



laetus in praesens

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23rd October 2011 | Draft

Map of Systemic Interdependencies None Dares Name

12-fold challenge of global life and death

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Produced on the occasion of the [world population having reached 7 billion](#) and of publication of the [The State of World Population 2011](#) by the [United Nations Population Fund](#).

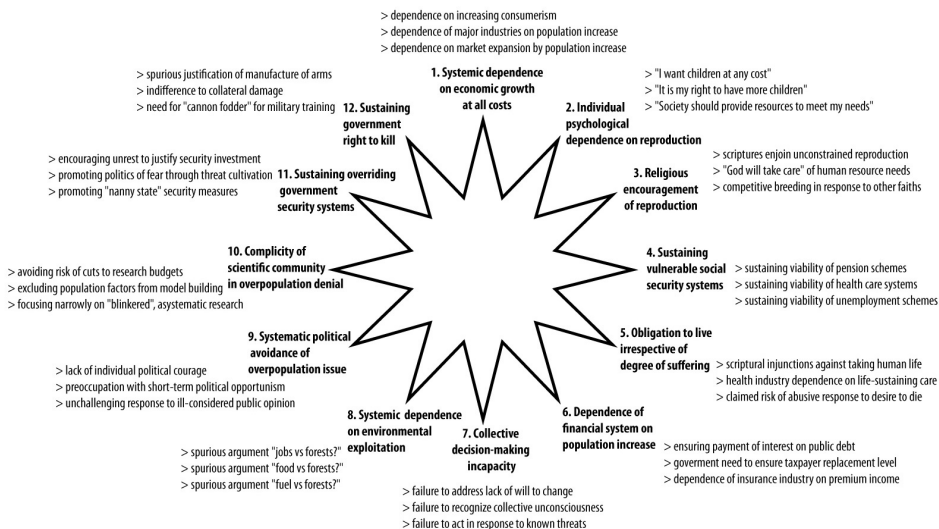
-- coincidental with a historic summit on the [European sovereign debt crisis](#) to "save Greece", "save Europe" and "save the world economy"

Mapping exercise

The exercise follows previous explorations ([Mapping the Global Underground](#), 2010; [Mind Map of Global Civilizational Collapse: why nothing is happening in response to global challenges](#), 2011). As in those cases, this is a partial response to the tendency of conventional strategic analysis to focus primarily on less controversial issues -- typically structured so as to omit any recognition of issues arising from the demonstrable track record of inability to "deliver" remedies to strategic challenges ([Recognizing the Psychosocial Boundaries of Remedial Action](#), 2009). This can be understood as a pattern of denial -- as exhibited at the [United Nations Climate Change Conference \(United Nations Overpopulation Denial Conference](#), 2009).

First iteration: As a *tentative exercise*, the following "map" is derived from the table which follows it, **without** considering any possible systemic relationships between the "functions" indicated. Those relationships are then considered in the [second iteration](#) which follows thereafter. The decision was made to identify 12 "functions" in the light of arguments previously made ([Eliciting a 12-fold Pattern of Generic Operational Insights: Recognition of memory constraints on collective strategic comprehension](#), 2011). Indicative sub-functions were then clustered within each. A [commentary](#) follows thereafter.

Mapping systemic interdependencies readily neglected



The **unordered** elements of the above "map" are those listed in the following table. These clearly invite refinement although weaknesses do not invalidate the possible integrative value of this approach. Indeed its very simplicity is an invitation to such refinement.

| Tabulation of systemic dependencies | |
|---|---|
| 1. Systemic dependence on economic growth at all costs | 7. Collective decision-making incapacity |
| | 1. failure to address lack of will to change |

