Imagining the Real Challenge

and Realizing the Imaginal Pathway of Sustainable Transformation

Reflections arising from a spirited encounter with Ashok Khosla

Introduction

The following diagram is an effort to hold within a single framework a number of strategic dimensions and dynamics descriptive of the contemporary challenge.

Explanation

Axes: The above image is not to be understood as having conventional Cartesian axes, although some significance may be associated with the conventional axes as discussed below.

The diagonal axes may however be related those used to map the complex plane, fundamental to issues relating to complexity. In the...
case of the complex plane it is used to provide a representation of complex numbers, made up of a "real" and an "imaginary" component. The real part of a complex number is conventionally represented by a displacement along an x-axis (of a modified Cartesian representation), and the imaginary part by a displacement along the y-axis. In the above diagram, the real and imaginary axes are represented diagonally as:

- **axis of imaginary explicit**: phenomena associated with this axis (the problematique and the resolutique, discussed below) are those that are the subject of open "opinionated" debate interpreting explicit phenomena (whether symptoms of problems or proposals for their solution). The "reality" of problems is typically challenged in this debate -- as is the "reality" of any imagined resolution of them.

- There is an imagined progression:
  - from the purportedly undesirable condition of the problematique, driven by the problematique as a form of repulsor
  - towards the imagined condition of achieved through the resolutique, as a form of enabling attractor

- There is however a counter-dynamic arising from:
  - the problematique operating perversely as an attractor -- as with the attractiveness of habitual behaviours however much they reinforce a problematic situation.
  - the resolutique operating perversely as a form of repulsor -- as with the threatening challenge of change (however supposedly desirable), encouraging its avoidance

- **axis of implicit real**: in any progress along the imaginary explicit axis towards the desirable condition implied by the resolutique there are two major forms of deviance or distraction:

  - game-playing amongst those mobilized in support of any collective project, as is typical amongst those within any institution, between its departments, or in any process of inter-institutional, inter-disciplinary or inter-faith "collaboration". Whilst felt to be very real, this is typically not rendered explicit in the articulation or assessment of that collaboration, or in the manner in which it was originally designed. It is an emergent dynamic which effectively functions as an attractor that is typically of greater significance than those of the explicit objectives associated with progress towards the resolutique. It is the stuff of daily office gossip and bureaucratic game-playing: who is "up" or "in", who is "down" or "out", and who successfully did what to whom, and the success or failure of any actions in revenge. It typically interfaces with unethical operations, whether minor or major, possibly even criminal in nature -- a form of "black economy". These rarely ever figures in any reporting of reasons for the problematic performance of a collective endeavour. It is "real" but "implicit" -- and may be the "only game in town".

  - engagement in any collective endeavour is accompanied by the role it plays in the personal and collective development of those involved, their learning processes, their maturation processes, and those through which their sense of self-esteem is articulated. These considerations may totally determine responses to strategic opportunities and necessities. Again these are not the subject of explicit formal discussion but are noted in corridor gossip regarding the arrogance or driving status needs of collaborators, or the obsession with making a mark and ensuring a historic legacy. Again it is only too "real" to those driven by this dimension, but may be so "implicit" in decision-making as to be completely disguised. Again it can be a primary attractor, irrespective of what is presented as the desirable outcome of a resolutique towards which all effort is purportedly directed. Function of this attractor is only too evident in leaders with a tendency to megalomania but may be as important with those struggling more discreetly for self-esteem and recognition.

Both these attractors are associated with complex patterns of denial. Although well-recognized by any with experience in complex institutions, or even community initiatives, they cannot be "put on the table". For this reason they cannot be recognized in the design of projects, thus preventing any provision for corrective and counter-acting measures. However these phenomena are of fundamental significance in ensuring deviance from the achieving any movement from problematique to resolutique.

**Problematique**: This term has been given prominence by the Club of Rome as the configuration of problems for which a strategic response is sought through appropriate analysis. It is presented in the above diagram as the repulsor driving humanity out of the many particular conditions in that configuration (hunger, disease, ignorance, homelessness, etc.). However it may also be understood, as noted above, as the pattern of habitual behaviours that are sufficiently attractive -- as addictions -- to resist any change to another condition, however credibly it is promised and whatever the threat. The phenomenon of smoking by well-informed members of the medical profession offers a powerful example of the operation of such an attractor.

