Planetary Praxis: On Rhyming Hope and History

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History says, Don't hope
On this side of the grave.
But then, once in a lifetime
The longed-for tidal wave
Of justice can rise up,
And hope and history rhyme.

Seamus Heaney, The Cure at Troy

OUR COMMON PREDICAMENT

These days, when thoughts turn to the state of the world, one need not be a Cassandra to fear for the future. It is enough to be alert to the reports of new blows to our wounded biosphere; of a globalization juggernaut transforming the economic order and unsettling billions of lives; and of a crowded planet cleaved by widening cultural, social, and political fissures. As this drumbeat of disquieting news stirs apprehension, the feeble response of the world community saps hope. A Zeitgeist of despair, nourished by its twin ingredients of fear and powerlessness, spreads in a public growing more attuned to our global predicament.

In the world of development policy, the expectation gradient has sloped downward as well. A mere two decades ago, when the Brundtland Commission injected the notion of sustainable development into the mainstream of policy discourse, optimism buoyed the atmosphere (WCED, 1987). The title of the Commission's seminal treatise – *Our Common Future* – caught the then idealistic mood: we can align economic growth – the dominant aim of conventional strategies – with the equally important goals of

protecting the earth we share and alleviating the poverty of those with whom we share it. The ringing moral imperative at the heart of sustainability – our responsibility to pass to future generations a world undiminished by our hand – struck a resonant chord in many, inspiring the work of a rising wave of young professionals and activists.

Of course, sober minds understood that the journey to sustainability would be no cakewalk. Formidable barriers blocked the way to "our common future:" vested interests, timid politicians, fractious geopolitics, myopic mindsets, and a culture of greed. Even as the Brundtland Commission was conducting its work and holding its public hearings in the mid-1980s, a decidedly unsustainable form of market-led globalization gained momentum. While the paradigm of sustainability advanced at the cutting edge of development theory, a growth-oriented political philosophy consolidated at the core of development practice. Placing rights over duties and individual entrepreneurship over our common future, the neo-liberal agenda of deregulation, privatization, and free trade unleashed a blizzard of economic growth unfettered by the competing priorities of environment preservation and poverty alleviation.

Still, the cogency of the case for sustainable development, and the patent risks of inaction, seemed reasons enough to look forward with a sense of possibility. Preparation began for a major international meeting to galvanize international political momentum for the new paradigm. The 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio do Janeiro– the Earth Summit – combined two watershed meetings in one: an official assembly of world leaders and a huge coming out party for global civil society. The Summit produced Agenda 21, its nonbinding international plan of action, and two formal treaties: the Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Convention on Biodiversity. In failing to attain firm international commitments on social and environmental goals, the meeting disappointed the bolder aims of its organizers. On the other hand, it did succeed in bestowing legitimacy on sustainable development as a policy framework for the debates that lay ahead and launching high-level negotiating processes on critical issues.

In the wake of the great event, though, fealty to sustainable development principles tended to be honored more in rhetoric than in practice. Instruments of good intentions proliferated – a long

series of international meetings, a United Nations Commission for Sustainable Development, countless national commissions – and the literature on sustainability burgeoned. The world was awash in action plans but bereft of action. Scientific reports could clarify the challenges, policy studies could offer strategies, local Agenda 21 efforts could make their communities greener, and civil society could win this or that battle, but together they could not deflect global development from its unsustainable path. The dream of sustainable development seemed no match for the reality of unsustainable growth.

The ambient mood in the world of environment and development grew more cautious and skeptical. A decade after Brundtland, a blue ribbon panel convened by the National Academy of Sciences published a report on sustainable development (BSD, 1998). The title, *Our Common Journey*, suggested its thesis that sustainability was best understood as a tentative process of adaptation and social learning, rather than a "common future" that we could specify and head for. By the time of the World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002 ("Rio plus 10"), the sense of lost opportunity and lost ground was palpable, more like "Rio minus 10" in a memorable phrase of environmental critics.

Now, with another decade taking its toll on the health of the earth and the psyches of its inhabitants, appraisals of the future have turned apocalyptic: *Our Final Hour, The Revenge of Gaia, The Coming Plague, The End of Food*, and *Countdown to Apocalypse* to name a few recent books. While some contemporary authors are excitable prophets of doom, others are circumspect scholars who have weighed the evidence carefully before putting pen to paper, sounding the alarm only reluctantly. When they speak the language of catastrophe, the world best listen.

Indeed, the tasks before us are immense: muting the risks that threaten social and ecological continuity; adjusting our values, behaviors, and institutions for a world growing more connected and fragile; mobilizing cultural and political resources for fundamental social change. We live in an extraordinary time, a turbulent interregnum between the familiar world of the past and a very different one in the making. So far, though, we seem to be flying nearly blind toward a dubious future without benefit of roadmap or clarity of destination.

Shaping world civilization in this century will test our mettle as individuals, as nations, and as a species. Where great transformations of the past have tended to unfold gradually, our planetary transformation is compressed into mere decades: our grandparents were present at its birth and our grandchildren will witness its outcome. Where earlier episodes were circumscribed geographically, this one spans the whole earth; where immediate human interests have spurred action in the past, we are called to respond to the needs of distant people, generations, and species.

The distressing chasm between an emerging reality of staggering risk and our collective ability to change course, between the global "is" and "ought," is a breeding ground for pessimism about the future. Yet, pessimism misses a critical point: in deepening relationships of global interdependence, history is unraveling old verities, norms, and mindsets. It is thereby laying down the warp and weft of a new foundation for cultural reinvention and collective hope: humanity and the earth are becoming a single community of fate.

This historical circumstance is the sine qua non for transcending the fragmentary ideology of the Modern Era, its fractious political arrangements, and its truncated vision of civilization. The ethos of modernity – individualism, consumerism, nationalism, domination of nature – once was well-suited to the exigencies of emergent capitalism, an emancipatory challenge to a stifling traditionalism. Progressive no more, the modernist mindset clashes with the imperatives of an ascendant global reality, hobbling the evolution of modes of thought and association attuned to the potential of this emerging reality.

Although still nascent, a new ethos is brewing, one that is rooted in the extended interdependencies now becoming more palpable. Our linked fates – North and South, rich and poor, people and planet, living and unborn – opens space for a correlated enlargement of human consciousness and political culture. An alternative suite of values – ecological awareness, human solidarity, quality-of-life, global citizenship – is spreading among an expanding global subculture, along with new forms of transboundary association and action.

These developments adumbrate a possibility latent in emerging historical conditions: a tolerant, just, and ecological global civilization could emerge from the existential uncertainty we now face. But possibility is not probability. A salutary transition is feasible only if

human thought and action rise to embrace one human family on one integral planet. Hope rests with a tenable response to the question of historical agency – what social actors can carry forward such a transformation? The search is on for a compelling planetary praxis, an evolving theory and practice to guide the journey and forge the path to our common future.

SYSTEMIC CHALLENGE

Immersed in a rapidly changing world, it is difficult to discern the larger pattern that unifies and gives meaning to the extraordinary changes unfolding around us, much like creatures of the sea, who cannot perceive the vast and roiling ocean in which they swim. Fortunately, we are not fish (if unfortunately for them). We can exercise our intellect and imagination to broaden our panorama and extend our vision. Exploring the contemporary global predicament takes an integrated perspective and a far-reaching outlook.

