

The Design

Building a Sustainable, Moneyless, Socioeconomic System

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Introduction

Today's socioeconomic system has a fundamental unsustainable nature. It has a largely linear characteristic of resource acquisition, production and waste disposal. This book has the aim of presenting the top level design specification for an alternative socioeconomic system that aims to offer a good standard of living for everyone and has sustainability built in right from the start.

We start with nature and our understanding of nature. We argue that to remain sustainable any socioeconomic system must work with nature rather than going beyond what nature will allow us to do. That doesn't mean we can't break limits through greater understanding and the intelligent application of technology but it does mean that at each stage of development we do have limits and we need to remain within those limits until we have the ability to move beyond them sustainably.

We then propose a dynamic distributed socioeconomic system that has its foundations in what we have learnt from nature and through the application of such learning; understanding nature through experimentation, logic and reason forms the core of the design. The system concentrates on the management of resources on the planet and allowing people the freedom to live their own life as they wish; thus we have room for a great deal of diversity.

The system has at the core networks of sustainable communities; each like a Lego brick that we plug together with other communities to build a sustainable society. Each community manages its own waste and has the capacity to produce its own food and energy. In addition, each community has something to contribute to other communities. In doing so, each community forms part of network where, in emulation of nature, we have a symbiosis emerging from a form of reciprocal altruism; each community puts something in and gets something out. This means we have a non-nation centric system built around people and their communities, their language and culture rather than artificial national boundaries.

For the technology, we propose a system where people who have the skill and knowledge manage the technology and resources that we have. Each technical area of society takes many years to fully understand and for a

person to reach a point where they can make a competent decision. Most people will have some technical skill in some areas but no one person can fully learn all that they need to learn in each technical area, therefore, a system based on expert management also leads to a distributed system where power become spread out.

The expert management of technology on the one side and the formation of communities on the other leads to a system that has a "people side" and a "technology side". Although treated as separate, both sides have overlaps and most of the people who live in the communities on the people side also work as experts on the technical side. However, experts rule in their domain and the people rule in theirs.

At the core of our current socioeconomic system lies money. Money allows us to exchange goods and services and has allowed us to advance as a species. However, our money based system also has a number of problems and has started to lead us down the path of self-destruction. It restricts people's access to needed resources, hinders some of our development, results in increased wealth concentration in the hands a small minority, enforced poverty and leads to the destruction of the environment. Not all these outcomes result from intended actions; most result as a by-product or as an emergent property. In addition, to keep this system going we need ever increasing exponential growth, yet we only have a finite bases for that growth, thus our current system has a self-destructive nature as no physical system can sustain such exponential growth.

We propose an alternative; a cyclic, sustainable, money-less system that uses measures of production capacity in energy terms to allocate resources. Each citizen would have the opportunity to participate in the system and in doing so would have an allocation of the production capacity available which they can use to request goods they require. Such a system uses energy (as exergy) as an accounting unit and thus has the name Energy Accounting. The system also requires expert management to produce items sustainably.

The rest of this book presents the ideas in more detail with the intention that it should form a specification for the design of a future sustainable socioeconomic system. The core ideas of understanding nature through experimentation and the application of logic and reason remain but the implementation can take many forms. In the appendix we present one such form which aims for an evolutionary change to an alternative system (not

revolutionary; we don't aim to "over throw" governments but aim to build up from the grass roots a demonstrable working system for a future sustainable socioeconomic system).

Testing, Testing, Testing

Part of building a sustainable system, testing has a central role in the design. We have a good imagination for creating artificial worlds. Testing allows us to distinguish between our imagination and reality. Thus, the central core of understanding nature works through a process of observation and experimentation and then testing the ideas. When we have something that we can show works we can add it into the system. The same goes for updating, modifying and evaluating new ideas. Through a process of testing what we have learnt we can grow sustainably.

The implementation details presented in the appendices present one way forward as well as a testing platform. We aim to test out the design and then build from what we know works. If things fail testing we examine, modify and move forward either with adaptations or new ideas. We hope other groups will also try out variations of the design present here and test out their ideas. We don't pretend to have the one and only "right" answer but instead aim to network with like minded groups who aim for the same goals as presented here but have alternative ideas. That way if anyone of use has an idea that does not work we can learn from the others. Also, even if we do have something that works, another group may present something that works better.

Utopia

The word "utopia" can mean:

1. A designed society
2. Literally, "nowhere"
3. A perfect society

The Design, present here, forms an example of a designed society so in that sense it falls within the classification "utopia". As the word "utopia" comes from the Greek meaning "no place" or "nowhere" the design present here also forms an example of a utopia in that sense. However, the Design does not aim to represent a perfect society. We argue the design presents *better* society in terms of sustainability and life quality than today's system rather than presenting a perfect society. We still have much to learn!

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