

Where do we go from here?  
The Post-Corona Challenge

**Action!!**

Luc Sala






The Times Are A'Changing, Nobelist Bob Dylan sang in 1964, but here we are, the largest worldwide disaster we have seen since WWII. Do we learn anything, or do we go back to 'normal' and continue to devastate our society, world, and nature? Maybe there are some lessons, and in this essay I will try to outline what I think matters most in discussing the options for the post-Corona society.

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## Post-Corona, a new era, how are we going to manage our world, our rights, our democracy, health, sense of purpose and belonging?

Thinking about the future there are major issues like climate, energy, environment, (bio-)diversity, overpopulation, and the income gap that need to be addressed. The Sars-Covid2 virus has made things more urgent, the need for fundamental change, if not a paradigm shift, has become urgent. We could go on as before, but then chaos or worse lurks, a reset of sorts is needed. This is not only a worry for the governments and institutions, but should concern everybody.

This is why in the context of futurological thinking this is such an interesting time, a tipping point. There is a real challenge ahead, no longer can we just contemplate, action is needed. But some deliberation and discussion is necessary, hence this essay.

The pandemic is not quite over yet and new variants can still throw a spanner in the works, vaccines can still turn out to have unpleasant side effects or become less effective. The viral flames or opposition against what has been forced upon the people can simply explode worldwide or in certain countries. Maybe a future without a pandemic is coming, but we have some nasty problems ahead. We need to think about that.

Corona, in my view, has been not only a nasty time with many fuckups and challenges to our freedom and autonomy but also it has become a hinge point, a historical pivot. It's time for a change! The realization has grown that things can and must be done differently; the pandemic crisis became also a wake-up call, a warning. A new era is coming, with new insights, and we must now set the stage for this, develop a vision. In fact, we should get ready for an „Umwertung aller Werte“, a reset or paradigm shift that goes much further than some „extra“ or „new normal“. There will be opposition, people usually oppose change and keep things as they were (and certainly in the West they are comfortable) and convincing the general public of the need for change is a challenge in itself.

Developing such a vision about a better future is somewhat different from devising some fixing for the most urgent problems, have some adaptations here and there, some measures and regulating things symptomatically. Such a vision must be based on sound and broad principles and not de-

scend into details and compromises, political program agreements and wish lists that are limiting rather than inspiring.

## Trust, confidence and wisdom

From my perspective, what we need most of all is trust and wisdom. Trust in each other, in the self-solving capacity of life, and in ourselves. Without trust and self-confidence, and it's pretty much compromised these days, we start arranging things from fear. Restoring trust, in society, democracy, the benevolence and integrity of others, that has to be first on the agenda. Corona has amplified the trend of taking away and limiting autonomy, privacy and agency of the common people. We are forced into behaving and thinking like sheep, following the party line, not thinking for ourselves and lured into believing it's all for the best. Left with the illusion of self betterment and individual gains, but actually disenfranchised and without hope for large parts of the population, this could turn out to be either a new era of slavery to (digital) big brother and "capital" or a revolution!

And then we need wisdom, for me that is knowledge with love, we cannot have enough of that either. It is much needed, because rational thinking falls short of solving all problems. We need a lot of wisdom, to arrive at decisions that come from understanding and compassion. We need leaders that are wise, experienced and purified people who do not deny their emotions, want to listen and dare to ask for support.

To arrive at such a future, in the religious perspective, is a matter of grace, of believing in a universe that has our best interests at heart. That realization has, of course, been pushed into the background by science and secular society, but doesn't the realization of a broader reality hold solace and hope? You can call that God, love or consciousness, a higher energy dimension, it doesn't really matter to me, just don't deny it.

Trust and wisdom are nearly impossible to measure and quantify but we do know what the consequences will be if we do not honor and thus restore those root qualities. In practice this will mean we will have to leave more room for intuition, for what we know and feel deep down, and perhaps forget about so-called science and rationality a bit more. Above all, we will have to set to work with a sense of purpose, and not aiming at even more growth, more material possessions, but rather progress towards a more human society, where happiness, development, essential resonance with nature and involvement are paramount.

## Listing the problem areas

There is much to do practically. Of course, there need to be a clear inventory of the problems created by Corona and what was already upon us before the pandemic, because the broader threats in terms of environment, climate, widening income gap, etc. can no longer be ignored.

Everyone understands that in the short, medium and long term we need to do a lot to parry the effects of Corona as best we can. The danger is that we come out of this crisis with only partial solutions and too many compromises. Not letting ourselves then be guided by that trust and wisdom but again prioritizing the symptomatic fixes, the models, algorithms and overly rational thinking from the past. With the temptation of micro-management, quick band-aids and emergency packages, patches, snake oil; measures often disconnected from the basic principles we claim we follow.

This is what I try to avoid in the following. We have to look at root mechanisms, at the fundamental flaws, at a new paradigm really. So do not expect an opinion or suggestions about all those wonderful alternatives that are being suggested. I try to outline broad issues, and do not go into specifics like exhaust-free inner cities, new middle schools, hydrogen energy, energy cooperatives, more small internet platforms with their own servers, sailing merchant ships, electric cars and inland navigation, alternative housing initiatives for the elderly and groups, new opportunities for organic farming, tiny houses, express buses, health insurance restructuring, smart houses, green roofs, specific tax measures, etc. etc.

Also the issues of overpopulation, climate and energy are not really dealt with in depth in this essay, they are discussed widely already and I like to focus on what's not yet in the public eye.

## Reset but how far do we go

The big picture is that we need a reset, a fresh start. We cannot continue on this dead end road to a situation, where we make ourselves impossible as humanity. The question is, of course, how far away that reset should be from the old „normal“. We would, as we are all conservatives in some sense, like to get back to the familiar, back to consumerism, vacation travel, material luxury; change is only fearful, you never know what might happen.

The clear message is that something does have to happen. That may, as far as I'm concerned, go beyond repairing the damage and some superficial adjustments to environmental threats. If the Corona crisis really is a singu-

larity, a one-time jump to another level, a true tipping point, then we won't get there with some band-aids and a narcotic pill.

There is already a broad discussion going on about what post-Corona should entail, and all sorts of parties and interest groups claim that their solutions are the right ones. Sometimes the underlying motives are nicely hidden behind pompous language and impressive media appearances, and even the critics can't see through the bubble but I still hope that we won't swallow everything that is served to us as pre-cooked magic soup.

### Point of view

Because of Corona the underlying polarization has grown in society, there are now pro- and contra-vaxxers and identifications with all kinds of issues and in general a lot of chaotic information. Maybe it's good to state my position here.

Take the idea that there is a global „conspiracy“ to enslave us all to a new neoliberal elite. That seems to me to be a nonsensical projection, which also, very differently from Rutger Bregman, does not see man as virtuous and essentially okay but as a predator, always busy with the pecking order and ruthless, looking for good and slavish customers and employees.

I don't go along with that, even as I see there always auto-conspiracies, people banding together and cooperating to achieve something. But a concerted worldwide effort and secret global plan I don't see, rather a mass-hypnotic lack of independent thinking and subscribing to a panic response to what was and is a serious challenge. Group think is seldom wise, stupidity reigns.

So negative as the conspiracy crowd I do not know those so-called top thinkers, the „illuminati“ who would rule the world. The real top thinkers and „change-agents“ are almost always religious, quite humble, and often very nice people with a lot of tolerance and understanding. I have had the privilege of meeting and interviewing quite a number of them, check them out on YouTube, and do agree with author Rutger Bregman<sup>1</sup>, who states that humans can be trusted in general.

However, you can also base an entire society on distrust and assume everybody is evil and anti-social, and we were well on the way to doing that. You are now guilty unless you can prove otherwise! Then you get a fearful, almost totalitarian system with a lot of hierarchy, a lot of power differentials, an elite and underclass. Such a form is, of course, protected and propagated as an ideal by those who benefit from it, or think they can benefit from it. And when we call it neo-liberal and tout it as the ideal way to organize soci-

1 Bregman, Rutger; *De meeste mensen deugen* 2019 (English title: *Humanity*)

ety it also attracts wannabees, people who participate for self-interest, for status, to feel important. Davos and the World Economic Forum is a magnet for those kinds of people.

There is talk of the „new normal,“ which is back to normal with some adjustments, especially regarding the climate crisis. From the neo-liberal and meritocratic corner and especially the established elite and big business there is an attempt in this direction which really means to just continue the existing path with some adaptations. The metaphors used, such as „Grand Reset“ and „Building Back Better“ give the impression that the forces behind this are seeking real change. Are they or can the whole New World Order idea also be seen as a rearguard action of the elite who feels threatened and want to maintain the actual inequality anyway?

## Key issues

There are some key concepts that we need to assess, are they relevant or irrelevant if we are to enable the future, not just foresee it, as St. Exupery has urged us.

As I mentioned, climate and overpopulation are well covered elsewhere, I look at some other issues, not pretending to be complete of course

To start with, the European Union has defined a couple of pillars concerning how we should manage and regulate society. They are:

- Proportionality

- Effectiveness (Efficacy)

- Subsidiarity

and these seem important and relevant, but there some other important issues slogans and concepts, like:

- Identity and identification

- The income gap

- Health and Immunity

- Diversity and entropy

- Efficiency

- Privacy

- Scalability

- Globalisation

- Interdependency

Sustainability  
and certainly  
Cyberspace and digitalization

Looking at these fundamental issues and key concepts in a critical, but positive way as I do in this essay may lead to conclusions that go against what we could call mainstream and neo-liberal thinking, but needs to be done if we really want to make a fresh start and it feels we have no choice there, given the situation the world is in now.





## Some starting points

Are we going back to the pre-Corona situation? Many people want to, but by now society and all of us may have changed. We have lost a bit of our innocence concerning government and science, but we also have learned about being connected, about privacy, autonomy, loneliness and how mass-psychology and group-think works. We order, buy, do and think, work and learn differently, and there are still troubling and very serious threats like climate, financial turmoil, energy, the rich-poor split and environment. Beyond the limitations and excesses of the Corona pandemic, it is necessary to develop a vision of how to proceed.

Let's start to make an inventory (not complete of course) of the problems and the challenges that are coming our way concerning the Post Corona society

### Inventory of problems

There are threats and problems, like:

- A: Short-term problems such as the cost of the Covid crisis, refugees, long corona complaints, recovery of economy, culture, tourism and travel.
- B: Some long-term problems: climate, environment, aging, diversity, national identity, economic order, the effects of globalization.
- C: Problems with democracy, the state economy and the state (we might need a new form of the social contract).
- D: Mental health requires attention: lack of meaning, control, agency, privacy, autonomy, censorship, appreciation for everyone's qualities.
- E: Dealing with the lasting changes in the way we live, work, do business: We see these in the economy, in our behavior, logistics, transport, public transport, education, mostly related to digitalization but also to habituation to other forms of communication, the online economy, payment behavior, increasing identification with partial interests, other forms of work, changing export opportunities, new top sectors, international cooperation, housing, ownership relationships, new forms of money, blockchain contracts, gamification, PTSD, medical diagnostics and healthcare costs, science as a compartmentalized paradigm, the end of routine jobs, the future of the inner city, tourism, recreation, festivalization, the sharing economy, experience economy, the emotion economy, intuition and crowd-sensing. This category requires further refining.

Alle these problems are related and can only be tackled in a comprehensive, total vision. The current division into sectors, ministries, branches and the organizations and institutions of the past will have to be overhauled.

Now a complete rearrangement of society is a very radical process, which may not be possible without violence and chaos. It helps to first look at what principles and ideals need to be upheld and what problems lie ahead of us. A few clear root pillars are needed, which together comprise a new paradigm, as a basis for further policy making and implementation.

To begin with, maybe we have to rethink the traditional distinction between good and evil, between what is good for the individual or good for all. This is of course eternally a point of contention but very decisive for the organization of a society. There is no universal truth or goodness, and free will is mostly an illusion, we act and do most things automatically, because they are pre-programmed.

Norms and values result from choices made, explicitly or implicitly, concerning two axes, permanence and flux, or the collective versus the individual. Both are needed, we need security and freedom, too much emphasis on one makes a society unstable. In the Western model we have slipped into individual freedom at the expense of collective security, but that is not an exchange, both are necessary. The government thus must direct and protect both permanence and flux. The individuality perspective has taken over (especially in the West) and now faces its limits. Being social, however, can also overshoot, and it quickly involves a lot of bureaucracy, hierarchy, protocols, rules and the erosion of countervailing power.

A list of further principles that are fundamentally at issue includes:

- Not symptomatic but integral, multi-disciplinary approach to problems. The term holistic is appropriate but a bit too woolly
- Making legislation and implementation of the government but also the rules about collective service provisions proportional, subsidiary and effective (European principles) and verifiable. Subsidiarity is related to the human dimension or the human scale of measures but also means involving and holding responsible the individual citizens.
- Enforcement, if necessary restoration of the separation of powers, at all levels and then also providing (legal) means of testing or challenging the outcome.
- Understanding diversity, but also biodiversity. Acceptance of differences, no uniformity for large and small, rich and poor, no general human dimen-

sion but customization. We see this in economics but it must also permeate science, medicine and the levels of government.

- Change is the rule and rights are limited in time. Makeability is an illusion, an ossified concept based on process thinking, not on creative impulses and dissociation. Ownership is the basis of permanence but is rigid and limits sharing.
- Clearly define and uphold civic and human rights, but also duties, a balance between what one brings and takes from the system.
- Limit process thinking, use models as a test, not as a starting point. Accommodate models and algorithms in industrial property law, such as patents (patents) with clear rules for public domain use.
- Understanding psychological process control issues such as feedback, in which stability and reflection have been sacrificed to „perverse“ stimuli and measuring points, but also to rapid and global digitization, resulting in unhealthy and damaging resonance and accretion.
- Understanding the need for privacy and intimacy (=shared privacy) and allowing, perhaps even stimulating, the making of mistakes as part of learning processes and progress.
- A broader cost/benefit model for the public and private sectors which also includes environment, health, happiness and sustainability.
- Recognizing identity conflicts and identifications, at personal and collective levels. Science and religion as well as the absorption of partial interests have become identifications, disconnected from the underlying identity.
- Recognizing mental health as the determining factor, physical health and happiness are outcomes. Visualize and quantify the human and economic costs of dissatisfaction, frustration, isolation.
- Initiate supra-national cooperation regarding cyberspace, censorship, data management and ownership.
- Tailoring the dimensions and impact of international cooperation to allow manageability and engagement, not excluding any group.
- Creating and encouraging reliable data and news, countering „fake“ news by supporting „reliable“ sources, not by censorship.
- Steering not by image or dreams but by goals, content and consequences.
- Do not see democracy as an ideal, but as a useful instrument for community thinking, meaningfulness, involvement and, therefore, simply being happy.
- Recognize as a new government task the facilitation of mobility and physical encounter, as a counterbalance to impersonal digitalization.

This has to do with city planning, culture, recreation, housing, care, transport.

## Lasting changes

Society and the world are ready for a major reversal, a tipping point. This has become very topical, partly due to the Corona crisis, and it is time for a reassessment of principles and the recognition that we can no longer return to the old „normal“. I'll just put them in a perhaps somewhat redundant list again, to make the thoughts and context clear.

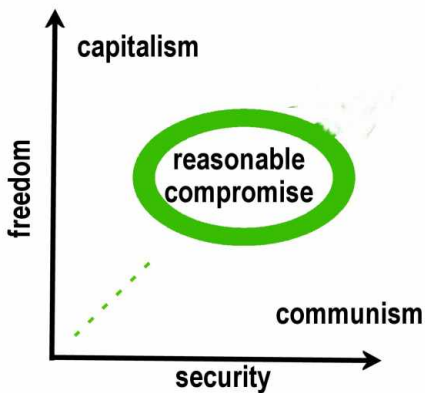
- Digitalization has upended many things, such as education, work, physical contact and forms of living, design of homes, tasks and accessibility of government and services, but also brought dangers. This is why a coherent vision is needed, one that sees comfort/security/efficiency and privacy/freedom/effectiveness in particular not as opposites but as separate dimensions. That vision must not start from the past but offer a vision of the future with goals and ideals, values and virtues, that honors not only the rational but also the emotional and intuitive and even the spiritual aspirations of human beings.
- Power requires countervailing and counter-power and control, which is largely lost in today's stepped quasi-democracy, as well as missing in all sorts of feedback loops such as grievance procedures, civil rights, etc. A good understanding of how feedback works and often doesn't work due to perverse feedback, due to lack of time to calm down (the danger of spinning out of control) and of adequate and independent measuring points and sensors. Review, demonstrations, whistleblowers, accessible justice, all part of the feedback needed for stable social systems.
- There is a growing difference between elite and mass and the erosion of the middle class, that is a schism that increasingly divides society and makes it unstable in the long run. This also has to do with diversity; a little can be different, but too much is disruptive. Support is important but should not mean ignoring the minority.
- The (European Union) legal principles of effectiveness, subsidiarity and proportionality are too often hollow words, the government decides by edict, the citizen is rendered virtually powerless. There is no possibility of appeal to test laws and regulations against these principles or the Constitution. Every country needs a Constitutional Court (the Netherlands don't have it), but also an institution (court) where the European principles can be tested locally, by citizens and institutions.
- Climate awareness is growing, and for many sectors, such as the food industry, the energy sector and the construction industry this means a challenge. The citizen must not be forgotten as part of the problem and the

solution. For instance shutting down energy-heavy equipment when there is no sun or wind could be an individual action.

- Planned predictions and models often turn out to be the goal, no longer related to the actual developments, openness about models and algorithms that are widely used is necessary, but also the legal protection (industrial property) for innovation and creation.
- Strongly felt shortages in society, such as the need for housing, cannot and should not be solved by symptomatic measures but require a multidisciplinary and integrated approach and a long-term vision. The foundations of ownership, management, inheritance law, taxation, spatial planning, social control, inherent security, sustainability, etc. are not isolated but interrelated.
- The Western neoliberal model must be challenged, it is becoming unaffordable in terms of damage to health and the environment, exclusion also on a global scale, and is unstable by burdening the future with debts of the present and by growing discontent.
- Integrity and the divergence of Law and Justice (sense of right). The Roman-Roman model of law in which good housekeeping and thus a priori innocence is implicitly assumed, has been partially replaced and tarnished by the Anglo-Saxon model in which everything must be on paper, and innocence must be proven. This confrontation between a settler and hunter society resonates with the opposition collective/individual, security/freedom, analog/digital and we see it everywhere; both dimensions have advantages and disadvantages. It is up to the judge (in a Trias Politica model) to weigh interests here, but the legal system and accessibility to it is jammed. Revising that system, also internationally and supranationally in light of digital and AI developments should be a priority.

## Ethics, rights, just or lawful

How do we deal with moral choices, with eternal questions about good and evil, the cultural interpretation of what is right, just or lawful. What are human or civic rights and why do they matter? This has to do a lot with the balance between individuality and community interest, the social. Political systems are basically choices made to balance the two. Communism tended to



go towards the social and secure, neo-liberalism towards the individual and freedom.

### Loss of human integrity

The ancient Roman-Rheinland legal principle was that everyone could be expected to act as a good family man, virtuous and reliable but also flexible, appropriate to the circumstances. Law and justice may diverge, the judge weighs interests. The integrity of the parties and the citizen is the starting point; guilt must be proven. A principle that implies peace, perma-

nence, care and fits a stable society, where citizens cooperate and not compete. This is opposed to the Anglo-Saxon principle, that parties must arrange and record everything, that law is based on custom and case law, on immutability and that law and law correspond. That has led to a lawyer culture there, a liability model that is expensive, crippling and class-sensitive, poor people can't pay for their law and so get it. It does fit with the basis of American society, which aims for progress, change, more of a hunter mentality than that of the European farmer and urbanite, and above all promotes competition. With laws that mainly protect the citizen against the government.

In the Netherlands we have gone the American individualistic way too far, people feel that, the competition in work, education, entrepreneurship, investing is stimulated but at the expense of the losers, there is a great division growing, poor versus rich, fitting in the meritocracy versus laggards, elite versus suckers.

### Legal questions, law and justice

During the Corona crisis, but also before that, a lot of things went wrong in the legal field; the sense of a just society and civil rights has been somewhat

eroded. If we want to do more about it in the future than just patch up the work, we need to think about what law and legislation actually aim to do and the ethics behind it. We must think about why we have collective laws and rules, about the relationship between the individual and society, about the subjective rights that protect the citizen against the government, and not only on a national level but also internationally and certainly also in relation to cyberspace, that virtual world in which so much is happening nowadays.

## Principles of ethical and rational behavior: Plato's Phaedrus

Every society makes a choice between the individual and the collective interest. In the Western model, individuality is more important than, for example, in more traditional societies, where the collective is paramount. It is always about choices concerning freedom and security, individual choices and interest versus collective interest.

A beautiful image that can help in discussions about ethics and morality, we find in the Greek philosopher Plato, who in the „Phaedrus“ describes the soul as a span of winged horses and a rational driver, who wants to lead them to the good and virtuous. One, the white horse, is well behaved and docile; the other, the black, is rebellious and troublesome. The „willing horse“ consists of the „spirit force“ and the wild horse represents the disordered urges. Plato saw the rational mind (the responsible one in our psyche) as the steering coachman of a pair of horses, thus giving a nice picture of the psyche and the task of reason. The driver steers toward eternal and

### security - freedom



*Plato's  
two horses  
(Phaedrus)*

**tamed - wild**  
**rational - creative**  
**collective - individual**  
**rational - intuitive**  
**ego - higher self**  
**left brain - right brain**  
**rules - flow**  
**truth - love**

heavenly truths such as happiness (Eudaimon); the horses' wings indicate a vertical dimension.

Plato thus described the choices that must be made, by every human being. We all figuratively have a white horse and a black horse in a span to steer, a tame horse and a wild horse that must pull the cart together and achieve a goal, it's a matter of balance. They are different, one is adventurous and seeks risks, the other conservative and well behaved but they both have to pull in the same direction. To be only well behaved produces rigidity, to be only wild produces chaos. That image in the



Phaedrus is very useful and gives insight into, for example, the relationship between freedom and security.

### Steering effectively

The diagonal in the Phaedrus can also be extended to social choices between freedom and security, so again between adventure and following the rules. To this end the chariot can be expanded to include passengers, who indicate to the rider or driver as stakeholders where they want to go; these passengers represent the interests that matter. The driver, who may be the legislator, the judge, the manager or the board of directors, must then steer the cart in such a way that both horses pull in the same direction. This makes the image much more widely applicable and also applicable to all kinds of disputes in society. There, in fact, the same issues are often at play as in our minds; we have to make choices and steer.

The approach of seeing well behaved and wild as opposites and thus exchanging freedom for safety does not work well. It is, unfortunately, often done. On the grounds of security, fighting Corona or terrorism, our civil liberties (integrity rights, privacy, the ability to deviate, to be wild for once) have been massively eroded. We are also now guilty until proven otherwise.

We notice this at airports and soon in more places because we have to carry an identification or vaccination/test certificate but in cyberspace it seems to have gotten totally out of hand, everything is tracked and recorded, on the sly and legally permitted or not, by governments and companies. The interests of the stakeholders (citizens) are hidden behind stories about health, danger of contamination, terrorism and increased security. That the balance of power between citizens and government (or monopolistic corporations) has totally shifted is not really noticed.



*The psyche has two horses  
to control, a tamed,  
safe one and a  
wild, creative one*

*white-black  
collective-individual  
digital-analog  
social-liberal*



The horse cart from the Phaedrus - if we extend the image to society and politics - also revolves around the question of how we can unite the collective and the individual. There is a field of tension between the two: you cannot please everyone, compromises are necessary and rules are needed. If we do nothing, a so-called „prisoners' dilemma“ (the choice two prisoners have to both keep quiet or betray the other) arises. The collective interest is both to remain silent, the individual interest is that by accusing the other one is better off. The result is usually that both choose self-interest and both lose.

### Creative or conservative

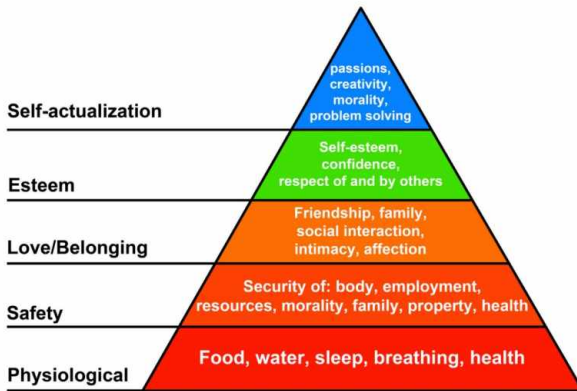
Man is self-aware and Plato understood that in this the mind plays a role but cannot ignore the wild (individual) and the tame (collective) impulses and needs. The wild, creative, the lust and the need for excitement is there but also the willingness to conform and the need for structure and rules. The whole gamut of human impulses and social actions lies somewhere in between the two, whether that is - in the view of the sociologist Max Weber - conformity, cooperation, exchange or conflict (and that's where I miss play).

Collective versus individual, social versus liberal, intuition versus rational logic, left versus right. We are trained to see it as opposites, as a polarity but they are the horses of a two-horse race, the goal counts and both are needed.