The planetary phase

Since the 1980s, the threads of global connectivity have been lengthening, strengthening, and thickening in every domain of human activity (Anderson, 2001). Yet, discussion of planet-scale phenomena has proceeded in largely parallel discourses, all introduced by the modifier "global": economy, corporations, finance, environment, communication, governance, civil society culture, terrorism. As the literature balloons in each of these arenas, there has been insufficient emphasis on their interactions and the common processes that underlie and connect them.

This is not to belittle focusing on the separate dimensions of globalization. Indeed, each deserves its own spotlight, for each is rife with novel challenges for the analyst, the policy-maker, and the citizen. Transnational corporations have created far-flung webs of production nodes and distribution channels. International finance has generated a bewildering array of instruments for speculative investment. The human transformation of nature has reached the level of the biosphere, the thin planetary mantle that supports all life. The revolution in information and communication technology has compressed cultural and physical distance, penetrated remote

societies, and enabled cross-border networks and communities to proliferate. Governments have created new international structures of governance, their number and diversity synchronized to the appearance of new challenges. Global-scale non-governmental associations, cultural influences, and fissures roil identities, at once dissolving difference and amplifying antagonism.

Yet, viewed through narrow academic or journalistic apertures each of these macro-developments can appear as a largely independent phenomenon. Looking instead through a wide conceptual lens brings their interdependence and interactions into focus; taking a long historical view reveals their common genesis. They are best perceived as separate manifestations of a larger world-historic process: the emergence of an integral global social-ecological system. The many forms of "globalization" are rising like the saplings of a young forest rooted in a common substratum, their crowns tangling as they grow.

We are at the cusp of a new era, the planetary phase of civilization. As traditional geographic and cultural boundaries erode, people and places entwine across one global system with one shared destiny. In the intangible space of human consciousness, this expanding nexus of connectivity enlarges our awareness and identities. The global arena is emerging as a supranational layer of social evolution, political struggle, and contending forms of consciousness. The planetary phase is transforming both the earth and we who live on it.

From the perspective of systems theory, the defining feature of the planetary phase is that the causal dynamics operating at global scales increasingly influence the dynamics of subsystems. Heretofore, the world could be reasonably approximated as a set of separate entities – independent states, autonomous ecosystems, and distinct cultures – subject to external interactions. Such disaggregation into quasi-independent parts is becoming less useful: the global system is irreducible both ontologically and epistemologically. The system and its components shape one another in a complex and reciprocal dialectic that changes the planet and its parts. In this dynamic of planetary transition, the catchphrase "the whole is more than the sum of its parts" takes on fresh meaning: the emerging global system cannot be reduced to its components. The global social-ecological system is something new on the face of the earth.

Historic roots

The planetary phase of civilization did not appear unannounced. In a sense, our progenitors started down the road to globalization when they journeyed out of Africa some 50,000 years ago on humankind's long march to the four corners of the planet (Chanda, 2007). Over the millennia, human interchange reached across continents and oceans. Ancient trade routes carried people, products, and ideas over great distances; conquering empires encompassed much of the then known world; and the great voyages of exploration wove the early strands of a web that would come to embrace the planet. Then, as people and their production filled the world at an accelerating pace in the last century, the harbingers of the planetary phase arrived with greater frequency. These included the spike in international trade before the Great War, the establishment of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and shared cultural symbols such as the images of Earth from space, the modern Olympics, and celebrity personalities. Threats to human security also became global: the two world wars, the risk of nuclear annihilation, AIDS, oil crises, the ozone hole, criminal and terrorist rings, and climate change. By the closing decades of the second millennium, the planetary phase had become a discernable historical development.

The planetary phase is the culmination of the Modern Era. Since the first flickering of humanism in the early Renaissance, modernity has challenged the authority of received wisdom and the stasis of traditionalism. Propelled by the intellectual upheaval of the scientific revolution and the ferment of capitalist expansion, vast human potential for knowledge, freedom, and progress was liberated. In the roar of the Industrial Revolution, the new market economy unleashed a previously unimaginable frenzy of acquisition and accumulation. By any tangible gauge – number of people, scale of production and consumption, pace of innovation – industrialization marked a sharp, upward swerve in the curve of human development: the era of exponential growth had arrived. The world of thought exploded as well, around such concepts as progress, reason, democracy, and the rule of law. In its ceaseless hunger for new markets and resources, industrial capitalism marched toward a world system.

For all the wealth it created and the ignorance it defeated, this era of "creative destruction" brought a degree of human suffering and

environmental abuse without precedent. Capitalism's ineluctable self-expansion either absorbed traditional societies into a web of market relations or subdued them as colonies in empires of commerce. As the revolutions in science, religion, and society spread and gathered momentum, they encountered hard resistance at the moving frontier between modernist and traditionalist mindsets – a jagged fissure that today has become a huge swath across the global field. All the while, modern society's insatiable hunger for resources has been cashing out nature's bounty.

Powerful movements for justice and preservation arose, but they could tame only the most egregious insults to people and nature on the road to globalization. The Soviet Union and kindred experiments elsewhere, asphyxiated by bureaucracy and the Gulag, squandered the twentieth century's dreams of socialist alternatives to capitalism. The industrial era rolled on, posing the question of global society but unable to answer it.

Perils of passage

The Modern Era leaves us with a paradoxical heritage: interdependence and conflict, immense wealth and crippling destitution, technological prowess and a compromised planet. On the one hand, we are endowed with a rich institutional and scientific foundation for building the House of Earth; at last we can defeat the ancient scourges of destitution and war. But on the other, we bear a legacy of violence and greed, which, if not tempered by a culture of peace and a spirit of cooperation, threatens to derail the modern project itself. We have entered the planetary age like callow adolescents with uncertain prospects, heirs to an ambiguous estate, facing a troubled passage to maturity. If the world were a single country it would have all the characteristics of a failed state: rampant poverty, immense inequality, degraded natural resources, conflict between hostile factions, and no legitimate constitutional authority. Each set of environmental, social, and economic problems festering in the contemporary world is a challenge in its own right; together, acting synergistically, they could pose grave dangers to the continuity of development and the possibility of a just and sustainable transition. In the planetary phase, peace and stability must rest on adequate global governance supported by a popular political culture. This is a foundation not yet laid.

Of all the manifestations of the planetary phase, the most vivid is the transformation of the earth itself by human action. We have become a powerful geological force, modifying the texture of the land, the chemistry of the sea, and the composition of the air (Crutzen, 2002). We are altering the titanic flows of water, energy, and matter that course through the ecosphere, knitting together land, sea, and atmosphere. The emblematic issue embodying the enormity of the stakes is climate change, with its several "inconvenient truths": the dangers posed to the planet and its creatures, the scale of the required action, and the unprecedented diplomatic challenge of devising an international solution to this complex problem. A second urgent environmental challenge is the impoverishment of the planet's biological resources – the degradation of ecosystems, the loss of habitats, the endangerment of species, and loss of diversity – victims of the mismanagement of land and water, of pollution, and, increasingly, of climate change. Another major threat is toxification – the injection of an expanding brew of chemical pollutants into the environment and food chain.

As the world economy has grown, so have social inequity and cultural polarization. Assaults on the tendrils of global amity are many. The pressure of immigration feeds xenophobia, eroding, in many places, social cohesion. To our collective shame, billions of people suffer destitution in a world of unprecedented aggregate wealth. The tentacles of Hollywood, the Internet, and Madison Avenue touch remote villages, linking and changing the world's archipelago of cultures. A struggle for world oil looms on the near horizon as we deplete reserves while demand soars, driven by the growing economies of China, India, and other formerly have-not nations.