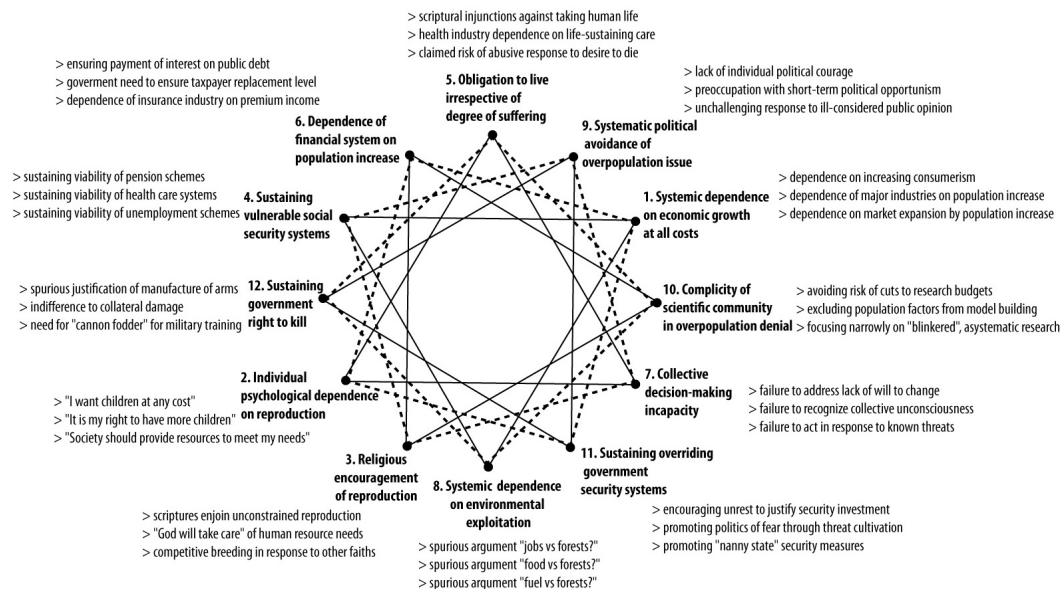
| | |
|--|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. dependence on increasing consumerism 2. dependence of major industries on population increase 3. dependence on market expansion by population increase <p>2. Individual psychological dependence on reproduction</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. "I want children at any cost" 2. "It is my right to have more children" 3. "Society should provide resources to meet my family's needs" <p>3. Religious encouragement of reproduction</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. scriptures enjoin unconstrained reproduction 2. "God will take care" of human resource needs 3. competitive breeding in response to other faiths <p>4. Sustaining vulnerable social security systems</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. sustaining viability of pension schemes 2. sustaining viability of health care systems 3. sustaining viability of unemployment schemes <p>5. Obligation to live irrespective of degree of suffering</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. scriptural injunctions against taking human life 2. health industry dependence on prolonged life-sustaining care 3. claimed risk of abusive response to desire to die <p>6. Dependence of financial system on population increase</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. ensuring payment of interest on public debt 2. government need to ensure taxpayer replacement level 3. dependence of insurance industry on premium income | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. failure to recognize collective unconsciousness 3. failure to act in response to known threats <p>8. Systemic dependence on environmental exploitation</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. spurious argument "jobs vs forests?" 2. spurious argument "food vs forests?" 3. spurious argument "fuel vs forests?" <p>9. Systematic political avoidance of overpopulation issue</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. lack of individual political courage 2. preoccupation with short-term political opportunism 3. unchallenging response to ill-considered public opinion <p>10. Complicity of scientific community in overpopulation denial</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. avoiding risk of cuts to research budgets 2. excluding population factors from model building 3. focusing narrowly on "blinkered", asystematic research <p>11. Sustaining overriding government security systems</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. encouraging unrest to justify security investment 2. promoting politics of fear through threat cultivation 3. promoting "nanny state" security measures <p>12. Sustaining government right to kill</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. spurious justification of manufacture of arms 2. indifference to collateral damage 3. need for "cannon fodder" for military training |
|--|---|

Second iteration: The question is how to consider the possible systemic relationships between these "functions", if only to provide mnemonic cues as previously argued (*Eliciting a 12-fold Pattern of Generic Operational Insights: Recognition of memory constraints on collective strategic comprehension*, 2011). As discussed there, a 3x4 schema was used here to explore a potentially meaningful distribution of the "functions". This involved distributing the 12 items into that framework and then moving them to elicit a degree of possible significance to the rows and the columns -- effectively "tuning" the matrix, according to a process previously advocated (*Tuning a Periodic Table of Religions, Epistemologies and Spirituality: including the sciences and other belief systems*, 2007). The necessarily tentative result is as follows.

| Interrelating forms of commitment | | | | |
|--|--|--|---|--|
| | "Psychosocial commitment" | "Ideological commitment to sustaining confidence" | "Unthinking systemic dependence on vulnerable systems" | "Commitment to effective control" |
| "Existential engagement in sustaining population levels" | Obligation to live irrespective of degree of suffering (5) | Complicity of scientific community in overpopulation denial (10) | Systemic dependence on environmental exploitation (8) | Sustaining government right to kill (12) |
| "Perverse complicity in population increase" | Collective decision-making incapacity (7) | Religious encouragement of reproduction (3) | Sustaining vulnerable social security systems (4) | Systematic political avoidance of overpopulation issue (9) |
| "Dependence on population increase" | Individual psychological dependence on reproduction (2) | Dependence of financial system on population increase (6) | Systemic dependence on economic growth at all costs (1) | Sustaining overriding government security systems (11) |

These items can now be distributed into a new version of the "map" such as to highlight these tentative relationships for mnemonic purposes. The numbering of the items is as before. In both the above tables and the map there is no immediate effort to stress cause/effect relationships between the functions. The implication is rather that the elements in the sets (whether in rows or columns) have a degree of "co-dependency" -- perhaps to be understood as a "resonant mutuality".