Self-awareness, the mind that directs, comes with the task and challenge of knowing what you are doing and wanting and directing that properly; that is no easy task. Adam and Eve were given that self-awareness when they had to leave paradise - that's also how you can interpret the Bible - and became responsible for their actions.

### There is no axis, just dimensions

Security and freedom are presented to us as lying on one axis, and it is argued that a little less freedom is necessary to pass security. However, this is a very uncomfortable fallacy, because security and freedom are both necessary, they are separate dimensions. Security and freedom must both be given space, not polarized or pitted against each other. In the discussion about these kinds of choices, people often make it seem as if it is quite logical that we exchange something, like freedom for security. In doing so, it almost seems as if we forget that progress and technocracy are relatively new developments and, by and large, the result of individual ambitions and self-interest, meaning freedom.



We encounter this same axis thinking and polarizing more often, openness versus privacy, diversity and individuality versus uniformity and centralization.

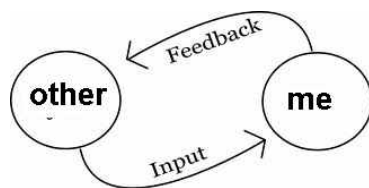
Social media supposedly offer more direct contact possibilities but have become channels for manipulation, herd behavior and identification with limited perspective.

The tension arc between collective and individual may not be as old as we think. Given how little progress early humanoids made beyond some pottery and fist-axe making over two or three million years, we might assume that „modern“ progress and individuality are related. No individual benefit and primarily serving the group interest - which is apparently what our ancestors did - means that innovation is not a priority. Older civilizations such as the Aborigines or the Hottentots actually changed very little and usually - apart from some ritual tasks - did not have great specialization and individual recognition for „technical“ innovations. The early humanoids probably had some kind of collective consciousness but individual achievements counted for less. Only later did progress come, about 10,000 years ago this really reached a tipping point. It seems that individual self-awareness and what we see as progress and innovation are each other's partners. Not always with optimal results, our environment and the climate issue make that clear.

## Core mechanism: feedback

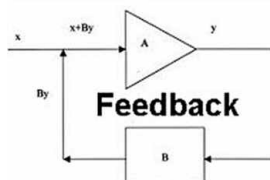
Society has (hopefully) reached a tipping point and then it is useful, to put on paper some fundamental mechanisms and outlines and how they are treated or should be treated in politics as well. The aim is to reduce all kinds of sub-processes and detailed solutions to a few clear points.

To begin with, we should realize, that rational and material science is quite limited. We know almost nothing about thinking, about consciousness, about how we humans relate to the outside world with our emotions and thoughts; we don't look beyond what we can measure. A little more openness to the unseen and tangible is really allowed. But there are also some more obvious pain points, which I want to address in more detail. I will come back to a number of them, such as diversity.



### Feedback

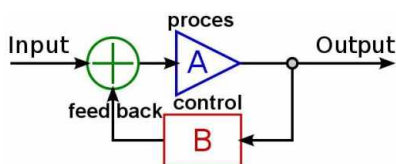
The feedback loop is a fundamental mechanism, which we know in technology but also encounter everywhere in society. If a feedback steering mechanism does not work properly, things become unstable. The fundamental problems are faulty models (and algorithms), the lack of peace of mind, faulty measuring points, and the creeping in of perverse incentives and feedbacks.

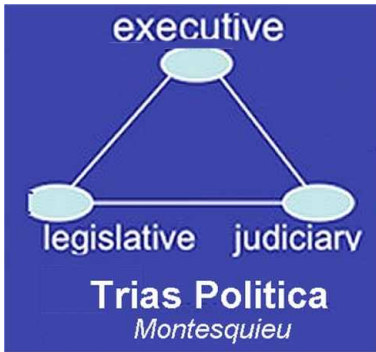


steering nology but ety. If a feedback work properly, things become with feedback

Accumulation and out-of-control situations arise, for example, when decision makers in a given situation benefit themselves from their decisions and there is insufficient control to counteract that. Or when the controller (authority) is biased when measuring (judging a situation).

So you can also call that perverse feedback. This also applies, for example, when doctors benefit from prescribing certain medicines but the big advantage goes to the Big Pharma companies. Or when civil servants are able to present their bosses with favorable figures, but these have become detached from the underlying objective because such an approach also promotes their own careers in the long run. And have complaints handled by their own department. The examples





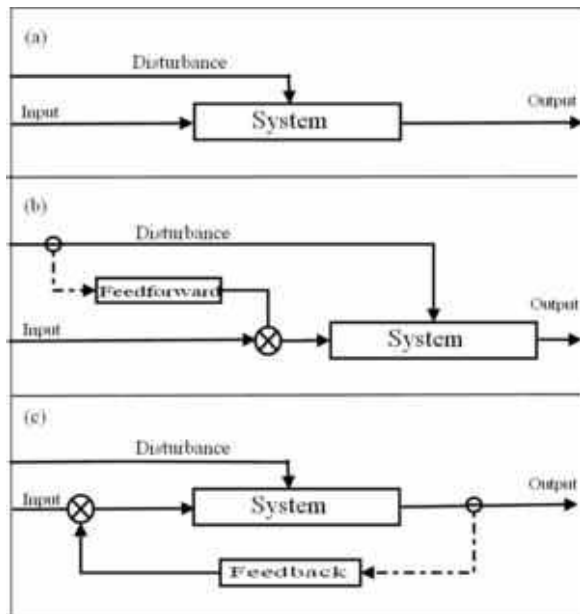
of such perverse feedback are everywhere, think of the benefits affair. In a general sense, it is when there are insufficient checks and balances and a healthy separation of powers is lacking.

Montesquieu's trias politica approach is designed to prevent that but is also a good starting point in general situations.

So it all has to do with the feedback mechanism, about which there is much to say in

technology and which boils down to steering processes based on measurements and estimates. Even if there is not enough peace and quiet (or damping) in that steering process, things can get out of hand.

The acceleration of processes and the feedback loop, partly due to digitalization because everything is becoming shorter and more real-time, reinforces that danger. Automatic decision processes, which are increasingly taking over the role of people in control circles, such as models and algorithms, are affecting manageability, especially if they are secret and not „open“. Peace and quiet in the decision making circles is then increasingly lost, reacting „now“ becomes the norm. Short-term effects are then the only point of reference; looking further ahead is difficult and time-consuming. This often means reacting symptomatically, not looking at what is fundamentally going on. One of the pain points is throwing up balls and experimenting with safety, health, climate and environment that have not been sufficiently thought through.

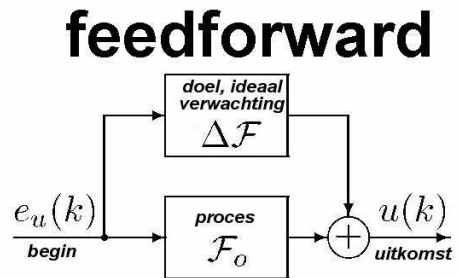


## Perverse loops

When incentives are built into a feedback loop that allows those involved to benefit themselves, either directly or in the long term (which can be seen as perverse), then the system quickly goes downhill, decay and corruption creep in, absurd rewards arise, the underworld and the upper world get mixed up, and support is lost. Without countervailing power, without checks and balances, without evaluations, without peace in the steering loop, things go wrong. Now countervailing power is not a question of setting up a „trias politica“ system. Complaints, referendums, click-lines, internal whistleblowers, Wikileaks, demonstrations, humor, cartoons, literature and theater, etc. are also feedback, and essential to identify abuses. Handling complaints by the complained about organization itself as is common in police, government, social care, tax authorities, etc. within the steering loop and without independent review is therefore dangerous and even perverse.

Feedforward is another way of steering, then you start from goals and ideals and try to achieve them. That is the original idea of political guidance, and that is what planning agencies and advisory bodies should do, but

they have also become victims of the tendency to cast everything in models, to leave decisions to automated decision techniques (algorithms) and thus the value of ideals is often lost and the human dimension is lost.



# Health and happiness

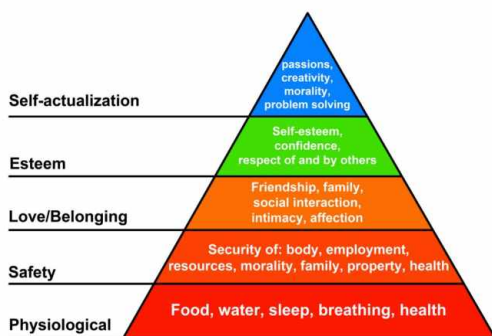
Happiness requires material conditions, like Maslow pointed out, but there is more to it. We need, apart from health also mental conditions, privacy, autonomy, agency and a sense of purpose to feel happy.

This is an issue that has been overlooked in the whole Corona-crisis, the fear and insecurity that has been disseminated by the government and experts has not been part of any study into immunity or the incidence of Covid infections. Yet we know very well that fear is a major factor in immunity.

One can not buy health, but being rich usually brings better life conditions, better food, healthier conditions, better care and this has led to what is called a health divide, poor people are less healthy, and die earlier. This is not only material, mental health is becoming increasingly decisive for healthcare because, after all, the mind controls the body.

In politics, talking about happiness, love and meaning is hardly on the agenda. People sometimes point to the happiness ranking, the Dutch are not doing so badly internationally, Amsterdam scores well as an expat location, our healthcare and pensions are top notch. We leave it to psychologists and sociologists to really find out how happy, healthy and satisfied we are, but all too often this results in lists and rankings that are too general or set up from a particular point of view.

The holistic coherence of things affecting happiness is hardly discussed, symptomatically all sorts of things are tackled and also achieved but a broad vision is lacking. Mental and physical health are still quite strictly separated, that people get sick because they are unhappy, can not express themselves, no longer have contact with their environment, well that you solve with a pill! That distinction between fighting symptoms (firefighting) and a broad, integral vision with the emphasis on the former is to be found everywhere, in institutions and companies, in science, the medical profession and in health care, education and defense; the whole of Western thought and action has become mainly reacting to symptoms.



The connection between mental and physical health is only one of the perspectives but a very important one and, to speak in material terms, a very expensive one. For we can indeed speak of a happiness crisis, which manifests itself as a health crisis. People are getting sicker and sicker, the increase of autoimmune diseases is very clear, more and more people are suffering from PTSD (post traumatic stress syndrome), suicide, loneliness, extremism, dementia (Parkinson's often has to do with an inferiority complex). The costs of this in human suffering but also in euros now and in the long run are growing over our heads. The identity crisis in society is directly related to individual identity and self-image, to how a person values himself, sees life as meaningful or meaningless, to mental health which essentially determines physical health. That sounds holistic and swishy but it's a truth that has long been accepted in many ancient traditions and cultures.

## Education

Education seems to be mainly geared towards flattening, prevent deprivation, everyone equal, talent just has to „bend over“, preferably as a baby already in school to bring in those behind. But what do we want with education? Brave slaves with all a „college“ degree (bachelor or so) and no work for the mediocre, or diversity, let the top performers work on real solutions and challenges, they can handle the competition and get better from it.

The performance pressure in education is killing for the self-esteem of most kids (and their parents); homework, tutoring and testing, their self-esteem is being eroded, there is so less purpose and meaning, no fun. Not accepting that playing is also learning. That's going to further erode mental health, depression, PTSD, and the cost is staggering when you break that down.

Education has to go back to the goal, preparing people for tomorrow's society, in order to make them useful and therefore meaningful participants, to knowledge and skills. Learning starts with playing, making mistakes, trying out choices and role models, discovering and shaping your „self“. Developing social behavior together with others, not just having to be the best on the tests. So back to pedagogy! The whole science has become a ritual, with titles and „quotation“ indexes, a theater with especially a lot of hierarchy and bread envy.

Great discoveries come, still, from a few, rising in the headwind. Spending money on mediocre grazers, not unique minds, is wasting money and effort. Selecting that group is not by throwing money at it but by chal



## Scale, do not treat large and small the same, small is beautiful

Treating everyone the same seems a nice principle, but we are not the same. Imposing the same fine on a millionaire as on a welfare recipient in case of an offense is not seen as fair, but also branding small mistakes by ignorant people as serious fraud, or giving large companies advantages that only come from scale.

When we talk about a human scale, as with subsidiarity (which will also be discussed later), then this means accepting that customization is necessary, in all sorts of areas, but there is the danger of a myriad of different rules and protocols.

The trend to make all universal and equal makes for easy bureaucracy, but lack of individual focus. Groups have been swept together under a common denominator, there are fixed allowances, supplements, all kinds of measures to aggregate but the result is that nobody really feels valued or respected. Many consider themselves victims or second-class citizens and engage in passive or active resistance, evade taxes, drive too fast, and waste energy, pollute the environment.

Reversing that trend is not easy and again has to do with engagement and support but is essential if we are to address the big issues with inequality, environment and climate.





## Symptomatic versus holistic

The Western world tends to deal with situations, challenges, crisis in a straightforward way, they deal with the symptoms and seldom look a bit deeper, for the root causes. In the medical world, this has become the standard, but in government and business the next quarterly report or elections are more important than a long term vision and looking at what is really happening in what could be termed a holistic approach.

Of course there is the need for immediate action, like with the Corona/Covid virus and the pandemic threat. So measures were taken, let's fight this, and obviously the notion of vaccination became the crucial issue. Let's jab everybody, then we will win. About future consequences, about prevention, prophylaxis, alternative treatments, little was done or accepted as relevant.

To make it a bit more general. Do you have to see everything in the light of eternity, like sustainability or long term consequences or can you also accept and live with emergency measures as the only path of action? It often revolves around the question whether the government or institutions and even corporations intervened at the right time and level or did they just panic and shot from the hip. Especially around the Corona crisis, that really is a question that is on many people's minds.

Did it all have to be so centralized, so supposedly safe and secure but ignoring the input from the field, ignoring the judgment of the citizens, the alternative medical world and the experts who had a different vision than the people of the health agencies and politicians? The result is that society is now polarized, the freedom-seekers versus the security-seekers, the good followers versus the anxious individualists.

### Support, democracy, voting

The idea that the people may vote, the original democracy, was already quite limited in ancient Greece, only the elite, the meritocracy was allowed to contribute a shard, women, slaves and foreigners were not. Democracy as we know it today has become a stepped, representative meritocracy, politicians must not only be smart but media savvy and certainly not too philosophical. The idea, that they pursue ideals has slipped into an approach where the so-called ideals are the flags that people wave and make promises about during election time but otherwise don't care about. The right is the left, the left supports right-wing policies, hustling and bargaining is standard, and those who obediently participate may join the reigns, the nice jobs, nestle in the clay layers of the meritocracy or the swamp of advisors and institutions, or make the transition to big business, which has

become an uncontrolled power factor in the meritocracy. Again, the feedback, the idea that ultimately the citizen or voter determines the course of action through their vote, no longer works well.

Trust in government, democracy, big business, the church and science has declined, for many already gone altogether. Now the question is, when will we reach the point where the masses won't take it anymore, will they disobey and start mutinying? With some rioters in front, some martyrs for the cause and then chaos, panic and collapse of the prevailing model, perhaps even of the Western neo-liberal model.

Restoring support is therefore essential, unless that collapse is seen as the only way to meet environmental, climate, inequality and control challenges in the long run. Nurturing trust, however, cannot be forced or imposed, and certainly not from above.

Support is an outcome, not a process. The road to it revolves around respect, equality of opportunity, appreciation of diversity, of everyone's contribution as valuable, of meaning and happiness beyond the material, of Kant's Categorical Imperative and Jesus' message that we should treat the other as we would want to be treated ourselves. The restoration of trust must start at the bottom, the scientists and experts need not be persuaded, support begins with the ordinary citizen.

In the information tsunami of the media, the social media, fake news, influencers and populist politics, ordinary citizens have little security anymore. There are no longer any community centers or meeting places, hardly any local media or neighborhood newspapers; the neighborhood parties, small-scale festivals, sports and culture have become closing items. Participation is a wash, cohesion and cooperation on a human level soon become wappie and terrorist conspiracy. But surely the human dimension of information begins with family, neighbors and friends, physical and informal, not Instagram or Facebook?

## False information

The firmness, which we expect from information, such as that what is in the newspaper is correct, is increasingly at risk. There is fake news, false information, phishing and viruses hidden in internet communications, even a photo or video can be manipulated in such a way that the truth is violated. We have almost unlimited access to data but we don't know if it provides reliable information (data is only information if it touches you, a bit is only information if it bytes). The idea of an epistemologically safe society, in which knowledge is therefore reliable, is increasingly lost. As a result, we become fundamentally and existentially insecure, feel inferior, drown in quasi-information and this affects mental and ultimately physical health.

## Identification as an escape

Another danger of feeling unappreciated is that we seek affiliation with sub-movements, as in identification with #metoo, BLM, ethnic or religious separatists or fundamentalists, Apple products, fashion trends, etc. and thus surrender part of our own identity as a compromise. That exchange of a sense of inferiority for an environment of superiority is what Wilhelm Reich already saw as fascism, deriving power and position from the system, the party, etc.

The fragmentation of political movements, increasingly following the delusion of the day, is clearly an identification problem. A better understanding of what identity means and how the Western paradigm with all its stress and competition and symptomatic short term solutions splinters individual identity and causes all these diseases of affluence is badly needed.

## Comfort versus Privacy

The Internet makes our lives more comfortable, we can do all kinds of things with it, services are easier and faster, doing business can be done from your bedroom, there are all kinds of advantages. But often we have to give up privacy, because Google wants to know all sorts of things about you, in order to make money, because they are free, but also to give you the right ads and information. This does not always work well, but offering comfort is the underlying idea behind many of the apps.

However, privacy is also essential for people, as a necessary part of learning and growing and intimacy as shared privacy is very essential for meaning and happiness. Diversity and privacy are not opposed to each other, both are essential. Only when we are allowed to be „different“ can we also appreciate the „other. Diversity is enormously important, in nature (bio-diversity) where it determines resistance and chances of survival, in our bodies where the billions of bacterial strains in our intestines and organs play a role in immunity and disease but also in society. Flattening, in physics called entropy, as we see it increasing through globalization and transparency, makes us vulnerable. Life, culture, art, society-reform, innovation-all flourish because of diversity, at all levels. There must be room for the anti-thesis (Hegel) if we are to move forward and achieve synthesis, including on a personal level. Restriction and repression to supposedly serve the common good and promote the “Greater Good” is a dangerous policy.

Freedom, that is what it is all about. The citizen is forced on the defensive, has to defend himself against civil servants, boas, the tax authorities, the care institutions. The welfare agencies, social insurance and their hired care support workers are rather pinchers and savers, who mainly have to prove themselves by treating the citizen as fraudulent and corrupt. You are

wrong, prove yourself right, a reversal of a fundamental principle of law, namely that you are innocent until proven guilty.



## Subsidiarity

Subsidiarity is mentioned as a keyword but it needs further elaboration. It is a fundamental issue concerning law, administration and legislation. It is part of a very clear and well defined European set of legal principles, namely that something must be proportionate, effective and subsidiary. However, the Corona crisis made clear these principles are sacrificed, using arguments like security and efficiency, even as the efficacy and now the issue of widespread vaccination is under scrutiny. The government and the medical institutions have assumed powers that some would call dictatorial and undemocratic.

I already pointed out that the Corona Emergency Law (Dutch Noodwet) is typically an example of a law, which suppresses the principle of subsidiarity, centralizing powers and sacrificing individual autonomy and control. That Emergency Law should therefore be reviewable for subsidiarity through an official procedure or court, as laid down in a Protocol to the Lisbon (EU) Treaty.

Subsidiarity is about whether the government (the administration and institutions sanctioned by it) is taking action at the right level, and particularly around the Corona crisis, that is really an issue that is on many people's minds. Meaningful laws and broadly supported norms have gradually started to give way to dictates, imposed rules, disproportionate measures, fines and power-hungry behavior by the ones in power without much defense from those who are affected by all this. Things are no longer on a human scale, no longer influenced by those who have to follow all those rules, it's all far removed from the appropriate level. f

The term that best encapsulates this whole complex is subsidiarity, and whether or not the word is understood, that's about it. This somewhat strange word (derived from subsidum (Lat.) aid, assistance) is popping up more and more but it is not understood by everyone. It is not about subsidies but about the way in which the role of the government or those in power (in general the administration) is set up and realized in practical situations and at what level. It stands for decentralization and small scale, putting the responsibility and the means of power that go with it at the right level. The English word subsidiary is used for dependent but independent business units and indicates stratification, control at a certain level.

## Proximity and relevance as the basis for humane governance.

We (in general, some countries have a different agenda) would like the citizens to feel really part of the system, feel entitled to their rights, know and use the way to counteract or challenge the rulings and measures, power to the people is a well known slogan.

Subsidiarity is not just a legal principle that decisions by the administrations should be taken at the lowest possible level (as close to the person concerned as possible) but in such a way that there is the least harm to those concerned. Subsidiarity is a kind of ethical principle means using the least intrusive means to achieve a particular goal. However, it has a much broader meaning, it is a social principle and an economic and management attitude that has to do with effectiveness, pluriformity, diversity, democracy, participation society, centralization, globalization, scale, hierarchy, stratification, autonomy and sovereignty. By following the principle of subsidiarity, the individual or group personality (identity) can come into its own, which breeds self-confidence and stimulates bottom-up initiatives and innovation.

Subsidiarity is also important as a democratic principle; our tiered representative democracy actually deprives citizens of much influence, and leads to indifference and lethargy.

## The dangers of subsidiarity

Not everything about this principle is positive, as it may lead to chaotic diversification of measures and rules. Bringing the power to make rules and enforce them down too much, a landscape of bedraggled and chaotic little kingdoms, where the people involved have to deal with a disorderly set of regulations and sanctions. A good or in fact bad example is the Belgium situation, where (also because of the language issue) there are so many levels of local, regional administrations with their own authority and control with often very specific interpretations, that an ordinary citizen or entrepreneur feels suffocated by the chaotic situation.

The importance of the subsidiarity principle through decentralization of government tasks is evident but is sometimes used to actually reduce the say of those involved. One example is the transfer of health care to the municipalities, which quickly turned out to be an austerity operation. Another problem is that subsidiarity can lead to small kingdoms and islands of power if there is no control from above. The underboss behaves like the boss, because he was allowed to arrange it anyway!

## Cyberspace as a factor in subsidiarity

Automation of all kinds of processes is possible and happening, AI is used more and more, and this aspect of digital, internet and cyberspace can lead to much improved targeting and personalization and customization of not only commercial, but also government communications and interaction.

Bringing government closer to the citizen has everything to do with the subsidiarity principle, which is still seen too much as a kind of European Union coat hanger. It has a historical and rational basis that is very relevant, also in the context of digital flattening and the control of data and especially personal data. We have left control of our personal data and what happens to it to commercial parties and to the government at a level, where we often have no insight or even awareness of who knows what and does what about us. What we do on the Internet, what Facebook, Google and the like collect and use about us, but also what DigID (national digital access code for individuals) and the digital patient file (medical) and what banks, insurers and institutions know about us has become detached from the person it concerns. As a result, our privacy is increasingly an empty concept.

We have gradually left the control of our personal data and what happens to it to commercial parties and to the government at a level where we often have no insight or even awareness of who knows and does what with us. What we do on the Internet, what Facebook, Google and the like collect about us and use also DigID and the digital patient file and what banks, insurers and agencies know about us has become detached from the person it concerns, the individual.

## Need to know, need for appropriate access and

The citizen is 'official' always held responsible for knowing the law. This is an illusion, many people have no idea about all the regulations and intricacies of the legal and administrative complexity. They are facing all kinds of legal consequences, but many don't even know how to read or interpret all those terms and stipulations. The options to find the right moves and legal steps is generally limited to those with money.

If some kind of system be implemented, where an individual has access to what's relevant in a form that's, which is not unthinkable in our digital world. Customization of information access and flow could be a legal principle too.

## Media subsidiarity

The principle of subsidiarity is also important in the media. Reporting should be as close as possible to the people concerned, information should

be accessible and appropriate, the rise of „fake news“ and media manipulation by a limited group ultimately affects the trust and thus the willingness of citizens to participate.

It is about appropriate and open reporting, in the right context and allowing access to the source material (but with journalistic exemption) . There are levels in the need for information and communication. Reports about a tree in a park are relevant to local residents are usually not national news. Local media are very important for small-scale initiatives and promote diversity, and thus deserve support without interference. Social media supposedly offer more direct contact opportunities but have meanwhile become channels for manipulation, herd behavior and identification with limited perspective.

### An ancient principle

Historically, the principle of subsidiarity developed in late Roman times,. The Greeks and many older cultures thought more in top-down structures. It is at odds with the centralist approach, where the state or city (Polis/Civitas) regulates everything for but mostly beyond the citizen. It stems from the social ethics and space for spiritual individualism (the authentic mysticism) of the Catholic Church, and can be traced back to Augustine (De civitate Dei 413-427 AD) and finds a broader expression in the Roman law of Justinian (535). The principle is based on the autonomy and dignity of the human individual and that the overhead (or rulers) should be at the service of man. The Catholic Church, including in the 1891 encyclicals *Rerum Novarum* by Pope Leo XIII, *Quadragesimo Anno* (1931 Pope Pius XI) and *Pacem in Terris* (1963 John XXIII), supports the principle as guiding the relationship between the state and society.