Unconstrained by coherent regulatory control, economic globalization generates new pathways for crises to ripple through the entire system. The potential risks and interactions of historically novel phenomena – far-flung production chains, huge hedge funds, titanic currency transactions, climate change, chronic oil shortage – are poorly understood (Raskin, 2008). Disruption in any of these domains could trigger a destabilizing chain reaction. Despite this, international governance mechanisms for reducing volatility and responding to problems remain piecemeal and anodyne.

The overarching danger is that multiple stresses will feed off one another and meld into a systemic planetary crisis. Environmental

impoverishment exacerbates poverty, incites conflict, and threatens economic stability; economic failure weakens the efforts to protect nature and reduce poverty; the global underclass, desperate to survive or relocate to wealthier countries, erodes environmental resources and the amity needed for geo-economic cooperation. With so many feedbacks and linkages, different events might ignite a cascading, planet-wide disaster. The more prominent candidates for activating a systemic blow include an abrupt change in the climate, a pandemic, a massive terrorist attack, a sustained oil shortage, and a collapse of the international financial system.

The world is rushing toward its rendezvous with global instability. The extent of the danger will depend on two decisive unknowns: the types and magnitude of forthcoming shocks, on the one hand, and the vulnerability of geophysical and institutional systems, on the other. International efforts, if pursued wisely and vigorously, could moderate the initial jolts while strengthening the ability of institutions to cope with subsequent disturbances. The interplay between these great uncertainties – the form of future crises and the pace of institutional adaptation – will condition the fate of global society in the course of this century.

Branching futures

To whatever has animated speculation about humanity's fate in the past – curiosity, advantage, anxiety, a search for meaning – must be added a very contemporary concern: passing on a resilient world to posterity. Sustainable development has brought the study of the long-range future from the margins of respectable inquiry to the core of research and policy agendas.

Looking through cloudy crystal balls into the future, we can envision many possibilities, each a unique unfolding of objective causes and subjective intentions. The geography of the future is a terra incognita beyond the ken of scientific projection and social prophesy. Indeterminacy is woven deep in the fabric of reality: all complex entities come to points of bifurcation, forks in the road where the outcome is inherently uncertain and sensitive to small deflections. The critical junctures of life punctuate each of our biographies, and there, the directions we take, whether by choice or fortuity, make all the difference. Correspondingly, our collective life-line forms a jagged arc through a branching tree of possibilities. Depending on

serendipity and human choice, fundamentally different worlds could crystallize out of the turbulence of transition.

We cannot predict the planetary future, but we can sketch plausible possibilities. We explore the terrain of the future not to forecast what will be, but to envision what could be. Well-designed scenarios serve as prostheses for the imagination, giving breadth and specificity to our longer-term outlooks. They are thought experiments for identifying critical uncertainties, examining the dangers ahead and inspiring corrective action. Rather than prediction, the point is to enrich the visionary imagination and sharpen debate about the world we want and ways to get there.

A simple taxonomy helps organize the bewildering menagerie of possibilities (Raskin et al., 2002). At the highest level, three broad channels radiate from the present into the imagined future: worlds of incremental adjustment, worlds of catastrophic discontinuity, and worlds of progressive transformation. This archetypal triad – evolution, decline, and progression – recurs throughout the futurist literature. In discussing divergent directions for the future, we shall refer to them as Conventional Worlds, Barbarization, and Great Transitions.

The first group of narratives, Conventional Worlds, describes scenarios that address global problems through a gradual process of technical innovation and social learning. Episodic setbacks notwithstanding, major tendencies persist in these visions: economic interdependence deepens, dominant values spread, and developing regions converge toward rich-country patterns of production and consumption. In the neo-liberal Market Forces variant of Conventional Worlds, powerful global actors advance the priority of free markets and economic expansion, relying heavily on technological innovation to reconcile growth with ecological limits. In the Policy Reform variant, governments respond to nagging global problems with a strong and comprehensive portfolio of initiatives to align the economy with the social goal of reducing poverty and the environmental goal of sustainability.

Although Conventional Worlds are variations and extrapolations of present patterns carried forward, they may be based on unrealistic expectations; they may also proffer undesirable underpinnings for the future. Undoubtedly, market and policy instruments for sustainability are urgently needed. However, strategies relying mainly on a series of

technical adjustments and policy adaptations are unlikely to be adequate to the growing challenges – they would be akin to going up the down escalator. To choose incremental approaches makes a dangerous wager in a world where abrupt and fundamental shifts may lie ahead. Finally, it is unclear what the source would be for the necessary political will for a program of extraordinary reform while consumerist values dominate the globe and while economic growth is equated with progress. Nevertheless, Conventional Worlds thinking continues to frame the discourse on policy, the discussion in the media, and even efforts on sustainability.

The second group of narratives, Barbarization, explores the deep risk posed by the Conventional Worlds course: the rejection of the need for deep change. In these scenarios, problems race out of control, the world drifts toward general crisis, and civilization erodes. In Fortress Worlds variants, powerful international forces impose order in an authoritarian global apartheid with elites in protected enclaves and an impoverished majority outside. In Breakdown variants, by contrast, such forces cannot counter or even inhibit chaos and conflict. Crises become uncontrollable, waves of disorder ensue, and institutions collapse.

The third group of narratives, Great Transitions, examines worlds that transcend reform to embrace new values and revise the aims of global development. One variant, Eco-communalism, encompasses the small-is-beautiful visions favored by some environmental and anarchist subcultures. However, it is difficult to envision a patchwork of self-sustaining communities emerging in our increasingly connected world, except perhaps in recovery from collapse. A more promising variant, New Sustainability Paradigm, sees globalization not only as a threat but also as an opportunity to construct new categories of consciousness – global citizenship, humanity-as-whole, the wider web of life, and the well-being of future generations – alongside a global institutional architecture for balancing pluralism with unity.

FRAGMENTARY RESPONSES

We return from our brief exploration of twenty-first century futures with a basic finding: the destination is inseparable from the journey. The decisions we make and the actions we take in the coming years, before catastrophes erupt, and before new institutions solidify while

others crumble, are pivotal in setting our course. In the birth throes of a new order, all constituents of society must adapt and respond. All major social arenas – labor, education, media, religions, professional groups – will shape and be shaped by global change. Three social actors now operating on the global stage will be key: governments, corporations, and civil society.

Social actors in a global drama

Each of our tales of the future has leading protagonists. Market Forces will dominate to the extent that powerful players such as multinational corporations and the World Trade Organization can build the institutions for an integrated global economy, spreading an ethos of consumerism and growth. The Policy Reform shift would be led by governments acting in cooperation to constrain and redirect global markets toward sustainability, and empowering the United Nations as a coordinative body.

An international coalition of powerful forces would impose the harsh order of Fortress World, perhaps evolving from such entities as NATO and the G-8 as they adjust and respond to a world heaving with crises. In Breakdown, these authoritarian forces are overwhelmed by the mounting chaos, while divisive legions – jingoistic nationalists, militant fundamentalists, criminal networks, local warlords – bring down the curtain on the long-running drama of civilization, at least for a time.