Clarifying the extent and complexity of the problematique has been the preoccupation of the World Problems Project, initiated in 1972 -- partly in reaction to the particular focus (see methodological comment) of the original report to the Club of Rome (Limits to Growth, 1972). The project notably profiled problems variously "imagined" to exist by distinct international constituencies, irrespective of alternative perspectives included that were claimed to have a more "realistic" focus.

The above diagram positions the problematique as the focus of the undesirable conditions that might be considered as the significance of the lower-left quadrant. However it is important to recognize the extent to which the problematic nature of this quadrant may be contested. For any such judgement reflects profound misunderstanding of the extent to which "we have never had it so good". Pressures for change may well be rejected because of the manner in which the current condition (exemplified by the lower-left quadrant) is what should be preserved.

**Resolutique**: This term has also been given prominence by the Club of Rome in a report for its Council (see Alexander King and
Bertrand Schneider, *The First Global Revolution*, 1992) -- as the configuration of strategic initiatives through which progress to a preferred condition of humanity could be achieved (see methodological comment). It may usefully also be considered to include the strategic initiatives through which any more desirable condition is sustained. As with piloting a helicopter, the pilot has to continue to use the piloting skills to maintain the vehicle at Location B having travelled there from Location A. It is as yet unproven that B is any more stable than A. As is said of democracy, one must continue to struggle to preserve it. It is effectively a meta-stable condition.

Clarifying the extent and complexity of the resolutique has been the focus of the Global Strategies Project (from 1984), which notably endeavoured to identify the specific relations between the many problems forming the problematique and the many specific strategies forming the resolutique. The project encompassed strategies variously "imagined" to be appropriate by distinct international constituencies, irrespective of the alternative strategies included that claimed to have a more "realistic" focus.

The resolutique is presented above as the focus of progress towards a more desirable condition. However, as implied by the remarks concerning the problematique, any proposed changes to conditions claimed to be more desirable are readily contested and framed as illusory and misleading. Strategies advocated by some may be understood as intrinsically problematic by others.

Especially interesting is that any movement from the lower-left to the upper-right quadrant, namely the outcome of any collective project, is readily subject to every variety of spin -- claims that objectives have been achieved or contesting the reality of that achievement. It is in this quadrant that views are articulated (and rationalized) regarding such typical phenomena as the huge cost overruns (or disastrous failures) of those mega-projects to which most resources have been allocated. A high percentage of major projects are subject to such overruns as has been recently noted in the UK. As a consequence the promised delivery of any desirable change through appropriate strategies is legitimately subject to challenge.

"Narrow is the strategic gap": The structure of the diagram endeavours to make clear how narrow may be the strategic gap between the distractants along the way from the lower-left quadrant to the upper-right quadrant -- irrespective of the way that either of these conditions is framed.

It is the archetypal strategic challenge of navigating between Scylla and Charybdis.

**Significance of the conventional axes:** The processes associated with the functioning of the attractors in the upper-left and lower-right quadrants suggest that any movement from the lower-left to the upper-right will be pulled off course into the domain of either attractor. The question is what is it that can be fruitfully understood as being pulled off course and how does this enable significance to be attached to the conventional axes rather than the diagonals characteristic of the complex plane.

From a strategic perspective, any endeavour to shift along the axis towards that of the resolutique might be said to involve two fundamental processes:

- **mobilization of external resources:** these are what might be understood as the tangibles of any enterprise, namely people, materiel (equipment, etc), etc. Arguably this process could be associated with the horizontal axis, namely increasing mobilization of resources is associated with displacement from left to right along that axis.

- **mobilization of internal resources:** these are the subtler resources associated with motivation, conceptual and strategic coherence, identification with goal, offering people an opportunity to grow and a sense of doing so. Arguably this process could be associated with the vertical axis, namely increasing engagement and commitment of people is associated with displacement from bottom to top along that axis.

The diagram then becomes interesting because of the "subversion" of the movement horizontally from left to right by the intervention of the game-playing attractor in the upper-left quadrant. The necessary mobilization is displaced into game-playing and is not available for appropriate support of the resolutique. Personal engagement and empowerment is focused on the game-playing attractor.

Similarly the empowerment associated with movement along the vertical axis is "subverted" by the operation of internalization of the psychodrama in support of some form of psychic sense of fulfillment. Again the necessary engagement is effectively displaced into accumulation of tangibles -- along the horizontal axis. This deprives any strategic initiative of the kinds of psychological engagement required for appropriate support of the resolutique. This point has been notably made by Stanislav Grof (*The Current Global Crisis and the Future of Humanity: a transpersonal perspective*, 2007) who argues that: The problems that stand in the way are not of an economical or technological nature; their deepest sources lie inside the human personality. Unfortunately the argument is also paradoxically and self-referentially applicable to the worldview of those who advance it! (cf James Hillman and Michael Ventura, *We've Had a Hundred Years of Psychotherapy -- And the World's Getting Worse*, 1992).