### Proportional sovereignty

A concept that resonates with subsidiarity is „human measure“, or „proportional sovereignty“, making things possible at the level where they fit. Sometimes that is individually or in family or in own social circle (sovereignty in own circle, a motto of the Dutch politician of the 19th century Abraham Kuyper) and can then enhance the strength of individual communities.

Thus, tasks should be delegated to the local community (or even the individual or primary care) in the first instance, then to the next level of administration, first a lower level of government, and only then higher levels. Sometimes a higher level is necessary and things can only be effectively regulated at the national or international level but with safeguards for diversity and room for small-scale and humane interpretation.



What is striking in the discussion about subsidiarity is that in Anglo-Saxon law subsidiarity does not play a major role. The Roman/Rhineland idea of an intrinsic domestic peace and reliability, for which the father of the household is responsible as the cornerstone of society, has been abandoned and everything is regulated in detail through contracts and laws. This has led to overly regulating public life and relationships and given much power to the administration. However, there is (in the USA) the small minority of libertarians (libertines) and their motto „Don't tread on me“ means they want keep government interference as limited as possible. The right to bear arms is seen as a counterweight to government power.

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## Identity and identification

We are, as an individual or a group, always unique, we have an identity. Identity or "isness" consist of how we interact with others and the world, but also has deeper, unconscious roots. Our personality is the expression of our identity, it's a relational thing. Part of who we are is based on our associations with specific ideas, ideals or groups, our identifications. We start out life as a baby identifying with our mother as our first object of attention (and thus belonging), later on we identify with many things but mostly follow the patterns from those early identifications with parents.

In the development of humanity, the "other" and the need for social contact and cooperation played a decisive role. It's not a specific human issue, many animals, insects and lower life forms need cooperation to survive. Without cooperation we (and life) would not have gotten far! As „hunters & gatherers“ in prehistoric times this cooperation and social interaction was not such a problem, you needed each other, a hierarchy arose automatically; hunting required leaders and in a relatively small group this arranged itself automatically, as we see in the animal kingdom.

Individuality did not play such a big role. The collective interest was to survive and, though they were not aware of it, to reproduce with the strongest genes. You could say that millions of years of pre- and early human development thus show a form of collective consciousness (conscience collective) rather than individual self-awareness.

With civilization, agriculture and the increase in group size, more was needed. Cooperation between people had to be organized. Identity began to play a role, individual interest (or the interest of a limited group, such as the family, the village, the region) did not always coincide with the broader interest. The urge to manifest oneself as a person, artist or individual was relatively new, but it also grew and amounted to more and more competition with the other. Natural hierarchy in a group as we know it in animals is on another level.

### Individual and community

It is always the other who defines us, individuality is the difference from the other and from childhood the mechanism by which we build an identity. Sociologists like Emmanuel Levinas, Pierre Bourdieu, Norbert Elias, Ryszard Kapuscinski or in our country Joop Goudsblom and recently Christien Brinkgreve („The Eyes of the Other“) see that other as the basis of our (togetherness); who can survive alone?

Social cohesion, solidarity, were not matters that concerned Plato or Augustine. That was not a question but a given in ancient times. There was politics and the pursuit of power but that was not a matter for the ordinary citizen and whoever seized power quickly invoked divine calling, the tendency of rulers to promote themselves to God is very clear.

We had to wait for social thinkers like Karl Marx, Max Weber and Emile Durkheim because it was only after a couple of centuries of division of labor, task differentiation and technocracy that the consequences of that industrialization became clear, such as the migration to the city and the need for a new vision of socialization emerged. Eventually resulting in the welfare state which now appears to be unsustainable again because we don't really want to share.

Total care is nice but also not very inspiring for the individual, the ambition extinguishes. Man can then no longer really choose between his impulses and needs and the good, social and within the lines operating. It remains a balancing act. In the real world this is also the case: we want both freedom and security. And trading off is not a good thing. That's what often happens now: we take away some freedom in order to offer security. That doesn't work, because both security and freedom must be there. They do need to be aligned not traded off and set on one axis.

### The morality of progress, why do we want more and better

Why do we want more and better, why do we need progress or is it actually good as it is and is a defensive policy to stick to the status quo enough? Of course we can make endless nice plans, deploy technology and invest in a better, sustainable, healthy world, but is this a sustainable option?

Is a super-state, science, the economic growth and as much innovation as possible really necessary, or is that the only way to keep our heads above water?

The question can be seen as just an ethical one, but climate, energy and the rich-poor divide force us to look at this more practical. Maybe better with less is also a good motto. Even more important is that we see what, for example, comfort and technology do for us. We can let ourselves be pushed around by technology and the fancy systems and plans, but don't we then reverse cause and effect? Pushing technology, innovation for innovation's sake, growth for growth's sake, that's building on quicksand and unfortunately we see the results too often around us. Shouldn't we first make sure that we understand what makes people happy, tolerant and respectful, what citizens actually want? That you may not need so much technology, networks and bandwidth for that at all, that is a possibility to consider, isn't it?

In the end, we come back to the human being. Understanding the deeper needs of citizens requires more than market research or elections, because the real problems often remain hidden. Every human being has both social and individual motives, a need for recognition and a search for the meaning of things. In practice, this is reduced to fairly flat goals such as more income, material things. If we want to rise above that, then a good understanding of the motives, mechanisms and morality of people and the community is therefore necessary.

This is something in which psychology, anthropology and sociology can help us but which the ancient sages also understood something about.

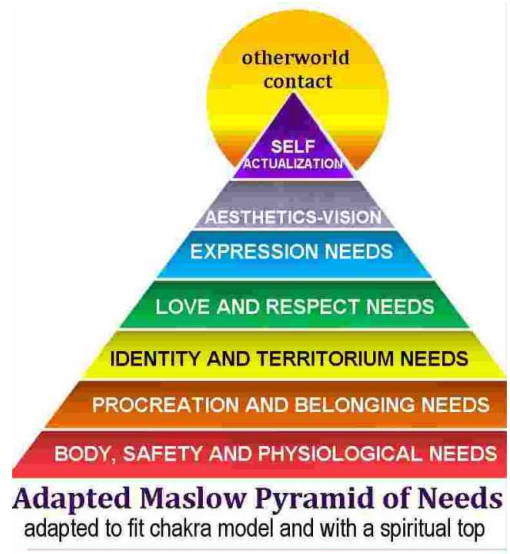
### Maslow's pyramid

What actually drives people, the family, the group, the tribe, the city, the state? We want security, recognition, prosperity, well-being, self-discovery, Abraham Maslow put it down in a beautiful pyramid of needs. There, the need for contact with the „other world“ is not very specifically mentioned but as long as religion plays a role, and it still is a factor in today's world, we cannot deny it.

So how are we going to fill these needs and for whom? How do we distribute scarcity fairly and equitably? With rules and laws you don't make people happy without structure, trust and challenges it won't work either.

Spinoza's remark that the essential task of the state is freedom may be a good starting point. Protection of the freedom to be yourself but then, also according to Kant's Categorical Imperative, with respect for the freedom of the other. Then, of course, security immediately comes

into the picture. The system, the order (with eventually law and rule and enforcement) must connect those opposites must be based on a sense of balance, justice and ultimately ethics. Morality as a practical ethic plays an essential role, what is the basis for this? Everyone equal, or still difference? Is it because we don't want to squeeze 'progress' by too rigid an order, sacrific-



ing creativity to conservatism? A totally safe police state or city is not fun, exciting or challenging, but the other way around is not what we want either.



## Democracy or democracy

The western ethical canon involves the concept of democracy as the way to deal with the consequences of balancing the individual and the collective. It's not ideal, but the best we have. In actuality it has developed from a simple principle to very complex fabrications and has degraded into meritocracy, autocracy and the notion that in a democracy the majority should honor and ensure the rights and position of the minority has often been sacrificed.

Also democracy has been branded and criticized as a typical issue of the Western economic and neo-liberal worldview; other and often historically older and more sustainable choices to organize citizen involvement have gained acceptance.

Let's start asking why we want democracy, does it promise more than representations, have we made it an icon of our search for a better world or is it a label and moniker we just stick on political actions irrespective of what they aim at?

Democracy is a way (and not the only way) to shape the connection between the individual and the collective a two-way, interactive process, to provide a way to participate in decision and policy making. It's supposed to protect the interests of the individual and arrive a just and well functioning society.

### Well being and happiness, for all or just for some

„The pursuit of happiness“ is a beautiful thought in the U.S. Constitution but when it was enacted it did not apply to slaves, the disadvantaged and women. We have moved on a bit since then but GNP and disposable income are still the very material pillars of policy.

Happiness and democracy are not necessarily linked, think of a monastery where democracy is not really an issue. The idea that when democracies make material progress they also function better morally and provide more happiness assumes a causal relationship. But turn this around, perhaps the economy (motivating and having people work together) is the cause and democracy the consequence elevated to an ideal.

Democracies also wage war, torture and discriminate and know and sanction inequality. A quote from the now somewhat outdated Francis Fukuyama („end of history“ in 1992):

*„... liberal democracy is not necessarily the only political system that is suited to resolve social conflicts. A democracy's ability to resolve conflicts peacefully is greatest when these conflicts arise between `interest groups'`*

*among whom there has been a long-standing consensus about the rules of the game, and when the conflicts are primarily economic in nature. But there are other, non-economic conflicts which are much more difficult to resolve and which involve issues such as inherited social status and nationality; democracy is not ideally suited to solving these kinds of problems.”*

And:

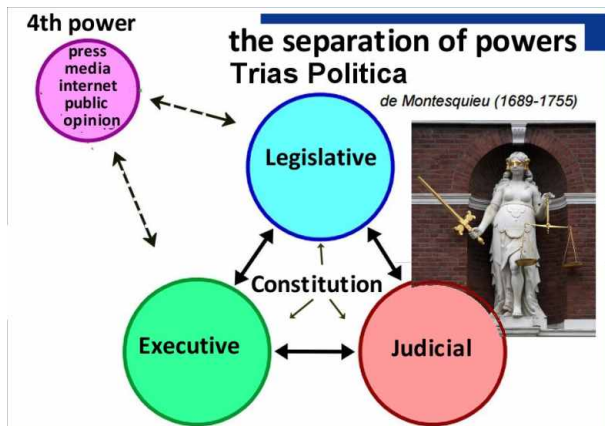
*„.....De liberal democracy may be more functional for a society that has already achieved a high degree of social equality and consensus in certain basic principles but for societies that are highly polarized by social class, nationality or religion, democracy can produce stalemate and stagnation.“*

## Democracy, representative, stepped, digital or direct

Traditionally, citizen consultation (preferably all residents, not just the elite) has been the basic pillar of a democratic system. That was possible (for the free and male citizens only) in Greece and still here and there like in Switzerland there is some direct democracy. But usually it has become a representative and thus indirect consultation, once every so many years. This means that the people periodically elect representatives who make decisions for them and sometimes executives who carry them out. it's essential they do trust their representatives, but this is another illusion, politicians seldom do what they promised. The lack of trust in the democratic system is what threatens society in the long run.

Furthermore, the political power is usually divided among several branches (powers) to prevent arbitrariness and abuse of power and those three powers are separated and balanced as in the Trias Politica, with a free press as the fourth power. The different organs control each other in this way.

We often call a constitutional state, in which every citizen has rights, freedoms and duties, a democracy. This is not always true, it can also be an autocracy, meritocracy, consensus system or theocracy or a parliamentary system that is not necessarily demo-



cratic. The definition is therefore quite vague, as in the (Van Dale) dictionary:

*Form of state in which the people (through representatives) govern themselves and can freely express their opinions and wishes.*

Contemporary democracy is more or less proclaimed as a (Western) state ideology in which the people are sovereign or especially think they are sovereign. Both in direct form (referendums, petitions, polls) and via representation. In this way, support for legislation is supposedly guaranteed. By means of elections, citizens give legitimacy to the decisions of representatives of the people, who are, however, these days often no longer consulted by the executive. „Ruling by edict“ has become the standard, the Trias Politica has become illusory, those in power determine. There is a tendency towards governmentalization of society and administration.

### Democracy as a sweetener

The whole democracy idea has become a sop and is in practice very limited; elections alone are obviously not enough, there should be participation, involvement, space for political activism. A democracy is not just the voting once every four or five years, it is a system of opposing forces and space for self-organization to make adjustments. The minority is allowed to make themselves heard (free press and expression/demonstration rights etc. It's not only that the majority respects and takes into account the interests of the minority, it's a system of checks and balances, incidentally with the risk of compromise solutions that nobody wants.

Democracy is not a licence for those elected as executive or controlling power to rule by decree for four years, listening to the voter only at election time, when that happens it becomes serial autocracy or even oligarchy. It is not about electing „puppets“ as office holders to policy principles. Democracy starts with communication, not panels and debates with the people in the neighborhoods and on the shop floor. But democracy also requires confidentiality, secrecy, because consultation in the open is not always productive. Democracy is a process, a result that cannot be made a static outcome. The characteristics of a democracy are:

- Individual freedom
- Basic political rights
- Police and defense have limited powers
- Independent judiciary
- Freedom of the press
- Freedom of speech



## Preconditions for representative democracy

If you are going on a hunt, democracy or even sociocracy (working with consent) is not a convenient approach. You need a more or less mature society to implement democracy. This includes:

- Group feeling (national unity, city, party, us/them), an identity
- Relative autonomy of the state, city etc. Democracy should not be a theater play.
- Economic and cultural development that allows democracy, as a stage in the evolution from tribe to modern nation.
- Means of communication that are widely accessible.
- Some degree of complexity, which means that not everyone is able to make informed decisions and we must leave that to elected or appointed representatives....
- No governing by agreement or edict, via the imposition of decisions, with which the trias politica and the dual system ('the government rules, the Chamber checks') loses its value. No governing by diktats, tables or lobbying influence. No power shift to government (gouvernementalization) at the expense of parliament.
- No (hidden) incentives (rewards also jobs etc.) for those in power, when acquiring or retaining the democratic and executive functions and positions,
- Participatory citizens. Broad participation in the GNP. Oil states where none of the citizens (not the import workers) have to work are rarely democratic. Involvement and responsibility should have substance.
- Means of power for citizens, plebiscite, petition, initiative, binding referendum, constitutional court, agenda setting, hearings, right to demonstrate, transparent government, impeachment procedures.
- A basis of trust and respectable legal principles: proportionality, subsidiarity, effectiveness and viability (as well as long term sustainability)
- Acceptance of an ethical basis, namely the common good, responsibility and citizenship, a social contract. Rights and duties. Restrictions on interest groups (religions, minorities) using or sabotaging democracy for self-interest as exclusive groups (identification). There must be consensus on the idea that those who are elected to govern do so for the benefit of all.

One can achieve this through multi-stage elections or directly or by using the internet for polls and voting, but under strict conditions of representativeness and security. Basic democracy is a form of democracy in which as

many decisions as possible are taken at the lowest possible level and is in line with the idea of subsidiarity.

## Cyberspace and democracy

Digitalization has great advantages, such as comfort, efficiency, access for all also disadvantages such as flattening and erosion of diversity, of local markets and local profits through globalization and erosion of privacy. The promotion of democracy, once praised by people like John Perry Barlow of the EFF as a core quality of the Internet (Cyberspace Independency Declaration 1996) has not really come into its own, however; rather it has turned out to be an instrument for mass manipulation, complete with fake news and identification with sectional interests. People in the early days of the World Wide Web spoke highly of its democratic potential, but more realistic minds recognized that the Internet would lead to unbridled globalization, neo-colonialism, flattening (the entropic effects), loss of privacy and civil rights, and erosion of cultural and bio-diversity. The democratic impact remained limited; polls, referendums, petitions turned out to be mainly advocacy, e-voting easily sabotaged, profiling used for fake news and manipulation (such as the Cambridge Analytica scandal in US elections) and the distance between citizens and government only increased. The cyberdemocratic impulse of free information is, since those days of idealistic hope about universal access and information wants to be free, being squeezed and turned into the suffocating dictatorship of cyber oppression.

## A new pillar of democracy: internet

Given the changing view of humans as fundamentally virtuous, democracy also comes to be seen in a different light, and new forms of citizen consultation are needed. The whole democratic machinery is now too based on restricting freedom, with coercion, punishment, and the deprivation of individual rights.

The approach of restricting, controlling, deciding from above, assuming fraud and bad character as we so clearly see in the Corona-crisis and the benefits affair, is actually not tenable anymore. It leaves no room for the good and responsible in each person. Can a new form of interaction between people, via the internet and applications but then secure and representative help here? Can this make true democracy and participation possible? That first seemed a beautiful ideal was lost in globalization and entropic flattening. Couldn't a system be set up that does use the internet facilities for greater participation, co-determination and participation? For control on subsidiarity, proportionality and effectiveness of governmental and institutional and unilaterally imposed measures, in the absence of a constitutional

court or a legal institution where compliance with these European rules can also be enforced nationally.

Direct democracy in its old form with personal input and choice is virtually impossible. Things like internet referendums do not work well because not everyone participates and not everyone is well informed. In theory, the Internet does open up new possibilities here and can be seen as a new pillar of democracy. This can be institutionalized but there must also be room for activism, whistleblowers, demonstrations, feedback from the bottom up. In a 'Big Brother' info-society, hacktivism in itself is not so bad; a democracy of partly anonymous and critical observers can have positive aspects.

This counterbalances the growing power of governments and big cyberspace powers like Google and Facebook, which operate in the „cloud“ and thus outside any jurisdiction or legal system whatsoever. Wikileaks has stirred up a lot of controversy!

Cyberspace also has threatening sides, it has all been figured out in sometimes frightening detail but we have let it happen and have not thought through and covered the consequences in „checks and balances“.

You can also see it optimistically, the more direct democracy that would be possible with the internet could include:

- Framing of consequences (group feeling, impact outcome as advisory or mandatory or corrective)

- Representativeness (all stakeholders participate), turnout promotion

- Qualification (well-informed participants and reliable information)

- Participation, only voting is not enough and too non-committal.

A common ethical framework

Democratic regulation, protocols, legislation at the right level (subsidiarity).

Secrecy, can the government verify who voted what?

Monitoring of implementation and feedback

Phasing and timing, repeat polls and validity period

Linkage to representative democratic institutions, parties, courts, schools of thought, the constitution, human rights.

Integration in education as a democratic pillar

If the above is taken into account, the Internet does give the citizen more possibilities, for expression, self-organization and as a new instrument of control. The individual has gained more power, because everyone can post, email, blog etc.

The fourth power, journalism as co-controller of the power of institutions, has become much broader, everyone can now exercise control. An empowered and well-informed citizen can therefore influence policy and implementation. Through the media, social media, parliament, through civil society organizations and through extra-parliamentary actions, with the internet as a means of communication, also among themselves. Provided that the government does not impose censorship or restrictions (or let it happen through the back door) on internet use, as is often the case nowadays, and also practises real openness itself and facilitates this in terms of procedures such as the WOB.

Internet extends the various functions of journalism to the citizen, the fourth power becomes more democratic but also less clear. Media are there to:

- inform: report on social developments

- monitor: check whether authorities and organizations keep to agreements and live up to their social responsibility

- provide a platform for discussion and opinion: a platform for opinion and debate

- to interpret and analyze: to offer background information on political and social developments and to comment on them

- Putting issues on the agenda: putting issues on the social agenda.

- Provide space for hacktivism, Wikileaks, investigative journalism, etc.

## Norms and values

What is missing is cyberethics. Truth, freedom, security, in a global context and in cyberspace we can't clearly relate them to each other. We will have to go back to thinkers like „Spinoza“ who, for example, saw freedom as an essential task of the state and then see if an ethics of cyberspace can be formulated. There is a great need for this. Just as in the time when a framework was created by Hugo de Groot with the rise of intercontinental shipping (the free sea) so in our time cyberspace will have to have its own ethics and legal basis.

It is a pity that in all the forums and discussions and in the comments of lawyers this is being touched upon but not coming up with clear suggestions and insights. It is actually non-lawyers like JP Barlow (EFF), Jaron Lanier, Ted Nelson, Wau Holland, Rop Gonggrijp and science fiction writers like Bill Gibson who have made meaningful contributions here and especially vistas.

They did not shy away from subjective views of law and think that in subjective law and the question of how do I experience privacy, truth, happiness, and freedom we may find a new cyberethics. No Legal-push but subject-pull. In this sense, the Internet is also a medium that still offers democratic prospects. But it does require the development of a new framework that overcomes the shortcomings of today. Kathalijne Buitenweg wrote a book about this: „Data Power and Counterforce.

### Creating a new framework

There are all kinds of plans and initiatives to set up something via the Internet, but there is no clear idea. Perhaps a competition and conferences on this subject could be used to ask the creative people to set up something that is informative, participatory and that can also have a probing effect.

That should include and take into account tests of voter involvement, expertise and bias, otherwise it will remain manipulable advocacy as it is now with all those petitions on the internet. Not directly on a national scale but in smaller organizations this can then be tried out.

This is not a simple challenge, a new pillar must be put under democracy, for which protocols, perhaps laws and institutions must be set up. The sharing of power to implement and manage such a system requires balancing and balancing the interests of all stakeholders.

It would make sense for the development of such an Internet democracy pillar resources in the public sphere but with support from private organizations.

### Information as a primal principle; the broader picture

Spirituality and informatics may also be related in quite different ways, such as when we see the information dimension as a fundamental dimension, a field, force or movement principle, that permeates everything and has much to do with consciousness. Manifestation is possible only if there is some form of consciousness. This is what quantum theory teaches us (it takes an observer to collapse the probability distribution of energy into a measurable manifestation). But that is not a widely shared insight in rational science, although the idea that information is a field rather than a signal does have clear supporters.

Slowly the insight is growing, that information (and that is more than data) may be something more than what Claude Shannon saw at the time as a rectilinear, unidirectional process of data transmission. Gregory Bateson already spoke of „information“ as a „difference that makes a difference“, in other words „a bit is only information if it is bytes“. If we look at the

physical insights about information and entropy, involving the quantum theoretical necessity of an observer and thus consciousness, then an information dimension unfolds that intervenes much more deeply in reality than the empiricists such as David Hume could grasp. Information as a primal dimension, as a connecting element, and then the step to chi, Tao, love, ether or divine spark is no longer so alienating. Information as a field, which connects sender and receiver but at the same time is connected to everything, does not need to care about the time-space continuum and for which man, or at least some people, have special senses, that turns the whole thinking around. The soul, that elusive basic idea, might have a lot to do with the information dimension and consciousness.

### Worldview, are we right?

In thinking about democracy, the worldview, or in fact the image of man that forms the basis of society, is decisive. That image is often that man is inherently evil, not to be trusted and is only kept from total chaos and arbitrariness by a thin layer of 'civilization'. This is the veneer theory, propagated by Hobbes and others and supported by all kinds of experiments in psychology in the sixties. Meanwhile, not all of that turns out to be true, as Rutger Bregman demonstrates in his book (*Alle mensen deugen*, 2019), or at least presents arguments that undermine the prevailing veneer setup. He sees evolution as a 'survival of the friendliest' but does not go so far as to speak of a 'survival towards the fittest' (more De Lamarck than Darwin) because that would require a God image or purpose of the universe.

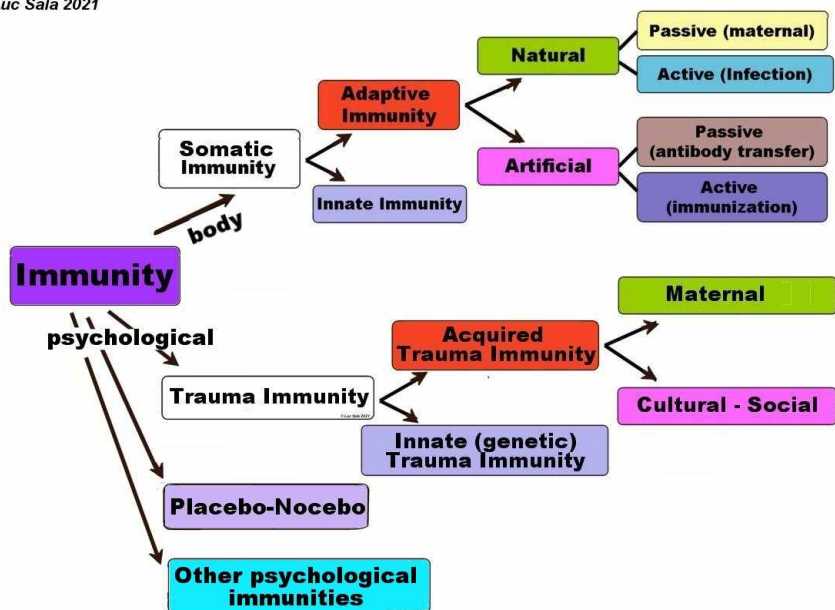
The Russian 'Silverfox experiment' of Lyudmila Trut and Dmitri Belyaev since 1959 supports this view of kindness as the basis of social cohesion and growth of cooperation. Foxes selected for friendliness change to friendlier animals with also friendlier (puppy) appearance and neoteny. The domesticated fox is a form of the wild red fox that has been domesticated to some degree under laboratory conditions, (*The silver fox domestication experiment*, Lee Alan Dugatkin 2018).