Systemic interrelationships reconfigured for mnemonic purposes



Comment

This tentative mapping exercise is a further effort to highlight what is typically designed out of political and academic agendas. **The result presented is probably less significant than the approach and the opportunity that it offers to others to identify core issues which tend to get designed off the agenda** -- and to explore their interrelationships. In other words it can be understood as an exploration of patterning to elicit significance. The clusters identified above can be refined, reframed and alternatives substituted. The attribution to rows and columns can be variously rethought, as with the relative positions of the rows and/or the columns -- somewhat as with the challenge of a [Rubik's Cube](#).

"Hot potatoes" The current strategic style may be caricatured as designing "around" political "hot potatoes" -- as argued separately (*Lipoproblems: Developing a Strategy Omitting a Key Problem*, 2009). Under the current conditions in which politics are increasingly associated with different forms of faith-based governance, the inability to consider and refine maps such as that above place considerable responsibility for current crises of governance on religion, as previously argued (*Root Irresponsibility for Major World Problems*, 2007). The incapacity of science to engage fruitfully with alternative worldviews -- including those within "science" itself -- may be understood as exacerbating the situation (*Guidelines for Critical Dialogue between Worldviews*, 2006; *End of Science: the death knell as sounded by the Royal Society*, 2008).

Bluewashing by the UN? The above exercise was undertaken on the occasion of the much-publicized announcement of the [world population having reached 7 billion](#) and of publication of the *The State of World Population 2011* produced by the Information and External Relations Division of UNFPA, the [United Nations Population Fund](#). It states:

How did we become so many? How large a number can our Earth sustain? These are important questions, but perhaps not the right ones for our times. When we look only at the big number, we risk being overwhelmed and losing sight of new opportunities to make life better for everyone in the future. So instead of asking questions like, "Are we too many?" we should instead be asking, "What can I do to make our world better?" or, "What can we do to transform our growing cities into forces for sustainability?"

This report makes the case that with planning and the right investments in people now-to empower them to make choices that are not only good for themselves but for our global commons-our world of 7 billion can have thriving, sustainable cities, productive labour forces that can fuel economic growth, youth populations that contribute to the well-being of economies and societies, and a generation of older people who are healthy and actively engaged in the social and economic affairs of their communities....

Our record population size can be viewed in many ways as a success for humanity: People are living longer, healthier lives...

In many parts of the developing world, where population growth is outpacing economic growth, the need for reproductive health services, especially family planning, remains great. The attainment of a stable population is a sine qua non for accelerated, planned economic growth and development.

The report is a technical delight to read. It is an example of the expertise of UN public relations in obscuring issues through skillful presentation and "positive" framing (Barbara Ehrenreich, *Smile Or Die: how positive thinking fooled America and the world*, 2010).

. **The report skillfully avoids addressing the dynamics which inhibit the decision-making and investment of the kind it assumes should be forthcoming in the light of its arguments.** This highlighted by the fact that the last UN [International Conference on Population and Development](#) was held in 1994, and no other is planned. None of those seeking to keep "population" off the international agenda could fail to appreciate the bland nature of the document.

Promoting systematic ignorance: The report is necessarily unable to highlight or address the problematic issues surrounding

"population" and the complex of dynamics which prevent the matter being debated effectively -- or even mapping out the positions and the arguments which prevent the emergence of new understandings. The focus is on "safe" estimates of demographic estimates and assumptions relating to reduction in fertility despite its acknowledgement:

But despite global fertility declines, about 80 million people are added to the world each year, a number roughly equivalent to the population of Germany or Ethiopia.

This at a time when there are recognized critical shortages of water, food, housing, and energy -- and ever increasing environmental degradation -- with few remedial prospects. The report is effectively an exercise in "hope-mongering" at a time when many have good reason not to give credibility to such arguments (*Credibility Crunch engendered by Hope-mongering: "Credit crunch" focus as symptom of a dangerous mindset*, 2008; *Abuse of Faith in Governance: Mystery of the Unasked Question*, 2009).