**Concluding comment**

**Configuring strategic dilemmas:** The interplay of real and imaginary in the title of this exploration highlights a degree of requisite "realism" in responding to the "imaginal" challenge of appropriate social transformation confronted by strategic dilemmas. The fruitful configuration of these dilemmas was the primary preoccupation of the Intersectoral Dialogue instigated by Ashok Khosla for the International Facilitating Committee for the Independent Sectors in the UNCED process on the occasion of the Earth Summit (*Configuring strategic dilemmas in intersectoral dialogue; Configuring Globally and Contending Locally: shaping the global network of local bargains by decoding and mapping Earth Summit inter-sectoral issues, Rio de Janeiro, 1992)*.

**Potential for further elaboration:** Whilst the primary purpose of this exploration has been to juxtapose various processes, the introduction of the real/imaginary dimension (respectful of the complexity of non-linear psychodynamics) suggests an opportunity for further development.
Aspects of this complex interplay have been the focus of various earlier reflections (Psychology of Sustainability: Embodying cyclic environmental processes, 2002; Walking Elven Pathways: enactivating the pattern that connects, 2006; Climbing Elven Stairways: DNA as a macroscopic metaphor of polarized psychodynamics, 2007; Reframing Sustainable Sources of Energy for the Future: the vital role of psychosocial variants, 2006; Enactivating a Cognitive Fusion Reactor: Imaginal Transformation of Energy Resourcing (ITER-8), 2006).

**Strategic "unconsciousness"**: The role of the upper-left and lower-right quadrants clearly calls for better understanding to determine how it can be usefully designed into initiatives with greater hope of successful -- and sustainable -- outcomes. The degree of denial with which they are associated -- in a strategic "shadow" zone -- is clearly unhealthy in some ways, whatever value it has in others (cf Global Strategic Implications of the "Unsaid", 2003).

**Mirroring**: The diagram highlights a degree of symmetry and mirroring. The extent to which attractors can also function, or be experienced, as repulsors would seem to merit further exploration. How is it, for example, that:

- people "get tired" of game-playing -- so that that attractor flips into being a repulsor?
- people challenge the quality of their engagement with "psychodramas" nourishing psychic needs that ultimately do not seem to enhance their self-esteem or the esteem in which they are held by others -- so that that attractor flips into being a repulsor?

**Implications of the complex plane**: Given the structure of the above diagram, there would also appear to be interesting ways of associating any further exploration with previous endeavours to derive psychosocial significance from the complex plane in terms of the Mandelbrot set (Sustainability through the Dynamics of Strategic Dilemmas in the light of the coherence and visual form of the Mandelbrot set, 2005; Psycho-social Significance of the Mandelbrot Set: a sustainable boundary between chaos and order, 2005). Of particular interest was the effort to relate this to earlier explorations of the coaction cardioid (Cardioid Attractor Fundamental to Sustainability: 8 transactional games forming the heart of sustainable relationship, 2005) -- to which the structure of the above diagram might be related.

**Enantiodromia**: This process, highlighted by cultural historian William Irwin Thompson (From Nation to Emanation: Planetary Culture and World Governance, 1982) in relation to four "cultural ecologies" (which merit comparison with Figure 1), concerns the tendency of many phenomena to turn into an opposite condition or flip-flip over time. The mirroring in Figure 1 suggests the possibility of navigating "between Scylla and Charybdis" in the light of a better understanding of enantiodromia (Psychosocial Energy from Polarization within a Cyclic Pattern of Enantiodromia, 2007; Patterns of Alternation: toward an enantiomorphic policy) and the implications for a subtler mode of collective endeavour (Consciously Self-reflective Global Initiatives: Renaissance zones, complex adaptive systems, and third order organizations, 2007) with a higher order capacity to address the complex of strategic questions. Necessarily this should be enabled by more powerful aids to comprehension (Generating a Million Questions from UIA Databases: Problems, Strategies, Values, 2006; Preliminary NetMap Studies of Databases on Questions, World Problems, Global Strategies, and Values, 2006).