The central focus of this inquiry is on the prospects for a deep shift in the mode of global development – what we have called Great Transition – and the social actors who might carry it forward. The remainder of this section critically assesses the potential of contemporary social actors for the task of such a transformation. Finding them too fragmented and myopic, our search for historical agents then turns in the following sections to other social forces now latent in the cultural field.

Multilateral institutions

A great number of intergovernmental initiatives have responded to the explosion of trans-boundary environmental, social, and economic issues (Held et al., 1999). Efforts at multilateral cooperation are underway in all of the world's regions, focusing at first, for the most

part, on mutual economic interests: common markets, harmonized trade policy, and shared infrastructure. As trust develops, the mandate of regional authorities can expand to include such issues as peacekeeping, security, protection of the environment, and the control of disease. The European Union remains the most ambitious and advanced of the experiments in regional governance; its further development will serve as an instructive case study for gauging the prospects for transcending the state system. The flowering of a continental consciousness in Europe as a complement to national identities would be a model for other regions and an inspiration to the larger project of global governance – or if it suffers a reversal, a warning on the unreadiness of identity to ascend to larger territorial scales.

The hub of global multilateralism is, of course, the United Nations, that vast system of specialized agencies and affiliated organizations. In the wake of the Second World War, the UN's aim was to secure the global peace while assuring human rights and spreading prosperity. But from the beginning its identity has remained ambiguous. Many of its founders envisioned the UN as a new supranational level of governance that would represent the interests of "we the world's people," in the inspiring words of its preamble, its staff a true global civil service with loyalty to the greater good. Instead, it soon became an arena for nationalist and ideological struggle, its ideals compromised during the long Cold War and beyond (Hazzard, 1990).

Although enfeebled, the UN speaks with the only legitimate, collective voice of the world's governments. That voice varies from future scenario to future scenario. As power consolidates around the private sector in Market Forces, the UN becomes primarily a platform for regulating and extending the global economy. In Policy Reform, the UN's mandate and authority expands as it assumes a catalytic, coordinating role in a global action plan to meet environmental and social goals. Under Barbarization, the UN remains relevant only as a venue for the world's elites to organize an authoritarian program of imposed security and environmental damage control. In a Great Transition, the dominance of states gives way in two directions: to global decision-making where necessary, to local democratic processes where possible. The UN – reorganized, restructured, and probably renamed – becomes the fulcrum for global governance, at

last fulfilling its founding vision of a supranational body for deliberating world affairs (Falk, 1998).

For the moment, the task of building an institutional architecture adequate to the challenges of the planetary phase rests with reluctant nations, ardent defenders of their own narrowly defined interests. Their response thus far to the surging need for global cooperation, which they can no longer ignore, has been irresolute. In particular, the United States, which bears so much responsibility for the global predicament and has so much to lose in a nightmare scenario, has undermined essential initiatives for global sustainability and exacerbated geopolitical tensions. In the future, the remaining superpower must lead by example, rather than impede: for another world to be possible, a changed U.S. is needed. Meanwhile, the larger dream of a supranational UN remains hostage to disjointed state interests, a subordinate factor in the calculus of geopolitics.

Transnational corporations

With revenues greater than the economies of many countries, large corporations are powerful players, driving and shaping globalization (Gabel and Bruner, 2003). The rise of the transnational corporation has gone hand-in-hand with the growth of the borderless economy. Conditions were optimal for this synergy: the revolution in information technology, the end of the Cold War, and the dominance of deregulatory, pro-business policies, especially in the United States and the United Kingdom. Footloose companies responded to the rocketing potential of globalizing product, service, capital and labor markets by building a supranational structure of rapidly evolving complexity (Dicken, 2007; Taylor, 2004).

In the absence of a blueprint or regulatory framework, the global economy propagates through the aggregation of individual corporate actions – one is tempted to say, rather like the way an ant colony's intricate tunnel system arises from the separate actions of a multitude of ants. But this analogy understates the major political role of the private sector, which applies vast resources to influence public perceptions and political decision-making. Despite the unease among some business leaders that feckless globalization compromises the stability of the international market system itself, corporations promote their bottom-line interests with little regard to competing

environmental and social concerns. In Market Forces scenarios, this power continues to grow, while regulatory mechanisms remain weak. By contrast, in Policy Reform scenarios, the implementation of tough social and environmental policies and regulations requires the support, or at least the acquiescence, of the most powerful actors in the private sector. A turn toward a Fortress World would entails a tight collaboration between big business and authoritarian governments, while Breakdown witnesses the collapse of large-scale corporate operations.

Today, only a handful of forward-looking corporations work in partnership with government and non-governmental organizations to establish high standards for socially and environmentally responsible businesses. Under growing pressure, it is likely that more will become allies for a progressive transformation of the global economy (Vogel, 2005). Still, the potential for big businesses to undertake fundamental self-reform will be limited as long as creating profits for shareholders remains their overriding purpose. A Great Transition requires initiatives to redesign the corporation down to its roots (White, 2006). Business charters and governance structures will need to align corporate practices with the larger goals of social justice and environmental stewardship. Meanwhile, efforts to encourage "corporate responsibility" can be expected to continue to deliver only modest adjustments to conventional development.

Civil society

Over recent decades, a third force has joined government and business on the international stage. Widely referred to as "global civil society," this polyglot includes many tens of thousands of nonprofit organizations, social movements, and informal associations (Glasius et al., 2006). Active across the spectrum of struggles for peace, justice, development, and the environment, they have changed the dynamics of global politics. They participate in intergovernmental deliberations, mobilize boycotts against socially irresponsible corporate practices, and undertake campaigns for human rights. In the streets, protestors have disrupted meetings of the World Trade Organization and other symbols of corporate-driven globalization. More quietly, and perhaps most profoundly, their educational campaigns have increased public awareness of global issues.

Civil society has released tremendous energy for a more just and sustainable world, offering to many a source of hope and an opportunity to contribute. If its momentum and vitality continue to strengthen, civil society will become an essential force behind a turn from Market Forces toward a Policy Reform world. But its possibilities are limited by organizational fragmentation that slices the global challenge into a thousand separate issues and turfs. Its dispersed victories do not scale up to an alternative path of development as painstaking progress achieved here and there is overwhelmed by the far more powerful forces of deterioration. Some disagree, asserting that somehow the aggregate of disjoint efforts will be sufficient (Hawken, 2007), a proposition that appears more rooted in a normative faith in radically decentralized forms of organization than flowing from a rigorous consideration of the complex political challenges of the global transformation.

Most basically, civil society lacks philosophical coherence: a shared understanding of the challenge and a coordinated vision of planetary solutions. A broad movement needs to mature, beyond civil society's politics of opposition, to make "another world is possible" more than a slogan. To gain the confidence and then the participation of the world's billions, such a movement would need to put forward a rigorous and inclusive global alternative as well as an integrated program for fundamental change. A systemic global citizens movement would be the critical historical agent for a Great Transition. The increase of peoples' activity over the past two decades has both made such a development possible and highlighted its necessity.

Centripetal forces

The actors in our spotlight – international governance institutions, transnational corporations, and global civil society – are all creatures of the planetary phase, manifestations of the integrating forces that are generating a single global system. Paradoxically, the centrifugal forces drawing the world together also generate counteracting forces pulling it apart. Newton's third law – for every action there is an equal and opposite reaction – now seems to be operating at a global level: the action of integration triggers the reaction of fragmentation, geopolitical activism provokes national isolationism, and economic globalization stimulates localist backlash.