The blithe naivety with which addition of 80 million a year to the world population is considered is evident in the debate and criticism regarding the historic summit on the [European sovereign debt crisis](#) (Brussels, October 2011) to "save Greece", to "save Europe" and to "save the world economy". Despite evident inability to foresee or manage an emerging global crisis over the previous decade, it is readily assumed that the strategic skills will be adequate to the challenges of the cumulative addition of such numbers (*Ungovernability of Sustainable Global Democracy? Towards engaging appropriately with time*, 2011).

This is already exemplified by "unraveling" of the European agreement as economists question the so-called comprehensive settlement and the lack of details (David Gow, *EU officials rush to hold bailout deal together as flaws emerge*, *The Guardian*, 27 October 2011). Is it possible that the quest for global agreement on any strategy is itself a delusion? (*The Consensus Delusion: mysterious attractor undermining global civilization as currently imagined*, 2011).

Through a pattern of denial and blame-gaming, it has not proven possible to identify responsibilities for the emergence of "the crisis" -- now effectively reframed as an "Act of God" beyond human control. That "God" or his delegates may act again, and ever more frequently, is ignored (James Lovelock, *The Revenge of Gaia*, 2006). In the absence of effective governance, Gaia is thus called upon to act as the "governor of last resort", however painful this tends to be (*Emergence of a Global Misleadership Council: misleading as vital to governance of the future?* 2007).

Asystemic analysis: Under the headings *Words are cheap...but trust is nowhere to be found*, *The Economist* leader comments on the European Summit (*Economic Crisis: Europe's Rescue Plan*, 29 October 2011):

Yet in the light of day, the holes in the rescue plan are plain to see. The scheme is confused and unconvincing. Confused, because its financial engineering is too clever by half and vulnerable to unintended consequences. Unconvincing, because too many details are missing and the scheme at its core is not up to the job of safeguarding the euro.... As it is, this deal at best fails to solve the euro crisis; at worst it may even make it worse. As the shortcomings of each component become clear, investors' fears will surely return, bond yields will rise and banks' funding problems will worsen. Yet again, disaster will loom.

The issue of **unchecked population increase is never mentioned in relation to the European sovereign debt crisis** -- or to other current global crises -- except by inference and euphemism ("increasing demand") in the face of shortage of resources, rising unemployment, human impact on the environment, breakdown of social security systems, and the like. And yet **each of these pressures increases annually, thereby exacerbating the instability of the global system and undermining the possibility of effective governance.**

Naively it would seem, the government of every nation focuses on the means by which it will ensure increased competitiveness to survive the economic crises of the future -- ignoring the fact that competitive success necessarily implies competitive losers who must seek other means to survive in a highly competitive environment, whether or not those "means" follow the rules of the game in which they have lost. At the time of writing, the World Economic Forum and OECD have launched the *Arab World Competitiveness Report 2011-2012*. This notes that 25 million new jobs will be required over the next decade in the region to maintain current unemployment levels. Simultaneously, the International Labour Organisation predicts a requirement for 80 million jobs worldwide in the next two years to return to pre-crisis employment rates (*World of Work Report 2011*). However it recognizes that the recent slowdown in growth suggests that the world economy is likely to create only half of the jobs needed -- with the predictable consequences for social unrest.

The challenge of population increase is readily and conveniently ignored by all authorities -- as exemplified by the UNFPA report. Curiously simulations of the systemic interdependencies (and the manner in which they are ignored or reframed) -- with a view to envisaging, communicating and testing possible remedies -- are themselves deprecated. This has been noted with respect to the Club of Rome infinitive by Graham Turner (*A Comparison of the Limits to Growth with Thirty Years of Reality*, CSIRO, 2007).

The "blinking" of strategic analysis is never factored into policy formulation, as some have variously noted (Karen A. Cerulo, *Never Saw It Coming: cultural challenges to envisioning the worst*, 2006; Joshua Cooper Ramo, *The Age of the Unthinkable: why the New World Disorder constantly surprises us and what we can do about it*, 2009; Nassim Nicholas Taleb, *The Black Swan: the impact of the highly improbable*, 2007).

Challenge of psychoactive hazards: There is a need to challenge the "cognitive cocoon" -- or "comfort zone" -- typically cultivated by United Nations reporting with the active complicity of Member States and the world's religions. This calls for a degree of reflection on the population debate as a "hot potato", meriting recognition as such -- irrespective of the possibility of consensus on any remedial initiative (*Overpopulation Debate as a Psychosocial Hazard: development of safety guidelines from handling other hazardous materials*, 2009).

References

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