**Further elaboration of Figure 1**: With the axes rotated 45 degrees to the left, Figure 1 (above) might be usefully elaborated into a more complex cognitive "holding pattern" (Figure 2 below) as a means of interrelating more processes associated with the mirroring of real/imaginary, explicit/implicit, certainty/uncertainty, externalized/internalized, etc. Four attractor/repulsors are indicated here: problematique, resolutique, imaginatique and irresolutique (game-playing). Four "axes" are used whose extremes are indicative of conditions that might be distinguished in terms of positive/negative, fruitful/unfruitful or negentropic/ entropic.

The arrows between axial segments are indicative of conditions associated with particular attractor/repulsors but are especially interesting in the manner in which they interlock the "dimensions" of the figure by relating qualities of non-proximate attractor/repulsors.

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**Figure 2: Interrelating problematique, resolutique, "imaginatique" and "irresolutique" (tentative)**

The structure and labels can be most fruitfully understood as evoking "questions" rather
Positioning Figure 2 within a circle offers a possible reminder that the figure might be a view of a fractal in that:

- each of the four attractor/repulsors (indicated by circles) might themselves be understood as having "internal" characteristics that could be similarly distinguished, namely the "resolutique" might itself have aspects analogous to the problematique, to the imaginatique and to the irresolutique (game-playing)

- the achievement of a viable resolutique might be usefully understood as providing a template in which the same pattern might then constitute a new challenge but of a higher order -- hence the pointer "beyond the resolutique" in Figure 2 to higher order games (cf James P Carse, *Finite and Infinite Games: a vision of life as play and possibility*, 1986) and to higher order questions (*Engaging with Questions of Higher Order: cognitive vigilance required for higher degrees of twistedness*, 2004).

- the four-fold pattern might be understood as seen from a fifth contextual perspective, implied by the circumferential circle. This suggests the possibility of shifting to another view or lens (through any of the five), each thereby offering variants of a fourfold pattern. This would then be potentially consistent with "5-element" theories, such as the Wu Xing of Chinese culture. Such an approach would also be consistent with that promoted by Magoroh Maruyama (*Polycocular Vision or Subunderstanding? Organization Studies, 25, 2004, pp. 467-480*). In polycocular vision, the differences between several images enable detection of invisible dimensions, which cannot be obtained by adding several images. This "perspective" contrasts with the cyclopean monocular vision -- often designed to supercede all others and to deny any complementary insights they may offer (cf *Cyclopean Vision vs Poly-sensual Engagement*, 2006).

The extreme conditions on each "axis" offer a way of holding insights into various forms of "overshoot" which may reduce comprehension of the pattern to one of lower order.

**Imaginatique and irresolutique**

There terms were introduced, as follows, as two concluding points in the above-mentioned *methodological comment* on the Club of Rome report on the *First Global Revolution* (1991):

11. Imaginatique: Efforts to provide a unifying framework have long been seen as increasingly suspect and as vehicles for hidden and suspect agendas. The report itself recognizes the need for innovation in language and approach. Many reports call for imagination, and new thinking. There is, therefore, a case for an "imaginatique" to match the resolutique. Such an imaginatique would be the totality of potential patterns on which the imagination can draw to order conceptual and organizational initiatives. Clearly simplistic orderings of integrative concepts, values and strategic initiatives are no longer adequate. They are often inherently boring. There is a need to integrate into such an imaginatique the audio-visual patterns which resonate most effectively with the world of many. The multi-media computer innovations, currently evoking widespread enthusiasm, need to be harnessed to that end, creating a richer representational bridge between the conceptual and the strategic -- and the possibility of a new global "identique".

12. Irresolutique: The "shadow" of the resolutique is the irresolutique. Bosnia is but the most dramatic definition of its nature. Whilst the resolutique may indeed be a "global approach at every level of societies within a global perspective to interactive solutions destined to solve problems" (p. 132), as a new enabling methodology, it also carries the challenge of resolve, resolution and political will -- and irresolution as the basic lack thereof.

The subtle possibilities of transforming the irresolutique into the resolutique need to be more effectively understood. Properly framed this may be more a matter of "guiding the canoe" than "pushing the river" -- an exercise in strategic aikido. It is more powerful imagery which could prove the best catalyst for such reframing, both amongst elites and amongst the wider public, and as a vehicle for the transfer of insights between them. The information tools generated by industrial society need to be adapted to capture insight, and to carry and present the wisdom of all ages, in a manner directly relevant to the strategy empowering exercise required at all levels of society.