The implication of this evolutionary trend, which incidentally does not preclude the possibility that, among other things, ingroup/outgroup polarization and identification can still cause humans to do terrible things, is not elaborated upon by Bregman. It goes very much against anti-racism and anti-discrimination sentiment. In extremo then, if we apply the silver fox findings to humans, are ugly people and ugly people groups less friendly and less social though more inventive and enterprising? There is hardly any research on this, except that we know that beautiful people have all sorts of advantages and are at the forefront of partner selection.

# Immunity, biological and mental

Our mental and physical health are only stable and reliable, because there is a whole set of mechanisms to safeguard our homeostasis. One of the most important is how we react to external challenges like diseases, infections, virus attacks. We can and do defend ourselves, all the time, our defense system is always on guard and deals with antagonist even without us noticing. This is called the immune system. The importance of this immune system has been neglected, we have adopted lifestyles and food, but also medical drugs and interventions that have affected our immune system. Too many antibiotics and disrupting medications have weakened our immune system and nearly everybody now has or will have some auto-immune disease. The weakening of our immune systems is an open door for those organisms that

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**Biological and Psychological Immunity  
(with trauma immunity as part of the psychological)**

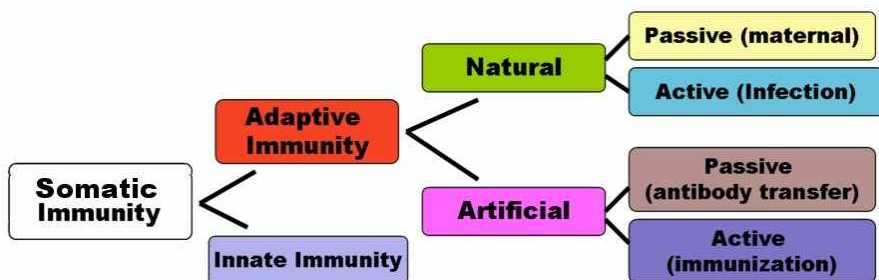
like to invade and take over our system, like a virus. We can ignore this and then another pandemic will certainly come and will maybe even more devastating than Corona and its mutations. If we go on as before, without fundamental changes in health care, diet, exercise patterns etc. most of us will die prematurely, and have a less healthy and probably happy existence.

The Corona crisis was a double viral threat, there was the actual virus and there was the mass-panic and hysteria (of government and the citizens) and then compliance phenomenon. The virus was clearly a health issue, but it has been the intuitive reaction to the threat and the effects of all the measures and fear mongering that created a global 'sheepening' and made most people follow their leaders in getting vaccinated.

We have gone through a time, where immunity was more or less equated to vaccination. But are we not equally immune to a mental virus, that makes us behave like sheep, give up our rights and nod only to hand over more of our autonomy.

## Mental, psychological immunity

Our mind can deal with physical challenges as good or even better than our body. The Placebo effect, when people react to fake medication as if it



were the real thing, is well known.

## Trauma-immunity; is there innate and/or acquired mental immunity?

Immunity is quite an issue since Covid-19, but mostly studied in relation to vaccination. There is some discussion about herd immunity, about levels of immunity, about the effects of fear and stress on immunity, but it's all fairly limited. For instance the effect of the biome (and thus food and bacterial probiotics) on one's immunity has hardly been mentioned in the Covid literature. The lack of data acquisition concerning not only the people who contracted Covid, but those who didn't and must have had some level of innate or natural immunity is amazing. Little is known about the health history, the lifestyle, the general condition, the antibiotics history, the mental stability of those who ended up in a hospital or died, let alone



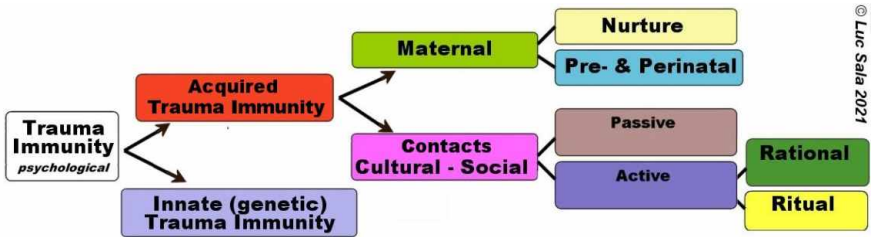
that one has looked at those who were exposed and infected but never showed any serious symptoms.

### Profylaxis and strengthening against mental disorders

Long lasting trauma (as we see in PTSD) has both somatic and psychological consequences, and as trauma does impact biological immunity, could there also be psychological trauma immunity, expanding the notion that immunity is not only a biological and physical phenomenon, but a mental condition?  
Has

Modern “Western” medicine is mostly symptomatic, not looking at healthy people and why there are able to resist disease, but only at the ones with complaints and diseases. In the Corona/Covid crises the emphasis on vaccination was very clear, prevention (profylaxis) and treatment was hardly discussed or researched, whatever was found by ‘outsiders’ was labeled alternative, dangerous, not-proven, quackery, and even made illegal.

There has been limited interest in prevention and environmental conditions in the medical profession, healing was seen as dealing with symptoms, al-



though the epigenetic perspective has changed this quite a bit. Not that there are no alternative perspectives, the holistic approach of many “Eastern” traditions is aiming at health, at prevention, at looking at deeper causes, not at superficial indicators and symptoms. They see mind and body as a single integrated complex, not separating the somatic from the psychological and including the spiritual dimension.

The current „Western“ approach is mostly to limit immunity to the biological level, as what protects from diseases and infections. This means defining immunity as the ability of an organism to resist a particular infection, pathogenic (harmful) micro-organism or toxin by the action of specific antibodies or sensitized white blood cells.

Another way to look at immunity is to see it as a complex biological system endowed with the capacity to recognize and tolerate whatever belongs to the self, and to recognize and reject what is foreign (non-self) and this offers

a bridge to the psychological immunity perspective, just remove the word biological.

Immunity (staying healthy) then is not only a somatic issue. There is immunity at the psychological level too and one could even talk about spiritual immunity. The term Psychological Immunity *was introduced by* Daniel Gilbert and Timothy D. Wilson and there is a Psychological Immunity System Inventory (PISI) test. Christian Schubert talks about psycho-neuro-immunity.

Psychological immunity is defined as “a system of adaptive resources and positive personality characteristics that acts as psychological antibodies at the time of stress to protect the subject from experiencing extreme negative emotions.” The „psychological immune system“ is a term used to encompass a number of biases and cognitive mechanisms like positive thinking, sense of coherence, sense of control, emotional regulation, goal orientation, that protect the subject from experiencing extreme negative emotions. These operate largely or entirely outside conscious awareness, but can be trained. The psychological immune system includes ego defense, rationalization, dissonance reduction, motivated reasoning, self-serving attribution, self-affirmation, self-deception, terror management and fading affect bias: a bias in which the emotion associated with unpleasant memories fades more quickly than the emotion associated with positive events.

Immunity can vary among populations, based on culture, diet, environment etc. Societal impact on psychological immunity levels has been described by C. Schubert.

Immunity, both psychological and biological is seen as a quality, not necessarily at a constant level, but essential for survival. There is long-lasting immunity which is innate (natural inflammatory responses and phagocytosis based on genetic predisposition and/or good condition or previous accidental exposure) or acquired (adaptive) through production of antibodies within the organism in response to the presence of antigens, like the immunity acquired by a vaccine or transfer of antibodies.

Immunity can be specific, offering resistance to a specific disease or more general, preventing a broader spectrum of illness. Adaptive immunity has two forms: the cell-mediated immune response, which is controlled by activated T cells, and the humoral immune response, which is controlled by activated B cells and antibodies.

There is also immunological memory which means the immune system keeps a record of every germ (microbe) it has ever defeated so it can recognize and destroy the microbe quickly if it enters the body again) or nonspecific, acting as a barrier and protection against a wide range of threats.

It has been apparent that serious injury in humans and experimental animals is associated with a decrease in immune functions as being dependent upon T cells, the principal cells involved in initiating adaptive immune responses. There is commonly seen diminished resistance to infections after major traumatic injury.

The military and veteran medical centers are becoming more accustomed to managing the deleterious late consequences of combat trauma like in PTSD, related to the dysregulation of the immune system. Trauma leads to the dysregulation of both the innate and adaptive immune responses, which places the injured at risk for several late consequences, including delayed wound healing, late onset sepsis and infection, multi-organ dysfunction syndrome, and acute respiratory distress syndrome, significant for the increased morbidity and mortality of wounded personnel. But there are obvious mental and emotional consequences too, depression, suicide, addiction, etc.

The Immunity level is not a constant, being able to withstand hostile situations depends on one's genetic profile, on one's condition, mood, the environment, the food one ate, it can vary even during the day. The psychological dimension of somatic immunity is important. In the CoVid crisis the effect of fear and stress on immunity, well known as a general principle, has not really been appraised or assessed as a factor in the vulnerability of a population, the focus was mostly on vaccination as a remedy. The effect of fear and diminished autonomy and freedom, the taking away of civic rights, agency and privacy has not been a real issue, but might turn out one of the lasting effects of the crisis, as this mayb lead to mental and physical ailments, depression, maybe dementia, lack of initiative and ambition, innovation and more.

### Can immunity be activated, stimulated, strenghtened

Innate immunity we can have as a genetic or epigenetic heritage, as something we acquire at birth by borrowing some of the mother's (gut/vaginal) biome, and as we encounter viruses and bacteria in growing up. The life-style, good food, a healthy environemnet, it all helps the immunity level. Immunity builds up, but needs maintenance in the sense, that encountering hostile influences keeps the immunity system active and functioning, total isolation doesn't (something ignored in the CoVid lockdown strategy). Children should play in the dirt, whatever doesn't kill them makes them stron-

ger. Nature can be helped by nurture here, and it's clear that adverse childhood experiences (ACE) don't help.

Now this is true for biological immunity, but why not for psychological immunity. The birth process is a potentially somatic trauma, but has mental/emotional consequences too. However, in a „healthy“ birth the baby seems to come out without much damage, due to hormonal mechanisms like the oxytocin for a bonding effect. One could see the birth as the first trauma-training. Later in life there are more instances, where trauma immunity is „trained“ or induced without the PTSD-like aftereffects, think about military boot camp or rites of passage in more traditional societies. How this strengthening of the psychological immunity exactly works, and if it could be used in psycho-therapy is an interesting question, one could even suggest that all therapy aims at restoring or building up the immunity level.

## PTSD immunity and resilience

Some people can experience potentially traumatizing events with much more than a normal reaction and trauma processing, without long lasting effects, other suffer a life time from the trauma. Others have so little immunity, that they develop a whole series of substitute identities and suffer from the consequences. This trauma immunity can thus have many levels and gradations. Concentrating on PTSD, but accepting there may be many more mental disorders that fit within the Psychological Immunity category, trauma-immunity is a relevant term. Nobody is really immune to stress, but there are people who deal with potentially traumatizing events in a „normal“ way, without long term effects.

The immunity-level influences the susceptibility (risk of becoming a PTSD victim) and resilience (ability to withstand and overcome the effects) and could help to make predictions of the emotional responses to future events for victims.

## Vulnerability, predisposition. resilience, immunity

People typically experience the same event in different ways, their immediate ad long term reaction is very individual. There are many factors in how a specific incident affect a person, but obviously one's state of mind is the most important, even before things like the physical condition. This state of mind has a history, and prior experiences with trauma (even if long forgotten like perinatal trauma) play an important role in how we deal with a potentially traumatic situation. Are we able to cope because we have an adequate trauma-immunity level, or do we end up with a more or less hidden disorder.

An example that highlights this principle can be seen through the horror of war combat. Two soldiers may endure the same exposure to the trauma of being shot at, while shooting at an enemy. Yet, it is possible that only one of them may go on to develop overwhelming stress that leads to a diagnosis of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Here a person's history plays a role in the vulnerability. If the soldier was already impacted before by other life traumas (for example, malnutrition, abuse, loss, accusations) his or her susceptibility to developing serious symptoms may be greater (Pitchford, Krippner 2012).

Several factors may *predispose* one individual to being more susceptible to developing emotional and psychological stress and lasting trauma upon a traumatic experience than another. These include previous history factors such as perinatal incidents (like a C-section), childhood traumas, living in unstable or unsafe environments, separation from a parent, serious illness, intrusive medical procedures, domestic violence, emotional neglect, bullying, and sexual, physical, or verbal abuse. These predisposing factors include biological predisposition or a low resilience or could also include psychological conditions, grieving a recent loss or experiencing a significant level of stress before the traumatizing event.

Although these factors may predispose an individual to be more vulnerable to trauma, it is not entirely predictable how a given person will react to a particular circumstance. There is the immunity level at the specific moment as this varies, depending on the condition of the person and the situation. The notion of trauma-immunity and how society, maternal care, belief system, rituals and education are factors is relevant here.

People are volatile, especially when emotional issues are at play. Traumas can be very complex, the root event can be just one incident, or a series of incidents, or a combination of incidents.

There are a number of causal factors identified. Being the perpetrator or the victim, and often those two roles are intertwined like when involved in armed combat, makes a difference. The question of guilt, and even switching identification with either role in post-traumatic processing is possible, and morality plays an important role. Could it be prevented, who is or is not responsible, at what level, what if one had acted differently in the run-up to the event, those questions can haunt trauma-victims.

Another factor is whether the traumatizing incident was outside human intervention or that it was caused by humans and somebody could be blamed. It is usually assumed that Interpersonal traumas cause more problems than impersonal ones like natural disasters. For example, school violence is

viewed as a human-made disaster, whereas earthquakes are considered natural, impersonal disasters. The type of disaster itself may determine the impact level of trauma and intensity of trauma processing a person experiences, depending upon how the survivor's sense of invulnerability to harm is challenged. In the case of a natural disaster, one's locus of control (the potential ability to take charge of an event) may be basically external in nature.

How 'close' an incident was, in physical terms or psychologically, also plays a role. There is the "identifiable victim effect", which refers to the tendency of individuals to be involved more or offer greater aid when a specific, identifiable person ("victim") is observed in a situation under hardship, as compared to a large, vaguely defined group with the same need. The age and attitude of the victim is also important. Young adults commonly display a sense of imperviousness to being wounded and a heightened sense of transcendent immunity to life events. When a young person's notion of invulnerability is challenged, his or her entire world view might be shaken. These perspectives may increase the susceptibility to the impact of a trauma. (Paulson & Krippner, 2007).

### Natural immunity, the CoVid case

Corona will have an enormous impact on the general and individual mental health for decades to come. Many PTSD-like trauma cases are already surfacing, especially for IC patients, but it has an effect on all. Understanding and studying why some people did get the disease and others not may mean a giant step in immunity science and trauma-immunity.

In the discussion about a vaccine for SARS-CoV-2 the issue of herd or population immunity is often mentioned. The idea is that if enough people would be vaccinated the virus would die out. Herd or group immunity is supposed to happen at the 80-90% level of immunity. What had been disregarded by the virologist and epidemiologists and has led to a redefinition by the WHO is the natural or innate immunity. Before „herd immunity“, was seen the indirect protection from an infectious disease that happens when a population is immune either through vaccination or immunity developed through previous infections. The WHO (since Oct. 2020) only refers herd immunity to artificial immunity by vaccination. The remark by the director general on october 12, 2020: „Never in the history of public health has herd immunity been used as a strategy for responding to an outbreak, let alone a pandemic. It is scientifically and ethically problematic.“ has been criticized a lot, but has been seen as an edict and many governments now make vaccination obligatory, direct or indirect, violating fundamental human rights of integrity.

Yet herd immunity level is relevant. If a relatively high proportion of the population has innate, natural or previously acquired immunity the dying out as a normal process of contact probability makes much more sense.

Ignoring innate immunity does not make sense. There have always been people immune or at least better able to deal with them for all kinds of diseases, never the whole population died out (the plague, Spanish flu), at worst some 30% survived. If the natural immunity for SARS-CoV-2 is around 60-70% (and this varies among populations) additional immunity buildup in surviving patients and through vaccination might help to reach the herd immunity level (some 75- 90% is suggested, depending on the mutation) and thus dying out of the virus.

Many people have some level of natural immunity, small or robust, for many reasons like genetic or epigenetic factors, previous exposure to similar viruses, but maybe also because of their age, good or bad health, condition, lifestyle, food patterns, climate conditions like humidity, specific gut biome bacteria, trauma history, medical history notably steroid and antibiotics use, telomere degradation of DNA, radiation, comorbidity, fear and stress levels, and what not. Left handedness, eye-color, birth trauma, allergies, relationship patterns, meditation practices, religion, sex life, vitamin and other supplements intake, oxygen efficiency, breath patterns, sleeping position, the list is endless.

Now that enough people have has SARS-CoV-2 and immunity levels are high enough, helped by the vaccination of large proportions of the population, the epidemiologist should start looking at the data and try to discern what factors are helping or even providing natural immunity, and what factors affect it negatively. More attention to comorbidity and medical history would be a practical route, but the problem is that those who were immune, are not normally tested for all the potential immunity factors. So research has, initially, to rely on comparing the data of SARS-CoV-2 patients with the general or specific populations.

Any discussion about the effectiveness of vaccination should take this into account. There are certain risks associated with vaccination, exposing everybody by forced vaccination might be counterproductive, as mutations might occur more easily, the virus tries to survive by all means. It is also against basic human rights (integrity) and may cause more harm than good, as not everybody reacts well to the vaccine and the long term effects are unknown.





## The great divide, elite versus underclass

Even in the Corona-crisis with all the economic turmoil, the rich got richer and the poor poorer, the income gap widened. The elite made money and the underclass, the underprivileged, the disenfranchised, the one with no hope to really better themselves lost. Inequality, within the Western world and overall globally, has increased. Many of the underclass not only lost their work, income, pensions, material security, they lost their trust in society as fair, in the government as trustworthy, in democracy as their safety buoy, in the neoliberal ideals, and are now a serious threat to the stability of certainly the Western model.

### The perspective divide; the crucial challenge

The growing inequality, and whether we think of it in wealth, in income, in autonomy, agency, health or in power doesn't matter much, is starting to become the core problem. The pressure from below but also the growing opposition and dissatisfaction of economically or otherwise oppressed groups who then reach for religious or nationalist (power distance reduction) levers can no longer be denied or manipulated by traditional means.

In the following I oppose the idea that it is an inevitable tendency for the rich to get richer and richer and that this can only be addressed by drastic wealth taxes. I believe that if we realize that getting rich and the whole notion of individuality has mostly to do with fear and lack of purpose and leads seeking security in individual wealth and reserves, then there lies a solution. Perhaps also look at what the lack of trust in each other and the system and the denial of the connection to the unseen (the otherworld) have to do with this.

Division and inequality in society is not a new problem but it is also a natural process, also in the animal kingdom there is hierarchy and a pecking order, with advantages for the alpha animals. Modern society did make it more extreme, especially in the last few decades, after a bit more equalization of income differences after World War II.

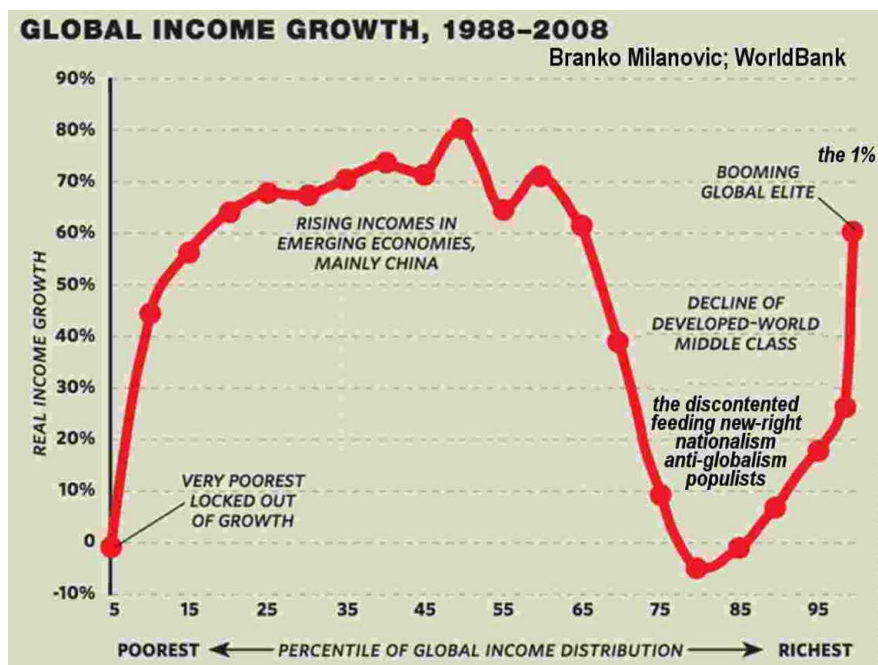
We now face huge differences in pay and wealth between rich and poor, at least in terms of individual wealth; the difference between rich and poor countries (North-South) has narrowed somewhat. The Corona crisis has made the individual differences even greater, how this develops in terms of the balance between countries is still difficult to foresee.



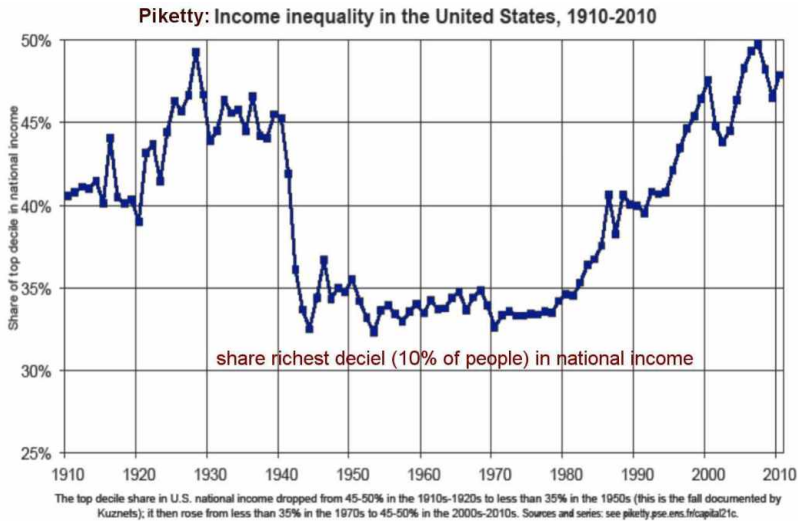
## Piketty; differences against the light

Much has been written and said about the power of the elite, the 1%, the increasingly lopsided relationships, the divide that has now become palpable. Here then comes to mind the notorious book on capital relations. 'Capital in the 21st Century' by Thomas Piketty. It's an originally French book (2013), based on historical data from a couple of centuries. It is actually very econometric and not very political but it has received a lot of attention from that angle. Left-wing politicians in particular look to it for support in tackling capital, wealth inequality, as they want to reduce income inequality, usually at the expense of wealth inequality, the rich have to bleed.

Although, in my opinion, the book made little sense as far as predictions and recommendations are concerned and looked mainly at figures from the past and dealt with trends and laws there, it did make the world aware of the growing inequality. I will critically discuss his approach here, as the subject has become extra topical due to the Corona crisis even as the low interest rates and the creation of money have made his observations less relevant.



Piketty's general approach was clear, rich get richer, poor get poorer. This was also well illustrated in the Lakner-Milanovic graph, the elephant curve, which also indicated that the growth of income for the elite and the poor was quite divergent and that middle incomes were being squeezed out. Piketty looked at it as an econometrician, rather numerically, and missed some developments that did emerge, such as the influence of cyberspace.



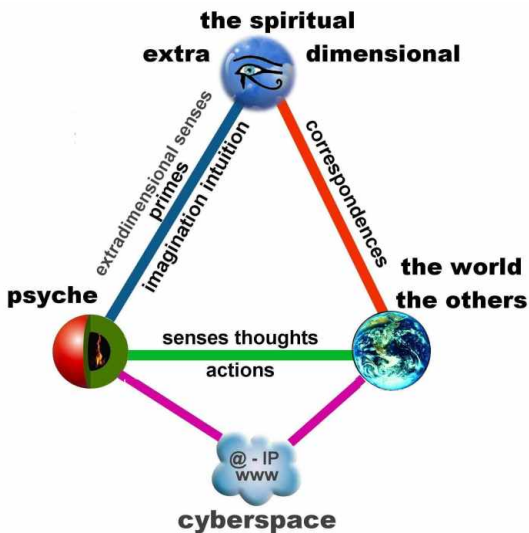
He thought too much in terms of classical return, underestimated the rise of participatory capitalism and exaggerated the power of large shareholders and billionaires and underestimated the power of pension-funds, especially in Europe.

### Income and wealth distribution and inequality

The difference in wealth between countries is decreasing due to globalization but the difference between rich and poor within countries is increasing, as Piketty showed. The ratio of income from capital to income from work has begun to become increasingly unbalanced in recent decades. The rich are getting richer, the poor poorer, although there is a difference between, say, Europe and the US. The ratio is getting out of control and simply put it is because the rich (and fewer and fewer of them with more and more money) are profiting at the expense of the middle and lower classes who are earning less and less and getting poorer. Nothing new but in the past those poor were far away in the colonies and we just looted their property without paying much for it.

