Chapter 14 Governance for the Anthropocene

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Over the coming decades as humanity needs to address the pressures on society that will result from global environmental change, governance will become a vital factor in how well we succeed. Further, in considering cultural transformations, the matter of governance both as an element of culture that requires changing itself, and governance of the change process are two important considerations.

In this paper I first set out the basis from which I approach the issue of governance. I then discuss the form of governance I think most helpful and why that is so. And then I outline some ideas about ways to move from the present system to an appropriate system for governing in the Anthropocene.

If we take up the idea that culture is the operating system for a society, that sets out what we know and believe, and what we can't know, how we behave, what is important and what is ignored, then for the purpose of this talk I propose that governance is the programmer.

Governance is not government: government is the set of institutions that evolve to govern and deliver on governance.

So government is a cultural institution and governance is embedded in the culture that it programs. Governance comprises all the elements or factors that impinge on defining how societies operate. So this gives us an example of actors within a complex system acting to influence that system.

From a health perspective, good governance enables the constituents of wellbeing. Wellbeing is a system and the elements comprising wellbeing inter-influence (Figure 1). Central to wellbeing is people having a sense of control over their circumstances (Marmot and Wilkinson 2006 Marmot MG, Wilkinson RG, editors. Social determinants of health. 2 ed. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press; 2006; Wilkinson RG. The Impact of Inequality: how to make sick societies healthier. New York: The New Press; 2005).

Therefore the method of governance chosen by a society has implications for that society's members' wellbeing.

A range of governance systems exist, and so which of these governance systems will be most helpful to achieving 'good' governance?

By 'good' governance, I mean a governance system that enables society scales to achieve wellbeing. I also note as the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment implies (Figure 1), wellbeing includes a biosensitive attitude and an ecologically sustainable approach to the environment on which it depends.

The range of governance systems go from Absolute Autocracy, through a continuum of oligarchies into a continuum of 'democracies' to small self-governing groups.

Figure 1
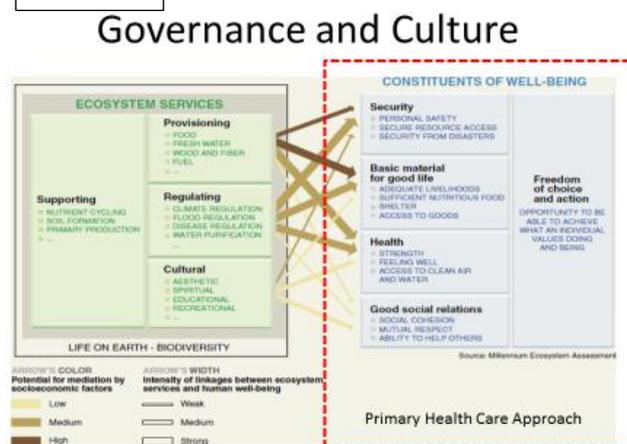
As Aileen Power has pointed out, governance is ultimately about power-sharing: who gets how much of the share?

On this continuum, I assert that democracy gives the best fit for achieving good governance. That assertion comes from the importance for wellbeing of people having a sense of control over their circumstances, and the most effective way for that to occur is for people to actually have control over their circumstances (as far as possible).

However, we have a warped idea of democracy in our modern, neoliberal world. One of the elements of democratic process has come to represent for us the whole of democracy - voting. This is an historical accident, to do with how governance in Europe evolved since the Middle Ages, and encompasses the theorising about and experiments in governance in 18th century France and America, and 19th century Europe that eventuated in 20th century anarchist experiment in Spain, and finally communist Russia on one hand and capitalist USofA on the other.

So what then is democracy?

I think it useful to consider this in three sections: a definition of what I think democracy is, a set of principles that constitute this definition, and an array of processes to institute and operate these principles.

So first, the definition: Democracy is about mechanisms for decision taking (governance) such that decisions are taken by those who are going to be affected by, that is have **to live with the consequences of**, those decisions.

Additional to that core idea of democracy, there are many other definitions. But for this discussion I am going with this one.

Democracy is not elections. Elections are but one of a series of processes for achieving democratic outcomes in particular situations.

The principles that make a democracy are listed in Figure 2. Political equality is usually described as "one vote one value". More accurately it signifies that in a democracy, each individual has the opportunity to exercise a similar degree of power or influence (see discussion below).

Deliberation means decisions are a dialogic (discursive) process, iteratively reached and informed by the best available technical and logistic evidence and the lived experience of those who will be affected.

Tyranny is the outcome of undue influence and the tactics used to gain such influence; it occurs in two situations. Either when a small sector of society is able to exercise disproportional influence

Democracy - Principles

Figure 2

- **Political Equality**
- **Tyranny Avoided** (majority or minority) or **Freedom from Domination**
- **Deliberative**
- **Reflective**, and
- **Adaptative**
- **Subsidiarity**

Fishkin, JS, 1991, *Democracy and deliberation: New directions for democratic reform*, Yale University Press, New Haven & London
Brown VA, Harris JA. The Human Capacity for Transformational Change: Harnessing the collective mind. Abingdon and New York: Routledge; 2014
Pettit P. Deliberative Democracy, the Discursive Dilemma, and Republican Theory. 2003
Pettit P. On the people's terms: a republican theory and model of democracy: Cambridge University Press, 2012.
Cooney R, Lang AT. Taking uncertainty seriously: adaptive governance and international trade. European journal of international law. 2007;18(3):523-51
Ostrom, Elinor. (2010). "The Challenge of common-pool resources". In: Environment: Science and Policy for Sustainable Development, 50:4, 8-21
Marshall G. Nesting, subsidiarity and community based environmental governance beyond the local level. International Journal of the Commons. 2008;2:75-97

for its own advantage or another sector's disadvantage. Current western liberal democracies are rampant examples of this. Ironically this is a subject that exercised the founding fathers of the USA considerably. Secondly, it can occur when a majority group within society can oppress a minority. Freedom from domination is another way to express this (see Pettit).

