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Reframing the Art of Non-Decision-Making

Conceptual gerrymandering on a global scale

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Introduction

It has become strikingly evident that most major international conferences and summits have become exercises in non-decision-making. Indeed, as encouraged by "question avoidance", decision avoidance has become an art form in its own right (*Question Avoidance, Evasion, Aversion and Phobia: why we are unable to escape from traps*, 2006).

The need to review a document of 20 years past, and the framing it offered then, has become even more evident in the light of a complex of issues with which the international community is variously faced. Examples include the incoherence of decision-making with regard to migration, in a period when those attracting the refugees tend to be the major producers of weaponry engendering the claims for asylum, as separately argued (*Evaluating the Grossness of Gross Domestic Product: Refugees Per Kiloton (RPK) as a missing indicator?* 2015).

Equally striking is the inability to respond effectively to increasing levels of urban violence and petty crime (*Global Incomprehension of Increasing Violence: matching incapacity to question the reason why*, 2016). This is curiously complemented by use of human rights provisions to constrain decision-making against disruption of civil society -- matched by increasing disassociation from such provisions (*Cultivating the Myth of Human Equality: ignoring complicity in the contradictions thereby engendered*, 2016).

The unresolved issues of **income inequality** have been highlighted by the chairman of the corporation implicated in a worldwide **emissions scandal** -- a corporation which has been an icon of the **UN Global Compact** (*Former Volkswagen Chief Martin Winterkorn Could Receive €60m Payoff*, *Wall Street Journal*, 24 September 2015). Similar inability to make systemic connections ("to connect the dots") is evident in countries proudly announcing their increased automobile sales at a time when their major cities are obliged to take extreme measures with respect to their use because of air pollution -- irrespective of any commitments to issues of climate change.

Reference is increasingly made to the need for "**joined-up thinking**", and the failure to engage in it (Simon Caulkin, *Why things fell apart for joined-up thinking*, *The Guardian*, 26 February 2006). This is perhaps further exemplified by the strange complementarity between the reliance on the **fiat money** created for quantitative easing and the deprecation of **fake news** seemingly essential to governance in a post-truth era.

In 1997 the clearest examples of such difficulties were provided by the **United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development** ("Rio+5"), the **Group of Seven - "plus-a-half"** (Denver), and the major European Union conference on institutional reform (Amsterdam). There is little difficulty in citing equivalent examples from earlier years -- of which the responses to the crisis in Bosnia are possibly the most painful. Arguably the decision-making capacity of global governance has however deteriorated significantly over two decades, as

evidenced by the unforeseen rise of populism challenging conventional modalities.

Much intellectual effort has gone into the process of "decision-making". There are libraries of books and documents on the matter. Little attention has however been devoted to non-decision-making processes -- the process of not deciding. As possibly the prime mode of response of the [international community](#), it merits some attention if it is not to be challenged otherwise (*International Community as God or Sorcerer's Apprentice? Strategic chaos in the absence of an interlocking temporal pattern of longer-term cyclic processes*, 2015).

In the reframing of the earlier focus endeavoured here, the concern is with identifying new ways of thinking about the "art" of non-decision-making -- whether through metaphor or otherwise. These are presented in sections below, appended to those of the earlier argument. Rather than the satirical reference to "art" in the earlier argument, the question addressed in this "reframing" is whether there are indeed subtler dimensions to the coherence of that process which merit consideration, most probably in aesthetic terms, as more recently argued (*Meaningful Configuration Engendered only by Tacit Aesthetic Entanglement*, 2016).

The hidden door to global transformation may well be "through" that to which attention is least accorded. As with many forms of creativity, the art of change may prove to be subject to strangely aesthetic constraints -- unrelated to conscious decision-making. This would seem to be consistent with the level of attention now given to the surreal as "*marked by the intense irrational reality of a dream*" (*'Surreal' declared Merriam-Webster's 2016 word of the year*, Reuters, 22 December 2016).

Some basic practices in non-decision-making

1. **Stress positive achievements** : It is essential to use the full panoply of public relations skills to stress the positive achievements of an international community initiative - no matter how insignificant they may be, or how unrelated to the basic challenge. For example one of the five 'solid' achievements claimed by negotiator Richard Holbrooke, during an August 1997 visit to Bosnia, was to have ensured a three digit telephone code for the country. Unfortunately, in the case of the G7 Summits and others, journalists have become increasingly sceptical about the lack of significant content in the Final Communiqués -- many regular intergovernmental conferences are no longer considered to be of media interest. The efforts to stress the positive may be taken to such lengths that any critical questioning is rejected. This provides an excellent cover for non-decision-making since minimal, token, cosmetic responses can then be extolled as significant positive achievements.
2. **Exclude critical reporters** : Strong criticism of non-decision-making can however be toned down, and even eliminated, by implying that journalists, and others, who are too critical will not necessarily receive an invitation to the following event. Since for some journalists, this is a direct threat to their career path, this can be very effective. Overt exclusion on this basis is of course not possible, but for the inviting body, it is only necessary to imply that critics may not be invited. A major controversial intervention to the 1999 Davos Forum was simply suppressed from the official report of it -- although journalists commented extensively on it in the media.
3. **Rotation of praise and blame** : It is vital for parties to international initiatives to appear successful, especially to their national constituencies. Basic to the art of non-decision-making is to allow each party to take turns in proposing an initiative in response to a crisis, thus achieving widespread positive recognition. One or more of the other parties must then be prepared to oppose this initiative in some way - thus ensuring that no decision is taken. Other parties can remain neutral during this process. For this process to be viable over a period of time, each party must take turns in proposing initiatives and opposing them. In this way the group can maintain media interest and an impression of getting somewhere, provided individual parties are prepared to weather their turn as 'opposer' and the heavy criticism this may arouse. The advantage of this technique, is that those making proposals do not have to face up to any possibility that these may be accepted. The procedure is therefore risk free. This process is somewhat analogous to price-fixing rings in business in that their existence can be easily denied.
4. **Proposal of solutions based on unacceptable criteria** : In the event of an international crisis, such as the massacres in Rwanda, the party in need may specifically exclude assistance or intervention of a particular kind. It is then possible for those desiring to be seen to be taking an initiative, but unwilling to do so in practice, to gain widespread approval by proposing precisely the form of assistance which has been rejected in advance as unacceptable. This is absolutely risk free for the proposer. The French and Belgian governments have been able to use this technique with great success with respect to the Rwandan crisis.
5. **Focus on monitoring, review and study** : This is a classical technique that is widely used. In the case of any crisis, attention is focused on the need for more information, study and analysis -- in the absence of which appropriate action can naturally not be taken. The impression is created that something is being done through a "study commission" -- indeed a decision of a kind has been made to undertake the study. No action is however taken on the crisis itself. Indeed the period of study may well exceed the period of duration of the crisis. This approach is much appreciated by academic groups who receive scarce funds to engage in the study. This approach was extensively used in relation to the 'Gulf War syndrome' and to the BSE ("mad cow") crisis. It is an easy way of dealing with many environmental issues, since many of the critics earn their living from monitoring-related processes.
6. **Displace attention to reframe the challenge** : In a crisis, as in the Middle East, where two parties are engaged in acts unacceptable to each other, if media attention can be focused on the acts of one, then those of the other can be treated as of little consequence. In the Israeli-Palestinian crisis, the media focus on "terrorist bombing" by Palestinians has successfully obscured the 'settlement building' by Israelis. Israelis are then able to insist that every priority be given to security restrictions on Palestinians as a prerequisite to wider discussions - but without in any way diminishing their ongoing settlement building programme. Since this programme, as a form of structural violence, is a prime cause of continuing Palestinian protest, the

Israelis are able to set up a situation in which nothing will be done about the crisis as a whole. This approach succeeds best when "settlement building" can be framed as a positive, innocent, non-violent activity in no way comparable to 'suicide bombing'.

7. **Celebrate achievements** : Under conditions of effective non-response to pressing issues, much may be achieved by engaging in celebration. Any suitable anniversary may be chosen - let's have a party. Recent examples include the 50th Anniversary of the United Nations, or the forthcoming millennium - although the Olympic Games also serve this function to some extent. By devoting sufficient resources to the celebration, the media are distracted. Critics are marginalized as engaging in 'sour grapes'. If the celebration requires several years planning, then attention can be usefully channelled over that period from other concerns on which action is more difficult.
8. **Scapegoating** : This is the classic technique of imputing inability to act effectively to the actions of some other group. Provided it remains possible to locate or create scapegoats, decision-making can effectively be avoided. This has been extensively practiced in the Northern Ireland crisis.
9. **Claim unproven links** : This approach is used to deny the relationship between two phenomena : acid rain and deforestation, offal reinforced feedstuffs and BSE, etc. It is then possible to avoid decision-making on the 'unproven' causative factor. Scientists can always be found to question the evidence for any link found by some other group of scientists.

The Hidden Art : Category Manipulation

The techniques and examples reviewed above are some of the more visible aspects of the art of non-decision-making. More challenging to detect, comprehend and communicate to others are various forms of category manipulation. Each is easily denied.

1. **Definitional games** : This is the process of defining categories in one way in one document or organizational unit, and then defining them in another way elsewhere or at some later time. Whether deliberately or inadvertently, the United Nations system has, for example, demonstrated great skill in using this technique in framing its approach to 'nongovernmental organizations' and 'civil society' ([see](#)). The art is to use this approach to obscure opportunities or to selectively advance particular strategies. At the same time competing definitions may be used to justify apparently incompatible strategies.
2. **Neglected or repressed categories** : This approach is familiar to those who experience discrimination, whether in terms of race, gender, age, intelligence, class or culture. Women experience exclusion through exclusive reference to the male gender in documents supposedly relevant to both female and male. Unwritten rules may specifically exclude those of a particular ethnic group or class. Non-English speakers, for example, may be handicapped in their access to information. On the occasion of the 1997 World Assembly of Youth (Paris), the Pope refused to meet with non-Catholic youth because in reality the conference was a 'world assembly of Catholic youth'. Skillful neglect of certain categories can ensure that any initiative will be subsequently undermined. Certain approaches to 'unemployment' may be specifically excluded from 'comprehensive reviews' of the challenge at the highest level.
3. **Over-simplification** : This technique is typical of those forcing through an agenda in which it is convenient to exclude categories and especially the relationships between them. A classical example is *Agenda 21*, whose chapter and paragraph structure avoids any recognition of relationship between the included elements, even though these necessarily have functional relations to each other. Many declarations of principles and ethical charters follow this pattern. This is commonly justified by the necessity to render the text simple enough to be communicable to the media and to various constituencies. Unfortunately the process of simplification seldom ensures the memorability of the text and tends to guarantee limited life for initiatives based on such oversimplification.
4. **Over-complexification** : This technique is widely practiced by experts to limit access to their field of knowledge. It becomes a means of requiring that the expert be personally consulted in order to convey the insights in practice. In the medical profession, it is the basis for the abusive use of the referral system.
5. **Narrowing the time-frame** : This technique consists of elaborating initiatives without any reference to historical precedents from which insights might be usefully obtained to ensure the viability of the new initiative. By encouraging ignorance of the past, in pursuit of the current initiative, there is every probability that the new one will remain equally unmemorable. Similarly, by avoiding sensitivity to more than the short-term future, factors in the medium and longer term (that will probably counteract the initiative) can be ignored. Effective non-decision-making can be achieved by benign positive focus on action in the immediate present.
6. **Focusing on the inaccessible** : In one form this technique involves one of the parties in a decision-making arena indicating that they are prepared to go ahead 'only if everybody else agrees'. This gives the appearance of a positive approach. It is especially successful in avoiding decision-making if it is unlikely that others will agree in this way. In another variant, the party indicates that it is only prepared to consider an issue within a broader framework (eg not overfishing of a particular species but of fish stocks in general). This ensures avoidance of decisions if other parties are not prepared to explore broader issues even though there may be scope for agreement on narrower issues. As with the 'Peter Principle' of personnel promotion, this technique can be an excellent way of positioning issues at a level at which institutions are incapable of dealing effectively with them.
7. **Ignoring cultural variants** : This technique emphasizes paradigms typical of a dominant culture to ensure that alternative

cultural perspectives (see *Encyclopedia of Conceptual Insights from the World's Cultures Proposal to UNESCO in relation to the Decade on Cultural Development*, 1988) are demeaned, ignored or treated as irrelevant or outdated. This is widely practiced in the English-speaking Western world. Faced with this inadequacy, a response may simply be to provide translations without recognizing that these do not necessarily provide an adequate vehicle for other cultural perspectives.