Nowadays the differences between rich and poor are much more direct and confrontational. The greater differences in pay between the top people in business and the lowest jobs hurt, partly because of the crisis. People are up in arms against inequality, as with Occupy and the Arab Spring. The Occupy movement of a few years ago also made it clear to the West that something is going on at a lower level and that people no longer simply accept growing inequality. Despite the collapse of Occupy, this still resonated with the masses and was picked up by the media. The self-enrichment of billionaires, but also of politicians, bankers and job hunters is now widely reported and labeled as 'greedy bastards'.

His success with the media and in the „leftist church“ is thus not really well founded but fits the fashionable 1% thinking, which now that the economy rebounds becomes more and more of an issue. The real mechanisms why societies almost always tend towards such a dichotomy between rich and poor and therefore end up being internally torn apart, is more a psychological/social issue than an economic one. In my opinion it has mainly to do with fear and mistrust, we have lost faith in each other, the system and the spiritual or religious „other world“, something that has been going on since the Renaissance. We have elevated rationality and science to a religion in itself but in doing so we have also denied that we as humans do exist or think we exist in three worlds. I like to portray this as the three-worlds picture (with these days Cyberspace as a new extension).



The inequality between rich and poor has been sufficiently researched in recent years and cannot be denied, at most one can argue about the scale of that inequality, is it the 10%, 5%, the 1% or the 0.1% who have the money and power. It is also no longer a question of capital against the masses, as it was in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, when Karl Marx but also Theodore D. Roosevelt were able to oppose the robber barons, the unscrupulous capitalists who used the industrial revolution to squeeze the masses. The have's are the better educated, the ones with ac-

cess, the have-nots are the disenfranchised, the ones with no hope or perspective.

Capital today is the smart that became rich and their coterie, who acquire their wealth and income by actively „working“ themselves. The hereditary rich are still there but are a minority in the new superclass of plutocrats, oligarchs and billionaires and those who hang around against them. The rent-seekers, those who realized the money machines created by unregulated privatization, corrupt governments and holes in the financial systems also formed a classic group of super-rich. However, they too are increasingly using their capital to grow further, and are thus very different from the rent-seekers of the past.

I noted, with all the globalization and scaling of the global economy, while the difference between countries has decreased, the domestic differences have actually increased. The emerging markets and BRIC countries (Brazil, Russia, India and China) have grown faster than the West and resource rich countries in particular are following that growth spurt, with almost always a few who benefit and become stone rich. The masses do advance slightly and a middle class grows, it is needed to create a market for cars, smartphones, drugs and status symbols but what they gain is actually at the expense of the middle class in the West, who lose their jobs and income due to the mobility of work.

### Diversity within limits

Differences in income, education, power, knowledge and status are productive as long as they are not too great. This also means that diversity has good sides, I will come back to that. Surmountable differences, that is, being able to get ahead through hard work and good ideas are fine and mobility (social and physical) can help to form a natural bridge and facilitate the step up for enough individuals. Difference is necessary, otherwise society stiffens but not too much because then things become polarized. We can receive and handle a limited number of newcomers, but if their share becomes too large, things will become polarized, they will clump together and ghettos and foci of resistance may arise.

Society (and people like Piketty make this clear) senses that things are going badly wrong and starts to react and anticipate. The rich hide in gated communities, the minorities isolate themselves in ghettos and cultural and religious (Islam) fortresses, tribalism rears its head, borders are made or set, polarization and radicalization are the result and global physical and digital security is at risk.

The problem of skewed income distribution has to do with a number of mechanisms, mostly related to the psychology of the citizen invited to indi-

vidualization, the Internet, globalization and the speed of communication. The faster the world turns, in terms of communication and reaction patterns (feedback) the faster the differences grow.

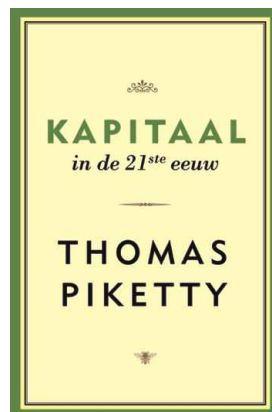
The speed of communication, which nowadays is mostly real-time (without delay) causes accretion (extreme resonance), a well-known effect in feedback loops. Knowing and measuring are dangerous in this sense, reacting too quickly can lead to uncontrollable extremes. We also know this as spiral effects: parties chase each other, with ever better weapons, extreme positions and escalation of conflicts.

### Controlling the spinning out of control

It would be interesting to see what effects a deliberate dampening of feedback would produce by, for example, imposing a delay of even a few seconds or minutes for tweets, email, chats, and messages. It is not inconceivable, that this could dampen a lot of unnecessary panic and ill-considered actions and reactions. On the stock market they already have such a delay built in, if the differences become too big too quickly. Such an imposed delay is one of the possible government measures to prevent widespread panic in case of major disasters. Not a total communications halt, just some delay that counteracts the whirling and snarling caused by feedback that is too short.

### Cyberspace as an economic factor in the inequality between work, capital, and talent

Piketty looked primarily at economic figures of the past and based his statement and theory on them and the laws he saw. But the future is more than the past, in particular cyberspace is changing the whole thing. The benefits of the Internet and digitization are great but the flattening of cyberspace, in culture and economy, should not be ignored. More and more the economy revolves around services, digital and virtual things like music, media, advice, apps and recreation via a screen. But you can arrange that from any location and from any tax regime, the bond with a city or country is becoming less. As a result, traditional roles are also shifting, capital providers got a different role but also the value of for example land or a factory has changed, it is now about market positions, customer bases, patents, market power. As a startup you no longer need money for an office or factory, or for machines and stock but you need to invest in software, app development, copyrights, marketing, PR. Talent is becoming more important, mediocrity is not



in demand, people want to hire top people, use them, work with them, share knowledge.

In particular, Piketty does not see that the value of actual knowledge (such as prices) is decreasing, this knowledge inequality is often the basis of (over)profit and therefore differences in returns, but the cyberspace transparency gnaws away at that, there knowledge is rather knowing how you can use something.

## Globalization flattens and facilitates new empires

The old heirlooms are no longer so powerful, it is the new entrepreneurs, like Jeff Bezos who became billionaires in what is increasingly becoming a meritocracy; those with talent, courage and commitment make it, the rest remain minkukel. The Internet is the economic factor that turns everything around and made globalization effective, so that tracing historical lines in terms of income distribution, as Piketty does, becomes trivial. His vision is a nice fit with the sentiment of the frustrated near-rich who saw their hopes, their 'American Dream', shattered by the crisis in 2008, but is actually nothing more than looking back at the industrial revolution and the previous centuries, without much value for the future. Politics, also in the Netherlands, unfortunately jumps on that bandwagon and turns it into a kind of agitprop, populist propaganda for its own benefit.

My biggest objection is that Thomas Piketty, with his analyses of capital versus income, does not address the consequences of modern technology, transparency, labor displacement, concentration trends; he apparently did not see the Internet as a fundamental economic shift. The Internet necessitates us to, in a sense, completely upend the way we think and talk about work, income, relationships and inequality. Piketty does not do that, and that is dangerous. His excavation and clarification of historical developments is not really relevant to the future, his recommendations and conclusions are unsubstantiated and irrelevant, but his observation that income and wealth inequality are out of control apparently resonates well with the zeitgeist.

Other writers such as Chrystia Freeland in 'Plutocrats' (2012) present a more nuanced picture, certainly of recent developments and the role of finance and especially the 'hedge funds' or leveraged funds where much of the speculative profits flow and the super-rich with their fascinating but also almost village-like patterns of isolation and clustering can be found.

It is in particular the modern financial constructions and poorly covered but ever lengthening levers (on underlying assets such as the sub-standard mortgages in the US) that caused the 2008 crisis but also caused the further widening of income disparities. Privatization created new super-rich here and certainly in Eastern Europe. In Mexico, China, and India, the plutocrats who

railed against the government for privileges, monopolies, and money machines are even more powerful than at home or in the US, where it is the hedge funds and internet entrepreneurs who made the billions.

We are left with a fundamentally different picture than before, the hereditary rich and large landowners have been exchanged for plutocrats, resulting in growing inequality but Piketty's analyses are history in that sense. In earlier centuries the old landowners, hereditary capitalists and annuitants determined the proportions and profited from the centrifugal effects of economies of scale (rich edges, empty middle); now it is the super-rich entrepreneurs, especially from the ICT and commodities sectors, and enterprising speculators to whom the increase in income and wealth flows. Yield as a combination of dividend (or retained earnings) and value growth (stock market value or private equity) is no longer useful as an economic barometer, because it is the 1% and their ambitious and hopeful auxiliaries who manipulate stock market price and value, if necessary via bitcoins as Tesla did.

The stock market is a Baron van Münchhausen phenomenon, pulling itself

<b>Piketty:</b> <b>The growth rate of top global wealth, 1987-2013</b>	
<i>Average real growth rate per year (after deduction of inflation)</i>	1987-2013
<b>The top 1/(100 million) highest wealth holders</b> <small>(about 30 adults out of 3 billions in 1980s, and 45 adults out of 4,5 billions in 2010s)</small>	6,8%
<b>The top 1/(20 million) highest wealth holders</b> <small>(about 150 adults out of 3 billions in 1980s, and 225 adults out of 4,5 billions in 2010s)</small>	6,4%
Average world wealth per adult	2,1%
Average world income per adult	1,4%
World adult population	1,9%
World GDP	3,3%

up by the hair because the roaming pension funds and saved money simply has to go somewhere. The underlying value has been lost sight of or, in view of the hidden environmental costs or costs of protection against terror, can no longer even be determined.

Economists also say that extreme income inequality is not so much unjust as it erodes trust in each other, the system, politics and democracy, and makes it more difficult for civil society to climb up the ladder. A few score, but the „winner takes all“ stops broad mobility. According to the WRR, it also

affects economic growth because the rich spend less and hoard more. It is a costly situation in the long run. In „The Spirit Level“ (2009), Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett describe, using all sorts of comparative statistics that high income inequality correlates with: more teenage mother-



hood, more violence, more health problems, more infant mortality, more obesity, and so on. What are the costs of this, do we include them in the picture?

That things can get out of hand is clear and we really don't need Piketty's complicated reasoning and graphs to do that. That taxing the rich, Piketty's suggesting to revert the process is more or less accepted, but will it work? Capital is volatile, money transferred in seconds. Maybe things like a Tobin tax (on financial transactions) or other drastic measures may help.

The general impression now is that things have gotten too crazy and the media and politicians are almost making a big deal out of it, referring to what Piketty, incidentally also together with Emmanuel Saez, dug up from the archives. Tackling the rich with a heavily progressive wealth tax, however, ignores the changed proportions, the historically low interest rate (there is no longer a fixed return to be made) and the volatile (highly fluctuating) valuation of working capital.

## Arguments for inequality

Don't think that inequality only has negative consequences. It does feed competition and ambition it helps innovation and change, without it we would become a stagnant and sleepy society, unable to deal with the challenges ahead.

I do think that investing is necessary for growth and that even luxury spending promotes innovation and keeps culture moving. Without expensive stores that exist from rich customers anyway no fashion, art, vitality. Communism was (on the outside) a flat and almost dead lot compared to the vibrant economy of world cities where indeed the rich set the tone.

## Capital versus labor income

Piketty addresses the question of whether the return on capital is not becoming increasingly decisive in the economy because it is also increasingly destroying the balance between income from work and income from capital; more rich people and less reward for work, in other words. Piketty expects that in the coming years wealth will grow faster than income, which will lead to a sharp increase in wealth inequality. He goes on to show that big capital and the wealthy get better returns (that's different from interest, which is now historically low) than the smaller saver and therefore grow even faster; there is an economy of scale for larger assets. So capital and growth are more out of sync lately and as a result the money flows to the capitalists and corporations who save more and more and then invest it.



The gap between what is earned through work and through capital growth and investment is growing. From 1980 to 2011, the global labor income ratio fell from 63% to 54%, so gradually less was earned from work and more from capital (growth). The trend of capital accumulation that began in the last century has only been reinforced by globalization. In the twentieth century, according to Piketty, it was somewhat rebalanced by the great wars, among others, after the capitalist heyday of the Belle Epoque (1870-1914) and the industrial revolution. Others see the political rise of the working class as the cause of this moderation.

Looking at the core of Piketty's argument, we come to a formula, which he says shows that further disparities are inevitable.

Piketty uses the formula  $R > G$  with  $R$  for return and  $G$  for growth.

$R$  is then in percentages what a capitalist (or all capitalists combined) earns from wealth and  $G$  is the rate of growth of the economy. So for a national economy,  $R$  is the return made on all private capital and  $G$  is the growth of the national product. His central thesis is that if the return on capital is greater than the growth rate (of the national product, the entire economy) then money flows to capital. The rich, who own the capital, get richer.

This formula is a simplification but it does put the problem of the tension between these two concepts clearly.

Consider for a moment a closed economy with as much capital as national income, so a simple situation. If there is a 4% return on capital at a 1% growth rate in the economy (a situation that is quite realistic) then 3% flows to the capital providers at the expense of the rest (workers, government). So in the long run, capital (capital) sucks the economy dry. In actuality, there is now much more capital than national income, so the draining effect is greater, the rich get richer even faster.

The  $R > G$  formula is clear but also in my view a bit too simple. Return  $R$  is not independent of  $G$  and growth  $G$  in turn depends on  $R$ . The magnitudes at stake depend on each other. Capital is also needed for economic growth, without investing no one benefits. Growth is a factor of capital but capital (providing) again a factor of (expected) growth. Tackling capital also means frustrating the engine of the economy, that people (can) become rich and super-rich is also a social-psychological ambition factor.

Incidentally, in the case of contraction, the shift to capital income becomes even greater. Take the situation that an economy saves (on raw materials) and therefore shrinks, this is even more detrimental to labor income, because the capital provider will collect that saving and the difference between  $R$  and  $G$  becomes even greater.

Also at play in this game between R and G is the size of the capital seeking return and the size of the national product. Because on what do you make a return? Surely not on the total value of an economy; things like land and real estate provide a return but government property (public assets) usually does not, so do they have no value, not even when it comes to companies and shareholdings? It is about what part of the wealth is converted into working capital and that is accumulated savings and accumulated value (of shares for example) but there are other values (wealth) such as raw materials in the soil (our gas is already almost private capital because of the deals with the oil companies) and the investments in education.

Now Corona has changed this image a bit. Interest are at a historical low, but the profits (and gains in stock value) are high, the economic growth is amazing (a bit against expectations) and this means good news for those who own the capital; the power base is shifting more and more from labor to capital even as the boom brings down unemployment figures. The power of the people is, also because of the whole complex of diminished rights, autonomy and agency. A perverse situation has developed, the word predatory capitalism (plunder-capitalism or predatory capitalism) pops up.

### Prediction or doom

This is where Piketty's political sting lies, because is this dichotomy also inevitable for the future? He thinks so if we don't start taxing the rich heavily, and that fits nicely with the zeitgeist. Blame the rich! Because, according to him, this wealth is often acquired through inheritance (and then well managed), poor people do not have many opportunities. Inequality therefore, and not only in money in the bank or shares but also in opportunities. Rich people pass the ball to each other and also have more to spend on education and networking, that is social capital.

So in his view, there is little to be done about that, he believes that with a (global) progressive wealth tax you can straighten things out. Nice for the left, but there is criticism of his approach, because isn't that a way to treat the goose that lays the golden eggs? The problem is that you can also see it differently. Growth (although that may no longer be necessary) is often caused by what those 1% of rich people (or the innovative entrepreneurs on the way there) do and invent, and that is profit-driven. They are not only the profiteers but also the engine of progress and not only money driven either. That Scary Duck image of greedy money piles up is too limited; many rich people realize that this is not sustainable and people like Soros, Buffet and Gates (now separated from Melinda) are well-known philanthropists who give billions to all sorts of projects but do not really change the system.

By the way, it is also disputed that inheritance still plays such a role, nowadays overpaid hedge fund managers, CEOs and successful ICT entrepreneurs are the new rich, at most the heirs of the current self-made billionaires will play a bigger role in the future.

The idea of growth is also somewhat ambiguous. Growth in the economy is achieved through savings or growth in the number of participants in the economy (working people), the influx of women has unrealistically distorted formal GDP growth rates in recent decades.

Thomas Piketty is not a pessimist, he does not predict an inevitable clash and systemic crisis like Marx. Actually, based on 300 years of figures on the economy, he sees a fairly stable (but very unequal) relationship between capital and income and draws that line (somewhat unsightly say the critics). Only in the 20th century did the wars and crises (and the increased empowerment of workers state others) make things different but in recent decades capital is again growing at the expense of labor income.

### The ordinary saver is losing out

It's not just the workers who are increasingly poorly paid, but also the cheap lenders (savers) are paying the price. Their bank deposits and pensions are being eroded by management costs, hidden inflation and claims by a government that is trying to plug systematic holes (aging). The rich suffer less from inflation because their assets (stocks, land, bitcoins) are more stable in value. They have not tied up their money in the bank at low or now negative interest rates but made it active.

Piketty lumps wealth and capital together. However, he mainly analyzed the return on capital and gives the example that rich universities in the US make as much as 10% on their tens of billions of dollars of assets. But is that realistic, even for the capitalists with us or exceptional? The large institutional investors (who mainly work with pension funds) try to make a return greater than 4% but, at least in our country, this is only moderately successful. Hedge funds are now also used to score some higher returns, but they again speculate nicely and hedge risks through deals in which the pension funds are otherwise involved.

### Need for certainty

The problem with simplifications is that the economy is much more complex than some formulas. For example, Piketty seems to misjudge the basis of much saving, the need for security. Much so-called capital is an old-age reserve; people want security for later. When that certainty is arranged in a different way as with the state pension system, people will save less. You can call that virtual or even emotional capital; ignoring it in statistics and

deficit calculations, as the government and the WRR still do to some extent, is nonsense. The emotional value translates into behavior, less hoarding and more security.

And in the secular and rational world, security is still mainly something you have to arrange, you have to hoard, get richer. Trust in the system, in your neighbors, in your network (or the Church) does not count anymore, grabbing is the only way to do something about the deep underlying and fundamental fear. The loss of „faith“ really plays a role in how we treat each other and especially want to be „up front“, with more money, a bigger car and more security.

## Yield and speculation

We live on credit and virtual speculation values and „capital“ benefits more than the citizen and worker for now. But then what is capital, I wonder. The property of the super rich is mostly their stock holdings, based on stock market value. That fluctuates and then we think they are getting richer or poorer but is that really true? They often cannot or will not sell those shares and collect their profits and the dividend yield is usually quite limited. Many of the so-called super-rich really can't wave billions like Bill Gates or Warren Buffet.

So the underlying problem is also to make real returns, the very low and even negative interest rates illustrate this. The 10.2% return at American universities that Piketty points to as an example was a thing of the past, it was achieved by taking big risks and being very alert to use the jumps in, for example, stock prices. It is only achievable with solid speculation and thus at the expense of others. You can never make even 4% real return if somewhere there is not also saving or earning on work, raw materials or energy or if there is productivity growth. Otherwise it is speculating or pottering as the Dutch did with our gas reserves.

Actually, when thinking about capital, a much clearer distinction should be made between hard returns such as dividends or rents and the price gains. Stock market prices do have some basis in the intrinsic value of the company and in price/earnings ratios, but the prices of the big players in, for example, ICT - and there are many big investors in this field - are often very speculative. Investors, especially those who live by the quarter and unfortunately these are also the large funds, do not look for a hard and stable return but price gain and chase each other or just into misery. Also the profit determination of companies does not take into account long term effects, environmental damage and the cost of dissolution.

Think of our pension funds, large organizations that have difficulty realizing 4% and therefore, in addition to dividend and bond income, chase each

other on the stock market and that regularly goes wrong. The actual owners, i.e. the pensioners, also have to pay the costs of the fund and do not see the Piketty scale effect, if any. All kinds of investment constructions are also rigged so that the small investor rarely sees a high return. The banks, insurers and the financial world keep more than their share as costs. But, and this mitigates the criticism, this actually maintains employment.

Domestically, a high return is almost unfeasible, except in the real estate market, where the housing shortage and the desire to be able to put money into something at least causes prices to spike, thereby driving up rents and WOZ values and with rent subsidies and rent taxes for the corporations we mainly pump money around. But beware, one day vacancy of e.g. stores and ageing will take their toll. Also the government still hands out nice returns and calculation interest sometimes. But government loans and such do not yield anything anymore. So our money (via the banks and funds) is often invested in risky adventures abroad and we invest very little at home, while we are actually bursting with money, from which others benefit.

### What do we do with money?

Money has become cheap, the interest is sometimes even negative, but what do you do with it? Putting away a mountain of money in a bank can cost you money nowadays, but an old sock is not a very safe place either. You want to invest, preferably with a return, in real estate, gold, minerals and bitcoins but what is sensible in the longer term?

We have money, it was mainly the upper middle groups who saved, also because of the lockdown and because travel, luxury and going out was not in the cards. We also put money away for our old age but are we really investing it wisely? Of course, we could invest in, for example, mobility, energy saving and the environment and that certainly brings returns, we should have had high speed trains working long ago and tidal power plants on the North Sea.

We now put money into sovereign debts of 'pathetic' countries and let the EU guarantee it and the ECB buy those things up again. Is that return in sound currency, something we can now put money into with reasonable certainty as to the results?

A financial carousel has been rigged, with absurd property values and tax cleverness but we have not been able to enforce a normal banking culture or healthcare economy. Government, business and the private individual all participate in the rat race, which we call rational economics but which amounts to a kind of money fair. The pension managers (on our behalf,

that is) together with speculators chase up the stock prices, the underlying value hardly counts.

### Me before Us, improving ourselves at the expense of the collective!

The financial collapse that dealt such a huge blow to the US in 2008 and subsequently the world market, was mainly due to illusions, the stretching of the virtual values of securities (such as houses) in constructions in the investment market. This in turn was the result of the increasing need for security among an aging population, who began to think more and more materialistically and therefore more fearfully, and were seduced by the beautiful projections of the funds, banks and the government. The times when you got your reward in heaven are well past, hell is an old age without help or pension!

It seemed so simple, we were going to invest our saved wealth, including the pension money that actually makes up the largest part (80% says Sander Boelens) of the capital to be invested by banks, funds, companies and the government, in such a way that a return was created. The only problem was that this return was seen as far too limited, calculated with paper illusions, tied together with empty promises, expectations and speculations. Return became a financial construction of bubbles, real return in agricultural yields, health, the environment, meaningful work, energy savings, mobility was still somewhere in the picture but no longer decisive. The economy became a bubble, which then also burst, but have we learned anything? It is still all about arranging bonuses, lining your pockets, speculation and air cycling.

### Historically high stock market prices

Especially institutional investors like pension funds drive each other crazy on the stock market, helped by a small club of ego-tripping wolves who try to outwit each other without looking after the real interests. We mainly protect the false security, the strange and enforced rent increases of 6.5% in recent years (of which 2.5% via the corporations simply goes to the state), the house prices again what to boost also the rental quote. Who can pay 50% or more of their income for rent? This is happening now, an old age pensioner can no longer live without rent subsidy, renting is absurdly expensive and that at historically low interest rates. It is protective behavior, the entire pyramid of banks, pension funds and investments is maintained at the expense of the savings of individuals and the disposable income of the masses.

It has been suggested that measures such as taxes on speculation, money movements (the Tobin Tax), environmental pollution and overconsumption are a better way than capital taxes of restoring the balance between capital and work. Raising the minimum wage, something that is now in play in the

US because many there now actually live below the poverty line, is also an option. Pre-distribution, that is, before taxation and redistribution improve the ratios, is the most elegant solution. It sounds simple, make the minima a little richer, so less inequality, that helps consumption and reduces social stress.

There is also the question, whether a further decrease in employment will not shake up the whole economic model, because what would, for example, a basic income for everyone mean for returns and capital accumulation? It could also lead to a new divide, and do we want that?

## The real return ROI

Returns are a story of benefits but also of costs, risks and long-term consequences. Meaninglessness, frustration, people on the street; this ultimately costs money, often not directly to companies but to society. What is the cost of an unemployed or inflow refugee of 18, who will never find work but needs some income, guidance and care and how do we keep him or her on the right track or what does corrective action cost? Such costs we now sweep under the rug of medical benefits, welfare, care and justice but are there. Discontent is a cost, people without purpose and meaningful pursuits run amok, become ill, troublesome, criminal or rebellious, and that costs a lot of money.

Return on investment, in that broad view, is much more than a nominal interest rate on wealth, it is the total sum of costs and returns of that investment and that includes the costs of frustration and rebellion. Tricky to determine but not negligible.

So the dichotomy seems to be about returns, pensions and the financial house of cards we live in but actually it is about (in)security and fear.

## Better, with less (fear)

In conclusion, the socio-psychological development of the last 50 years and actually the last few centuries seems to offer more freedom under the skin there is more fear, stress, uncertainty than people think. This is what at a deeper level determines the atmosphere and therefore the economy and our well-being. We can no longer count on family and neighborhood, the social network is now virtual, neighborly help history but hooray! cyberspace must compensate for it all. Crime, minorities, education, gamification (the resurgence of lottery thinking), all kinds of trends can essentially be traced back to this, and in social media we may see a solution but that too is already over the top E-happiness or i-happiness is only relative, Facebook friends don't come to your birthday and turn out to be much less fun in real life than their avatar in the cloud.