This backlash comes in many forms. An anti-globalization movement resists the predations of unregulated world capitalism. A host of nationally-based interests – businesses, unions, cultural preservationists, anti-immigration forces – promote protectionist policies. Religious fundamentalists, recoiling from the materialism and decadence of the global mall, spread their atavistic ideologies. In the chaos of transition, criminal networks, drug traffickers, and arms dealers ply the global bazaar. Meanwhile, terrorists advance their own dark vision of "another world," countering the intrusions and injustices of a westernized modernity with murderous activity.

The conjoint tendencies toward both connectivity and fragmentation manifest at the level of the individual, as well. As centrifugal historical forces have pulled us outward, many have been turning inward, seeking meaning, healing, and peace of mind through a large variety of psychological, spiritual, and metaphysical practices. The surge of the "personal transformation" and "New Age" movements has been synchronous with the surge of globalization. Perhaps the draw toward personal answers has become particularly attractive in this period of stress, uncertainty, and anomie, or the pull may be simply a correlated phenomenon of the planetary phase. In either case, the effect is to emphasize the search for individual rather than collective solutions. Recognizing that, in a troubled world, the private quest for psychic solace may be elusive, influential figures have begun to make explicit the link between personal transformation and the encompassing pursuit of social transformation (ANH, 2008). In turn, environmental advocates increasingly underscore the link between reducing our ecological footprint and turning toward lifestyles that are sufficient materially and rich in other dimensions of well-being: relationships, community, fulfillment, and spirituality (Speth, 2008).

Such encouraging convergences remain more potential than actual. Meanwhile, the fissure between those for and against globalization is creating a false, unhealthy divide. The drift toward the ideological poles of hyper-globalization and fragmentation hollows out the middle ground. Those who would reject both extremes have no clear voice and direction. Yet the open space between celebration of corporate globalization and anti-corporate reaction is fertile ground for a new popular politics and culture. Such a yield awaits

perspectives and movements that can embrace unity and diversity, one world and many places, the personal and the political, changes in both values and institutions. With such a planetary praxis, we can navigate between dueling utopias and false dichotomies to a more enlightened and desirable future.

SEARCHING FOR A LEADING CHARACTER

The global transformation now unfolding on the world stage brings to mind an absurdist play. Like the abandoned and unrealized characters in Pirandello's *Six Characters in Search of an Author*, the players must improvise without author to finish the script or director to guide the action. The dramatis personae muddle higgledy-piggledy toward an indeterminate outcome. Is the global drama – call it Six Scenarios in Search of a Character – a tragedy in the making? Perhaps not, if the citizens of the world, now milling in the wings, move toward center stage and tilt the narrative arc toward a gentler denouement.

On human agency

Marx famously observed: "Men make their own history, but they do not make it as they please; they do not make it under self-selected circumstances, but under circumstances existing already, given and transmitted from the past. The tradition of all dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brains of the living" (Marx, 1852).

Indeed, we have entered this global century haunted by inherited myths, ideologies, and values. This stubborn legacy dims the prospects for deep change in our ways of thinking, feeling, and acting. Still, the past is prelude, not destiny. Although their memories may long linger, nightmares do fade when the brains of the living awaken to a new day. We are not predestined to carry forward the modernist mindset, nor succumb to its reactionary negation, a collective retreat into pre-modern dreams and mythologies.

Earlier great transformations were self-generating whirlwinds of structural and cultural change (Polanyi, 1944). Changes in the institutional configurations of social organization went hand-in-hand with changes in ideational patterns of interpretation. In these periods of restructuring, possibilities opened for new modes of understanding and behavior in closer harmony with emerging

conditions of material and social existence. People could act individually and collectively with greater freedom than in static times, more as independent, rather than dependent, variables in the dynamics of social evolution.

People are active agents who interpret events, give cultural meaning to social reality, and construct order, norms, and authority. Social change is about subjective interactions, negotiations, and struggles over meaning, legitimacy, and symbolic interpretation, as well as objective processes. Although some theorists may fixate on either structure or agency as more primary, they are more usefully understood as mutually constitutive in a reciprocal process of influence and interaction (Archer, 2000). Human agency can shape society's structures, but only within the limited range afforded by the historical conditions of that society. The range is widest in periods of structural transformation when regnant patterns weaken and new hegemonic institutions have yet to solidify.

The capacity to adapt is an essential feature for the persistence of any social system (Sanderson, 1990). Like homeostatic systems in general, societies are inherently conservative, seeking to accommodate novelty without major structural or ideational readjustment. They resist change by managing disturbances through counterbalancing responses or new features that mute disruption. Social continuity depends on the coherence and alignment of ideas and institutional structures in a process of gradual systemic adaptation with incremental adjustments in norms, values, and institutions (Chirot, 1994).

Development proceeds in an adaptive mode so long as endogenous or exogenous disturbances remain within certain tolerance levels, and tensions between subjective and objective conditions are manageable. However, when severe and prolonged strains overwhelm compensatory mechanisms, coping capacity is compromised. When system elements become unsynchronized, structures destabilized, and behavior turbulent, a relatively rapid break may occur as institutional, cultural, and environmental patterns crack.

This is the revolutionary moment when conditions are in place for transformation. In the midst of systemic crisis, conventional institutions and ideas lose their sway, and political authorities lose their legitimacy, enlarging cultural and political arenas for oppositional

concepts and new allegiances. The determinative power of once dominate structures and ideologies weakens, opening space for the indeterminism of human choice, intentionality and elective behavior.

Structural processes carry forward patterns etched in the momentum of history. By contrast, human agents, when acting to realize normative visions, bring a teleological aspect to the dynamic of social change. Past structures drive the present into an uncertain future; human vision and action pull the present toward imagined futures. Through the interaction between determination and choice, humanity changes history and itself. At critical thresholds, complex systems can bifurcate into distinctly different states, and the path taken is highly sensitive to very small perturbations. Similarly, our planetary system can branch discontinuously into alternative global trajectories. In these decades of transition, we have amplified influence on the kind of world that consolidates out of the turbulence of change. We will squander this moral responsibility and pragmatic opportunity if collectively we are too complacent, too cynical, and too timid. We can seize it with a richness of vision and boldness of action that realizes the subjective and objective potential of the planetary phase.

Stretching identity and citizenship

The principal social actors now on the global scene are unlikely to lead the way. Our survey here of the transformative potential of government, business, and civil society revealed interests too narrow and outlooks too myopic for the task. In the end, we must return to that irreducible subject: the citizen who has the capacity for moral discernment and action. The weakening of social strictures in our transformative global moment opens doors to revisions of culture and identity, and the sense of collective possibility (van Steenburgen, 1994; Dower and Williams, 2002).

Over eons of cultural innovation and social adaptation, the sphere of community has expanded to include families, clans and tribes, then villages, cities, and nations. Societies of increasing complexity elongated the radius of interdependence, bringing enhanced social resilience and security. These dynamic institutional connections also extended the emotional fabric of identity and loyalty, forging commitments so strong that individuals were willing to sacrifice even their lives for the welfare of the group. A shared cultural heritage

secured the allegiance of members to the community. It was the soft power of social conventions that constrained their behavior, and not, generally, the coercive authority of the powerful. The great power of the collective "we" was instilled in the psyches of new generations through the veneration of idols, myths, flags, and leaders.