8. **Favouring the fashionable :** At any one time, there are fashionable conceptual approaches to issues, and consultants 'on the circuit' who enthusiastically promote their use. Institutions can be successfully panicked into exploring the latest intellectual fad for fear of offering a competitive advantage to their competitors through inaction. Because an approach is fashionable 'nobody gets fired' for adopting it. By encouraging institutions to take up a succession of particular fads, a broader view of the range of possible initiatives is inhibited. No sense of the strengths, limitations and complementarity of the fads emerges.
9. **Rejection through negative association :** Genuine innovations can be successfully marginalized and rejected by focusing attention on any disasters associated with their development. In this way social experimentation on alternative lifestyles and modes of employment has been conceptually linked to "sects" and therefore tainted as dangerous because of widely publicized incidents (Rajneesh/Antelope, Jonestown, Waco, Heaven's Gate, Order of the Solar Temple, etc). Such experimental failures are in no way considered equivalent to disasters associated with the development of any new technology.
10. **Disqualification :** Evidence and insights are easily dismissed by claiming that the witnesses or originators are in some way unqualified to comment on the topic in question. This process is used by a given discipline against those outside it, including other disciplines. It is used within a given discipline, between schools of thought and universities, between "seniors" and "juniors", between 'top' specialists and 'mediocre' specialists. It is used by clusters of disciplines against "practitioners" or the general public. Alternative approaches to healing have provided a number of examples. Many conceptual innovations have been subjected to this process, especially since it is difficult to be 'qualified' in a field which is only in the process of emerging.
11. **Conceptual 'roll-on, roll-off' :** This process involves apparent acceptance of a new perspective - but for a period only. When collective attention is focused elsewhere, decreasing weight is attached to the new perspective, until it can finally be ignored. This is widely used in the treatment of elite, or well-connected, offenders. When resistance to their punishment is finally overcome, they may indeed be convicted -- but after media interest has died down, their sentences can be shortened and they can be released. A similar approach is used in matters involving regulation, notably with respect to the environment. Regulation and inspection may indeed be introduced, only to be relaxed or 'rolled back' once the pressure is off and other pressures are given priority.
12. **'Classification' to protect interests :** New insights and approaches can be effectively quashed by appropriating them - whether in the national interest or under corporate copyright. This process may be undertaken preemptively by requiring that all personnel sign nondisclosure agreements. This is characteristic of both national and international civil services. Nobody is then qualified to comment publicly on issues documented in classified documents. The quantity of classified material indicates the extent to which insights are suppressed in this way.
13. **Exertion of pressure :** This is one of the most developed techniques. It can be effectively used in any peer group simply by implying that failure to act in a particular way will cast an unfavourable light, prejudicing career advancement, funding, honours, etc ('the stick'). Pressure can be increased by offering rewards, career advancement, or promises of honours ('the carrot'). There is suspicion that attribution of a number of major prizes is occasionally affected by this process. Pressure can be further increased by unadulterated bribery and intimidation (including threats of exposure or even physical violence).
14. **Delay:** This classical technique may be used in combination of several others. A variety of excellent reasons may be found to delay decision-making until 'the right moment'. The effects of delay are most evident in response to crisis situations, including massacres and those requiring disaster relief such as the Kobe earthquake. The 'international community' is very skilled in the use and justification of delay as has been most clearly seen in the case of Bosnia and Rwanda.

Who possesses these skills and how do they operate ?

The theme of this section was developed separately, subsequent to the 1997 version (*Emergence of a Global Misleadership Council: misleading as vital to governance of the future?* 2007). Given the concerns raised by the election of Donald Trump to the US presidency, some subsequent arguments are also of relevance (*Engaging Proactively with the Risk of World Misleadership*, 2016).

It is probably true that most people possess these skills in some measure. Parents make extensive use of them in persuading children to act, or not act, in particular ways. Employers, or superiors, may use them to persuade, or dissuade, employees regarding issues on which they differ. Teachers may do the same with students. Sales personnel make use of these skills in dealing with customers or in handling product complaints - as do confidence tricksters. Generals pride themselves on being able to use them to suitably motivate soldiers or demoralize the enemy - "psychological operations" are now a recognized military specialty. Physicians also use such skills in providing, or withholding, information to patients or their relatives. Couples use them in navigating their relationships.

Use of these skills may be portrayed as innocent or fair practice. In the case of couples : "all is fair in love and war". The much cited Harvard study on *Getting to Yes* (1981) is an example of what is now considered fair practice. Whether their use in the sale of Manhattan by Indians for a few 'beads and trinkets' can be considered fair practice is another matter. This however proved to be a model for interaction of colonialists with most indigenous peoples. Would it be ironic if aliens were to employ similar skills in their dealings with

humanity - even if it were 'in our own interest' ?

The concern here is not so much with such instances but rather with the manner in which these skills are deployed to inhibit effective response to conditions of society and the planet. Who plays these games ? Where do they acquire their skills ?

For a conspiracy theorist, the response is no doubt straightforward. For those with strong political orientations, this would also be true. For someone with fundamentalist religious beliefs, the answer would also be obvious. It is not clear that these answers would be helpful. Moreover, the skills are currently explicitly recognized as being the art of the 'spin-doctor'.

Who employs spin-doctors ? Most obviously it is the highest government office in a country -- as part of ensuring fruitful relations with the media and an appropriate public image - possibly assisted by state-controlled media. In this sense it is merely an extension of public relations and as such would be common to major corporations and to military operations. Ironically the first head of UN Public Information after its creation was the person formally responsible for British war propaganda. Upbeat reporting has become a requirement of international initiatives.

The question is then who frames issues and initiatives for the international community. The question goes beyond particular issues, which may indeed be successfully promoted by certain lobbies. Of more interest here, is how the set of issues is managed as a whole. Who ensures that certain issues and approaches are given priority and that others are neglected ? Clearly a number of bodies aspire to this role and many lobbying organizations seek to intervene in ways they consider most strategically appropriate.

Comments were provided on the following examples in the 1997 exercise (under the heading *Who possesses these skills and how do they operate ?*):

- Club of Rome
- Interaction Council
- Semi-formal international elite groups
- Catholic Church
- Secret societies
- Organized crime
- Fundamentalist religious groups
- Intelligence agencies
- World Economic Forum
- State of the World Forum

The listing was extended, with other comments in the document a decade later (*Emergence of a Global Misleadership Council*, 2007), and more recently (*Starting Afresh in Envisioning New Possibilities?* 2016). The listing could have been elaborated to include groupings of international organizations (*International NGO Groupings*, 1971).

All such groups lay claim to assemble together, or to be able to influence, "the leading opinion makers" and "the leading thinkers" in the light of a special understanding that they may believe they uniquely possess, as with the claims of many assemblies of international bodies. With some exceptions, they are all essentially conservative and interested in maintaining the status quo -- their current way of doing business and managing arrays of issues. Few are assailed by doubts concerning the validity of their perspective. Some, such as the religious and corporation-oriented groups, are especially interested in expanding their role and style of action and curtailing the actions of those out of sympathy with them.

Any groups identified in this way immediately invite extensive commentary by [conspiracy theorists](#), who provide highly critical remarks on many of them -- however questionable. The fundamental issue remains how these many groups have proven to be so inadequate with respect to the governance of a civilization increasingly vulnerable to crisis.

It is of course the case that any group identified would tend to claim that it could in no way be seen to be at fault and that others were necessarily to blame. Following the surprising election of Donald Trump, playing according to the rules of American democracy, it is remarkable how his opponents now claim that Hillary Clinton "really won" (***)

Reframing the issue context : some examples

In the light of the above, the 1997 document explored the following issues in which non-decision-making had been most evident.

1. **Security** : Many intergovernmental agreements provide for national security, with the UN and NATO perhaps the foremost amongst them. The past 10 years have made it quite clear that no country can depend on others for effective protection, and that pleas for effective assistance may be acted upon too late, if at all. Bosnia has proven to be the most striking example. Rwanda was another. The failure of the Somalian operation was another. The inability to respond effectively to the conditions of peoples, such as the Kurds or the Tibetans, is another. How has non-decision-making, or deciding not to act, in response to peoples in danger become such a refined art ?
2. **Over-population** : If there is a single issue which is systematically undermining national and international efforts to remedy the conditions of society and the planet, it is over-population. The Catholic Church has, aided by a unique coalition of religious groups, has been highly successful in ensuring that this issue is removed from international agendas (as in the case of the Rio Summit on Sustainable Development in 1992) or framed in such a way that action is minimized (as in the case of the Cairo Population Conference of the UN).
3. **Unemployment** : This issue, affecting the quality of life of multitudes, is endlessly debated in national and international arenas. No coherent new approach has emerged. Many isolated initiatives are proposed and some are implemented, but with little real hope of responding effectively to the problem. Perhaps most interesting, is the manner in which the official and unofficial debates on the matter are separated. Little attention is devoted to the process whereby some possibilities get on to the official agenda, and others are excluded from it. But whether within the official or unofficial contexts, most significant is the way in which

employment itself is framed. The question of the appropriateness of the frame is not addressed. Who controls the framing? (see *Sustainable Lifestyles and the Future of Work Learnings from "The Employment Dilemma and the Future of Work"*, 1996)

4. **Cultural diversity** : The increasing enthusiasm for 'globalization' and the information society, is accompanied by rising concern about global homogenization and cultural imperialism (whether by the USA over Western Europe, or by the West over other regions). Many language groups feel the dominating pressure of English. Although there are many isolated responses to these pressures, often of a tokenistic kind, there is widespread resignation that little can be done about it. It is not foreseen that humanity may lose as much conceptually (if not more) through this process as it is losing through destruction of the rainforests.
5. **Environment** : The Rio+5 UN Conference on Sustainable Development (New York, 1997) focused attention on international inability to decide effectively in response to environmental crises, or having decided, to act. There is widespread failure to ratify or implement international environmental treaties. Action is often articulated in terms of military metaphors such as 'targeting' with the naive assumption that targets are somehow static and passive (see *Enhancing Sustainable Development Strategies through Avoidance of Military Metaphors*, 1998)

A subsequent articulation endeavoured to configure the following set of issues, including or implying those above (*Convergence of 30 Disabling Global Trends: mapping the social climate change engendering a perfect storm*, 2012), indicating examples in each case within the checklist:

30 Disabling Global Trends

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|--|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Systemic erosion of confidence and trust 2. Rapidly decreasing coherence of statements by authorities (official declarations, "promises" by governments) 3. Emergence of evident contradictions undermining confidence in those involved 4. Increasingly evident disparities (notably correlated with forms of discrimination) 5. Increasingly uncertain individual social security 6. Increasingly perceived meaninglessness of life (especially for the underprivileged) 7. Increasingly constrained efficacy of remedial action 8. Cultivated delusions regarding possibility of fruitful consensus regarding 9. Inability to deliver effectively according to strategic vision and contractual agreements 10. Need for ever more extreme forms of distraction and the questionable means of ensuring their availability 11. Effective "grooming" of the population 12. Increasing constraints on dissemination of challenging information evocative of (unwelcome) questions regarding current modalities 13. Increasingly omnipresent "security" systems 14. Increasing pattern of failure of security systems (purportedly "guaranteed" not to fail) 15. Increasing sense of personal insecurity 16. Much-challenged relation to "life", evoked as an unquestionable justification for problematic initiatives | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 17. Much-challenged relation to principles and values 18. Erosion of judicial process 19. Systematic manipulation of representative decision-making 20. Indications of questionably classified initiatives lacking effective democratic oversight 21. Preoccupation with short-term outcomes, whether problems or benefits (and consequent neglect of long-term implications) 22. Spurious justifications (invoking health, security, jobs, advancement of knowledge, etc) 23. Emergent pattern of "ranting and raving": 24. Increasingly ineffectual argumentation: 25. Unquestionable dependence on aggravating processes 26. Asystemic analysis of resource overshoot and remedial possibilities (most notably in relation to population increase) 27. Evident emergency unpreparedness and vulnerability to "surprise" 28. Inability to reframe the evolving situation and unchallenged resistance to considering that possibility 29. Ineffectual gatherings of those acclaimed as effective, influential, well-resourced, intelligent, wise, or spiritual 30. Ever-increasing impatience at the evolution of the situation (with the evident probability of social unrest) |
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Reframing understanding of the decision-making context

The civilizational puzzle meriting attention is the inability to focus on the nature of the failure of remedial strategies, whether individually or as a necessarily integrated complex (*Recognizing the Psychosocial Boundaries of Remedial Action: constraints on ensuring a safe operating space for humanity*, 2009; *Mind Map of Global Civilizational Collapse: why nothing is happening in response to global challenges*, 2011).

Especially striking is the long recognized focus on "small decisions", hyped as remarkable breakthroughs through the media (Alfred E. Kahn, *Tyranny of Small Decisions: market failures, imperfections, and the limits of economics*, *Kyklos*, 1966; W. E. Odum, *Environmental degradation and the tyranny of small decisions*, *BioScience*, 1982)

Binary cognitive implications of "decision": As the etymology of decision suggests, it a process of "cutting off". The key question is how to understand the context with respect to which this cutting off takes place. Also curious is the binary implication of cutting, effectively recognizing only the option chosen to the exclusion of the "path not followed". The irony is all the greater given the association of executive decision-making with the original function of executioner.