We believe in our own illusions and have banished the institutions and rituals that brought us back to our true nature, our soul, or allowed them to become bogged down in materialism. Being a socialist without knowing your neighbors, being religious because we seek a safety net.

The fundamental problem, and we must work on it, is that we actually no longer trust the government, democracy, the other, and gradually no longer ourselves. Decades of nannyism, repression, taking away freedom and generally forcing people to fit into the system, have produced a people of slavish yes-men. These are serfs (inseparable) to capital and brands; they flee into cell phones, flat screens, soccer madness, branded clothing and materialism.





## Post-Corona Macroeconomics

Macroeconomics is not concerned with individual choices but with broad society. There are, of course, when we get rid of Corona or when there is a more or less acceptable and sustainable solution to vaccination and testing and we can function „normally“ again all sorts of measures that will be needed to get that broad economy back on track. Many of these will simply be repairs and short-term emergency bandages to help the most affected sectors such as hospitality or tourism get back on track. In general, the downturn doesn't appear to be as bad as it seems; we're bouncing back fairly quickly is the expectation. Let's hope so.

However, we cannot avoid the more fundamental questions. For it is clear that the bottlenecks such as unlimited growth, further divisions in society, environmental damage, resource depletion, money as the only basis of value, must be examined.

The big problem, however, is that everything is connected to everything else, that if we are going to lash out at a specific problem we must also include the balance and connection to other areas. The danger of symptomatic partial solutions is obvious. The example of the Groningen gas extraction is clear, it brought in some nice money but now we have the problems.

Economics as a science is concerned with the choices and behavior of people, businesses and governments in consuming and producing, but it is also the whole of production, distribution and consumption of goods and services. It is about more than supply and demand, price and market, it is also about why, for whom, and how. The idea that scarcity is the driving force in the economy has been somewhat abandoned; it is increasingly about emotions, values, and the impact that economic activity has on nature, people and humanity. From an almost exact science it has now become a social and behavioral science, with a normative dimension, some things like growth are desirable or not.

In the process, the fundamental contradiction between individual self-interest and collective interest also comes up again. Utility maximization, getting better at it but for whom? The idea of a self-regulating free market is an illusion, some regulation is always needed and there is lobbying, influencing, market power or corruption. Production and valuation is no longer limited to physical things, ideas, inventions, opinions, scenarios are also part of the economy, while things like the value of shares, real estate and bitcoins are also virtual, driven more by emotions than rational arguments. Labor is no longer a matter of muscle power but of brainpower, manage-

ment, innovation, entrepreneurship, risk taking. Reward has turned from a cash wage to a matter of promises and future pleasures, in promotional opportunities, options, pensions and insurance.

## No miracle snake-oil

So there are no simple miracle cures; it really doesn't help, for example, to start introducing a basic income for everyone just like that, or to introduce a tax on capital movements (Tobin tax) or a millionaire's tax, to ban livestock farming, to start building nuclear power plants or to restrict travel abroad. The consequences of such interventions are often very different from what was expected and also require international coordination. Coming up with measures too quickly and not thinking them through properly often leads to problems. The well-intentioned incentives for electric cars, for example, did not work out well; people made use of the loopholes and possibilities in the regulations in order to gain their own advantages and not to save the environment.

Nevertheless, we need to think about an integrated approach and accept that there will be things we overlook.

## The energy problem

I am a lot more optimistic than most people when it comes to energy (global warming is another matter). Of course, we still use far too many fossil fuels and generate substances that adversely affect the climate it is going in the right direction anyway. Alternative sources of energy, sun, wind, geothermal, hydropower, perhaps even alternative forms of nuclear power, there is plenty of research and investment going on, and the technology is getting better, more effective and cheaper to produce.

Major steps still need to be taken, especially to enable intermediate storage of energy, but battery technology and hydrogen are all being worked on. In time, energy is going to cost much less, become more environmentally friendly and is also going to help us not solve the problems with the climate but at least increase our resilience. With enough cheap energy, we can cope with cold and heat, but there are also regions where temperatures above 40 degrees or below zero are already being experienced.

Cheap energy from solar cells can also help to reduce inequality in the world, a continent like Africa has enough sun, can use the energy for better agriculture, better logistics, desalination of water, why not irrigate the Sahara and reforestation using these energy sources?

And we can also look beyond those windmills and solar farms, we are a country on a sea with the largest tidal difference and flow in the world, every 12 hours and 24 minutes the water level goes up and down a few me-

ters. At Vlissingen it averages about 382 cm, at the Hook of Holland it is only 169 cm but at Delfzijl again 299 cm and the water moves (flows) horizontally. There are already experiments to generate energy with it, they work with a kind of large ship propellers under water.

Tides are an unprecedented source of energy, which we mainly owe to the moon and will not be exhausted. So filling up the North Sea with windmills is not the only option, but there has been little further exploration. When Amsterdam privatized its port in 2013 (it was just privatization but wasn't allowed to be called that) I tried to stop that via a referendum, using the argument that they should also look at this kind of alternative energy. That didn't happen, the port company and its then rather corrupt management concentrated on coal and fossil fuels and thus more or less hit a dead end.

## Agriculture

The Netherlands is quite a top performer in terms of agriculture and agricultural technology, our horticulture is productive and we export a lot. For decades, the focus in agriculture has been on higher yields per hectare, using artificial fertilizers, pesticides, genetically modified crops and this has succeeded. More food per acre than ever is being produced and as long as there is hunger in the world that seems like a good thing. But in the process, bio-diversity has been quite compromised. There are too many mono-cultures and they are vulnerable, not self-healing and have a price-depressing effect; the farmers themselves do not gain much from it. The massive scaling up and mechanization has fundamentally impoverished the soil, the greater yield comes at the expense of taste, vitamins and immunity value. Reducing biodiversity is one of the great dangers in the long run, it affects resilience, the reservoir of self-repairing genetic information and is often irreversible, breeds of animals and plants die out. The whole bio-industry is under attack, because we want healthy, biologically balanced food, we are concerned about emissions and climate effects. Meat eating should be reduced, because of the climate and the terrible conditions for the animals but also because much of the current meat supply is just not healthy, pumped full of antibiotics and fed the wrong crops.

That all sounds nice and is seen as threatening by farmers, who don't want to go back to an approach that involves less yield and more care.

But there is also another aspect, if we look at the food supply in a somewhat broader context. The whole logistics, dragging food around, chilling, freezing, storage, processing, packaging and marketing are more determinants of the consumer price than what the farmer gets. Also, only a portion of the production actually ends up in our stomachs, because there is

selection by appearance and shape, there are sell-by dates, there is a run on the auction, and in the store, bonus offers and two-for-one hassles persuade the customer to buy too much, which then disappears into the garbage bag. The one-person household would benefit more from adapted portions, better marketing, more attention to actual needs, less messing around with kilo-crunchers and volume deals, less mass and more local and small-scale, which would mean that less would be thrown away and huge savings could be made over the entire chain. The market power of the supermarkets is, at least here, far too great. A few buying groups dictate the prices, squeeze the suppliers to the bone, and manipulate the consumer. Not to serve their customers healthier, better and cheaper but purely for profit.

## Work, unemployed, automation

Before Corona broke out, the economy was doing relatively well and unemployment was declining; there was a demand for people in technology, healthcare and the hospitality industry. After Corona, that picture will probably not be so optimistic anymore. There will probably be some growth again, the recovery plans such as those for healthcare will help people find work, there is still much to do in insulation and environmental measures, alternative energy but in the long run further automation is a threat to employment.

## Robotization and automation: return and threat

What do we do with superfluous labor, which we have eliminated through automation or rendered unemployed by moving factories to low-wage countries? That is the big problem for the coming years, maybe we have some respite because of the aging population but denying it is not wise. If we continue like this, in addition to the already wealthy upper class with wealth and a superclass of big entrepreneurs, plutarchs, creatives and knowledge workers with special talents, there will also be a large group without work, meaningful use of time and thus potentially an underclass. It is the dark side of progress, what do we do to stay happy and keep the feeling that everyone counts and matters?

As a country and as Europe - with a gaping aging problem as well - the solution lies not in further divisions (old/young, poor/rich, own people/alien people) but in better sharing and thinking now about what we are going to make people do without work or with part work. Do we try to keep them sweet with bread and games, to hypnotize them with what the modern media and cyberspace have to offer in terms of entertainment or do we start thinking about what meaning, being human and being involved actually means?

And do we provide replacement work? Oh no, those are empty stories, we also save on culture, care, attention, cohesion, love. Cyberspace eats away at margins, eroding profits and also jobs. The work of highly educated people is also disappearing; nowadays there is a greater need for professionals than for white-collar administrative workers, who are becoming redundant as a result of automation. Consultancy, notary services, all kinds of legal services - there will still be work for the top people, and the routine will be automated using AI and blockchain technology (which standardizes logistics, contracts and transactions, for example).

The argument against this somewhat doom-and-gloom scenario could of course be that technology will always bring solutions, new activities and new opportunities. Cyberspace is part of the problem hopefully also part of the solution. Isn't some adventures in cyberspace, in virtual reality if need be, the ideal solution to keep people busy, with digital bread and games, occupational therapy and 'always on' distractions? So why not trust in progress? Aren't there environmental challenges, global warming and still inequality in the world that we can work on?

### There will be new work, or not?

The big question is to what extent will the Internet and modern technology take the work out of our hands and minds? You can look at it positively. After all, did the car make the coachmen unemployed, the copier the printer, the digital photo the photo industry? That's how it's always been, saw the economist Simon Kuznets and showed that it may have been a little less for a while but always better in the end. It can all be solved, there will be whole new industries with work we can't even imagine (mining engineer on the moon?), new recreational options (and drugs), we can fill our free time with fun, let the machines do the work and we'll think of something, we'll be creative! That's how it's always been, Kuznets saw.

Hasn't life become much easier? No more slaving away in the fields, no more mind-numbing assembly line work, we're all happy, aren't we :-)? Computers and the Internet have of course automated all kinds of unpleasant routine tasks. We can order, pay and handle all kinds of administrative matters electronically. We save time and costs and life becomes easier and more comfortable but here is the sting; it is clear that this has also cost and will cost jobs. The Internet is the great work eater and flattener. Labor has become shiftable, to low-wage countries or machines, and inequality between countries has decreased but between the poor and the rich has actually increased. Knowledge and skills, once the means to distinguish yourself, can be bought anywhere, in Mumbai or Kinshasa they also have internet and smart birds and they cost less! And there are

winners, not just from rich parents either but they leave little room once they succeed, because winner-takes-all is the silent participant in the great cyberspace globalization game. It could all turn out fine, we can start filling our free time nicely, let the machines do the work and we'll think of something, we'll get creative! Will there still be work left, will we find other meaningful occupations, creative activities or will it be idleness, the gym, gaming and passively enjoying what others make for us?

The time perspective can be thought of differently. The most negative scenarios see massive job losses in the five to ten year timeframe. Perhaps that is too pessimistic. The self-driving car will also stay away for a while. For now, with an aging population that retires and requires care, there is still work to be done. In the long run, however, we cannot deny that cyberspace is undermining traditional work, and the nice slogan „The New World of Work“ (HNW) doesn't help there either. In practice, that term means reorganizing (=saving) work, moving it around or outsourcing it, making the worker more dependent and fragmenting and atomizing the task content, reducing engagement and enjoyment.

### Touchless work disappears, the cloud takes over

There will still be work for people who flap their hands, the pickers, box fillers, the handymen, the plumbers and auto mechanics. But we don't train people for that; everyone must be prepared for knowledge work, entrepreneurship, being creative. We don't want ordinary routine work anymore, we'll get Poles for that, although they want that less and less. In itself, this is not a problem; machines for peeling bulbs, picking shrimps, cutting asparagus, robots that can do this and do not get tired, will be developed. They are not there yet, but they can and will be, while people just sit at home.

The whole education system is increasingly geared towards levelling the playing field, to all getting a diploma, a bachelor's or master's degree, but if there is no work for that, what do we do then?

Work for specialists and top experts will probably remain and entrepreneurs will see new opportunities, but an ordinary job or especially the „touchless“ office job that has nothing to do physically with people or products is in danger. They are gradually being saved and automated. Work disappears, robots, machines and computers do the work and bring the merit but not to the ex-employees, at most the government can then levy taxes and start redistributing.

We still invest like crazy in automation and technology but that is not aimed at creating jobs, it is aimed at saving costs.

Let me make that practical. In the Wieringermeer (a polder in the North) it is Microsoft, and in Groningen it is Google building enormous dataprocessing plants & cloud facilities, server parks that serve to store and process what others no longer want on their computers. This in turn requires a lot of energy, so wind farms will be built to provide power, not to houses but to these kinds of installations, heavily subsidized and environmentally ill-considered. These kinds of investments are received with cheers; people shout about employment and progress, as a small country we manage to pull this off! In fact, after the construction phase (and the investment and subsidies of hundreds of millions, even billions) it is about work for only a few hundred people, who take care of maintenance, cleaning and some management, really no top jobs.

Automation and cyberspace implementation is like a virus. Those fancy cloud computers from Google do replace servers and equipment at large and small companies, smaller providers and individuals. They see or expect big savings because they no longer need management, maintenance, energy, replacement, depreciation, etc.; they now leave that to Google and the cloud and it costs a lot less. Especially less in people and work, that is clear. In our country alone we are talking about a few hundred thousand smaller servers, because every small company, broker, administrative office etc. has or had a server. So they are going to disappear, everything to the cloud, nice and global, uncontrollable and kept out of local taxes. But this trend will cost the work of the computer companies that installed, sold and maintained the existing equipment but also received some income from suppliers such as Microsoft where one paid for licenses, etc. All of this goes global, untraceable, and promotes further divisions in society. The cloud, that beautiful invention, sold as super secure and easy (although that is often disappointing) saves billions but mostly in work. So count your blessings, this is not a win-win story. Then we are lucky to be by the sea (because Google and the big platforms are also here because of the undersea cables) and still have a little work left!

## AI can make people redundant

In the coming years we will see that driverless logistics (trucks without drivers), healthcare robots, mobile data and automated medical monitoring and treatment will require very nice investments in ICT but for drivers, letter carriers, assembly line workers and farmers on tractors there will be no more work. Are we going to pay them or put them in camps? Now that there are almost robot soldiers (via Boston Dynamics, which emerged from MIT research, was then owned by Google, then Softbank Japan and is now part of Hyundai) police robots will not be far behind. These won't look like



„Terminator“ cyborgs but smart automated superintendents and neighborhood watchmen who keep an eye on things and use software to make decisions about intervention and enforcement.

That camera on the corner will become an almost self-thinking security unit, which can interrogate large databases via profiling and check whether something is wrong somewhere and possibly take action, perhaps by stopping your implant chip or blocking your car or bank balance. That there will be some innocent victims, well that's called 'collateral damage', you shouldn't whine about that, the end justifies the means!

It all costs work, especially work for hands and routine tasks but meanwhile the rich and the smart get richer and the collective debt and social inequality grows. It has been suggested that there is no other solution to this problem than very broad inflation but that does not sit well either, that is stealing from the small savers with bank deposits and thus often from the pension reserves. The alternative anno 2021, very low or negative interest rates to stimulate the economy and investments, does not work either; nobody wants to borrow money because there is no real return in sight. We are hollowing ourselves out.

### Ned Ludd: away with the machines

The divide, along with the looming automation/robotic wave, is cause for concern about broad social unrest after 2021. The young people whom we burden unreasonably with student debt and who cannot rent or buy homes from their meager starting salaries, supported by unemployed middle groups and automated farmers, drivers and factory workers, may be up in arms, research firms and futurists predict. Aggressive protests against technology and job losses have happened before, the Luddites (under Ned Ludd) destroyed looms and machines in England between 1811 and 1816. Those who are against computers and want to destroy them are referred to as neo-Luddites.

### Basic Income

In view of the expected developments, particularly in terms of the availability of meaningful labor, solutions have been proposed. In his book 'the second machine age', Erik Brynjolfsson outlined how we are going to lose most routine work to robots and computers.

How are we going to solve that? We could do so with an economic system, where the results (profits-savings) of that development don't unilaterally go to a small minority and plunge the rest into poverty. It could make sense, giving everyone a basic income. The idea is somewhat older but Rutger Bregman also wrote about it and scored worldwide with the idea. Politicians



are now also looking at that kind of redistribution option, even as .taxation, rebates and benefits have become something of a quagmire.

How high, for whom, how can you introduce that? That's a matter of finding out and trying. The amount should be a little less than what people with work would earn because ambition should remain for those who want more, but enough to live on. The taxation of those who still want to work with a basic income must make working attractive.

The website [www.basisinkomen.nl](http://www.basisinkomen.nl) puts it this way: *„Basic income is a fixed (monthly) income that the government provides to every citizen, without any income test or work obligation. The basic income is high enough to ensure an existence as a full member of society.’*

It should be noted that it would apply to every citizen. Perhaps it would be more feasible and sensible to introduce it, for example, by limiting it to people over 55. That would eliminate a lot of red tape and the often nonsensical and perceived punishment of job applications for the elderly.

For the introduction of a basic income, a new balance must be found between work for money, work for others (volunteer care, social projects), basic income and taxation because it must remain affordable. It would mean a very fundamental change in our economic model and also rattle the old ethic of „if you don't work you won't eat“.

In view of technological developments, it is an option that must be seriously studied and perhaps also tried out. In doing so, we must also recognize the danger that a new underclass of basic income earners will then emerge, who will and must live out of order. This can lead to exclusion from, for example, living in the big city, top medical care, educational opportunities, and means new ghettos and opportunity gaps for children of basic income recipients. If a basic income is going to mean that those who find it sufficient can only live in the Achterhoek or Oost-Groningen, that is a dangerous result.



## Post-Corona Marketing

Money makes the world go round. Not entirely true, but the economy is an important part of society. The economy is often about price. We want to be cheap, value for money. But the determination of prices is very limited, we look at the cost prices that actually have to be paid, on top of that we add a profit surcharge and then we get phenomena such as kilo freezes, irritating two-for-one offers and all sorts of discount jokes and bonuses to convince the customer.

But these costs do not take into account what we do to the environment, the animals, the people who have to make it somewhere far away for a rotten price, and the climate. We transport like crazy, there is no tax on flying, you get kerosene where it is cheap, you replace marine diesel with filthy asphalt sludge, the polluter usually does not pay or pays very little. We do not take into account the costs of disposal, waste processing, although that in itself has become a very profitable industry, which also sometimes just dumps garbage without considering the future.

### The price of products rarely includes the future costs.

We talk a lot about recycling, we demolish entire forests for the paper used in reports and analyses, but do the supercooled or fresh fruits and exotic vegetables at supermarket Albert Heijn include how many extra kilometers they travelled, their CO2 footprint, etc.? That would be nice, something more specific than vague Fairtrade labels and quality labels. Awareness, if we know how chickens grow up to be condemned to starvation we are willing to pay a bit more for better treatment and therefore better meat.

These kinds of considerations and initiatives to make costs more realistic should receive more attention in the coming period. The government can do something about this, but companies themselves also have a responsibility. The annual accounts of companies should include an account of what else their products or services do, to what extent they participate in the circular economy (reuse) and the social impact but that is, if anything, often not very concrete in practice.

### Market power

One of the problems that needs to be tackled with vigor after the Corona crisis is market power, the fact that certain parties are supremely powerful in a particular market and can often also play the entire column, from manufacturer to store. At the beginning of the twentieth century it was already clear that the industrial revolution had created such concentrations of power and

monopolies that something had to be done about it; the government had to promote competition and start regulating it. This happened in the United States in the oil industry, Standard Oil was broken up, and later also in telecommunications.

We all know about market power, we know that we pay a lot for monopolies, if there is no alternative you have to. In this respect there is often no room for a second supplier, winner takes all. But even if there are only a few suppliers, one can, with or without agreements (because these are illegal), control the market, both to the consumer and to the suppliers. Retail chains such as Albert Heijn do this and are also called to account by bodies such as the Netherlands Authority for the Financial Markets (ACM), but they cannot do much about it either.

### The government: market party and player of the tax organ

The government plays an important role in the development after Corona, and that goes beyond support measures, paying off the debts incurred and taxation. The government is often the first customer of new services or products and can thus stimulate innovation. The government can steer, because a lot needs to be regulated and regulated, also to prevent or remedy problems. For example, home delivery is starting to become a scourge. Restricting tourism is possible, but operating without or with less tourism is a serious attack on the economy (here and elsewhere).

Digital government is advancing. The government itself is using the Internet more and more. There is more online government contact, complaining can often only be done via the Internet, tax returns, online planning and processing of health care, online application for permits and filing of complaints are also encouraged and often enforced. The government's tax measures, such as additional taxation of environmentally unfriendly products, making unhealthy products such as sugar or online home deliveries more expensive, and thus stopping or driving trends.

The tax burden will have to increase significantly to cover the shortfalls caused by Corona, and will hurt particularly the bottom of the income pyramid. That is not where the growth of the past decades went; the poor remained poor; they were underdogs, and remain so. The citizen soon finds himself with an income-tax burden of 50% (even 55% for the middle group, see Pieter Omtzigt in his book on a new social contract) and on top of that VAT, energy levies, property tax, local taxes, mandatory insurance. By then, disposable income has already become very limited, and rents and fixed costs are almost impossible to afford for many (this would apply to 2.8 million households). This dichotomy is also evident in marketing, what can someone spend at the bottom, who already has to go to the food

bank? Luxury, that is for the rich the upper middle income and that can be dangerous. Companies and organizations, which too clearly target the elite, can lose the trust of the general public, think of banks, insurers, the vacation industry.

Globalization and the Internet threaten diversity, culturally, biologically (genetically engineered standard seeds) and in terms of product range. The local retailer, manufacturer or service provider cannot compete with the big players, is too expensive, too slow, cannot generate enough publicity and goes under. This added value is important, because it gives zest to society, helps build local identity and thus cohesion. The loss of small and medium-sized businesses would be a big mistake, and in the long run would mean surrender to monopolistic and global corporations.

### Post-Corona Markets

Even after Corona, markets remain, B2B, B2C, C2C, GOV2C1, and things, services, media, beliefs, government decisions, and recreational options must be sold or invented.

A number of things have changed permanently, of course, such as work patterns, education, medical facilities, purchasing behavior, media visibility, image calling, online meetings, privacy loss, „authenticity confusion,“ data acquisition, lead generation, online advertising and product placement, customizing/targeting, apps, logistics, dropshipping; there has been a substantial leap towards further digitization and an online society (economic, social, emotional). But will the experience economy, fun shopping, impulse buying, the sharing economy, festivalization, gamification, influencer economy, social media and word-of-mouth marketing, media access and mobility (recreational, family, work, physical meeting) really change fundamentally? Are we going to value other products, other services, share more than own, buy environmentally conscious, live healthier, exercise more, deal more effectively with appointments and travel, multitask more or less, rearrange our hospitality visits, complain more, abuse the internet loopholes more such as free returns, there are more questions than answers.

The Internet connects but also divides people and, through globalization and flattening of competition, has also eroded diversity and profit opportunities. Social awareness seems to have increased, there is a certain „helpfulness“, a tendency to share information for no profit, and other forms of collaboration such as crowd funding, sharing vendor reviews, giving tips or creating manuals.

The divide between rich/elite/two-earner and poor/ethnic/minority is increasing, the Corona crisis has made meritocracy much sharper. Not old money entrepreneurship, education, and commitment determine who suc-

ceeds and who is left behind. Who can buy a Tesla or has to make do with an electric bike, and yet pays heavily for it! This reduces the diversity and thus the self-healing capacity of society and increases the threat of revolt or chaos.

## A different approach to market forces

If you want to participate, you must have an online presence and a „brick-and-mortar“ point of contact or delivery location remains important. Online visibility (on your own site, paid, with influencers or in independent media), broad PR positioning of the brand and relevance to the customer are important and generate opportunities, but how do you use the data, what do you do with data on preferences, buying behavior, creditworthiness, and is that allowed by privacy rules?

Authenticity, amidst a sea of fake news, questionable bargain pushers, hidden product placement, and doubts about the authenticity and integrity of suppliers, media, and government, is becoming increasingly important. Building trust is expensive, takes time, and it goes wrong quickly, we also see in politics. An honest and consistent way of doing business is becoming increasingly important.

Even before Corona, marketers were hammering away at the need for the Internet for contact, for lead generation, and how the AIDA strategy needed to be focused. That's even more topical now but a bit more refined because now everyone has a website, payment and ordering options and the like.

## New Markets

Cyberspace of course also has whole new possibilities, advantages and models to offer, which do have consequences for the whole trade and brokering business. New markets, new products and services emerge. One can think of sharing and bartering, from transportation to equipment, houses (B&B), to companionship, sex, care, education, expertise, etc. By the way, a nightmare for the tax authorities! Working from home also brings prospects for revenue, from coffee to office furniture, massage, backup services, security, shared cars. The benefits, such as being in charge of one's own time can be more productive, less travel time is lost, better work-life balance, less dependence on transport and location are in contrast to the lack of informal, physical contact and therefore possibly less, innovation, knowledge sharing, discipline and privacy (24/7, external control, sneaky assessment), security risks. For the employer, it brings lower costs, more choice, easier to choose from a wider range of flex workers and specialties but also less insight into productivity, protection of data

and expertise, less loyalty and loyalty and costs for mystery checks and real time monitoring.