Given the suggested emergent significance of a global "identique", this might well also be understood as an attractor/repulsor -- a fifth. This would confirm the value of the circumferential circle introduced into Figure 2 (cf *Experimental Articulation of Collective Identity -- through a dynamic system of metaphors*, 1991). The associated processes might be fruitfully related to those discussed by Peter Senge (*The Fifth Discipline: the art and practice of the learning organization*, 1990).

Indicative efforts at systematic exploration of the imaginatique and the irresolutique might be understood as associated with the following:

- **imaginatique**: A wide range of approaches to (possibly subjective) understandings of human development and related modes of awareness were profiled in the *Human Development Project*. This was partially in accordance with recognition of non-material aspects of human development acknowledged in 1975 by Aurelio Pecci as Director of the Club of Rome [more]. The Club of Rome subsequently commissioned a third generation report (Ervin Laszlo, *Goals for Mankind: Report to the Club of Rome on the New Horizons of Global Community, 1977*) to focus on the social, psychological, and cultural inner limits which could give
positive direction to human aspirations. This dealt explicitly with human factors and investigated those ethical commitments, world views and value judgements which could lead beyond perennial crises toward a healthier state of global human society. This highlights the intimate relationship of the imaginative with "values", notably as explored in the Human Values Project in relation to understandings of "wisdom" (cf Wisdom and requisite variety). This was a theme highlighted by the Club of Rome in a collective investigation for UNESCO entitled In Search of a Wisdom for the World: the role of ethical values in education (1987). The Human Values Project explored systematically the specific links between individual "values", the "problems" they rendered detectable, and the "strategies" for which they provided a rationale.

- **irresolutique**: Particular efforts have been devoted to systematic study of the psychodynamics of game-playing, most notably through the transactional analysis initiated by Eric Berne (Games People Play, 1980). A further attempt is discussed separately (Cardioid Attractor Fundamental to Sustainability: 8 transactional games forming the heart of sustainable relationship, 2005; see Figure 3c in annex). But perhaps of greater significance are the systematic efforts associated with military strategy, notably the classical studies of Sun Tzu (The Art of War), of Miyamoto Musashi (The Book of Five Rings) and of Gao Yuan (Lure the Tiger out of the Mountains: the thirty-six strategems of ancient China) -- whose significance was explored in the Transformative Approaches Project.

Kathryn A. McDermott (Barriers to Large-Scale Success of Models for Urban School Reform, Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, 2000) reviews the challenge from earlier perceptions that implementation of any solution typically required avoidance of politics and bureaucratic gameplaying. In relation to politic-bureaucratic game-playing, Derick W. Brinkerhoff (Democratic Governance and Sectoral Policy Reform: tracing kinkages and exploring synergies, World Development, 2000) notes the difficult dilemma of how to avoid simply substituting one set of closed and clientelist relations for another. Paula D. Gordon (The Ethics Map: a values-based approach to defining ethics and integrity in the public service, 2007) helpfully distinguishes game-playing in terms of a transition through three conditions:

- no ethics: encouraging or taking part in bureaucratic gameplaying for individual or bureaucratic gain
- value neutral or relative ethics (indifference to value-based ethics): refining the rules of the game along scientifically-oriented lines, science being defined as the divorcing of science, rationality, and empiricism from human values and concerns
- value-based ethics: discouraging or not taking part in bureaucratic game playing for individual or bureaucratic gain

The above configuration merits further reflection in the light of the extensive potential further development by Robert Daoust (Map for an Algonomic Pain Management, 2009), combining several other mapping approaches, including that of the I Ching.

### Annex (Afterthoughts)

**In quest of mnemonic catalysts for comprehension of complex psychosocial dynamics**

The arguments for identifying the following mnemonic aids were articulated for a meeting on Forms of Presentation (Geneva, 1980) of the Goals. Processes and Indicators Development project of the United Nations University (Minding the Future: thought experiment on presenting new information, 1980). It is to be expected that different aids would appeal, or not, to different people to a different degree. The items included in the separate Annex are therefore necessarily indicative of possibilities rather than definitive. The principal criterion is the ability to facilitate understanding.

- Fish-pond dynamics | WH-questions and non-linear dynamics | Martial arts | Symbol systems | Resilience | Consilience | Five-fold pattern | Beyond two-dimensional representations | Möbius transformations | Catastrophe revisited
- Configuring catastrophes | Wu Xìng (5-element theory) revisited | 4-wheeled drive vehicle | Musical epistemology | Optical systems | "Dual-use" technologies

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