In a context of widely acknowledged complexity, in which it is claimed that "everything is connected to everything", any decision can then be understood as marginalizing or rendering irrelevant that which is not the focus of the option chosen -- whether by ignoring it or postponing consideration of it. The process can be called into question as a form of "**cognitive gerrymandering**", as separately discussed (*Scientific Gerrymandering of Boundaries of Overpopulation Debate*, 2012). A striking example is offered by the issue of "terrorism", a concept carefully crafted by legislative provisions to exclude the vast majority of processes by which people are "terrified" -- mugging, sex slavery, torture, domestic violence, bullying in institutions, racketeering, shootings, and the like (*Varieties of Terrorism -- extended to the experience of the terrorized*, 2004). As a consequence the unprecedented provisions for the detection of "terrorist threats" avoid detection of such processes and the need to respond to their perpetrators.

More curious is the sense in which those making a decision frame it (and themselves) as necessarily "right" with the implication that those whose preoccupations are set aside are necessarily "wrong" (as with their preoccupations). There is a continuing debate on the interplay of right with righteousness, especially with respect to any political right wing. There is corresponding concern with those on the left, readily associated and conflated with the left-behind, and the sinister.

Lefteousness? Further subtlety is evident in widespread recognition of righteousness and the almost total lack of reference to any complementary understanding of "lefteousness" of which the most subtle is that of Yaacov Haber (*Righteousness and Lefteousness, Orchos Chaim*, 2005), in contrast with the more obvious compilation by Paul Routledge (*The Bumper Book of British Lefties portraits of all the forces of leftousness*, Politico, 2004).

Given the challenge to decision-making of self-righteousness, of some interest is the complementary insight of Pete George:

An overconfidence in lefteousness can appear as an arrogance of ideals as they blind themselves inside their own made bubble. Where they think the people must listen to them rather than them listening to the people. (30 May 2012)

This binary approach is of course most evident as being fundamental to democratic voting procedures, as in the 2016 US presidential election and the UK Brexit referendum. No matter how small the margin of any majority, the other option is excluded. The divisive consequences for a society are a matter of increasing concern (*Criteria Justifying Recounting or Revoting in Democracy post-Brexit*, 2016). Those thereby "remaindered" (if not "executed") and their preoccupations, call for new thinking (*Reintegration of a Remaindered World: cognitive recycling of objects of systemic neglect*, 2011).

Cutting the Gordian knot: The challenge of decision-making in contemporary of complexity has been usefully compared to the significance attached to the legend of the **Gordian knot** with which Alexander the Great was confronted (and chose to "cut"), as discussed separately (*Mapping grossness: Gordian knot of governance as a Discordian mandala?* 2016).

In the absence of depictions of such a knot in cognitive terms, the implication that the dilemmas of global management might be explored topologically as a knot merits consideration in the light of the mathematical interest in the **endless knot**, the **trefoil knot**, the **cinquefoil knot**, and the **septoid knot**. This would be consistent with the psychological significance associated with knot topology by **Jacques Lacan** and **R. D. Laing** in respect of individual self-governance. Commenting on a session of the World Economic Forum, **John Jullens** argues that: *It's as if the global economy is being strangled by a gigantic Gordian knot from which it cannot untangle itself* (*The Gordian Knot of Global Economic Growth, Strategy-Business*, 15 October 2013).

The legend has been used by other authors:

- Ryan M. Irwin: *Gordian Knot: apartheid and the unmaking of the liberal world order* (Oxford University Press, 2013)
- Reinhard Wagner: *The Gordian Knot of Global Collaboration* (International Project Management Organization)
- Bernard Harborne: *Cutting through the Gordian Knot: analysis of conflict and violence* (World Bank)
- Andreas Bieler and Adam David Morton: *The Gordian Knot of Agency--Structure in International Relations: a Neo-Gramscian perspective, European Journal of International Relations*, 7, 2001, pp. 5-35).
- Gabriela Lemus: *Severing the 'Gordian Knot': defying conventional wisdom and reversing current trade policy* (*The Huffington Post*, 2 June 2015)
- Pawel Opala and Krzysztof Rybinski: *Gordian Knots of the 21st Century* (Paper presented on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the Polish Association of the Club of Rome, 2007)
- Leonardo Baccini and Johannes Urpeläinen: *Cutting the Gordian Knot of Economic Reform: when and how international institutions help* (Oxford University Press, 2015)

Several authors have related the associated dilemma to energy and climate change. For example, Ted Nordhaus (et al.) focus on the insight originally required by Alexander:

Alexander's new perspective -- what is sometimes called a "gestalt shift" -- was a prerequisite to cutting the Gordian Knot... We believe that both a gestalt shift and a bold stroke are required to cut the Gordian Knot at the heart of today's energy challenge.... In the end, it was impossible -- and unnecessary -- to untie the Gordian Knot. (*Fast, Clean, & Cheap: cutting global warming's Gordian Knot, Harvard Law and Policy Review*, January 2008)

Such considerations resulted in an earlier focus on the problematic interlocking of cycles embodying so-called **wicked problems** -- calling for cyclic comprehension, as discussed separately (*Encycling Problematic Wickedness for Potential Humanity*, 2014; *Encycling wickedity in the light of polyhedral viruses and their mutation*, 2015). This approach is consistent with the cycles inherent in spherically symmetrical polyhedra, as discussed below.

Non-binary decision-making possibilities? It could be readily assumed that a non-binary decision is a logical impossibility. Reference has however long been made in political philosophy to a **third way**. This is understood as a position akin to centrism that tries to reconcile right-wing and left-wing politics by advocating a varying synthesis of right-wing economic and left-wing social policies. Arguably the very process of alternation, held to be fundamental to democracy, suggests a distinctive dynamic understanding of conventional binary approaches (*Policy Alternation for Development*, 1984). A tripartite approach is reflected in **tripartism**, understood as economic corporatism based on tripartite contracts of business, labour, and state affiliations within the economy.

Constraints on more complex modalities are evident from the logical **law of excluded middle** (or the principle of excluded middle). This is the third of the three classic laws of thought. It states that for any proposition, either that proposition is true, or its negation is true. This is associated with the sense of a *dilemma*, which is between two opposing alternatives. This is associated with the **trilemma**, namely a

difficult choice from three options, each of which is (or appears) unacceptable or unfavourable. Similar understanding is associated with the quadrilemma, a seldom-used and unconventional term describing a problem requiring a choice among four alternatives.

Such perspectives are fruitfully called into question by a distinctive understanding of quadrilemma as articulated within various Eastern philosophies (for example the Maadhyamika *catuskoti*), and notably by Kinhide Mushakoji (*Global Issues and Interparadigmatic Dialogue: essays on multipolar politics*, 1988). In that articulation, four modalities are distinguished (as [separately interpreted](#)):

- *Affirmation*: Leading to affirmative action in the form of support, commitment, initiative, proposition, cooperation, consensus formation, empowering, 'opening'.
- *Negation*: Leading to negative action in the form of sanction, withdrawal (of support), denial, disassociation, delimitation, criticism, opposition, promotion of dissent, disempowering, 'closing'.
- *Affirmation and negation*: Leading to ambiguous action, non-violent resistance, 'dumb insolence', 'giving with one hand and taking with the other', 'double dealing', 'stick and carrot tactics', the 'yes but no' response of the frustrated cross-examinee.
- *Non-affirmation and Non-negation*: Leading to action in the form of indifference, indecision, non-action (in the oriental sense), 'neither confirm nor deny', 'opening and closing'.

The possible significance of pentalemmas, hexalemmas, heptalemmas, and octalemmas is discussed separately in the light of some references in the literature ([Decision-making capacity versus Distinction-making capacity](#), 2015):

- pentalemma: *The Pentalemma: an Erisian elaboration on the Catsukoti* (*The Open Source Religion Social Network*, 2006); *Need to recognize quintucrisis or this five headed monster* (*Global Sustainability Project of Rediluvism*).
- heptalemma: allegedly significant in Jain Dharma (*Saman Suttam*)
- octalemma: as discussed in relation to *Strategic Octalemmas* (2009) and by Edward Andersonto (*Problem of Time in Quantum Gravity*, 2012). The Euthyphro "dilemma" is restated as an octalemma by Richard Goode (*Nothing Is Permitted: an argument for moral eliminativism*).

Arguably conventional reliance on binary decision-making is also significantly called into question by the unforeseen emergence of so-called [post-truth politics](#). Intriguingly, whereas conventional logic is dependent on [truth tables](#), there is now a case for exploring what might be termed a post-truth extension of that framework, as discussed separately ([Towards articulation of a "post-truth table"?](#) 2016).

Configuring a complex of systemic options comprehensibly

In a society of evidently increasing complexity, the question is how a comprehensive set of issues and options is to be "framed" -- especially given the contrasting understandings of appropriate decisions which are so vigorously held and defended (if not violently so).

Dynamics of blame-games and defensiveness: To that dynamic is added the pattern of [blame games](#) whereby the other, whether in majority or minority, is held to be at fault for the inadequacy of decision-making (*Collective Mea Culpa? You Must be Joking! Them is to blame, Not us!* 2015; *Us and Them: Relating to Challenging Others patterns in the shadow dance between "good" and "evil"*, 2009). The dynamic is naturally accompanied by patterns of defensiveness and denial in response to any accusation or blame.

Curiously both the patterns of blame and denial could be considered fundamental to decision-making contexts, especially those characterized by competing political parties and ideologies, as in plenary assemblies and parliaments. More problematic is the sense in which these are effectively designed to avoid "resolution" of such differences, except by the most primitive voting procedures.

The dynamic is further complicated by electoral commitments -- promises which can be readily broken with impunity by blaming the other, such that there is every opportunity for decision avoidance. Such commitments lack all contractual constraint in any legal sense. Successive majority governments are free simply to blame their predecessors, denying any responsibility. The situation is tragically evident with regard to historical actions by governments against indigenous peoples, especially including slavery.


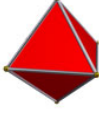
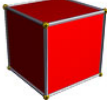
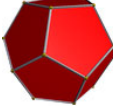
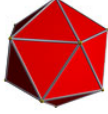
With respect to the effectiveness of such decision-making contexts, a neglected question is the level of [absenteeism](#) in parliamentary assemblies, presumably at all levels, including intergovernmental organizations [NB *The manner in which relevant statistics are presented makes it difficult to highlight the extent to which the presence of elected representatives in such assemblies may be as low as 15%*]. Such physical absenteeism is increasingly compounded by "conceptual absenteeism" in that, even when physically present, attention may well be focused on other matters via the internet. Unexamined is the question of whether such issues obtain whether respect to bodies with [oversight responsibilities](#) -- highlighting the curious ambiguity of that term in being also indicative of forms of neglect (or governance [blind spot](#)).

Potentially even more problematic are those situations in which those elected or appointed are chosen such as to limit their decision-making capacity, as critically discussed with respect to the role of UN Secretary-General by Joe Lauria (*Ban Ki-moon: Requiem for a UN "Yes Man"*, *Global Research*, 4 January 2017), and as may well be the case with respect to the managing director of the IMF. Such a constraint may well be formally defined by secrecy, non-disclosure and confidentiality agreements.

Dynamics of polarization: One approach to such a framing is to use the sense in which two contrasting options can be understood as associated with "polarization" and its dynamics. As polar opposites, they can be represented by a pole or line. For the purpose of comprehensible encoding and discussion, a [multi-polar](#) decision-making complex could then be represented by a polyhedron of appropriate complexity. Given the enthusiasm for "pillars" in defining structures of governance, there is even a case for exploring the transformation of pillars into poles (*Coherent Value Frameworks: pillar-ization, polarization and polyhedral frames of reference*, 2008).














The potential "global" coherence of such a complex, whatever the challenge to its comprehension, could then be highlighted by the use of spherically symmetrical polyhedra, for example. The point is usefully illustrated by the set of 5 [Platonic polyhedra](#) as follows, where the number of edges is suggestive of the number of policy options which may call for reconciliation in a global context -- however complex

this is variously held to be. The mapping is clearly relevant to any aspiration to the strategy of **full-spectrum dominance**, as separately discussed (*Embodying Global Hegemony through a Sustaining Pattern of Discourse: cognitive challenge of dominion over all one surveys*, 2015).

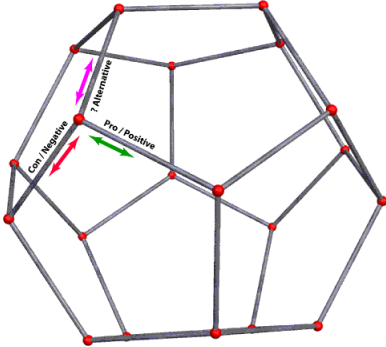
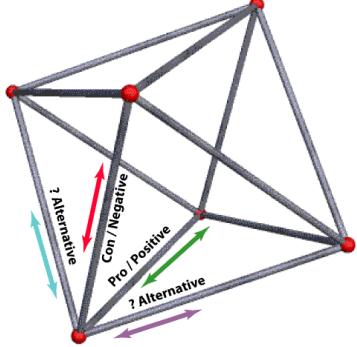
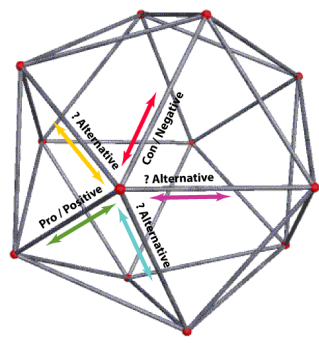
5 Platonic polyhedra with indication of number of edges				
Regular symmetrical approximations to the "globality" of a sphere				
				
edges=6	edges=12	edges=12	edges=30	edges=30
valency=3	valency=4	valency=3	valency=3	valency=5

The argument is consistent with that of **Buckminster Fuller**. His extensive analysis of such geometry was framed as offering a new mode of thinking (*Synergetics: Explorations in the Geometry of Thinking* (1975, 1979), as separately described (*Geometry of Thinking for Sustainable Global Governance: cognitive implication of synergetics*, 2009). It is also consistent with the adaptation of aspects of Buckminster Fuller's insights through the work of management cybernetician **Stafford Beer** (*Beyond Dispute: The Invention of Team Syntegrity*, 1994).