Of course, outside the walls of the community dwelt the oft demonized "other," not worthy of equal moral concern. The contending themes of solidarity and conflict have brightened and darkened the human story from time immemorial as antagonism between communities opposed the forces enlarging the commonwealth of sympathy and cooperation. Eventually, by assimilating their weaker contemporaries, or annihilating them, dominant societies expanded their domains, opening the possibility, if not the certainty, for social forms of greater complexity and larger moral identities to emerge.

Philosophers and prophets have long envisioned a time when the ring of community would encircle the entire human family (Heater, 2002). The key premise of the present inquiry is that the planetary phase brings this abstract dream down to earth, embedding the ethos of human solidarity in the conditions for our survival. Being part of a global "we" challenges the identification of community with a specific place; or, put differently, the world-as-a-whole has become a "place" in its own right. Meanwhile, the proliferating networks of cyberspace reinforce this sense of community beyond territory. Most profound is the visceral awareness, now spreading, of the dependence of our own well-being on the well-being of the earth. As human connectivity and consciousness globalize, so might the human heart.

What, then, does it mean to be a global citizen? Citizenship is complex, even in the familiar guise of state citizenship. In a broad sense, we can say that a citizen is a member of a wider community that grants rights and entitlements to the individual while requiring that the individual fulfill responsibilities and obligations in return. A citizen in the fullest sense also embraces a relationship of loyalty to the larger community. But the condition of citizenship cannot be defined abstractly, for it has changed, and continues to change, as a constituent of evolving societies.

The layers of modern citizenship were formed in three historical waves that extended entitlements to individuals (or at least those

enfranchised as citizens) in the arenas of economic opportunity, political rights, and social guarantees (Marshall, 1950). In the eighteenth century, civil citizenship conferred individual freedoms and property rights. In the nineteenth, political citizenship spread democracy and the right to vote. In the twentieth, social citizenship brought entitlement to minimum standards of welfare and economic security. These rights were the fruit of corresponding waves of social mobilization against traditional privilege: civil citizenship codified the triumph of entrepreneurial classes over feudal interests; political citizenship assigned sovereignty to ordinary people, nullifying the divine rights of monarchs; and social citizenship protections were won by associated workers in their long struggle with laissez faire capitalism.

Of course, it has taken many decades to extend these rights, once they were established in principle, to women and excluded subgroups, a process not yet universally complete. Economic, civil, and social rights remains a matter of negotiation and contention as the borderless economy, immigration, and terrorism re-open old fissures within nations. In particular, the viability of national welfare states is undercut by economic globalization as increased competition and the threat of capital flight puts downward pressure on production costs, wages, and benefits.

The planetary phase will continue to reconfigure the forms of citizenship that were forged over the last several hundred years. In this new century, a fourth wave is adding a new layer, however nascent it may be: global citizenship. This broadest conception of citizenship has both emotional and institutional dimensions. In one sense, people become "citizens of the world" when their concerns, awareness, and actions extend to the whole human family and beyond, to the ecosphere that sustains us all. This perspective is spreading. A growing band of "citizen pilgrims," in the apt phrase of political philosopher Richard Falk (1992), are like early voyagers to an imagined global future. The spread of such a widespread affective orientation is surely a precondition for global citizenship. Ultimately, though, a fuller expression would be expressed practically through prosaic instruments of collective and democratic institutions for decision-making and governance. Although this prospect may seem far off, precursors of global governance are multiplying within the current order: international agreements on human rights, the environment, and the economy; supranational

bodies; and civil society networks. If these scattered experiments succeed, they could become the foundation for a more mature form of global governance, one beholden to the body politic as a whole rather than merely balancing the interests of competing states.

How plausible is this? It is worth remembering that nation-states themselves were welded out of the fractured identities of city-state, fiefdom, and tribe. A few hundred years ago, there were states and nations, that is, political territories and cultural groups, but no nation-states to make the two congruent. Looking forward from that vantage point, a world map of more than two hundred nation-states might have seemed dubious, and the incipient ethos of nationalism rather dreamy. Nonetheless, the once arbitrary boundaries of nations are now considered inviolate, and, with hindsight, the nationalists of yesteryear seem prescient.

In our deeply divided world, envisioning an ascendant global consciousness with a capacious sense and view of community may challenge credulity. Yet, the integral earth, as the natural boundary for human affairs, offers a basis for an imagined global community more grounded in emerging social and ecological realities than the changeable boundaries of national communities. Just as national citizenship once dissolved barriers within states, global citizenship may reduce divisions among them.

Imagine all the people

In the years ahead, globalization and its discontents are bound to further expand consciousness and trouble consciences. A rising tide of cosmopolitanism, though by no means inevitable, is at least now conceivable. Likely or not, an ethic of global citizenship is basic to bridging the dangerous chasm between obsolete twentieth-century institutions and twenty-first century realities. Still, the great struggles of the past show that good intentions do not suffice for social change.

For that, it takes a popular movement to convert grievance and longing into practical action of sufficient effectiveness and tenacity to overcome the inertia of culture and the resistance of entrenched interests. The contemporary world stage is missing that critical actor: a global citizens movement capable of redirecting governments, taming corporations, and unifying civil society. The social agent for a systemic global transition needs itself to be systemic in outlook and globally

inclusive in composition. More than the simple aggregation of disjoint campaigns and policies, a viable global movement, like the global system that spawns it, would need to be more than the sum of its parts.

Without a systemic movement to unify and inspire, some activists remain stalled in a politics of opposition, confronting symptoms rather than underlying causes, while others retreat in frustration and exhaustion. Many people fall prey to despair, or its first cousin apathy, never finding a meaningful way to engage a global crisis so overwhelming and vaporous. A global movement, were it to form, would speak especially to this growing band of concerned and as yet disempowered citizens: to their minds with a unifying perspective, to their hearts with a vision of a better world, and to their feet with an organizational context for action. The global citizens movement would be a fitting answer to the poignant question heard everywhere: "What can I do?"

Episodes of ordinary people mobilizing for fundamental social change punctuate modern history. In triumph and failure, the oppressed, disenfranchised, patriotic, and visionary have risen in movements for rights, justice, independence, peace, and dreams of a better world. The purpose and form of social movements have been as varied as the disparate types of grievances and frictions social evolution has created. Some particularistic movements have advanced narrow ethnic, religious, and ideological interests, often with coercion. By contrast, other movements have struggled to enlarge the spheres of human rights, social justice and collective environmental responsibility.

It is this latter progressive tradition that engages our attention as we consider a theory and practice for a planet-wide movement for sustainability and justice. Of course, a global citizens movement would be unprecedented, an emergent form of collective action in response to the crises and opportunities of the planetary phase. Nevertheless, we can glean important lessons from the successes and failures of the past. What conditions have set the stage for progressive social movements? What strategies have galvanized diffuse dissent into collective action? How do successful movements attract and sustain the commitment of new adherents?

The 1960s began a Cambrian explosion in the evolution of social movements, a process of proliferation and diversification still in progress. Where class struggle was the singular focus of the Old Left,

the so-called "new movements" were animated by the full variety of concern and longing that marked those watershed years: environment, peace, rights, race, ethnicity, and gender. Correspondingly, the scholarship on social movements began moving beyond its classic focus on class conflict and Marxian analysis to a more eclectic appreciation of the multiple bases for collective action (Goldstone, 2001). Not surprisingly, the protean diversity of contemporary movements defies neat theoretical generalization, or easy consensus, on the core factors governing their creation and dynamics. Some analysts underscore destabilizing macro-historical forces, others the psycho-cultural conditions that predispose individuals to commit to collective action, and still others the tactics and strategies of specific movement experiences (MacAdam et al., 1996).