New services, which do not run directly over the Internet, also have opportunities. For example, more of the need for physical contact can be met by shared space offices, new opportunities for the city center, festivals and event marketing. Friday afternoon drinks may need to be shared via zoom but also come in locations across the province.

A clear growth market in the sham world of cyberspace is to start selling trust, by offering services in terms of PR, media presence, influencers, arranging likes, postings, outsourcing handling, arranging 'presence'; with the danger of manipulation.

### Relationship building

Digital marketing is the discipline with which the online marketing objectives of a company are realized via online and interactive media, channels and concepts. It is aimed at realizing (stored and real-time) customer knowledge and delivering added value for the customer, with profit for the provider of course. Essential is building sustainable relationships with (potential) customers by being in dialogue with them.

It is about personalization and effectiveness but also has to deal with problems such as crossing privacy boundaries, accessing an abundance of data too quickly, inadequate means to analyze them properly, switching consumers between online and offline and back again (the omni-channel customer), new forms of evaluation and criticism by consumers themselves through social media, and the abundance of choices that make customers headstrong (no simple limitation, you get everything on your screen).

### The emotion economy: feelings do count

Do we buy something on rational grounds, or because we find it fun, beautiful, status-enhancing? Do we shop to find the best deal or because it's fun to store, to see, to feel, to try and then to be able to take what we've bought with us immediately? Do we want to have something in order to own it, or do we rather seek experiences, want to feel good, experience something, perhaps take risks because we lack excitement in our lives.

Economists have long assumed the idea, that man was a homo economicus, a thrifty rational decision maker who planned to maximize profits. Our behavior is rather emotional, impulsive, we buy and decide (mostly) based on emotions, often unconsciously. Factors such as wanting to belong, FOMO (fear of missing out on something), wanting to do better than the neighbors (and showing that) because we are addicted to buying, bored or think that this or that product makes us „better“, so to disguise our inferiority complex.

The latter has to do with cognitive dissonance; you think you need something because it is better, prettier or stronger.

There is an inner conflict, often instigated by the organization that wants to sell you something. Some organizations take advantage of this. The churches have traditionally kept this cognitive dissonance in check for their followers, but it also works well in politics, and in marketing, working with emotions has become a true art, with Apple as a clear example.

In marketing, the insights of the emotional economy are increasingly important, one looks at a broader range than a good price-performance ratio, one takes into account emotional preferences and phenomena the asymmetric time horizon (consume now is better than save tomorrow, pay tomorrow or next year better than today) . We spend a lot of time finding information, but we don't take that time into account and drive long distances to find somewhere a few euros cheaper. And for financial services and products we are no longer rational at all and our emotional time horizon plays a powerful role in our decisions.

When it comes to survival, as with medical decisions, people are not so calculating at all but clearly very emotional. Actually, the bottom line is that purchase decisions often depend on psychological value, over rational economic value. We are more likely to buy this or that make of car because of image and charisma than because of a clear consideration of technical factors.

## Emotion manipulation as a tool

There are seven laws of emotion economics; it is illustrative how, for example, Apple deals with them.

- 1. The law of loss aversion. The psychological aspect of loss is more than twice as great as the psychological aspect of gain. You can't go wrong with Apple products because they are user-friendly, not cheap, and you don't hear much about malware and viruses on Apple.
- 2. People have asymmetric risk attitudes. In the profit domain, people are risk averse. In the loss domain, an individual actually prefers risk. Apple buyers like to see themselves in the profit domain, are risk averse and want to pay for it.
- 3. People prefer the middle ground. Apple always has fairly expensive and fairly cheap solutions but knows that its customers usually choose a middle solution.
- 4. People have a self-control problem, and make impulse purchases that may not be wise. Apple provides nice services and accessories that are expensive but easily sold with them.

- 5. People are financially illiterate and can't calculate, the deals that Apple offers through providers are sometimes not useful or good at all, and Apple squeezes the providers but also the providers of apps, games and music (by 30%) considerably (and is also called to account and fined for this!). That older and discontinued models in terms of battery quality may already be partly less, you hear nobody about, people want to have an Apple thing, and if new is too expensive then just a store daughter, refurbished or second-hand.
- 6. People are disaster-prone and deny the possibility of disaster, who really makes conscientious backups or has all different passwords?
- 7. People filter information asymmetrically. People like to hear information that confirms what they think anyway, and close their eyes to information that contradicts their opinion. Appreciators have come to believe that Apple delivers the best products, and don't want to assume otherwise.

And there is more, however, and that is what the emotion economists are not yet looking at closely. For example, Apple very deftly exploits the us-them feeling, you either belong or you don't, you identify with the brand. They learned this, by the way, from their first PR advisor Regis McKenna, who was behind the famous Mac commercials but also had the Apple logo kept in the picture as a kind of subliminal compulsory.

The exchange of the inferiority feeling of its customers with an inferiority environment c.q. product image or the principle of cognitive dissonance plays a clear role in the Apple approach. For Apple buyers, status, especially in the eyes of their peer group, is very important. They do not have to be able to prove, like the hardcore gamers, that their thing is faster or more powerful, the envious glances of the environment are enough confirmation, do you already have an iPad Air? For that, they will line up to get a new iPhone12 first. Having (and showing) is more important than using!

## The new marketing models

Globalization and cheap transportation options but also government support for e-commerce exports has brought new opportunities but also threats. Everyone knows Alibaba or AliXpress, everything from China, cheap and often free delivery. How can they do it, there is no way to compete with that. And it's growing and growing, attempts to impose VAT on smaller orders, for example, is administratively impossible to do and people are also going to arrange local storage so that one-day-delivery becomes feasible.

But government also has a role here. Under pressure from the middle class and self-employed, dropshipping from China and the logistical waste caused



by cheap and chaotic shipping can be tackled. This has to be done on a European level and can be an impulse for local and stock-based e-commerce. Also, the monopolizing effect of affiliate marketing, all kinds of suppliers gathered under one brand and on platforms such as bol.com and amazon.cm, that is not good for competition. Such an all under one roof construction may bring more customers, but you have to stand out in terms of price or terms. It limits the local customization and service that the small business owner can offer if reasonable margins remain. That entrepreneur now thinks he will find protection and „exposure“ under such an umbrella but pays thickly for it and has to compete even more and with more colleagues.

New marketing constructions that make use of the Internet often mean that something has to be surrendered. For example, the use of endless menus as we know them from the telephone is quickly counterproductive, we want a human being on the line, not a computer. Of course it sounds nice, outsourcing your complaints department and after-sales to a call center in India, but as soon as the customer realizes this, it affects the reputation of the brand.



## Diversity

It is becoming a bit of a catchword but the concept of diversity is one of the key concepts in thinking about change. This is what is needed in the post-Corona perspective. If there are no differences, nothing happens, without challenges and incentives not only society but also nature stands still. But if there are too many differences, things go wrong, things break down, systems and organisms don't survive, and that includes people. In practical terms, a little stress is useful, too much stress makes you sick and that applies both to physical stress by, for example, toxic substances in your environment and psychological stress. This also applies in the economy and in education, equalizing everything is counterproductive, then competition, ambition, challenges disappear and progress stagnates. We need a headwind to make the kite rise.

Diversity in culture, manifestations, DNA in genes, in science and in society is therefore essential. If everything was the same nothing happened, from differences something new emerges. In thinking we see this as Hegel's thesis, antithesis and synthesis, in nature and in our bodies, diversity forms the secret weapon against unexpected threats.

Differences are needed to get things moving, to cause dissociation (looking at things from a different perspective) so that we can choose from alternatives. Difference is necessary and not just negative, without difference there is no energy, no development, no ambition. Just look at income difference, some difference between rich and poor promotes development, innovation and ambition, thus entrepreneurship.

If we formulate the positive effects of diversity as utility or value, you can graphically represent it in what I call the diversity curve, or more precisely the diversity-effect curve.

### The diversity-effect curve: difference makes a difference

Indeed, we can also link difference and inequality to utility, effectiveness or other qualities. I developed a graphic representation to make clear what the role of differences is. In an actual situation this naturally produces a very specific curve, but from a general, and somewhat smoother, model a lot can already be learned. It is then a curve which first shows a negative effect (rust), then rises, peaks and falls again, gradually shows negative utility and then finally a chaos, a crisis situation.

There is, if there is no difference, also no stimulus and things do not move; that is negative, rest rust. With a little difference, there is movement, there is utility, value, positive effect. That grows to a maximum and then, when

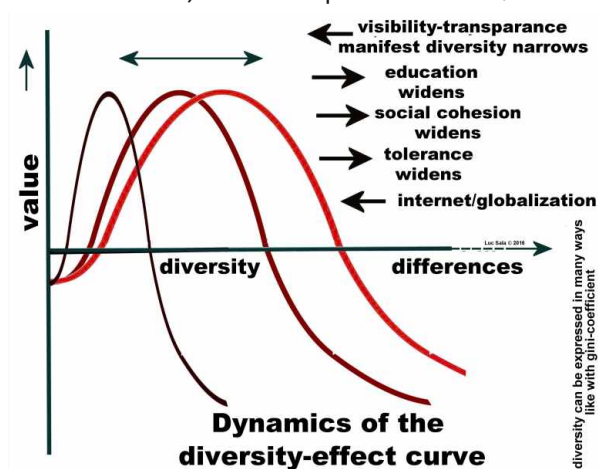
the differences become too great, the utility diminishes. At some point the friction even becomes so great that a negative effect arises and that then tends further toward crisis (revolution, uprising). Then a transformation can still take place, a catharsis like Karl Marx foresaw as a result of the industrial revolution but usually one does not want to let it get that far. One can, however, through policy measures, taxation and education, try to reduce the differences.

Diversity, or inequality, in this view first has positive effects but it must not go too far or things will get out of hand.

Social science also interferes with diversity, in issues such as deprivation, refugee influx, the integration problems of minorities and of course the rich/poor dichotomy. On the one hand one wants to see the benefits of diversity but also warns of the situation that now the position of the poor is deteriorating to such an extent that it will have negative effects, perhaps even lead to chaos and rebellion. So the inequality we now see in incomes, opportunities and status is not bad in itself but if it gets too severe it is also potentially a poison bomb, which has been growing unnoticed over the past decades and can therefore now become dangerous, both by the threatened (the poor, disadvantaged) and the rich, who feel the storm coming.

That diversity-effect curve is important for the analysis of income inequality but also for democracy, business processes, evolution, innovation and education as a tool to clarify what difference now makes a difference.

So it is interesting to determine how, for example, integration of newcomers, minorities, age groups. Up to what value (you can use percentage, difference indication, or difficult indications like the Gini coefficient for the horizontal axis) is there a positive effect, where does it peak and when



does it disappear and how fast does it get out of hand after that? The values of the curve vary from situation to situation but the general picture remains. It is of course important to determine the values, the slope, the optimal point, etc. in the actual situation, but understanding the curve is a start. Integration, housing alloca-

tion, subsidy and permit policy, language policy, minority participation, education, SME policy, it is actually all about dealing with and managing diversity.

## Everywhere we see this

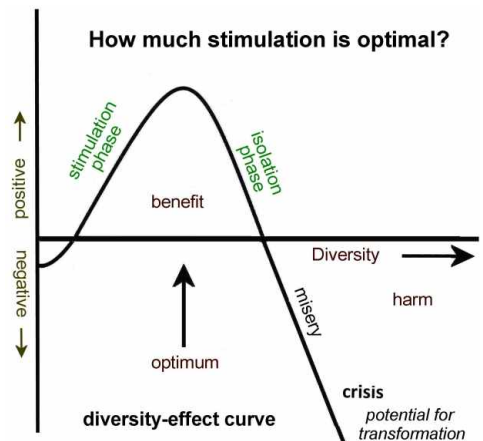
We encounter processes that work as indicated by the diversity curve everywhere, in biology and sociology, and psychological processes follow a similar pattern. It also helps to understand innovation and creativity; a little stimulation (diversity) works, too much blunts and leads to closure.

But, and this is what makes this curve so interesting even without further numerical interpretation, how does the usefulness of diversity change under the influence of external factors or wanted adaptations. How do influences like cyberspace, education, or taxation affect this curve? Cyberspace (and the information society), for example, compresses the curve horizontally, as transparency makes differences more palpable. Possibly utility also decreases or increases vertically but that's not the point here. So with this horizontal compression a crisis arises more quickly. Education, which increases tolerance for differences and social mobility, shifts the curve to the right. In this way all kinds of effects and measures can be made transparent.

You can also extend the diversity curve a bit further. Perhaps the resulting chaos is not so negative after all. A crisis and a moment of catharsis (an uprising, for example) may eventually lead to a change and transformation. Then a new situation results, a real change. In a society that may be necessary but the status quo forces will then try to prevent it. Normal policy is not aimed at initiating dramatic crisis situations and violent societal transformation.

Diversity policy, and that may well become a priority in post-Corona society, therefore amounts to making meaningful use of the good and bad sides of diversity and deploying defenses against rigidity and social isolation on the one hand and the chaos and radicalization that arise when differences are too great on the other. Such policies may be the only way to counter growing inequality and if it is perceived as unfavorable, unjust and bad.

These are crucial questions; when is diversity still productive and when



Now this plea sounds like a somewhat academic approach to what is really a realistic problem, and you can reason endlessly about diversity, bio-diversity etc. etc. in practical situations but it is good to start with a place where diversity clearly plays a role, the city.





## The city; change of function

The changes after Corona will be felt worldwide but close to home, in the daily living environment, we will also feel it. For example, the urban environment, the shopping streets, the offices, what will happen to them? The silence through Corona was a relief for many, no tourists, no masses, no turmoil. But in a post-Corona vision we cannot ignore the city after all, things have changed like the way we work, order food, go to school, healthcare and delivery, etc. These changes were coming, mostly because of internet and automation, but Corona has given it a serious boost. The city is increasingly becoming a physical contact platform, the place where people come together, seek entertainment and go out. Working, learning and the hospital can all take place at home or in the periphery, but the central role of the city is increasingly about meeting people.

The Corona crisis has already changed a lot, partly a temporary thing like empty stores, a stricken catering industry but the fact that more and more vans and scooters drive around delivering things or meals to homes is perhaps permanent.

People praise how quiet it was in the city during the crisis with hardly any tourists, no nuisance, blue skies and little air pollution but that was a fairy tale for a while. It is simply unrealistic to think that a city can survive economically and socially without people, traffic, visitors, tourists, meetings, hotels, exhibition complexes, etc.

We are certainly not going back to the „old normal“ because too much has happened, and the crisis has only accelerated certain developments. It was already clear that, for example, the role and influence of the local government, the municipality, the council and especially that of the mayor were already increasing before the crisis. They were given more tasks, received more money from the central government (which was not very generous with it) and can locally and in more direct contact with the citizen better regulate pressing issues such as the environment, energy, mobility, care and diversity.

One of the most important changes for the ordinary citizen, as urban dweller or visitor, is that the function of the city is shifting.

### The role of the city, serving the individual and the collective

One subject, where the basic principles of permanence and flux meet, is the city, and certainly the changing role of the city. The city (physical or digital) is the logical place for social interaction; the contact platform where morality (as the basis for dealing with the other) must be lived. We have to and want

to reach out, make purchases, make contact, go out - we can do this with the internet, but physical contact offers more and the city is the platform for this. You no longer have to go there to work, to learn, to approach the government or even to live. Making contact and managing diversity, that is what the city must now essentially provide. But to achieve this, moral choices have to be made and interests weighed up. Subsidiarity at the local level is essential if the citizen is to feel at home and connected to the city. Apart from threats from outside, there is the following thought. A city can also be seen as an organism. If a city like Amsterdam were full of happy, sensible people, we would automatically implement the things and systems that suit them. In marketing this is called pull, not pushing solutions but looking at what people need. Let the question arise from the people, the citizen, as a solution to problems that are now or will be. This does not mean that it is not possible to take a broader view and that technology can play a role, including technology that does not (yet) exist and can help against emerging threats.

Every society, therefore also the city, is essentially determined by how one deals with the contrast between freedom and security, individual and collective, as related in an earlier chapter to the development and necessity of law and the law. In the city of the future, it is no different.

### The Connected City: a vision of the future

Cities have traditionally been the places where people come together in a somewhat larger context because concentration of people makes possible things that cannot be done on a small scale, such as a market, specialized professions and security through numbers, joint constructions (city wall) and structure.

The concept of civilization comes from the Latin word *cives*, which means citizen. Since about 10,000 B.C., cities have emerged. The earliest excavations of what was then a kind of *civitas* (city), with communal spaces, have been found in southern Turkey. Around 4000 BC a real civilization wave set in, with writing and trade. Since that time, cities have fulfilled all kinds of functions. They were safe fortifications, crossing points (the Dam, the Tricht), market places and offered a concentration of facilities such as for trade, storage, education, care, religion, culture, justice, postal services and administration. Cities are centers of power for governments, offer martial booty (to enemies), genetic diversity (choice of partner), entertainment and social mobility.

Cities evolved from marketplaces, centers of handicrafts and of local production such as of beer towards increasingly being workplaces in the industrial revolution such as for shipbuilding and textiles and later for com-

puting. The focus on defense and a location that was easily accessible but also central and safe was gradually lost. Cities began to grow. People moved from the countryside to the cities, either for work or to escape the oppressive atmosphere and control of the villages. This is a trend that is leading to ever larger mega-cities worldwide, but may now be reversed with home working and the online economy.

Cities have always been concentrations and intersections of contact, both physical and virtual. Ports, bridges, dams, roads, passes, train tracks but nowadays also airports, sewers, cabling, radio networks and the Internet hubs form the basic infrastructure. We share these facilities because it is economic, efficient, because there are economies of scale, it is convenient or necessary or just beautiful and fun. Institutions, universities, hospitals, government offices, the business community wanted to move to and in the city. The city was and is a magnet for fortune hunters. Seeking opportunities for improvement is a human trait and the city has much to offer in that regard. In addition to being the place where the better incomes can be earned (in China, people in the city clearly earn more than the underprivileged rural people), the social structure and the availability of trade, fairs, markets, education and all kinds of facilities of a city is the basis for its attractiveness. The city offers social mobility, opportunities for improvement, escape from the often perceived meager situation in the countryside.

More and more people, worldwide, started living in cities in recent decades. Whether they found happiness there and whether their situation really improved (in terms of income, housing situation, life expectancy and happiness) is the question. Returning to the countryside permanently was exceptional. In fact, only affluent seniors would consider it but they certainly will not go back to the primitive situation from which they perhaps once escaped. The new home working may well encourage migration out of the cities again.

The Corona crisis has made it clear that it may not be necessary to live in the city at all because working, shopping, recreation and schooling can now be done online. You may want to go there once in a while, feel connected with your family, friends, go to your favorite restaurant, to a party, theater or cinema you may also want to live elsewhere to escape the crowds and stress, the unhealthy environment; that is certainly a consideration.

The city is about connection, about social interaction. That remains and the city therefore certainly still has a future and the changes in terms of function are slow. We will probably continue to have overcrowded inner cities for a long time to come and, certainly globally, the cities will continue to grow.



However, the traditional roles and functions of the city are being eroded. The connected city of the future is a place that brings people, things, machines, robots and resources together, hopefully in a harmonious relationship.

Technology and people will not be in opposition to each other but together will provide an especially human living environment. Let's leave the city for the cyborgs, robots and artificially self-aware computers to the SF writers and techno-fanatics, the AI believers like the Ray Kurzweils of this world. They predict from a materialistic view that human talents may one day be replaced by computers to the extent that we no longer need people or human characteristics, so to speak. A fearful and dystopian perspective, it seems better to me to concentrate on what being optimally human can entail and the role that the city plays in this.

The Internet makes our lives more comfortable, that is clear. Yet there is a growing pain, in this virtual communication we miss the contact, the physical, the physically meeting and experiencing the other, the culture, the architecture, the services and the atmosphere. The economic and physical necessity coupled with a psychological one. Contact with each other, gaining experiences (shopping, going out, continuing education, social, etc.) and sharing (goods, services, companionship, culture) is becoming increasingly important. The city is and will remain a magnet but for different reasons than before.

It is less and less about growth; a city like Amsterdam, for example, will not (be able to) grow much larger. The housing shortage is not only a matter of more houses but also of perception. We are living bigger and bigger, taking up more and more square meters of living space per person, and there are a lot of empty stores and offices. But focusing that alone on the numbers, outside demand (expats) and the shortage of buildable spaces has led to skewed growth, tightness and high prices.

Cyberspace and social media are ultimately flattening, we do more or less the same everywhere, use the same language and culture and therefore ultimately all become more of the same, the diversity and identity is lost. This is not so noticeable yet, but for example the shopping stock, architecture, city planning, facilities, advertising and public transport in all world cities converges to a vague mediocrity.

### Character; outside or inner strength

In order to retain some unique „identity“ one then erects super high, super large or frenziedly „different“ buildings - which fit poorly with their surroundings and context - to distinguish oneself, the architectural approach of Rem Koolhaas. The flattening of the identity of one or 'the' city is clear.

The city must supplement or compensate for what we are losing in cyberspace, the touchability. This is possible if modern systems of communication are integrated to this end with the physical infrastructure, transport, distribution of energy, water and waste products, and with care and entertainment. The idea of the „Compact City“ - an old Amsterdam concept still from the time of Luud Schimmelpennink, among others, together with the White Bicycle plan (sharing) and the concept of The Digital City was also pioneering at the time - already argued for much more integration, sharing and doing things together. The idea of the compact city is already quite old, it comes down to (re)combining all the functions of the city with and within each other, so that more can be done with the same and essentially limited space and land. Living, working, education and recreation closer together, with more mixing and therefore more cross-fertilization, integration and cohesion, less transportation between work and home and a safer environment. The old idea of the mate (sociability) who is apprenticed to his master fits in with such a compact city.

Of course there are also disadvantages: it is more difficult from an environmental point of view, there is nuisance from noise, goods traffic and production, and not everyone wants to give up the idea of a quiet residential neighborhood to live in the middle of the turbulence.

## Contact platform

Providing physical contact is or will be the central function of the city of the future. If we cannot easily shake hands and look each other in the eye, it will be a dead city. The one-and-a-half meter society is a social disaster. Cities that arrange the best physical mobility and contact opportunities for visitors and residents have an advantage in this. They offer a better living environment, attract the creative talents and thus have more future value and current attractiveness

With modern techniques and more expansion in depth and height, we can allow more people to live, work, recreate, study and design the compact city (an old hippie ideal) together in a reasonable way but more is needed. We will want to fulfill the essential needs of humans, for contact, for physical experience. We can leave that to entrepreneurs but we will have to think about a framework, about broader measures, decision models, about change (building and demolition) and about the ethics of living together and in turn express that in rules, plans, policies and modes of implementation.

Municipal bodies are close to the people, administrators at the local level tend to be more pragmatic and less partisan, seeking solutions and compromises on a human scale. The responsibility of city governments in this regard is clear, they can regulate infrastructure, transportation, and physical cohe-

sion on a local scale by investing, providing direction, or promoting initiatives of others. Benjamin Barber, with his book 'If mayors rules the World (2013)', was a forerunner in positioning in this framework the mayor as a defining figure. Mayors, according to Barber, would come to play a more decisive role in society, even more decisive than national governments. They can concentrate on the practical side of living, housing and working, have much more direct involvement with security and influence the broad liveability and therefore attractiveness of their city for the poor, middle classes and rich. In this way they have an influence on what sort of people will live in 'their city' and how they interact with each other. This is where the opportunity lies, as well as the duty to ensure that the differences between rich and poor do not get so out of hand that not only ghettoisation but also revolt and violent polarisation are prevented. After all, the city must remain a vehicle for upward mobility.

### Technology to the rescue, or not?

At the moment people are still looking a lot in the direction of even more technology, even more technical solutions, even more internet and digital initiatives. People think in terms of 'smart city' and that undoubtedly makes sense because issues such as energy use, environment, care, education, telecommuting, security and more efficient management can certainly be improved a lot with technology but it is necessary to look further. Integrating smart city initiatives with human needs, striving for a human city, a warm city, a happy city is possible and in the long run much more important than forcing everyone into some kind of Big Brother technology utopia.

### Connected City and Smart City

It seems that 'smart cities', all nicely linked, are going to solve many problems but that approach is limited in a way. We cannot, for ecological reasons (the global climate and city climate) without the smart solutions with the internet-of-things, home automation and automation but a smart city is not yet a living city.

There are initiatives all over the world to improve the city, often with the slogan Smart City. Amsterdam but many big cities like New York are doing a lot of this. They are experimenting with smart-city solutions and seeking inspiration and innovation from outside. There are all kinds of initiatives and options such as digital citizen consultation and involvement in problems, crowd sourcing, crowd monitoring, crowd funding, administrative participation through social media, local media, neighborhood wikis. However, the emphasis is often on using technology even more to improve the services and functions of the city and especially of the urban government,

to make them more accessible and transparent (Accessible and Accountable). What is often missing is the integration of the physical and virtual.