Given the focus on a limited set of policy-priorities (as articulated by the **UN Millennium Development Goals**, for example), the question of interest is how any more complex set of issues might be configured, using the 13 semi-regular **Archimedean polyhedra**, for example, as depicted below.

13 Archimedean polyhedra with indication of number of edges												
Semi-regular symmetrical approximations to the "globality" of a sphere												
												
18	24	36	48	60	60	72	90	90	120	150	150	180
all with valency 3, 4 or 5 (their duals, the Catalan polyhedra , have valencies up to 10)												

Such possibilities were highlighted separately with respect to shaping the global network of local bargains by decoding and mapping Earth Summit inter-sectoral issues (*Configuring Globally and Contending Locally*, 1992).

Indication of various types of governance challenge in a "global" context using 3 Platonic polyhedra		
Trilemma (dodecahedron: vertex valency of 3)	Quadrilemma (octahedron: vertex valency of 4)	Pentalemma (icosahedron: vertex valency of 5)
		
20 vertices (trilemmas)	6 vertices (quadrilemmas)	12 vertices (pentalemmas)

Dangerous reduction of systemic complexity by collapsing polyhedral mappings: The concern with any such relatively comprehensive mapping is how policy-making engages with only a small sub-set of the pattern as a whole -- effectively collapsing the latter into irrelevance ("planned negligence").

Of some interest is the manner in which the geometry of the polyhedra offer indications of how the more complex forms can be collapsed into simpler forms through various transformations. This can be understood as corresponding to the kinds of zooming -- from global to local -- with which users of maps on the web are familiar. The process clearly implies a loss of systemic variety, potentially vital to the viability of any "local" option.

The dangers can also be usefully explored in the light of the arguments concerning the "subunderstanding" resulting from the loss of "polyocular vision", as articulated from a cybernetic perspective by **Magoroh Maruyama** (*Peripheral Vision: polyocular vision or subunderstanding*, *Organization Studies*, 2004). This loss can be further explored in terms of "cyclopean vision" in contrast with "encyclopean vision" (*Cyclopean Vision vs Poly-sensual Engagement*, 2006).

Given the potential variety of configurations of polyhedra, useful for any such mapping, it is appropriate to note the contrasting number and kind of edges (lines) and/or "poles". Of particular interest are conditions under which the latter may be associated with axes of symmetry -- also vulnerable to being collapsed through any exercise in reductionism. It is symmetry which is especially valuable in enabling global comprehensibility.

The characteristic triangulation of edges of especially stable polyhedral configurations merits careful consideration, as argued separately (*Triangulation of Incommensurable Concepts for Global Configuration*, 2011). This notably includes sections on

Triadic logic?
 Triadic dialectics
 Triadic strategic applications
 Triadic conceptualization
 Triadic education and learning

Interrelating multiple triadic approaches
 Integrative thinking
 Enhancing coherence through spherical triangulation
 Navigation of the strategic universe

Of relevance to the conceptual implications of such triadic organization are the arguments of Paris Arnopoulos (*Sociophysics: cosmos and chaos in nature and culture*, 200) and Anthony Blake (*The Triad; The Meaning of the Triad: an interpretation*)

Framing problematic global decision-making through metaphor

Images of decision-making: As a key locus of global governance, the [Washington Consensus](#) lends itself to further metaphorical exploration in the light of the electoral commitment made by Donald Trump (*Trump calls to "drain the swamp" of Washington, USA Today*, 18 October 2016; *Donald Trump is calling for ethics reform to 'drain the swamp in Washington DC'*, *Business Insider*, 18 October 2016). The image of hippos wallowing in the mud readily comes to mind, especially in the light of their physiological habits in that environment.

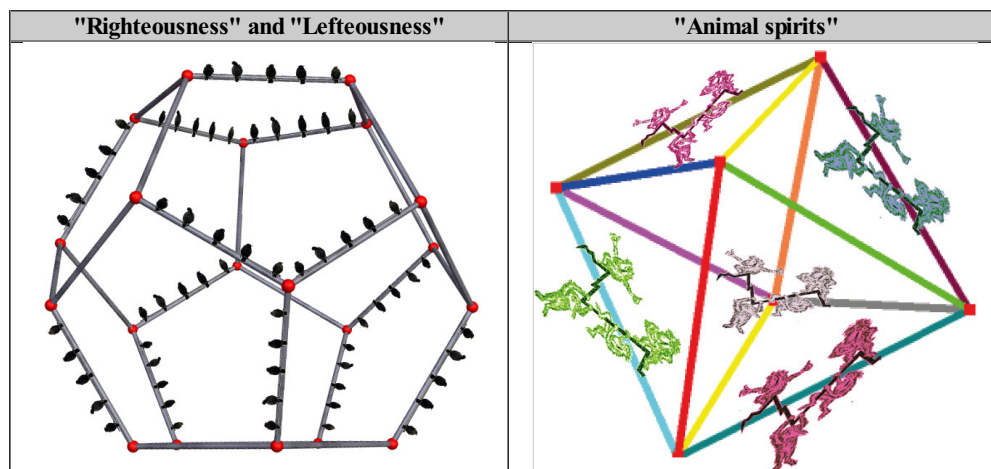
A more acceptable exploration of the variety of useful "images of decision-making" could be derived from the classic study by [Gareth Morgan](#) (*Images of Organization*, Sage, 1986), as separately reviewed (Matthew J. Lambert III, *A Review of Images of Organization, Complicity: An International Journal of Complexity and Education*, 2009). Morgan distinguishes the framing of organizations as: machines, organisms, brains, cultures, political systems, psychic prisons, flux-and-transformation, and instruments of domination.

A case was made for the need for new images of decision-making by T. Connolly (*Hedge-clipping, tree-felling and the management of ambiguity*, 1988). Stress has been placed on the disparate nature of such images by Sidney Dekker and N. Suparamaniam (*Divergent Images of Decision Making in International Disaster Relief Work*, 2005). Of relevance to this argument is the study of challenging and unpacking images of coalition foreign policy and its implications for international relations and governance by Juliet Kaarbo (*Coalition Politics and Cabinet Decision Making: a comparative analysis of foreign policy choices*, 2012).

Righteous, lefteousness and "animal spirits": The challenge of righteousness in global governance is usefully suggested by use of the familiar image of birds aligned on a telephone line -- as with those favouring a particular party line. Naturally the birds are "upright" at any particular part of the globe. However, as illustrated by the image on the left (below), they are quite distinctively "upright" in relation to one another in different regions of the globe.

Are those of alternative orientation to be understood as characterized by "lefteousness" in any way? How is the integration of the variety of orientations to be rendered coherent? Metaphorical use of birds is especially relevant now that political discourse is heavily influenced by tweeting -- most notably by the newly elected president of the USA.

Another challenge to the coherence of global governance can be illustrated by widespread reference to the use by [John Maynard Keynes](#) of "animal spirits" as descriptors of emotional drives. These "spirits" are suggestively employed in the image on the right (below). The depiction of the "spirits" derives from portions of the cover illustration of a study of their role in economic decision-making by Robert J. Shiller and George A. Akerlof (*Animal Spirits: how human psychology drives the economy, and why it matters for global capitalism*, 2009).



Depicting the animal spirits as monkeys also offers the sense in which global governance is characterized by tribes of howler monkeys vociferously defending their respective territories and strategic trajectories (*Monkeying with Global Governance: emergent dynamics of three wise monkeys in a knowledge-based society*, 2011). The howler monkey metaphor is especially appropriate to the response of those shocked by the election of Donald Trump.

Similar use was made of the "monkeys" in a related discussion of decision-making dynamics (*Swastika as Dynamic Pattern Underlying Psychosocial Power Processes: implicate order of Knight's move game-playing sustaining creativity, exploitation and impunity*, 2012).

Incoherence of global governance? The disruptive elements indicated in the visual metaphors (above) require some practical illustration -- especially when the challenge is to interrelate the contrasting orientations suggested by the edges of the polyhedra, supposedly implying a systemic whole. One example is offered by the octahedron, potentially to be used as a mapping of the major religions of the world, supposedly eight ([Stephen Prothero, *God Is Not One: The Eight Rival Religions That Run the World -- and Why Their Differences Matter*, 2010](#)). Clearly, as noted above, the historical and continuing conflict are indicative of how distant is the prospect of any global coherence.

Another example is offered by the [concentration of media ownership](#), as in the case of the USA ([Ashley Lutz, *These 6 Corporations Control 90% of the Media in America*, *Business Insider*, 14 June 2012](#)). With respect to governance, the figure can be significantly compared with the percentage of US media endorsing Hillary Clinton in the 2016 presidential campaign ([David Edwards, *Filtering The Election*, *Media Lens*, 18 November 2016](#)).

Globally the media system is now dominated by nine giant firms ([Robert McChesney, *The Global Media Giants*, *FAIR: fairness and accuracy in reporting*, 1 November 1997](#)). The challenge to any possible emergence of appropriately critical global insight is illustrated by the findings of a recent study ([John Vibes *Study Finds Nearly All Scientific Papers Controlled By Six Corporations*, *True Activist*, 22 July 2015](#); [Sean Adl-Tabatabai, *Nearly All Scientific Papers Controlled By Same Six Corporations*, *YourNewsWire*, 20 July 2015](#)). The control extends to intellectual copyright over knowledge published in those journals -- with all that this "knowledge incarceration" may imply for the emergence of global insight.

It is to be expected that similar situations exist in other domains -- as with the so-called [Seven Sisters](#) controlling the oil industry. This raises the question as to how the relevance of such configurations to governance globally is to be understood.

The rapid development of information systems, the anticipation of the [internet of things](#), and the expected impact of artificial intelligence, suggest an ever increasing dependence on such systems. These could fail disastrously at any moment -- or be "switched off" as an act of cyberwarfare -- irrespective of their foreseen extreme exacerbation of unemployment. Other than their role in security, surveillance and financial trading, their function with respect to global decision-making remains largely unexplored. A "[technological singularity](#)" is nevertheless anticipated.

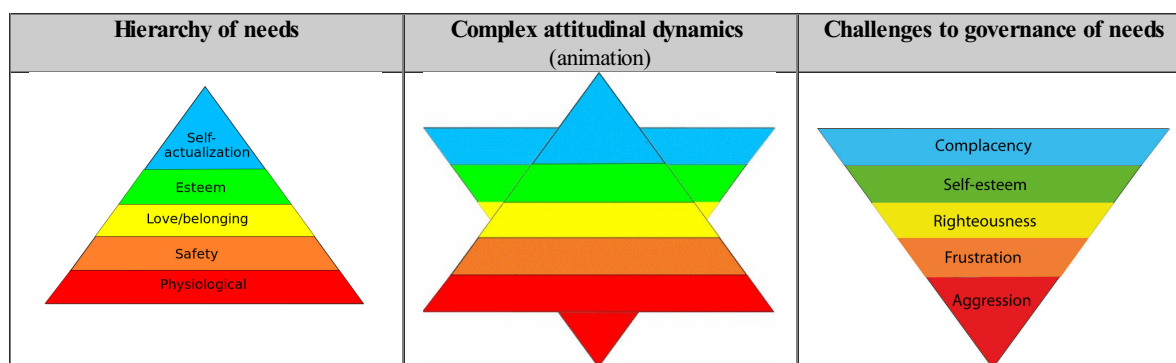
Understood otherwise, irrespective of the obsessions of conspiracy theorists, is civilization now witness to forms of coherence better recognized in terms of complicity and collusion -- as a consequence of a confluence of constraining factors. Typically these are designed out of public discourse. They are most evident in cartel formation, secret agreements and "memorandums of understanding" -- to the extent that these are consciously recognized in a civilization which may prove to have been collectively challenged in that respect ([Global Strategic Implications of the "Unsaid"](#), 2003; [John Ralston Saul, *The Unconscious Civilization*, 1995](#)).

Towards a 3D mapping of the questionable needs of governance

Hierarchies of needs -- and constraints: A natural point of departure in considering the needs, which governance is called upon to satisfy in some way, is to make use of the conventional [needs hierarchy of Abraham Maslow](#) (below left). The evident challenge for governance might well be considered the indifference in practice to the implications of the need positioned as most fundamental, namely "self-actualization". There is little effort in governance to give more than token meaning to the processes implied by this, especially with respect to its more profound cognitive implications. There is therefore a case for inverting the hierarchy and associating some notion of complacency with that level (below right). It is not a focus of decision-making, especially in terms of the effective allocation of resources to it, rather it is a modality of indifference.

