the importance of respect and compassion for all life forms.

The work of Maathi Wangari, for example, features in an exercise to illustrate how planting trees can be a means to empower women and to protect the environment. Her attention to detail is illustrated in the way in which relationships across cultures, species and the ecosystem are featured in daily lessons on living well and living ethically. The chapter is also linked to a podcast in which she is interviewed by the editor during a visit to South Africa in December. Veronica explains the process of developing the workbooks in a team that worked according to the principles of participatory action research. All the participants were encouraged to voice their ideas and the workbooks are tested in the classrooms and modified in response to the suggestions made by team members in collaboration with teachers and learners.

The conversations about the papers are extended by means of audio and visual links by some contributors to an internet archive so that some of the material can be explored through other media. The hope is that by demonstrating what is possible, it will inspire more people to live differently and that it will lead to policy and governance changes.

Firstly, Reynaldo Treviño-Cisneros explains the concept of the Anthropocene and makes a plea for using dialogue to establish harmony across interest groups. Then Norma Romm discusses the notion of the Anthropocene critically and makes a plea for restoring a sense of connection with others and the environment through caring. She explains the implications for current societies in a paper delivered at the International Systems Sciences Conference in Berlin (2015).

Janet McIntyre-Mills chapters propose an alternative approach to democracy and governance on the notion of a Planetary Passport to support a Global Covenant and Earth Democracy. Janet discusses the need for education to foster the protection of diversity. Science, Democracy, Agriculture and Ethics thrive on the testing out of ideas, while the paper also makes a case that social systems need to foster freedom and diversity to the extent that it does not undermine the rights of others in this generation or the next. The stewardship approach to ethical policy and governance praxis is developed in this chapter and in her second chapter she stresses that binary oppositions based on subject/object, male/female/water/earth/animal/human, planet/economics play out as part of the modernization agenda.

If we are to set aside the so-called ‘Monocultures of the Mind’ (Shiva 2012a,b) we need to ‘Make Peace’ with ourselves, others and the earth. The need to protect seed diversity from industrial farming is Shiva’s mission because corporatized farming has become part of the problem. She has taken on Monsanto in legal proceedings because the so-called ‘Terminator seeds’ from Monsanto replace biodiverse plants because they do not self-generate and are reliant on costly farming processes. She stresses that avoiding these threats to food security requires understanding that the linear assembly line approach to farming or making a living is unsustainable.

Diversity in nature is as important as it is in society: in a kindergarten or university classroom or an industry board room. The a priori capabilities to enable

participation in a life worth living has been detailed as an ethical priority for all sentient beings by Nussbaum (2006, 2011). Thus the democratic minimum requires the capability to protect a decent quality of life and the environment on which we depend. The violence of silencing women and children in domestic situations can also be seen as a synecdoche of the sort of violence shown towards natural diversity. If we weed out and exterminate difference we become increasingly vulnerable to change. In agriculture seeds that survive through generations of testing need to be protected. This has been echoed by Indigenous voices and is now core to facilitate policy transformation through enabling the voiceless including all marginalized peoples, in particular women and children, to engage in expressing their rights while exercising a duty of care to protect other sentient beings and the environment on which we all depend.

Patriarchal science and society have played a role in silencing protest. The rights of animals to a life free of pain has been stressed by Singer who discusses the a posteriori consequences of unethical living. As a utilitarian, he argues that extending solidarity to others makes sense because it fosters the wellbeing of all<sup>3</sup>. These chapters explore perceptions on whether people understand that growth in the size of the ecological footprint of cities, growth in the size of species loss, growth in the size of the gap between rich and poor (as a result of the greed of a few at the expense of the majority in this generation and the next) is unsustainable. Some of the best examples of structuralist agendas are constitutions that give rights to the marginalized and to nature. The Ecuadorian constitution makes some steps in this direction, but could be criticized for the lack of implementation of the norms enshrined in the constitution.

Some of the best examples of *voluntarism* include encouraging people to become more politically active in transforming what is valued through 'being the change'. The issues of the day are summed up as follows:

- Growing gap between rich and poor (in particular those who are displaced)
- The growing rise in the size of ecological footprints of some at the expense of the majority
- The growth in unsustainable food choices and the growth of displaced people
- The need for a new narrative in the sense used by Jacob Von Uexkoll, new architecture for participatory governance and participatory democracy and a new sense of relationship with nature and other animals.