To make sense of this theoretical heterogeneity, it is useful to map explanatory factors into three broad clusters: system vulnerability, organizational capability, and cultural solidarity. Notably, this triad has an antecedent in the classical movement literature: Marx's emphasis on structural crisis, Lenin's on vanguard leadership, and Gramsci's on oppositional culture (Tarrow, 1998). They correspond to three enduring dimensions of social movements – grievance, action, and identity – that will be at play in the efforts ahead to generate a global citizens movement.

A social system enjoys the allegiance of its citizens when most believe that authorities govern fairly and effectively, but becomes vulnerable when widely perceived to be unjust and ineffective (Habermas, 1975). When the powers that be lose the trust of the public, the thrall of its legitimacy dissolves; the political and psychological conditions are in place for diffuse discontent to flow into the formation of a contentious social movement. Of course, governments become unwilling or unable to satisfy popular concerns for various reasons – deepening conflict between social groups, shifting public expectations, clashes among the elite, venal leaders. The details vary with time and place, but the consequence is universal: allowing grievances to fester and spread puts the possibility of an organized opposition on the public agenda.

System vulnerability is the precondition for the consolidation of a social movement, not its guarantor. Though widespread and deeply felt, popular discontent will eventually wane or persist in isolation

unless reinforced and harnessed through effective organization. The nascent social movement must mobilize networks of adherents, provide leadership, and assemble the financial and human resources necessary to endure and grow, often in the face of state repression. It needs to generate a repertoire of efficacious tactics that spreads its message and shows its strength, the types of actions employed dependent on the political opportunities that are available (Tarrow, 1998). These might include political marches, sit-ins, and political lobbying in relatively open political systems, such as the United States, and covert actions in more closed ones, such as the former Soviet Union.

If system vulnerability gives a social movement its raison d'être and organizational capability its means, cultural solidarity, our third analytic category, binds a political movement as a human community. To galvanize masses of ordinary people and hold their allegiance, movements must offer a rich and attractive alternative to the hegemonic culture. More than a practical arena for expressing grievances and engaging in contentious politics, a flourishing movement becomes a realm of the heart as well. It is a nexus of association whose participants shape a community and reshape their identity. Commitments to a cause or a dream are reinforced by the emotive solidarity renewed through common symbols, myths, and rituals. A consequential movement also becomes a locus for generating a shared intellectual culture: concepts for understanding the ways of the world and visions of a path to a different world.

Turning to the contemporary scene, our three conditioning factors – system vulnerability, organizational capacity, and cultural solidarity – help clarify the prospects and challenges for our imagined global citizens movement. On the first score, the emerging global system certainly is vulnerable, its governance mechanisms widely perceived as incapable of addressing the burning problems of sustainability, peace, development, and justice. Weak and visionless, it can seem hostage to powerful states and corporations that unabashedly advance partial interests impervious to the common good.

On the global ship of state, now drifting off course with no legitimate captain at the helm, the passengers are growing restive. Thousands of transnational civil society organizations have entered the fray on scores of separate issues, but the larger political and cultural mobilization that can integrate concerns into a coherent new

global paradigm has yet to gel. In the coming years, if the crisis of legitimacy of global governance continues to deepen, the foundation of a global citizens movement will strengthen. The historical conditions thus are ripening for a systemic movement, informed by a transformative vision of global society, to coalesce.

The development of the other key dimensions – organizational capacity and cultural solidarity – is far less mature. The challenge is no less than evolving the instrumental and affective bases for collective action across the great cultural and spatial distances that a global movement must circumscribe (McCarthy, 1997). The great complexity and dispersion of a nascent movement suggests an open and exploratory process of collective learning and adjustment, the forms of association harmonized with the multiple issues and diverse traditions it would seek to bring together.

There can be no credible blueprint for this project, no formulaic design for organizational structure, strategy, or culture. Indeed, any temptation to pre-specify the details is almost sure to be counterproductive, and should be resisted. The top-down structure of earlier oppositional movements will not suffice in a post-modern world suspicious of authority and leadership; nor will its converse, namely, faith that political coherence will arise spontaneously from below. A viable movement must navigate between the polar pitfalls of rigidity and disorder. Its vitality would flow from an organic and democratic process of self-creation, an unfolding of its immanent adaptive logic that cannot be rigidly controlled or foretold with any precision.

Nevertheless, we can imagine the broad contours and principals of a living global citizens movement: a growing network of networks attracting new adherents through local, national, and global nodes. It would enlarge the arena of public participation and cultural ferment, and involve people throughout the world, across cultures, class, and place. It would retain diversity, but under the umbrella of an integrated framework for addressing all the important issues. It would be an organic process evolving in phases with structures of internal governance and external action fashioned by participants in a process of adaptation to one another and to changing circumstance. Each widening circle would prepare the ground for a broader effort.

Building and maintaining normative solidarity in a movement of such diversity would be its great challenge. The pull toward unity is

sure to be strong as awareness spreads of our shared global destiny and communications technologies further shrink psychic distance. At the same time, the fragmentation of different languages and traditions, and intransigent suspicions and resentments will no doubt continue as powerful centripetal forces. It would face the great hurdle of building unity in an era of strong identity politics and widespread skepticism about leadership.

To thrive and to prefigure a desired future society, the global citizens movement would cultivate a politics of trust. Such a politics would announce a predisposition toward seeking common ground and tolerating proximate differences in order to nurture the ultimate basis for solidarity. A movement up to the task of global transformation would need to discover ways of balancing the twin desiderata of coherence and pluralism. It cannot eliminate ideological conflict, regional antagonism, and organizational turf battles. Indeed, the movement's diversity would be a source of richness and energy. But to find common purpose nonetheless, will take a global vision and movement culture that understands different perspectives and initiatives as different expressions of a common project.

All social change movements are pulled in contrary directions. They must both reach out and resist, expanding participation and forging alliances, on the one hand, and identifying and challenging entrenched forces, on the other. The emphasis on trust does not discount the realities of power and interest, or assume away the conflicts that are sure to lie on the path of global change. Rather, it suggests that the reconciliation of pluralism, unity, and vision will be a fundamental concern for the birth and growth of an authentic movement.

To imagine a Great Transition is to imagine a future based on values and principles of planetary solidarity. By embodying these goals in their pursuit, we nurture their realization. A global citizens movement would be the natural voice for expressing the collective imperative to dampen dangers and pursue the common dream of a civilization worthy of the name.

THE HOPE HYPOTHESIS

With its provenance in the twentieth century, the planetary transition arcs toward its providence in the twenty-first. The many develop-

ments and upheavals we now face are the birth pangs of some form of global society. We can observe its embryonic shape, speculate about its possible form and temperament, and give it various names, but we cannot know what kind of creature is being born. We stand at a singular branching point. What we do, or do not do, in the coming years will have an amplified influence on the basic anatomy of the planetary phase. Unless one is a true believer, confident in free-market solutions for this world or redemption in the next, the comforts of certitude are unavailable. In counterpoise to such sanguine convictions are fearful, and contradictory, warnings: the world is becoming homogenized into a Westernized monoculture (Mander and Goldsmith, 1997) or the world is descending into a clash of civilizations (Huntington, 1997). The truth is that disparate and contending forces are driving the world into the future (Barber, 1996), some toward MacWorld, others toward Jihad, still others toward more nuanced possibilities.