Using this experimental inversion of the hierarchy, there is then a case for exploring the more evident psychosocial conditions within that framework -- if only tentatively in anticipation of further reflection. Hence the positioning of "self-esteem" and "righteousness" in the image below (right). These can be understood as fundamental to the unfruitful dynamics of conflicting parties in the processes of governance -- in which resources are more evidently invested.

With respect to the evident incapacity to ensure the safety identified in Maslow's variant, or the deliverability of resources for physiological needs, it is then appropriate to position "frustration" in the image, and the aggression engendered by anger at that failure. Just as Maslow's hierarchy suggests an existential focus on "self-actualization", in the inverted condition a corresponding focus is evident in angry aggression.



The animation above is an effort to recognize the complex engagement in the contrasting preoccupations indicated by the two hierarchies. Specifically, through the use of colour coding, it challenges the complacency with regard to self-actualization which readily takes the only too evident form of selfishness.

Similarly it challenges the problematic framing of aggression, especially since this is only too evidently a preferred modality of governance (and a focus for ever-increasing resource allocation). It is of course the case that aggression in response to perceived injustice is framed favourably (and righteously) rather than problematically -- and may well be conflated with understandings of self-actualization. This confusing mix of associations is expressed to a degree by the animation.

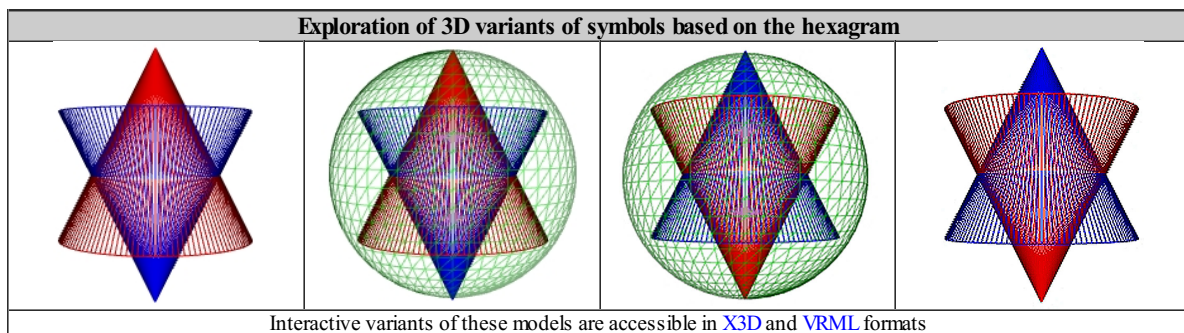
The visual exercise above is a tentative partial response to the recognition of the widespread lack of comprehension of the violence which constitutes an ever increasing challenge for the individual and for governance. Specifically it is response to the only too evident failure to allocate resources to why it emerges, in contrast to the unprecedented level of resources allocated to preventing or eliminating it, as argued separately (*Global Incomprehension of Increasing Violence: matching incapacity to question the reason why*, 2016).

There is an obvious trap to be recognized in any such mapping through the conventional associations of particular significance with the directions left and right, upper and lower, and inside and outside, as highlighted by the work of George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (*Metaphors We Live By*, 1980) and discussed separately (*Unquestioned Bias in Governance from Direction of Reading? Political implications of reading from left-to-right, right-to-left, or top-down*, 2016).

Exploration of 3D symbolism: The quest for more insightful imagery to enable greater comprehension can be taken further by imagining the above hierarchies to take three-dimensional form, rather than reinforcing the mental habits associated with two-dimensional representation. The combination of a hierarchy and its inversion is strikingly reminiscent of the **hexagram**, which so notably features in certain religions and cultures (most obviously as the **Star of David** of Judaism, the star of creation of Christianity, in Islam, and in cosmological diagrams in Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism).

In 3D the hexagram can then be represented by two cones as variously shown below. The central images include a sphere to correspond to the circle by which the 2D hexagram is typically circumscribed in its symbolic use. This is fruitfully indicative of the "global" nature of the challenging preoccupations of governance, highlighted with respect to the two hierarchies above -- with their specific introduction of the cognitive dimension.

Again various uses can be made of colour to give focus to the ambiguities of perception and engagement. The intersecting cones were constructed with 3D software (X3D Edit). The screen shots have been deliberately rendered in wireframe versions, notably to benefit from the striking central **Moiré pattern** where the cones intersect.



Decision-making questions: The relevance to decision-making can be taken further, notably with respect to its highest inspiration (of which "self-actualization" is indicative) and to its most problematic expression in violence (whether of jihad, or otherwise). To that end use is made here of the set of 7 so-called WH-questions: *where?*, *when?*, *which?*, *what?*, *how?*, *who?*, and *why?*. These could be considered as giving focus to the challenges of governance, especially in relation to violence. They are necessarily fundamental to strategic decision-making, most notably in the military.

As indicated above, it is striking to note how the focus of governance with respect to violence is on its most tangible (short-term) manifestations. The investment of resources is most notably framed by a more limited set of questions, namely *what?* and *how?*, and *where?* and *when?*, and the concern with *which?* Whether in the case of the first or the second pair, their consideration can either be interpreted in strategic terms (then positioned in the upper portion of an image) or in tactical terms (then in a lower position). Again it is the latter interpretation which then attracts most resources, rather than the "meta" considerations of the former.

The concern with *which?* offers an interesting focus for targetting and goal-oriented decision-making. In the lowest position, this frames both the sense of executive decision-making and the sacrificial modality of kamikaze jihadism. As such it offers interesting resonances with both *who?* -- as a mysteriously reframed sense of identity (potentially facing annihilation) -- and the metaphysical implications of *why?* Clearly the degree to which identity (*who?*) is defined by motivation (*why?*) is fundamental to any cognitive understanding of radicalism. Preoccupation with a physical "*who*" becomes a tangible surrogate to avoid any effort to comprehend the subtle dynamics of *why*.

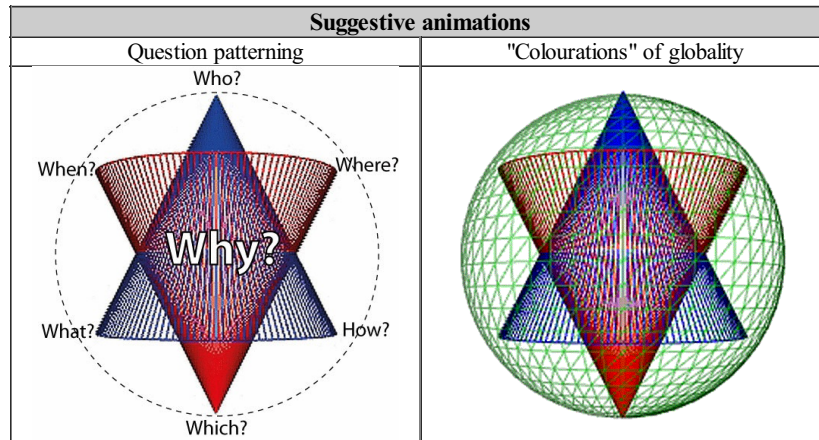
There is remarkably little investment in the longer-term context of *why?*, or in the mysterious process by which *who?* becomes apparent -- whether following "radicalisation", or the unforeseen emergence of a world leader such as Donald Trump. This is a curious reflection of the lack of priority accorded to "self-actualization" -- other than in tokenistic and superficial terms.

It could be fruitfully asked how the appreciation of "self-actualization" is to be distinguished from the deprecation of "radicalisation" -- given the experience of the interplay between *why?* and *who?*. The existential implications can be variously explored (*Radicalisation of Existence and Identity: recognizing the global emergence and influence of daimonic dynamics*, 2015).

Conflation: A sense of mystery is also associated with the *who?* of global decision-making (especially from the perspective of

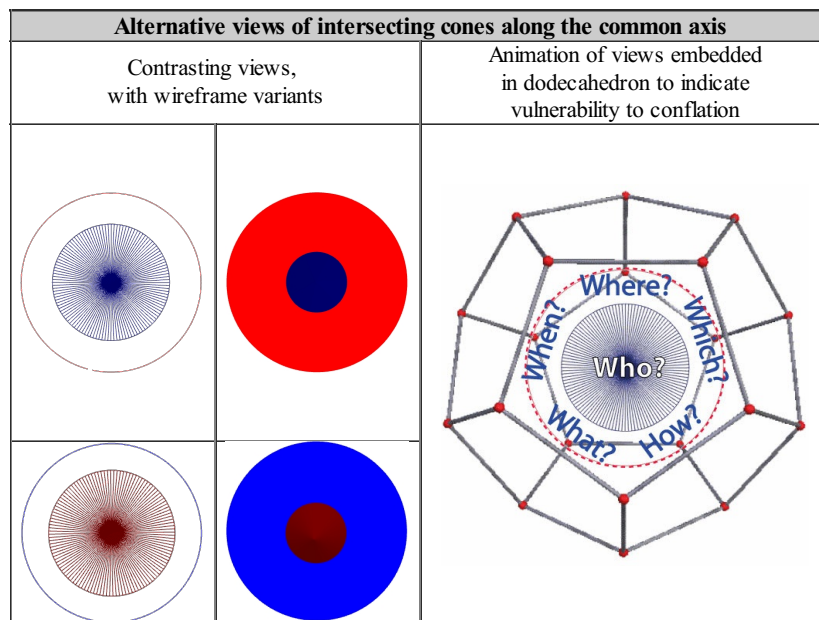
conspiracy theorists). Also curious is the inability of governance to question *why* its striking track record of failure in addressing increasing global vulnerabilities is so carefully avoided -- other than through blame and defensiveness. Strangely, given the fundamental importance of such symbols for religion, the mystery in relation to *who?* and *why?* is echoed in both comprehension of individual identity and the mysteries of the supernatural. Hence the use of the upper and central positions of the images for these questions.

The animations below offer a dynamic reframing of such matters -- as they merit consideration in decision-making by the collective or the individual. That on the left below is a mapping of the WH-questions in which *why?* and *who?* are given special emphasis. That on the right is an effort to exploit colour as a means of indicating how the global framing of these issues may be variously comprehended.



Embedding in a global context: In endeavouring to reframe global decision-making through a visual "story", further use can be made of the 3D modelling of the intersecting cones (above). Vertical perspectives along the common axis then give the set of four images on the left (below), of which two are given in wireframe form like those used above. The merit of this approach is that it emphasizes the extent to which conflation can occur between subtler (strategic) understandings and the more obvious (tactical) interpretations of what is implied by the animation on the right (above). The challenge is all the greater in that the contrasting forms (below left) are variously reminiscent of "bull's-eye" targets and goals.

This offers the possibility of embedding the intersecting cones within a dodecahedral polyhedron (for example), as indicated by the animation on the right (below). This suggests how a subtler interpretation can be questionably conflated with a more obvious interpretation. Of particular relevance is the sense in which *who?* and *why?* can be conflated, as discussed earlier. Obviously any such animated embedding could be imagined otherwise to explore other insights into the engagement with globality.



Comprehensibility of global decision-making -- and its "packaging": There is continuing concern at the quandaries of representation of the complexity of issues for which adequate decision-making is required -- both for decision-makers and the electors mandating them. The possibilities of **dumbing down** are then dangerously attractive.

As a development of the above argument, one intriguing possibility is to use the widespread familiarity with playing cards as a device with which to associate a new form of insight into decision-making, as discussed separately (*Radical Localization in a Global Systemic Context: distinguishing normality using playing card suits as a pattern language*, 2015). Clearly most card games exemplify the challenges of decision-making. The issue is whether additional significance can be associated with the process -- especially in a period in which the conventional playing strategies of political parties have been effectively "trumped" by the emergence of Donald Trump.

With respect to the contrasting styles of question discussed above, as a pattern language there is the possibility of recognizing that:

- a strategic "higher" level can be associated with hearts and diamonds -- as symbolic of distinctive goals and aspirations in life
- a tactical "lower" level can be associated with clubs and spades -- as symbolic of the requisite control and groundwork

The manner in which these can be confused and conflated offers a means of "carrying" the reversibility of priorities highlighted above in terms of questions. Of interest is why such traditional symbols "work" so acceptably in card games for so many. Their significance as a pattern language can be extended to greater degrees of complexity (*Cognitive heart dynamics framed by two tori in 3D*, 2015; *Patterning Archetypal Templates of Emergent Order: implications of diamond faceting for enlightening dialogue*, 2002).