The options can be summed up as follows: We can emphasize structuralist interventions through constitutions that give rights to nature and develop policy to protect all sentient beings as suggested by Nussbaum (2011) and to protect habitat for wild and liminal animals as suggested in Zoopolis (Donaldson and Kymlicka 2011). We can encourage voluntarist approaches through educating people to become engaged citizens through scaling up the potential of ecological citizens to participate in decision-making (as suggested by the Aarhus Convention, see Florini

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<sup>3</sup><http://www.pambazuka.net/en/category.php/features/96307>.

2003) and the right to justice in post national regions governed by a Global Covenant (Held 2004).

Eshanta Ariyadasa discusses his Ph.D. research on ways to enhance the public education of children in Sri Lanka as part of his research on the governance of children's homes. In Sri Lanka the number of orphans as a result of war, natural disasters and the migrant work of women has necessitated measures to protect them. His practical action research program supported by an Endeavour Award Scholarship involves the evaluation of children's homes and it draws on his experience as the founder of one of these homes. The action learning program with young people includes recycling, organic gardening and bee keeping as a way to live healthy sustainable lives. His focus is on ways to ensure that the UN rights of the child are upheld in deed not merely as words to guide the policies governing children. The idealistic capabilities approach of Nussbaum forms the basis for developing a priori guidelines in line with the UN goals and they provide a basis for developing indicators for wellbeing. A video podcast on his research is also linked with this chapter.

Yvonne Corcoran-Nantes and Clare Buswell discuss the importance of gender and nonviolence as it relates to governing the Anthropocene and this theme is continued by Gascon, Widianingsih and McLaren. The work of Donna Haraway on gendered violence provides a source of inspiration for the volumes in this series. Her work on the way thinking shapes design is vital for transformation. We are the boundaries, she reminds us. Transformation of the Anthropocene to more sustainable ways of life require us to 'be the change'.

Keith Miller and Susan Goff explore land and culture and how loss of land and culture affects the wellbeing of Aboriginal Australians, whilst Jeff Foote together with Maria Hepi, Marara Rogers-Koroheke and Hone Taimona discuss Maori community wellbeing and living systems. Kofi Quan Bouffour explains the systemic importance of land and the implications of loss in Ghana. The themes of land loss are also taken up by Clare Buswell and Yvonne Corcoran-Nantes who explain the precarious lives of women who often depend on access to the land through marriage. Although the majority of the world's farmers are women they do not own the land. When they are divorced, widowed, suffer illness in the family or take on mortgages to engage in mechanized corporatized farming they run the risk of land loss which severely impacts on the subsistence and survival strategies of women and their communities.

The process of losing land in Mindanao, Philippines is described in a chapter by Mervin Gascon. Mervin is undertaking his Ph.D. research on the most vulnerable in Mindanao, namely women and children who have lost or on the verge of losing land. Simbolon underlines that Indonesia provides constitutional support for the right to water security for all and the implications of corruption on public health. Akena makes a case for communal land ownership to protect food security in Africa, whilst Quan Bouffour takes up the theme of public education and land management.

The message that runs as a leit motif through this collected volume is that resistance and resilience depends on cultural transformation and modelling

alternative ways of being the change. We are indeed the boundaries and it is up to us to be the agents of transformation towards non-anthropocentrism.

Alexander Christakis with Maria Kakoulaki considers the importance of participatory democracy and governance with reference to agriculture in Cyprus. This case study on managing diversity is particularly relevant as Cyprus is closer to Syria than it is to the EU wherein it is an uneasy member state.

This special edition ends by discussing the awareness of natural inclusion developed by the biologist, Alan Rayner who sums up our interrelatedness through explaining how definitive thinking, whether divisive or unifying, is constructed from abstract presuppositions that overlook the intrinsic flux and spatial receptivity that are vital to the existence of all forms of life. His work uses mixed methods of visual and verbal communication, including art and poetry, to describe, illustrate and account for the diversity across all scales of life from microbes to mammals and from moss cushions to forests. A favourite poem and painting, entitled ‘The Hole in the Mole’, emphasizes the attentive receptivity essential to sustainable ways of living, and how this influences natural energetic flows and formations.

Like Shiva, his message is that we are dependent on the earth, and this dependency necessarily entails both generative and degenerative processes. It takes all kinds to make and sustain the vibrancy of life on Earth, including hedgehogs and earthworms.

This first volume builds on previous publications cited in the chapters below and develops a case for non-anthropocentrism through both structuralist and voluntarist approaches to ‘being the change’.

To sum up, the focus of the two volumes is knowing our place in the universe and recognizing our hybridity. It makes the case that current architectures for governance and democracy are part of the problem.

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