Using the citizen to signal and help manage is one thing but real involvement requires more. A nice little park where the urbanite then does nothing more than sit around Facebook does not solve pressing problems like loneliness, social isolation and polarization. Perhaps it would work better if that park offered no wifi or mobile access!

Efficiency is not effectiveness and human effectiveness is often at odds with so-called information. Reporting complaints about the living environment via the iPhone and a special number 311 puts the responsibility back with the city and deprives citizens of their right and duty to do something themselves or to ask other citizens to do so.

### Loneliness, also or especially in the city

A village used to be a social unit; people knew each other, supported each other, although there was undesirable social control. But in the city, you can just drift away alone. All those fantastic websites for finding information have not reduced loneliness, but may have increased it. The time-honored counter is gone but haven't we done more harm than good by doing so? Broadband fiber optic internet access sounds nice but what if you are illiterate or not digitally literate? Or too old to install the new technology properly?

### Local media

I have always been a strong advocate of local media, that is radio and television but also neighborhood newspapers, discussion platforms, debate forums, pamphlets and venues. These are small-scale, local communication channels, very important for the sense of belonging, of counting, participating and exercising influence for the citizen. Local media can support and give substance to the roots of society, to being involved in democracy, to the sense of belonging. Let the people have their say, express their opinions, criticize, in their language and in their way, aimed at a small group or the whole community but especially not over the heads of the people. The frayed edge, the minorities, the agitators, the malcontents, through adequate access to local media, they can speak their minds.

Not the pompous, rational and scientific approach of the „big“ media, the national television, the talk shows and documentaries, but simply letting the people speak. The problems of the street, the neighborhood, the initiatives, complaints, dissatisfaction but also the nice things may have a place. Local media organizations, such as Salto in Amsterdam and my own television channel Kleurnet at the time, can be the platform for this, not controlling

but facilitating. Without the restrictions imposed on the 'big media' in terms of copyrights, formats, use of language, commercialization and censorship. This calls for generous and independent funding, but without the political slavishness that is more or less expected by the subsidizer.

Local media are much more important for cohesion than is usually assumed. Especially at a time when internet communication, blogs, vlogs and influencers are taking over the time-honored tasks of the paper media, support and appreciation of local media is essential.

## Sharing, an economy of the social

Social means that a human (or animal) tends to live in a group. We do so for all sorts of reasons, safety, efficiency, possibility of specialization, sociability, choice of partner. We are social because we are dependent on each other but paradoxically also to be able to distinguish ourselves, to climb in the hierarchy. Socii in Latin means partners, connected, with something of using each other, depending on each other.

With neighbors there is a relationship that is more than social, there is a sense of belonging, sociability, obligation and service that is somewhat diluted in the concept of social. A social society takes care of those who are less fortunate but does not oblige to contact, the social service (now very aptly the Centre for Work and Income) gave you money but no sociability or contact. Proximus is the Latin word for neighbor. So the word proximate would actually be clearer than social. In fact, it expresses mutual connectedness.

We need to bring together and share resources, means and capacities, which is an ecological necessity but also the magic formula for connection and innovation. We can thus save, do more and better with less and, as an added benefit, connect and stay connected with others.

Sharing a schoolyard together, for example, waiting for school to go out, is traditionally a social benchmark. Parents get to know each other there, often the circle of friends for the coming years is formed there. People share the care for the children, arrange parties, sleepovers and exchange caregiving tasks. Sharing a boat, a lawn mower, a washing machine or exchanging things through initiatives such as Noppes (LETS - Local Exchange Trading System) are social encounters.

Sharing as a commercial activity is still something different from sharing in a credit society (possibly without money), as David Graeber saw in 'Debt, the first 5000 years' in older cultures. Virtual debt, intangible and social credit, favors, relationships, they often play a much larger role in a society than we think. Money may be the bridge between society and the market but not the only one.

With the Internet and IoT (Internet of Things) (and it's getting better with 5G), that sharing economy (sharing economy is an ambivalent word) can take on an even broader dimension. A market is emerging for B&B, boat rentals, private cab services, healthcare services (including sex), supplementary education, home growers (not just weed), babysitters, garden rentals, party venues and whatnot. A market in which large parties such as Bol.com operate, sometimes in a way that is not entirely clean (for example, they charge 15% on the shipping costs that individuals incur). Also the commission arrangements are sometimes more in the interest of the platforms than of the people who share their work or their home. Everything can be done through the net. The mostly illegal Dark Web trade (as with SilkRoad) in drugs, weapons, papers, etc. is an example. Strangely enough, that is mainly based on trust, one pays for stuff with bitcoins and just has to hope it will be delivered.

### Middle class under pressure

The established middle class does sometimes see this trend towards mutual trade, exchange and sharing as a threat and the government fears tax evasion (especially VAT), black money circuits and security problems (fire, incompetent service providers, criminal exploitation). However, partly due to its growing accessibility via the Internet, it is an unstoppable trend. Regulations, guidelines and boundaries for the sharing economy should be determined with room for experimentation.

Sharing is not only economically interesting; there is a psychological need to meet physically, possibly with an intermediate step via technical media. This is necessary to reach an agreement and a physical necessity if we want to exchange, swap, share and do things together.

### Contact patterns; more and more to follow, less privacy

Every city dweller or visitor uses the city in his own way. At home and subsequently in terms of transport, route, locations visited and activities, we develop patterns of use. There is often a certain regularity in this. We are used to going to work in a certain way and going out often follows fixed patterns. We go to a regular pub and have a fixed spot in the park while our shopping also often follows a standard pattern. There are deviating situations, but we often do that en masse, such as at a demonstration or when the weather is nice. Then we go like lemmings to the beach or the parks. It's not just about getting around; our consumption, purchasing behavior and contact patterns are often fairly fixed and therefore predictable. It can be used by the government or commercial parties and that can be an invasion of our privacy.

Those movement patterns and spending patterns are, if we forget about privacy for a moment, quite easy to follow, because almost all of us have a cell phone, we pay through a trackable system. Even our entry into the city (because of old diesels) and also parking information is already marketed by municipalities and actually almost everything we do is known or can be followed and perhaps even influenced. This is not something for the future, we want to connect and integrate everything. As an example; gasoline prices per pump are regulated remotely in response to what competitors are doing and current sales data. The traffic services that provide congestion information also work with current travel data.

The government also participates, and perhaps rightly so. It is already being used on a large scale, for example on Queen's Day and at large-scale public events. Crowd control by the police works with such technical means. These techniques allow us to limit congestion in normal situations or to steer it by means of measures such as digital remote controlled signage, peak prices for public transport, differentiated and dynamic parking tariffs. As 'always on, everywhere' becomes more and more the norm, pedestrians and cyclists can also be directed in this way.

It all feels like enormous manipulation but the economic and environmental benefits to government and citizens of all that tracking and steering are also clear. Traffic jams are expensive time and gasoline wasters. We are looking to optimize movement and so why not accept the comfort of help with purchasing decisions and contact options? And what is the role of the government in this regard, surely they also do advertising and send us messages, useful or not, e.g. alarm warnings by SMS? Surely this is in everyone's interest? Or is it not?

### The fragmented, segregated city.

The big city is increasingly a mishmash of cultures, languages, which seems unmanageable, you can't forbid people to come and live or work there. A healthy city requires managing the diversity in who lives there, in terms of family size, income, culture. Do not mix in too much „other“, there are limits to the absorption capacity of a neighborhood or district but start from a compact, mixed population. Not just row houses but many more courtyard-like neighborhoods, more communal facilities (sharing economy of power-hot water-washing-wifi delivery points-exchanging) and spaces for working, receiving, lodging, babysitting, parties, manufacturing facilities (fab-lab), sharing facilities etc. Practical directions can be given, dealing with housing allocation, accessibility, contact opportunities, the integration of smart-city functionality into ordinary life, planning, transport



modes such as public transport scaling, individual public sharing transport, electric, self-driving, autonomous transport.

The combination of living, working and living together is still relevant but can be scaled up, with more ecology, more connectedness, more contact between generations, more sharing on a personal level, more shared responsibility for communal greenery, security and care. This is not just a matter of tackling physical projects. Permit policies, building codes and the legal constructs for care sharing, cohabitation forms, front door sharing, splitting or linking of housing units, financing, stakeholder participation and entry/exit arrangements need to be challenged. The way in which almshouses and former convents operated, with sometimes very restrictive rules but a common goal and apparently sufficient power to survive, can provide inspiration here.

### The essential choice

These are all considerations between the individual and the collective, but wouldn't it make sense to make it possible for residents in a particular residential project (neighborhood, building) to abide by agreements that limit their civil liberties? Would it not make sense to make physical coupling and decoupling of dwellings (for family care, new parent structures and forms of cohabitation) the basic principle in new buildings, i.e. to plan passageways (potentially) between dwellings, front door sharing and a flexible interior layout. More sharing means more contact, less loneliness, less care and happier people. In an aging city, seniors are an important group.

In London the inner city has become unaffordable and the workers live far away, in Paris the banlieu is a ghetto. The same threatens Amsterdam and, to a lesser extent, Rotterdam; the rental policy and the lack of cheap housing is driving ordinary people out of the city, expats and the new knowledge elite are taking their place. Although it is increasingly about the contrast poor/rich with rich two-earners in „gentrification neighborhoods“ where the yuppies have pushed up prices and the original residents had to leave, and also concentration in other clusters, there is also a clear ethnic segregation going on.

Not that a white ghetto has emerged within the Amsterdam canal ring, everything is still mixed together, with many expats and (still) many social housing residents in the low and middle groups. The housing market has stagnated because no one wants to or can move, prices have risen extremely high, there is skewed living and the elderly remain in much too large houses for lack of alternatives. This is really not because of the landlords, they only profit from it. It is the corporations, which in turn are used by the government as an alternative source of income, that have driven up rents and prices. They must therefore, more or less forced, now keep their heads



above water, to pay off old excesses and commercial experiments, by selling the attractive houses dearly and charging unaffordable rents for the rest, not based on reasonable depreciation, interest costs and maintenance.

## Housing affordability

Recent Dutch policies such as raising the (rent) points and moving to WOZ (official tax estimated value) value as the basis for rent reinforce the vicious circle whereby purchase prices are determined by a shortage. The housing corporations and coops are all in the game, profiting from higher prices for sale and thus rent and thus buy again, it chases each other.

The big city centers are attractive, for expats, pensionados and also for rich and well earning families (if there are white schools) with often intergenerational support (inheritance, mortgage support, 100,000 euro scheme). However, it is becoming more and more expensive, the underclass is slowly being driven away to suburbs, the countryside, Vinex districts, Almere, and eventually to Heerlen or Oost-Groningen when the rent subsidy is phased out.

Here it is also important to realize that the division into rich and poor, in low-paid work and top incomes will go further and further, and the centrifugal effect of globalization, swinging everything to the poorest outskirts also plays a role. Less work, robotization, self-driving transport, the demand for „ordinary“ labor is decreasing, wages are flattening, this is an imminent but difficult to avert development. Plans such as a basic income for everyone do not counteract income segregation but actually reinforce it, with the result that the growing group of minima are forced to leave the city. The fact that a basic income is up in the air with the ongoing robotization and automation and not working is becoming less and less of a choice is apparently not (yet) on the agenda or not in the interest of the status quo elite. But there are dangers, the divide is getting stronger because of it.

## Seeding a rift

Then it's a matter of waiting until problems start to appear, in the sense of bread revolts, radicalization and revolution. You don't have to be a Marxist for that, that development is quite universal. The intelligent poor, formerly the middle class who are also driven to the minima situation, organize that; they are well educated but feel the difference with those who did get into the upper class, earn well and can (or are allowed to) live in the city. That resistance, radicalization, violence is not a matter of poor, stupid wretches is also evident in the radical Islam movement.

Preventing income segregation and maintaining a middle class may well be a more important task than working on ethnic disadvantage and segregation, and the two do run together now but need to be properly distinguished.



## Happiness, power, autonomy, privacy and freedom

Being happy and judging your happiness (retrospectively through surveys) appear to be quite different from each other, so happiness is debatable but it is what we all strive for and can actually be seen as the collective goal. Imposing this repressively as Bhutan does is counterproductive but investigating happiness in the city seems a priority if only to clarify the differences between cities and to be able to steer towards more confidence, more happiness and more well-being.

### The freedom NOT to participate

Participation is such a buzzword, everyone MUST participate, welfare is now called participation, a kind of modern serfdom and an imposed almost slavery existence for those who do not contribute. Even though this may not be necessary in the long run or even if there is no work, withdrawing from 'working for a living' has now been labelled anti-social in a kind of neo-liberal jargon.

However, it is important that the choice to withdraw from choosing or participating is also allowed, if you are willing to bear the consequences. There is a tendency to want to train or educate everyone to be a resilient and individualized citizen but in doing so, the freedom to remain free from government and to protect one's own privacy is eroded.

Freedom also means that a person may choose NOT to participate, not to become digitally resilient, not to choose, not to influence, not to interfere with others. In a city, the liberated or those who make themselves free, those who flee the straitjacket of convention in the frayed edges often turn out to be the change agents, the artists, the social innovators.

There are good reasons to stay aloof, psychological as well as ethical. The time-honored libertine „don't tread on me“ is a good starting point. A government that, even with the best of intentions, forces its citizens into an unnecessary straitjacket and invades their privacy runs the risk of resistance building up, under the skin, which can, however, manifest itself in forms such as the terrorist 'lone wolf' syndrome that people are now so afraid of. Participation is not a duty but a right. Enforcing participation with a false and unnecessary social argument that amounts to repression and is perceived as slavery or unethical economy drives means loss of moral credibility. The dividing line between cautious encouragement (nudging) and abuse of power is sensitive and requires wide margins of safety, also

because personal fascist behavior (using the majority environment to mask personal feelings of inferiority) lurks.

For many citizens, especially those on the wrong side of all kinds of stripes, the abuse of power (corruption, official arbitrariness) that they experience from the government and the implementing bodies is one of the major fears and pain points. The benefits affair made that very clear again. Historically, this is also usually the cause of less than organic revolutions.



## Physicalization, festivalization, the event economy

We have learned through all the lockdowns and isolation measures that physical contact is indispensable. In fact, we cannot live without occasional physical contact, meeting others, physically being somewhere in nature, feeling and touching.

The digital contact culture, smartphones, social media, Netflix and all the virtualization were already becoming a problem for the cohesion of the society and the loneliness and physical touch/contact deprivation it causes for many, but Corona made it very clear how limiting that can be.

### The new physicalization

Social media and mobile telecommunications have profoundly changed the contact patterns and contact needs between people, we are after all always online and accessible everywhere. However, we have lost depth and intensity. The Corona crisis has made this painfully clear, the lockdowns have led to depression, loneliness, powerlessness, feelings of meaninglessness and rebellion for very many people. The costs of this in human terms but also financially, are enormous and will continue for a long time. But we soon forget that, when we are allowed again!

We want, if we can when the Covid-craze ends, to go to festivals, concerts, go into nature with each other, camp, play and sport with each other. This trend towards festivalization and eventification has been going on for some time now; worldwide the number of events has already grown explosively. In the Netherlands we were certainly a forerunner in that field. The festival culture and DJ scene here has developed quickly and widely.

### Festivalization, event economy

Many of us want and seek freedom, play, fun and personal growth. Attending festivals or join communities and tribes seem to provide this and is becoming very popular. This trend is relevant here because, apart from the leisure and entertainment, such autonomous spaces are potentially laboratories of change, indicators of future trends, places where social innovation happens. Looking at what happens at festivals, at intentional gatherings and in general in Free Cultural Spaces (FCS), permanent or more short-lived like festivals, is relevant in a futurological, psychological, economic, social and political perspective.

Understanding the processes, preconditions and constraints of events like Burning Man or what happens in communities like Christiania or the Am-

sterdam Ruigoord community may well hold keys to better apprehend how change happens. Identification, participation, realization and transformation are parameters in this process, relevant not only to understand how we can create a wonderful weekend event, but essential in the much broader process of changing our world.

Understanding change, political transition, innovation, personal and social transformation is what the world needs.

Festivals have become a boom, a business and an industry. The impact of this trend may be as important as what Silicon Valley brought to us, a FestiValley phenomenon. Regions like around Amsterdam, are becoming festival hotbeds, and influence worldwide trends, fashions and staging of festivals elsewhere.

There are and have been all kinds of festivals, identifying them is not easy. Labels like authentic, religious, commercial or alternative, participative, or intentional are used but not really distinctive. Conforming or autonomous is a dichotomy that comes closer to what is relevant for understanding the relevance for our future. We need entertainment, but we also need places to learn, transform, renew, make mistakes, play. There are the conforming versus the transformative qualities. Are festivals only used to confirm what we are, supporting the status quo, the social order and our egos, or do they offer a way out, an escape from what we pretend to be? The distinction in mask affirming or mask breaking (in the context of transformation) thus makes sense.

Festivalization is an economic trend, fitting in what is called eventification and the experience economy, but even more a social phenomenon, and it reflects how society is changing. Our lives are virtualized, emptied of meaning, we are data, not humans, consumers, not cocreators. People therefore seek engaging, live entertainment, but also contact with others, participation and identification.

There emerged a class of 'alternative' festivals, that focus on bringing something 'extra' beyond the purely commercial entertainment many large festivals offers. That extra can be idealistic, a message to the world, transformation or personal growth, but it requires more than managing a crowd and selling tickets. It asks a special focus and an intention that goes beyond the materialistic.

Their popularity grows, and one of the clear messages of the Corona lockdown situation is that there is a serious demand for festivals. Their success is maybe related to what we miss in our Facebook, Twitter and Netflix digital world. How we want to use our mobility and free leisure time to find contacts and meaning. Seeking an escape from the stress and continuous

presence of our cyberge virtual and often lifeless connections. More and more people attend festivals, feel being part of tribes in real, tangible environments; it seems this balances and counteract the emptiness of internet presence, allows the anonymity and freedom we need to learn and offers an escape from the invasive privacy breakdown.

Such festivals are what this book is about. It's not an overview of what is available or merely a description of specific festivals, just a few are mentioned. The book is about looking for what makes the alternative, spiritual or magical festivals different. How they offer authenticity and what Peter Lamborn Wilson (Hakim Bey) called 'autonomous zones', or what in anthropological terms is called 'the magic circle'.

Such events range from small meetings to large festivals and communities which are pockets in time and space where the control of 'normal' society doesn't matter much, and the tribal, the magical and the sacred can be experienced. They are temporary or more permanent places where one can experiment with decision making, relationships, art, sex, drugs and music. What makes this 'special' or 'magical', however, is not very clear, except that the experience is there. Many experience a feeling of happiness, exaltation, connection; things are different.

## Experience economy and eventification

One of the trends in economy and marketing is recognizing, along with the emotional drives, the importance of experiences. In the emerging experience economy, seen as the next stage in consumer behavior, the production, buying and consumption of services, products and places is no longer based on consumption, but geared towards producing events, spectacle, impression, performances, theater; all towards creating subjective emotions. The festival and eventification trend (event consumption) is an obvious part of this, the changed attitude concerning 'shopping' another.

The festivalization trend impacts not only the events as such, but has many effects. It requires allocation of public funds, urban planning and influences time allocation of the citizens. It effects many other areas, like tourist facilities, security, law&order, health, and even education as new kinds of jobs appear, and 'Event Management' becomes part of the curriculum.

Events are not only economic endeavors, they are complex cultural products, combinations of many fields. It involves economy, marketing, security, arts, music, theater and of course applied psychology and sociology, not to forget ecology. The cooperation of many parties and discipline specialists is necessary, both local stakeholders and international artists, ceremonial managers and mood experts. The need for integrated event and ex-

perience management, staging and planning studies, also at an academic level, is obvious.

What are the major dimensions and attraction of the autonomous zones that we describe as alternative festivals, group meetings, communes or free cultural spaces, not ranking or comparing them with events of a more commercial character, where passive consumption and entertainment prevail.

To study this, we have to look more and better at what history, the notion of Utopia, Dystopia and modern psychological and social insights have to say about this. Among the perspectives are needs, meaning, group mind and the resonance with play, ritual, social media and even computer games. How can the participation, identification, realization and transformation these more engaging events and places counteract or complement shortcomings in communication, education, society and culture.

**Mobility is not only a mobile phone, but the freedom to move.**

We think a lot, but on a human level there will always be an underlying need for physical contact and mobility, for exchange, networking, shopping, going out, enjoying diversity. For all the robotization, automation and technological alienation, we seek „authenticity,“ the human touch and the human encounter.

For all the threats of alienating telecommunications and cyberspace, the antidote lies in physicality (meeting each other physically, being together physically and experiencing) and authenticity. Feeling, seeing, touching, education by living people, meeting each other in the pub, on squares, at parties, events and festivals with like-minded people, that is what we need to counterbalance the one-sided and increasingly virtual cognitive information and ‘thinking culture’. Communication and distance are connected, closer means more communication (see Allen curve).

This has practical consequences for society, spatial planning and the entire cultural sector. On which we must develop policies, formulate visions and translate them into practical terms.

Not symptomatically, not by subsidizing the occasional concert, neighborhood party or festival or clearing a meadow, but by an integral approach. Every municipality should make room for it, in the planning, in the physical facilities and in conjunction with residents and local businesses.

## Tribalism

Being together with like-minded people because we like the same things, share certain insights or ideals, are members of the same club or movement, it is a legacy, but given the developments a revival of the tribal feeling, tribalism. Sometimes we do this with thousands, sometimes with smaller



groups. You belong somewhere, you dress accordingly, go along with the eating habits such as vegan or vegetarian, you adapt and go along (for a while) with the fashion, norms and values. You meet your friends there or make new ones who you then contact again later via social media. Whole communities arise. The „burners“, people who have something to do with the Burning Man festival in America, are a good example of such a new „tribe“.

The festival business and the „getaway culture“ has taken off and will surely pick up again soon after Corona. It has become a whole industry, the fairs of yesteryear have now become big events, the campgrounds became recreational facilities, all kinds of theme parks came into being, but also temporary festivals somewhere outside or right in the city populate the agenda. A lot of people are involved, a lot of technique is needed, tents, installations, toilet facilities, but also surveillance, first aid, control of drugs, a whole sector that dried up due to the crisis.

## Responding to the need

It is the entrepreneurs in this sector but also the government who can and must steer the further development of this physicalization. Because it can get out of hand, always the same kind of events at the same locations, that's no fun anymore. Municipalities also recognize this and make demands on the content and approach (theme) of events, it must be somewhat original, just music, dancing and drinking and swallowing pills, that is too limited.

Here lies a challenge. Until now, the event industry has mainly tried to regulate and forced to increase security, safety, hygiene, limiting (noise) nuisance, parking spaces, fire safety, etc. This drove up costs and the industry began to complain, you can't organize anything like that anymore. Of course, that was not the intention, because events, congresses and festivals bring people to the city or the location, which brings excitement and income.

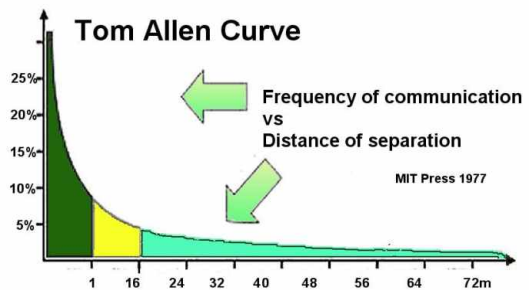
Now that a restart seems possible, for the time being with restrictions such as tests and vaccination requirements, it would be wise for the government, also at the national level, to take a look at the whole eventification trend. Just as in the past every village had to make room for a fair, processions and other celebrations, now every municipality should draw up an event plan, designate locations, provide basic facilities and start facilitating in a broad sense. Coordination is needed with other events, other municipalities, also on a regional and national level; this should also be placed as a task with a national body or ministry. It's not just about rowing events in, but to steer critical ones. For example, the cruise industry seems impres-

sive, big cabinets with thousands of visitors. But what do they end up spending in the city? They eat on board and at most buy some tourist junk, souvenirs or eat an ice cream. Venice is losing out as a city!

## A very broad sector

You can only look at the catering industry, at concert halls and traditional events, parties and celebrations, but you can also see it much wider: the entire recreation and entertainment sector from the coffee house or senior citizens' club around the corner to Christmas markets, carnivals, experiential events, congresses and mega-events such as the Olympic Games, European Football Championships, Kings-Day, Pink-Pop festival and Sail Amsterdam. An integral approach to fighting nuisances such as alcohol abuse, parking pressure, noise and criminal or extremist influences is certainly needed. But this is not just a matter of laws, regulations and licensing policy, but of accepting that this is a growing industry in which a lot of money is involved and there are many socio-economic and socio-psychological facets that need attention. Going out is an outlet, important to prevent loneliness, it is a cultural platform, a place where new trends in music, fashion and expression arise but also where new rituals develop, which offer people and society cohesion and meaning.

Science does not yet look at it this way, there is now only some attention to the business aspects, the organization, the staff. It is precisely a broader view with appreciation for the anthropological effects, the social impact, group identity, etc. that can help to build our country's top position in the festival world. Social innovation often starts at gatherings where there is a so-called Temporary Autonomous Zone (TAZ, a term of Hakim Bey) offered, where people can experiment relatively safely and autonomously with togetherness, with play, participation and group processes.



## Other books by Luc Sala

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