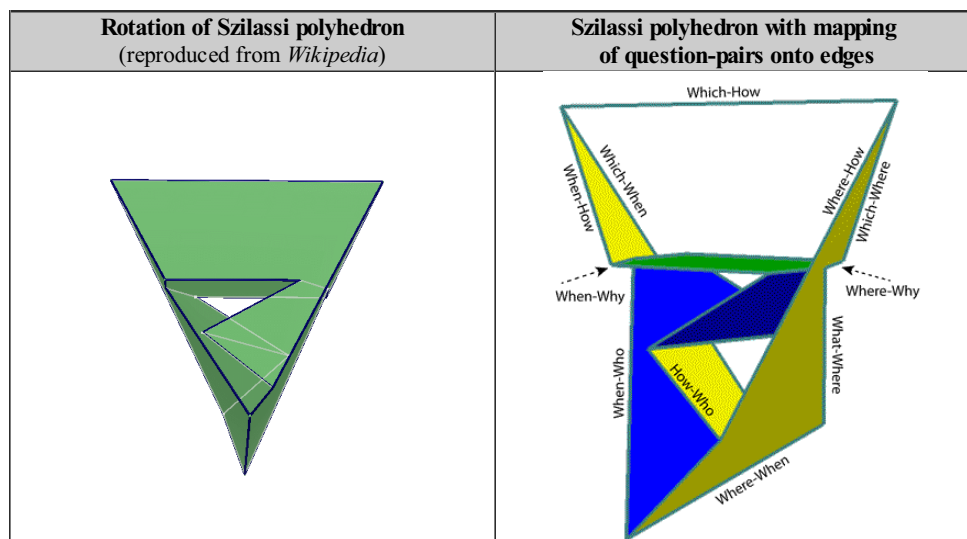
Colour mapping: The suggested use of polyhedra to "reframe" the challenges of global decision-making can be taken further. Whilst comprehensibility of complexity can be suggestively associated with the symmetries of polyhedra, such as those indicated above, the representational challenge can be presented otherwise.

Drawing on the tendency to associate political tendencies with colours, the issue of how to "package" comprehensibility most compactly can be addressed in the light of the relevance of some polyhedra to the [colour mapping problem](#) -- long a feature of mathematics. What distinctive configurations of multiple colours are then possible and how does this relate to the distinctive colouring of contiguous countries on a map?

In this respect a quite distinctive polyhedron is of special interest, namely the [Szilassi polyhedron](#). This is a nonconvex polyhedron, topologically a torus, with seven hexagonal faces. Each face of this polyhedron shares an edge with each other face. As a result, it requires seven colours to colour each adjacent face, providing the lower bound for the [seven colour theorem](#). Of some significance is that it is difficult to depict that polyhedron as a 2D image, hence the animation below.

The relevance of this polyhedron to the mapping of the set of WH-questions has been explored separately (*Now as the Ultimate Cognitive Strange Attractor*, 2014). This includes discussion of:

- [Patterns of questions indicative of the subunderstanding of now](#)
- [Polyhedral configuration of questions](#)
- [Mapping of WH-questions with question-pairs onto a memorable polyhedron \(a football\)](#)
- [Mapping of WH-questions with question-pairs onto the Szilassi polyhedron](#)
- [Potential insights into the Szilassi configuration of WH-questions from 4D](#)



Such use of the Szilassi polyhedron can be understood as a response to the challenge of rendering comprehensible, in a compact manner, the requisite complexity (in cybernetic terms) which global decision-making is called to address. This contrasts with the potentially dangerous assumptions reinforced by oversimplification of the sphere as the primary symbol of "global".

Embodying subtle elegance in global decision-making

"**Magical plan**"? In considering the possibility of more fruitful global governance it is appropriate to reflect on the myth of a magical plan by which this might be brought about. Many efforts by the eminent, the wise, councils of the wise, and other authorities, would seem to embody aspiration to what could be understood as a magical "silver bullet". Anticipation of a Messiah, or the arrival of otherworldly extraterrestrials, are features of such hope-mongering.

For some such a Plan already exists, "if only the world would listen". This is the typical posture of many religions, most notably as articulated by the Pope in the light of the beliefs of the Catholic Church. The complete and utter inability of such religions to reconcile their insight with that of other religions -- or to see any need to do so as a consequence of the bloody conflict engendered by such failure -- is an indication that another mode of thinking is required (*Adhering to God's Plan in a Global Society: serious problems framed by the Pope from a transfinite perspective*, 2014).

One fruitful myth towards that end is that of the [Holy Grail](#) as exemplifying the quest for the cognitive healing balm of global governance -- the ultimate panacea (*In Quest of Sustainability as Holy Grail of Global Governance*, 2011; *In-forming the Chalice as an Integrative Cognitive Dynamic: sustaining the Holy Grail of global governance*, 2011). This symbolic quest can be fruitfully explored through associating the 7 WH-questions with the set of 7 elementary catastrophes. (**).

Cyclic flows: Such an association draws attention to the sense in which the challenge is fundamentally a dynamic one, probably better understood in terms of flows and cycles, as exemplified by the [resilience](#) associated with the [adaptive cycle](#). How this might be better decomposed into an interwoven set of cycles is a question which accords with some of the preoccupations of complex systems theory, notably with respect to a [viable system model](#). This could however itself be construed as the desperate effort of science and its technocrats to frame "the plan" as religions and politicians have so vainly endeavoured to do.

Appropriate metaphors might then include those with which many are familiar -- whether dance or riding the waves (notably those of cyberspace). With their emphasis on the [psychology of flow](#), these recall the arguments of [Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi](#) (*Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience*, 1990). However they also recall the adage favouring "guiding the canoe" rather than "pushing the river".

It is in this sense that new insights are required into a traditional Chinese myth that the role of the emperor is precisely to do nothing -- namely essentially one of non-decision-making whilst "enabling" the connectivity through which decisions of a lower order emerge. Such decisions are of a lower order precisely because they excise from a global perspective that with which they are concerned.

Taoism has many insights to contribute to such comprehension, especially through the classical function of the *I Ching* as a [pattern of decision-making cycles](#) valued in the traditions of Chinese governance. Of related interest within that framework is the sense that any need to make a decision effectively signals mistaken "subunderstanding". The traditional tale of [Zhuang Zhou](#) (aka Chuang Tzu) as the [dexterous butcher](#) is also of relevance with respect to decision-making -- appropriately cited by Csikszentmihalyi with respect to flow, as discussed by [Eric Schwitzgebel](#) (*Flow and the Not-So-Skillful Zhuangzi? The Splintered Mind: reflections in philosophy of psychology, broadly construed*, 2 March 2007).

Aesthetic implications: In a period when populism is deprecated by the conventions of democratic governance, missing is any exploration of the connectivity provided by the mysterious preoccupation of those whose "voices" are articulated within those movements. This can be readily recognized in their degree of cognitive investment in music, song and dance. Recognition of this aesthetic engagement, and its cognitive and physical embodiment, merits new consideration in the light of the alienation from the preoccupations and agreements of governance articulated in unreadable thousand-page texts.

The poorly recognized relevance of aesthetics to the "art" of decision-making, can be variously explored (*Aesthetics of Governance in the Year 2490*, 1990; *A Singable Earth Charter, EU Constitution or Global Ethic?* 2006; *Poetry-making and Policy-making: Arranging a Marriage between Beauty and the Beast*, 1993). In the language of the peoples, the issue might be explored in terms of the "vibes" with which they are able to resonate -- in cognitive terms. What indeed might render the distinctive processes of governance attractive, as suggested by multi-part singing and polyphony (*Imagining Attractive Global Governance: questioning possibilities and constraints of well-boundedness*, 2013).

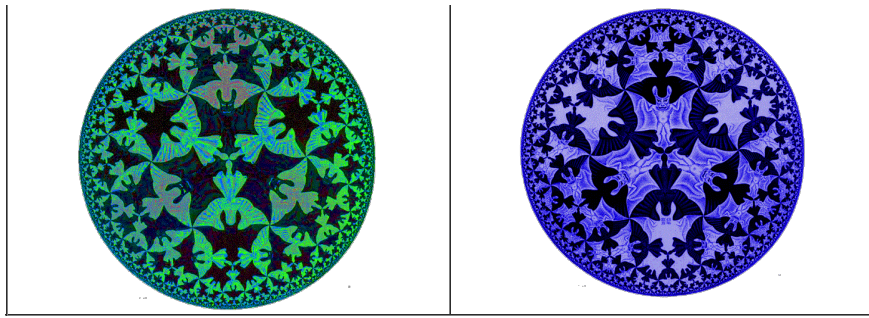
Escher and hyperbolic space: Given the important role that the the art of [M. C. Escher](#) played in early promotion of explorations of hyperbolic configurations, a valuable introduction to hyperbolic geometry is provided, with extensive illustrations, on the *Math and the Art of M C Escher* Wiki (at [Hyperbolic Geometry](#) and at [Euclidean and Non-Euclidean Geometry](#)). The argument may be further developed through mathematical consideration of the [Poincaré disk](#) and the [tessellation of the hyperbolic plane](#) with which Escher's work is so closely associated.

How people are able to experience hyperbolic space is essentially problematic since hyperbolic tessellations cannot be adequately "seen". They can only be "represented" in Euclidean form by "trickery". A common way of doing this is on the Poincaré disk, which is a finite circle that represents the boundary of the (infinite) hyperbolic plane that is contained within. In 3D a sphere lends itself to analogous representation.

Recent astrophysical research by Stephen Hawking and colleagues has shown that the universe may have the same surreal geometry as some of art's most mind-boggling images (Lisa Grossman, *Hawking's 'Escher-verse' could be theory of everything*, *New Scientist*, 9 June 2012). This offers a way of reconciling the geometric demands of string theory, a still-hypothetical "theory of everything", with the universe as observed -- through a negatively-curved Escher-like [hyperbolic geometry](#) (essentially a [hyperbolic space](#)). Their results rely on a mathematical twist previously considered impossible.

The possibility that analogous insights might be relevant to global decision-making is discussed separately (*Global Communication Patterns in a Hyperbolic Space of Negative Curvature*, 2016; *Mathematical theology as source of mnemonic clues to global comprehension*, 2016). The argument there is most succinctly indicated by the following animations -- highlighting the extent of the often-stated global preoccupation with the battle between "good" and "evil", exemplified by the engagement with any opponent, mostly notably terrorism (*Evil Rules: guidelines for engaging in Armageddon now*, 2015).

Experimental animations indicating the "dance" between angelic and demonic forms	
Based on the classic Circle Limit IV (Heaven and Hell) (1960) of M.C. Escher	
Coloured to highlight demons (dark)	Coloured to highlight angels (dark)



Animations suggestive of the dynamics of hyperbolic space	
Dynamics of the Angelique ?	Dynamics of the Demonique ?

The Poincaré representation (animations below) is especially valuable as an aid to comprehension of the process of subdivision of fundamental, subtle insight (at the centre) -- a decision -- and the multiple, tangible manifestations (at the periphery). The work of Escher has of course been central to consideration of self-reference by Douglas Hofstadter (*Gödel, Escher, Bach: an Eternal Golden Braid*, 1979).

Hypothetically, might the UN Millennium Development Goals be better understood as entities "dancing" in hyperbolic space -- namely one of negative curvature? Even more intriguing is the possibility that comprehension of such curvature may prove to be fundamental to meaningful engagement with the dominance of hyperbole in a post-truth context (*Hyperaction through Hypercomprehension and Hyperdrive: necessary complement to proliferation of hypermedia in hypersociety*, 2006).

Hofstadter's later work is of course relevant to any consideration of the flexibility offered by flow, especially when centered on the essential (*Fluid Concepts and Creative Analogies*, 1995; *Surfaces and Essences: Analogy as the Fuel and Fire of Thinking*, 2013).

Comprehension of subtlety: Speculating further on the pattern of mutually entangled cognitive "hierarchies" (above), the underlying subtlety can be explored otherwise (*El-Attractor -- Timeless Complex Dynamic: Health, Wealth, Stealth / Youth, Couth, Truth*, 2013). Especially significant to decision-making is the complex nexus of subjectivity and objectivity variously labelled as "self-actualization" and "spiritual", with implications of much higher orders of "self-reference" (*Engaging with Insight of a Higher Order: reconciling complexity and simplicity through memorable metaphor*, 2014).

As explored in the latter, and in the mythology of the Holy Grail, there is potentially a major challenge to recognition of any insight of any "higher order" -- especially its tendency to take the most modestly obvious forms. This has been explored with respect to religious anticipation of some form of Messiah, as well as in the encounter with extraterrestrials of advanced intelligence and culture (*Self-reflective Embodiment of Transdisciplinary Integration (SETI): the universal criterion of species maturity?* 2008; *Sensing Epiterrestrial Intelligence (SETI): embedding of "extraterrestrials" in episystemic dynamics?* 2013). The challenge is even evident with respect to recognition of any form of super-giftedness -- in the absence of formal training and qualifications, as with Srinivasa Ramanujan.

A welcome contributions to such reflection is the thesis of Samuel George Mahaffy (*Relational Presence: the spatiality of breakthrough decision making through a relational constructionist lens*, Taos Institute, 2012). His conclusions are framed by research indicative of the vastness of available visual discourse about decision-making as indicated by the following table.