The perils of global development and the lure of "another world" have catalyzed new efforts to understand its complexities and influence its direction. The emerging discipline of sustainability science is starting to illuminate the dynamics of co-evolving human and environmental systems that lie nested together from local to world scales (Kates et al., 2001). Social scientists are providing fresh insight on the determinants of human behavior and the psychology underlying notions of human well-being (Jackson, 2008). The humanities are exploring the value and esthetic dimensions of a new human consciousness for the planetary phase. Civil society is erupting with countless endeavors to tame the hydra of environmental degradation and social conflict.

The outline for a revised strategy is coming into focus: green technology, poverty alleviation, non-materialistic life-styles, effective global governance, a culture of peace and tolerance, a socially and environmentally responsible business sector. Although we can celebrate some progress on all these fronts, realizing this as an integrated framework for global development remains beyond the grasp of the world's fragmented practice at present. Viscous institutions, tenacious norms, and entrenched interests resist the winds of change with the inertia of any dying regime. All the while, technological innovation, market growth, and cultural diffusion hasten the world's helter-skelter gallop to a dubious future.

The gap between the stubborn "is" of conventional development and the elusive "ought" of deep change is dangerous and dispiriting. Pessimists can mount considerable evidence to indict the future. It takes little more than a gloomy disposition and an analytic bent to construct cogent scenarios of a world fraught with crisis, breakdown, and misery. With a growing segment of the public attuned to global perils, the perception spreads that the world is traveling rapidly toward a dark future. To many, the "business-as-usual" scenario is looking less like the comforting projections from computer models and more like a Fortress World.

Certainly, any clear-eyed consideration of plausible long range futures must include dystopian visions for they loom as possibilities all too real. Still, no prognosticator, however knowledgeable and astute, can foresee the events and innovations sure to buffet the trajectory of the future. Historians of the twenty-first century some day can identify them and ponder their significance with an acuity granted only to hindsight, but denied to foresight. Most importantly, bleak prophesies underestimate a key source of cultural surprise: human reflexivity.

When we think critically about why we think and act the way we do, and then think and act differently, we can transform ourselves and our destiny. Impersonal forces do not carry us inexorably to a predetermined destination: the future is a journey we are constructing, not a place we are going. Imagining what could be, reflecting on how to get there, and acting as if it mattered, gives soul and sight to the blind march of history. When vision shapes action, causality becomes two-way: a push from the past and a pull toward the future. Social images act like magnets, drawing the present toward attractive futures and away from repulsive ones.

Foresight and intention – the essence of free will – when exercised collectively broaden the frontier of social possibility. Now more than ever we need people who imagine other worlds and, in so doing, make them attainable. Then, planetary development can turn toward far greater comity among people and environmental sustainability. The same historical forces generating the global emergency are preparing the basis for transcending it. In the coming decades, the old dream of one world and one human family will become more than a distant vision. It will be anchored in the basic condition of the planetary phase: the deepening interdependence of people and all living things.

Can new visions, values and actions for a sustainable and livable world develop with sufficient speed and coherence? Normally, societies change gradually within resilient boundaries of law, governance, and values. However, when historical continuity is disrupted, old social structures weaken and cultural strictures loosen. In these transformative moments, the scope for human choice and freedom expands. That is the power of Margaret Mead's dictum: "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it's the only thing that ever has." In times such as ours, small actions could have large consequences. The efforts of an active minority, rippling through the cultural field, may release latent forms of consciousness and political association. When such actions are resonant with opportunities offered by historical circumstance, they can amplify rapidly, challenging conventional ideology and broadening the public perceptions of the possible. Social movements have influenced the trajectory of social evolution before, and could again in the planetary phase.

The precursors to a cultural and political movement for a Great Transition are visible today in the eruption of efforts to understand and guide global change. But the pace of adjustment remains slow and the effort fragmented. The popular force for accelerating fundamental and coherent change may well be immanent in emerging conditions. The immediate priority for building our planetary praxis is to tap into this potential by engaging in social experiments with modalities of association for expressing the unity, vision, and trust that can lead to a wider cultural and political crystallization. Bringing a global citizens movement to life stands as a preeminent opportunity and challenge for those committed to a sustainable and just transition.

A vision of world community has captivated the philosophical and social imagination at least since the fifth century BC when Socrates proclaimed, "I am a citizen, not of Athens, or Greece, but of the world," and Aristophanes importuned, "Mingle the kindred of the nations in the alchemy of Love." Two centuries later, the Stoics developed an ethical philosophy centered on the notion of cosmopolis – a world polity in harmony with reason and the universe – that was the foundation for twenty-three hundred years of thought on the prospects for an integrated world civilization.

As scholars pondered its meaning and world-changers pursued its promise, the cosmopolitan idea of a humane and rational world mutated and evolved through the centuries. Along the way, it met resistance from philosophical and ideological skeptics, who questioned both the possibility and desirability of cosmopolitanism. Some dismissed the vision as a pipedream, pointing to the sorry saga of our disputatious species trying to live together. But the search persisted for a political and cultural basis for universality, reaching its quintessence in the eighteenth century, in the humanism of the Enlightenment.

After a lull in the nineteenth century, cosmopolitan thinking appeared again in the middle decades of the twentieth (Wagar, 1967). At a time of world war, genocide, and the threat of nuclear destruction, a group of writers of great erudition and passion – Mumford, Toynbee, Tielhard de Chardin, and others – re-imagined world civilization: "The Age of Nations is past. The task before us now . . . is to build the earth." These were voices in the wilderness of the final decades of the twentieth century, a time unsympathetic to ideas of cosmopolis.

In the crucible of the planetary phase, a new wave of cosmopolitanism can rise. As globalization erodes borders both on maps and within minds, the cosmopolitan sensibility takes unprecedented form and urgency. The global system interweaves the fates of all: rich and poor, human and non-human, living and unborn. The reality of greater interconnectedness will encourage a corresponding enlargement of our identity as global citizens. If this takes hold, the cosmopolitan dream will finally have found its historical moment.

Global society today carries forward all the inherited layers of affiliation and structure: we are members of families, neighborhoods, and nations, as well as geographically dispersed affinity groups of shared beliefs and interests. Each of us stands at the center of concentric circles of community. The scaling up to the global level of institutional and environmental interconnection – the tangible manifestation of the planetary phase – also plays out in the subjective space of human consciousness. The enlargement of the human project presses for a corresponding expansion of human identity that weaves together the destinies of all.

In the planetary phase, the once quixotic dream of an organic world civilization becomes an objective possibility, even a necessity

for human survival. We urgently need a synthesis of theory, values, and practice that blends an understanding of the historic moment, a commitment to planetary solidarity, and a true global citizens movement. We cannot assume that such a planetary praxis will develop: that will depend on a felicitous interplay of objective and subjective conditions in the coming years. Yet, if we can awaken to its promise, the planetary phase carries a hopeful opening for the project of civilization. Shaping that world – making hope and history rhyme – will take the world's citizens acting together in a timely way for a future of social justice and enriched life on a revitalized planet.

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