Summary of process for searching images of decision-making on the web to collect data for mapping visual discourse (reproduction of Table 4.6 of Mahaffy, 2012).		
Key word(s) searched	Number of images identified	Types of images available
"decision making"	2,140,000,000	Process maps, flow charts steps in decision making, symbolic representations of change choices, figures and cartoon figures of humans making decisions
"decision making process"	443,000,000	Similar to types of images above with predominance of flow charts and diagrams of process steps
"decision makers"	205,000,000	Mostly figure representations or pictures of human decision makers. Images are predominantly of male decision makers
"participatory decision making"	1,350,000	People-oriented pictures with more representation of groups, covers of books, flow charts
"appreciative inquiry"	142,000	Flow charts, spirals, pictures of books and resource materials, various depictions of the 4-D and 5-D process

This offers compelling indications that the visual discourses represent significant contrasting assumptions and world-views. Mahaffy concludes by suggesting the abandonment of reference to the problematic term "sacred" -- as indicative of that place where organizations

make breakthrough decisions reflecting a shared higher purpose. He suggests that this be replaced by a sense of "relational presence".

Paradoxical cognitive implications in global transformation

Blind spots and black holes: There is however a sense that global civilization is embedded within a complex of flows which elude collective awareness and comprehension, consistent with the above-mentioned arguments of John Ralston Saul (*The Unconscious Civilization*, 1995). As indicated above, the hidden gateway to global transformation may well be "through" that to which attention is least accorded. This could be understood otherwise as the unasked question, effectively a "deadly question" (*Abuse of Faith in Governance: mystery of the unasked question*, 2009; *World Futures Conference as Catastrophic Question: from performance to morphogenesis and transformation*, 2013).

The classical Taoist metaphor of a *gateless gate* is especially appropriate, however limited the capacity to recognize it (*Configuring a Set of Zen Koan as a Wisdom Container: formatting the Gateless Gate for Twitter*, 2012). Such failure may itself be consistent with the arguments of Terrence Deacon with respect to "what is missing". For Deacon: *Ironically and enigmatically, something missing is missing* (*Incomplete Nature: how mind emerged from matter*, 2012).

As with many forms of creativity, the art of change may prove to be subject to strangely aesthetic constraints -- unrelated to conscious decision-making and possibly partially acknowledged as surreal. What may be deplored as systemic neglect could well prove to be a dynamic essential to the failure of outmoded dependencies -- an aspect of the "choice" addressed by Jared Diamond (*Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed*, 2005).

In this sense there is huge irony to the role of governance implied by the function of "oversight" and righteous dependence on it. As equally indicative of negligence (and a blind spot), it shares ambiguity with other terms of relevance to decision-making -- "sanction" being a prime example. Are many abuses tacitly sanctioned by government and other authorities? Those bodies currently claiming authority in global governance might then be fruitfully compared to the *Artful Dodger* imagined by Charles Dickens, or to recognition of archetypal *tricksters*.

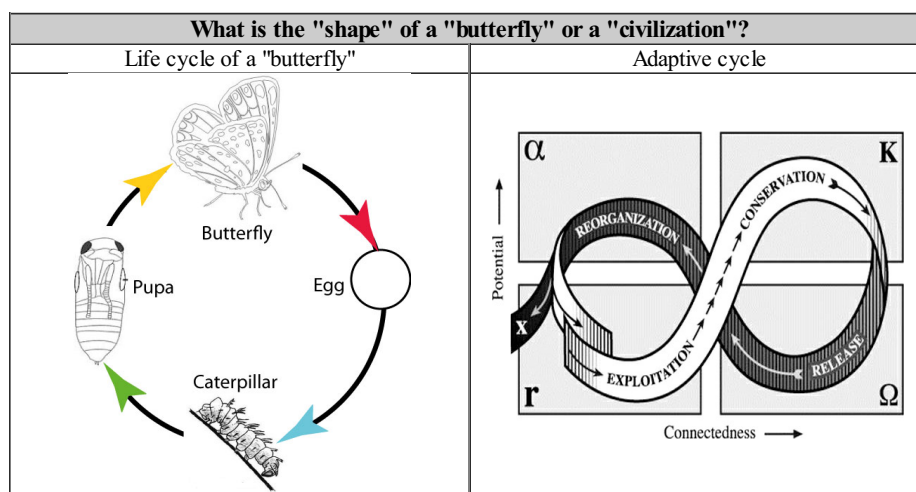
Biomimetics and epimimetics: The argument can be given focus through the life cycle of the butterfly and its use as a metaphor, as separately discussed (*Engendering shape under threat of global catastrophe*, 2015; *Cyclic dynamic of emergent order versus States of emergency ordered spasmodically*, 2015; *Epimimetics, biomimetics, epimimetics and biomemetics*, 2010).

How might the caterpillar sense the failure of its outmoded pattern of organization in anticipating its transformation into a pupa -- or the pupa, in subsequently reconfiguring itself as a butterfly?

Particularly suggestive is the light of the reference to polyhedra (above), is the discovery by Buckminster Fuller of a cycle of transformation between certain spherically symmetrical forms. This was nicknamed by him as the *jitterbug transformation*, understood as providing a unifying dynamic. Much significance is attached to the doubling and quadrupling of edges that occurs, when a cuboctahedron is collapsed through icosahedral, octahedral and tetrahedral stages, then inside-outed and re-expanded in a complementary fashion. Is this indicative of the "rewiring" cycle of the butterfly?

Focus on the apparently final shape of a "butterfly" distracts from any question about its changing shape and morphogenesis. Whereas there is careful thought about the "*shape of the universe*", there is seemingly little thought about the "shape of global civilization" -- or of a human being, for that matter (aide from concerns about obesity).

Expressed otherwise, how does one "cognitively ride" the *adaptive cycle* in which one is implicated, as framed by the *Resilience Alliance*?



Although use has been made of the metaphor with respect to the transformation of society, there is value in recognizing the degree to which aspects of the metaphor have been adopted as appropriate to personal experience. Extensive reference has been made to *cocoon* (namely the pupal casing formed by the caterpillar). Thus *cocooning*, namely staying inside one's home, is valued as insulation from perceived danger, rather than responding to it by "going out" to meet it.

The sense of an "egg" can be variously recognized in terms of aspirations to global peaceful resolution of problematic experience, reminiscent of final embodiment of a goal and the regeneration this may offer. Curiously forgotten in appreciation of the metaphor is the fact that the butterfly lays many eggs, suggesting the need to recognize multiple framings of globality -- and "peace". Also significant in

that respect is that the eggs may be of a variety of forms, as with the wing colouration of the many species of butterfly.

The symbolic appeal is also evident in relation to the "bubble" in which people increasingly dwell in an information society, however this is to be distinguished from a cocoon (Mostafa El-Bermawy, *Your Filter Bubble is Destroying Democracy*, *Wired*, 18 November 2016). Curiously relevant is the preoccupation with legacy, and the manner in which this may involve laying "memetic eggs" and "planting seeds", with their various reproductive associations.

More challenging is the "caterpillar" phase -- perhaps valued as the "many little feet" enabling social movements? The potential of a caterpillar as a political metaphor has been the subject of commentary relating to the transformation of a consumption-obsessed society (Eric Carle, *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*, 1969; *Seven Critical Readings of The Very Hungry Caterpillar*, *Anglophonism*, 7 August 2012; Marina Lewycka, *The Caterpillar with an Appetite for Philosophy*, 26 September 2007; G. Anderson, *A Marxist interpretation of 'The Very Hungry Caterpillar'*, 6 May 2011).

More intriguing is the manner in which the 8 pairs of feet (10 plus 6) are coordinated to enable movement. Could the metaphor be suggestively extended to encompass the crudely coordinated distinctive models by which a consumer society is effectively governed -- perhaps as exemplified by the principles of the UN Millennium Development Goals? This is all the more relevant in that the transformation required for the emergence of a butterfly involves a rewiring to give 3 pairs of feet and 2 pairs of wings (which have a figure-of-eight movement).

With respect to the [metaphor of metamorphosis](#), the caterpillar is a consumer *par excellence*, as noted by [Elisabet Sahtouris](#):

A caterpillar can eat up to three hundred times its own weight in a day, devastating many plants in the process, continuing to eat until it's so bloated that it hangs itself up and goes to sleep... If you want a butterfly world, don't step on the caterpillar, but join forces with other imaginal cells to build a better future for all!

That said, has the fundamental point of the metaphor been missed? How does the butterfly "re-member" the cycle in which it is variously embedded, as recently explored (Brandon Keim, *Butterflies Remember What They Learned as Caterpillars*, *Wired*, 5 March 2008; *Despite metamorphosis, moths hold on to memories from their days as a caterpillar*, *The Conversation*, 1 August 2014).

Misframed as the desirable outcome, is the metaphor used to focus on an eternal condition of happy indulgence -- anticipating an escape from the wheel of life (*Societal Learning and the Erosion of Collective Memory*, 1980). Does it reinforce preoccupation with "flying away" from problems of the planet, as exemplified by enthusiasm for space travel (*Challenges More Difficult for Science than Going to Mars*, 2014).

Also missing from selective focus on the metaphor are the implications of butterflies as a vital food source for many: wasps, ants, parasitic flies, birds, snakes, toads, rats, lizards, dragonflies and even monkeys (*What Eats Butterflies?*). There is also the implication of the now-deprecated passion for butterfly collection and display, with the threatening possibility that further interest by extraterrestrials in humanity might be similarly inspired (*Wings of Desire: why the hobby of Butterfly collecting is over - it's all about conservation now*, *The Independent*, 10 August 2015). And, mixing metaphors provocatively, what of the so-called [butterfly effect](#) of [chaos theory](#)?

Surrealism: The relevance of a surreal perspective has been separately argued (*Surreal Nature of Current Global Governance as Experienced*, 2015).

The surreal has been remarkably exemplified in a country especially proud of its philosophical heritage. There the outgoing prime minister has been responsible for framing a comprehensive strategy for the detection and eradication of "radicalisation". Simultaneously the primary candidate for the presidency has specifically identified his core strategy as "radical" (*Radical Innovators Beware -- in the arts, sciences and philosophy -- terrifying implications of radical new deradicalisation initiative in France*, 2016; *François Fillon, 'Radical Conservative' Who Could Be French President*, *Agence France-Presse*, 22 November 2016). The outgoing prime minister is also a candidate for that position.

Given the current appeal of the surreal (noted above) as being *marked by the intense irrational reality of a dream*, "cognitively riding the adaptive cycle" might be fruitfully informed by reflection on the famous Chinese tale of the [butterfly dream of Chuang Tzu](#) -- wondering if he was a man who dreamed of being a butterfly or a butterfly dreaming of being a man.

Such considerations reinforce the sense in which the "art" of non-decision-making -- going with the flow -- is better understood in dynamic terms rather than framed statically. As argued by [Francisco Varela](#), it would seem to be a subtle process of [enactive cognition](#) (*Laying Down a Path in Walking: essays on enactive cognition*, 1997).

The associated paradoxes merit continuing reflection (*Paradoxes of Engaging with the Ultimate in any Guise: living life penultimately*, 2012; *Living as an Imaginal Bridge between Worlds: global implications of "betwixt and between" and liminality*, 2011; *World Introversion through Paracycling: global potential for living sustainably "outside-inside"*, 2013).

Strange attraction of "collapse"

A strange attractor -- strangely located? The widespread use of the butterfly lifecycle is clearly a fruitful metaphor of civilizational transformation in many respects. The major difficulty would seem to be in its use to frame that winged entity as the desirable, culminating endpoint of what is thereby transformed into an essentially linear process.

The implications of egg-laying, and the disappearance of the winged entity, are then lost. This is especially problematic given the track record of the disappearance of many civilizations which considered themselves to be global and eternal -- and potentially able to fly. Metaphorically speaking, this is suggested by widespread symbolic use of a bird as their core symbol of identity (most notably eagles) --

despite the obvious challenge of the spastic movement of their political "wings", as can be variously explored (*Counteracting Extremes Enabling Normal Flying: insights for global governance from birds on the wing and the dodo*, 2015).

Irrespective of this "illusion", rather than understanding the butterfly lifecycle in terms of the dynamics and geometry of a cycle, there is then a case for understanding it in terms of the topology and dynamics of a torus. This is effectively a container for the process of morphogenesis along which the shapeshifting entity travels. As an experiential tunnel this is readily comprehensible from an individual or group perspective, however this may be understood by an evolving civilization.

Such a torus clarifies the distinction between the axis of the tunnel (as providing the daily sense of direction and constraints) and the axis through the central hole. It is **around** the latter axis that the life of the shapeshifting entity travels (as with a planet around a sun), although it is not defined to the same degree as by the constraining experience of the daily tunnel -- and the hopeful prospect of a "light at the end of the tunnel". The toroidal cycle is then appropriately reminiscent of the symbolism of the **Ouroboros**, preoccupations with the **wheel of life**, and the myth of **eternal return**. Daily experience is then readily understood in terms of reference to the above-mentioned constraining "tyranny of small decisions".

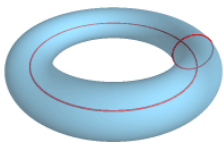
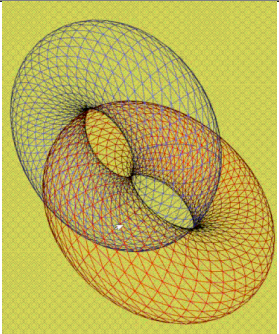
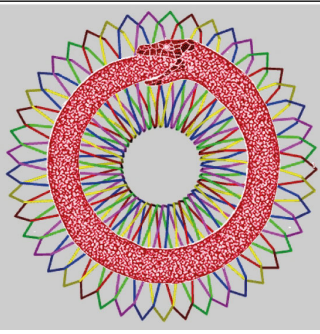
Framed as a torus, the cycle as a whole then effectively defines a central locus which is cognitively "missing" from its topology, otherwise experienced as relatively tangible, if elusive, as a tunnel. A remarkable indication of the challenge of recognizing this central locus is offered in mathematical terms by Ron Atkin (*Multidimensional Man; can man live in 3-dimensional space?*, 1981), as discussed separately (*Comprehension: social organization determined by incommunicability of insights*, 1995).

Atkin uses a colour triangle to illustrate his argument -- to be recognized in this context as the simplest approximation to a torus. At the simplest level of awareness, red, green or blue can be separately recognized (at the vertices). At an intermediate level, colour combinations (red/green, etc) can be recognized (along the edges). The combination of white (red/green/blue), as the centre of the triangle, calls for comprehension of a higher order -- enabling memory of the triangle as whole, and the capacity to travel cognitively around its geometry.

Also elusive, but to a higher degree (if only as indicated by the butterfly), is what the cycle enables -- the direction in which the shapeshifting entity travels (along the central axis of the torus) as a consequence of many such cycles, and the process which engenders such "movement". The movement may be understood in terms of spiral dynamics, although this also needs to be distinguished from any helical movement along the tunnel. These contrasting movements are usefully distinguished in the case of the solar system.

The challenge to comprehension can be partially clarified through a combination of the images shown below. That on the right emphasizes the sense in which some analogue to a "magnetic field" is engendered. Embedding the Ouroboros within a helical coil recalls the current preoccupation with the dynamics of the so-called "plasma snake" in the operation of a toroidal nuclear fusion reactor (Kathy Kincade, *Taming Plasma Fusion Snakes: supercomputer simulations move fusion energy closer to reality*, Berkely Lab, 24 January 2014; L. Delgado-Aparicio, et al, *Formation and stability of impurity "snakes" in tokamak plasmas*, MIT Plasma Science and Fusion Center, 2012).

Clearly of interest is what this may suggest or imply in cognitive terms (*Enactivating a Cognitive Fusion Reactor Imaginal Transformation of Energy Resourcing (ITER-8)*, 2006). There is then a case for a form of "hypercomputing", in the light of the "oracle" envisaged by Alan Turing (*Imagining Order as Hypercomputing: operating an information engine through meta-analogy*, 2014). The central animation (below) is suggestive of an intriguing form of entanglement, as discussed separately (*Interlocking Tori: combining the two alternative representations*, 2006). Rather than framing life in terms of the need for riding a single adaptive cycle, it suggests the possibility that this may call for skills reminiscent of riding a "bicycle" -- rather than a monocycle.

Torus-Sphere transformation (animation)	Interlocking dynamics of two tori (animation)	Psychosocial "magnetic field" engendered by the Ouroboros? <i>(image in preparation)</i>
		
Reproduced from <i>Wikipedia</i> , made by User:Kieff	X3D and VRML models (kindly developed by Sergey Bederov of Cortona3D).	see animated variant below (left)

The experiential issue is further clarified by metaphorical use of such geometry in relation to the "sense of life" or of civilization, given any sense of "pointlessness". The sense of "point" can be associated with anticipation of the "light at the end of the tunnel" as a goal or target -- towards which points may be scored. The symbolic value identified with a globe is notably evident in the design of various ultimate awards, as with the Hollywood **Golden Globe Award** and the **FIFA World Cup Trophy** -- perhaps to be recognized as **Holy Grail** surrogates. The conflation of "globe" and "egg" is evident.

The sense of point can be further associated with "appointment" -- notably as an "appointment with destiny". In contrast there is of

course the sense of "disappointment" -- exacerbating any sense of pointlessness. Clearly this gives focus to any question of "missing the point" -- and of hopefulness misplaced as a consequence of inappropriate hope-mongering. The animation on the left (above) is helpful in indicating the potential conflation of a global target and cyclic insight as framed by a torus. The argument has been elaborated separately (*Embodiment of a Way Round Pointlessness?* 2012; *Way Round Cognitive Ground Zero and Pointlessness? Embodying the geometry of fundamental cognitive dynamics*, 2012).

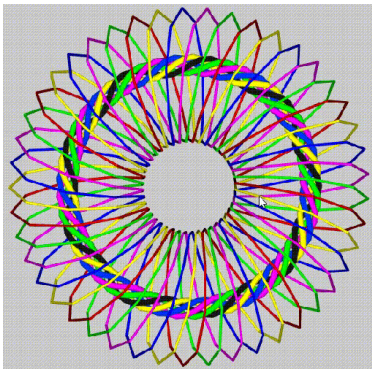
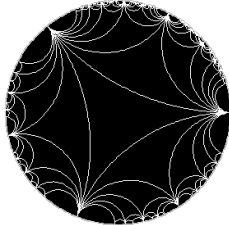
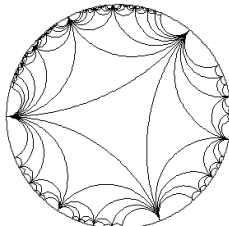
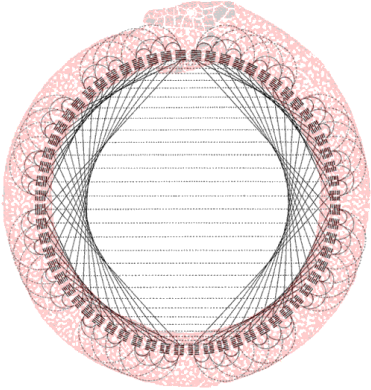
What is missed in this way can be related to the argument of Deacon (above). The point missed can then be usefully associated with the experientially elusive central hole of the torus (variously framed above). A sense of the missing can be further clarified by the subtle arguments for the significance of holes, as elaborated by **Roberto Casati** and **Achille C. Varzi** (*Holes and Other Superficialities*, 1994) and separately discussed (*Cognitive Mystery of Holes, Lacunae and Incompleteness*, 2014). These considerations engage explicitly with the borderlines of metaphysics, everyday geometry, and the theory of perception (as reviewed by Steven A. Gross, *What's in a Hole? The Harvard Review of Philosophy*, 1994).

Such considerations can be fruitfully associated with the mysterious nature of black holes for astrophysics. As a metaphor, a black hole is helpful in emphasizing the sense of a vortex engendered by the torus -- with which a form of collapse is naturally associated (as widely described by astrophysics). Traversing a black hole, and its function as a portal, has been imaginatively explored by science fiction. The cognitive mystery has been otherwise framed through a film offering a sense of "*Down the Rabbit Hole*" (2004).

As a metaphor framing individual or civilizational evolution, a black hole is naturally associated with the extensive discussion of singularity, however this may be experienced (or variously cultivated by meditation). Especially intriguing is how this may be reframed by the challenge to comprehension of the negative curvature of hyperbolic space, as mentioned above.

Various aspects of the issues above have been speculatively discussed separately from an aesthetic perspective (*The-O Ring and The Bull Ring as Spectacular Archetypes: dramatic correlation of theatre, theory, theorem, theology, and theosophy*, 2014). Beyond the obvious relationship of their prefixes, the issue is therefore whether and how *Theorem*, *Theory*, *Theology*, and *Theosophy* might indeed be related in some form of implicit cognitive "The-O ring" through a pattern of aesthetic correspondences.

As a challenge to the imagination in this context, the Ouroboros is further discussed separately (*Explanation vs. Inplination: multiversal embodiment through the Ouroboros*, 2012). The psychosocial implications of any "magnetic field" engendered -- especially its rotation -- also lend themselves to discussion in the light of the renowned creativity of **Nikola Tesla** (*Reimagining Tesla's Creativity through Technomimicry: psychosocial empowerment by imagining charged conditions otherwise*, 2015).

Suggestive associations of the Ouroboros		
schematically embedded within helical coils indicative of an engendered "magnetic field" (variation of the image on the right above)	View along the toroidal tunnel travelled by the Ouroboros -- using Poincaré Disk (discussed above) of detailed decisions at the circumference and the Biblical narrow path at the centre	with 64 interrelated conditions of change encoded by the <i>I Ching</i> , as an indication of the circular configuration of the variety of pathways of choice and decision
	 	
Interactive variants in X3D and VRML formats	Adapted from a Wolfram Demonstration Project	Animated variant on YouTube

The animation on the left derives from a range of animation experiments discussed separately (*Visualization in 3D of Dynamics of Toroidal Helical Coils -- in quest of optimum designs for a Concordian Mandala*, 2016). A complex animated variant of the image on the right, with many additional visual features, is derived from an earlier set of experiments (*Dynamic Exploration of Value Configurations: interrelating traditional cultural symbols through animation*, 2008).

That animation is suggestive of a view "along" the toroidal tunnel, as with the plasma snake of a fusion reactor (constrained by the set of magnets in its wall). That image calls for the Ouroboros to be presented orthogonally to what is shown. The animation is more suggestive of how the controlling "magnets" in the container wall can be recognized in terms of the "tyranny of small decisions" through which the "wriggling" of the snake is managed.

The Poincaré Disk animations are also indicative of views "along" the tunnel, with the additional implication of the extreme shortness of attention span at the periphery (associated with those small decisions), in contrast to the far longer attention span at the centre

(encompassing the toroidal cycle as a whole). Such framing then distinguishes the subtle memorability of longer term cycles, as separately discussed (*Engaging Macrohistory through the Present Moment*, 2004). Presumably it is embodying this perspective that best reframes the art of non-decision-making.

There is a provocative metaphorical comparison to be made between "decision" and "conduction" (given its leadership associations), with the latter implying continuity in contrast with the discontinuity introduced by the former.

"Conventional" (Technical)	"Unconventional" (Aesthetic)
decision	non-decision
conduction	superconduction
"small decisions"	"flow"
leadership	self-organizing leadership

In the light of such a comparison, "small" decision-making associated with the tunnel cross-section is to be radically distinguished from the superconduction associated with flow around the torus, along the tunnel. It is of course the case that superconductivity is one of the characteristics of the plasma in a fusion reactor. This argument can be explored otherwise (*Circulation of the Light: essential metaphor of global sustainability?* 2010; *Circulation of the light: What flows? What circulates? Cryptocurrency?* 2014). Clearly there is a very particular challenge to reconciling the decisions of the present moment with macrohistory.

Welcoming "collapse"? The very absence of joined-up thinking can be welcomed (rather than deplored) as the requisite disconnectivity heralding transformation -- effectively morphogenesis. As for the butterfly, collapse could indeed be recognized as the upside of down (Thomas Homer-Dixon, *The Upside of Down: catastrophe, creativity, and the renewal of civilization*, 2006). The need for such fluidity to enable morphogenesis suggests that excessively joined-up thinking in governance can easily give rise to the kinds of clunkiness characteristic of spastic movement -- contrasting with the nimbleness otherwise appreciated. There is clearly some irony to metaphorical use of [liquidity](#) and [solvency](#), perceived as essential to global financial operations.

Joined-up thinking can thus be seen as a constraint on the fruitful change which passes through a phase otherwise framed as "collapse". Deprecation of "corruption" and "wicked problems" fails to recognize the emergence of the new shape they enable. In whatever form it takes, such "negativity" merits a degree of appreciation in cyclic terms (Tibi Puiu, *How caterpillars gruesomely turn into butterflies*, *ZME Science*, 7 January 2015). The descriptor is a reminder of its use as a slogan in other contexts of relevance (*Gruesome but Necessary: Global Governance in the 21st Century? Extreme normality as indicator of systemic negligence*, 2011). In relation to such issues, consideration could also be given to the paradoxical potential of negative strategies (*Liberating Provocations: use of negative and paradoxical strategies*, 2005).

Such considerations resulted in an earlier focus on the problematic interlocking of cycles embodying so-called [wicked problems](#) -- calling for cyclic comprehension, as discussed separately (*Encycling Problematic Wickedness for Potential Humanity*, 2014; *Encycling wickidity in the light of polyhedral viruses and their mutation*, 2015). This approach is consistent with the cycles inherent in spherically symmetrical polyhedra (as discussed above).

What a relief ! The fewer the global decisions effectively made the better -- whether by the international community and world leaders, or otherwise? Their "incompetence" merits the most thoughtful appreciation as precursor of a "new shape".

The aesthetic can be evoked in a quite distinctive manner with "universal" appeal consistent with appreciation of the surreal, namely with the humour circulating widely on the web (*Humour and Play-Fullness: essential integrative processes in governance, religion and transdisciplinarity*, 2005; *Humour and International Challenges: augmenting problem and strategy comprehension through psycho-cultural catalysts*, 1998).

<p align="center">Key to the current state of entrapment of global civilization?</p> <p align="center">A trap is a function of the nature of the trapped</p> <p align="center">(Geoffrey Vickers: <i>Freedom in a Rocking Boat: changing values in an unstable society</i>, 1972).</p>

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