Reflection recognises that this process has to watch itself, be explicit about its values, make its assumptions transparent, review its process, and be mindful of all the knowledges that feed into the deliberations (Brown VA, Harris JA. The Human Capacity for Transformational Change: Harnessing the collective mind. Abingdon and New York: Routledge; 2014.), and takes a learning attitude to its existence.

Adaptive governance provides two lines of thought:

First Cooney and Lang provide a definition: "governance process that seeks to make decisions / formulate policy in the face of uncertainty and incomplete knowledge, recognising inherent conflict and valuing diverse interests, and is reflective of its processes and of the evolving situation". They introduce managing uncertainty and reinforce managing conflict, valuing diversity, and reflection.

Second, Ostrom outlines five basic requirements for achieving adaptive governance. These include:

- Deliberation,
- Acknowledging and actively managing conflict,
- Users of a resource monitor usage to enhance rule compliance,
- Providing infrastructure, that is flexible over time, both to aid internal operations and create links to other regimes
- Identification of and steps to address errors and evolving developments.

The Principle of Subsidiarity has it that decisions are taken closest to the level they will be implemented and services are delivered at the level in a way that balance economies of scale with economies of effectiveness. Ostrom's principles and the idea of subsidiarity feed directly to the definition of democracy. Two other elements are important: Connectivity, horizontal and vertical, and Accountability, down and up.

Democratic processes are briefly outlined in Figure 3. Political equality requires representation of all legitimate interests in order to embody equality and avoid tyranny. I haven't resolved if representation needs to be proportional numerically or can be substantive. And there are serious questions of how to define legitimate, that is which interests are included and which excluded. Methods exist to do this (Ulrichian boundary critique) but I'm not going to discuss this today, except to say that not only do current

and geographically present interests need inclusion, but the interests of future generations, geographically distant people, other species, the disadvantaged, the less powerful, the young and the aged need representation too. Again ideas about how to do this can be discussed elsewhere.

Deliberation: face to face whenever possible even if electronically, with adequate but not indefinite time, access in real time to necessary expertise and information. Examples are citizen juries.

In the interests of time, some of these will come out in the discussion further along.

Figure 3

Democracy - Processes

- Political equality and avoiding tyranny
  - Representation ...
  - Representation by lottery (sortition, sampling)
- Deliberation
  - Multiple methods
- Reflective and adaptive
  - Multiple methods
- Subsidiarity
  - Community based
  - Nested

Finally to this section of the discussion, democratic systems need to incorporate mechanisms to ensure there is accountability for governors the the governed, and that the processes of government are open and transparent to everyone.

In passing let me just remind people of Fotopoulos' idea of inclusive democracy (Fotopoulos, T, 1997, *Towards an inclusive democracy: The crisis of the growth economy and the need for a new liberatory project*, Cassell, London, New York.). The lesson here is to recognise that to be truly democratic, a society must have democracy operating across all of his realms: the political, the social (including the personal), the economic and the ecologic, including institutional frameworks that aim to eliminate any human attempt to dominate the natural world. His argument for the failure of the experiments with democratic governance across the past few centuries is that each only paid attention to some of the realms while others were ignored. This emphasises questions of representation and reflective and adaptive governance processes.

Presenting in Figure 4 is a very simple model of our governance system. It represents the main loci of power and how they interact.

A governance model   Figure 4

In today's neoliberal, western "democratic" cultural tradition, we position government in the central position of power. We observe the myth that governments are in control.
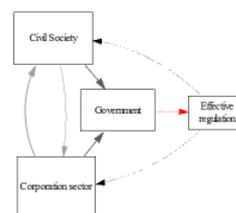
We know however that power is actually contested between all three: government, the civil society and the corporate groups. This contestation revolves around differing sub-cultural views about the role and reach of government in governance, whose interests are given priority and why, and links in to differing world views which, to use Lakoff's descriptors, are the *strict father* or the *nurturant parent* view. The former currently has ascendency.

So to undertake the cultural transformation to bring about the Phase 5 Transition Boyden argues we need urgently, one of the key cultural sectors needing to change is our governance. This is both because of the institutional power and resources governments hold, and because of the role which *nurturant parents* see government having in regulating corporations, which in turn is a critical part of the culture change we want to see.

Based on the idea that a democratic governance system is this best way of achieving a biosensitive, ecologically sustainable society what creates the conditions for human wellbeing, I'm proposing that democratic governance, as defined above, is where a governance transformation needs to go.

What would that look like?

Without pre-empting discussion too much, one view could be this (Figure 5), based on Ostrom's "nested polycentric governance systems": core would be a set of citizen assemblies deciding about public policy, the economic and social priorities, and the ways and means of achieving these, appointing public servants, monitoring service delivery. The business sector would be no longer shareholder owned corporations, but cooperatives governed by citizen assemblies or mutuals governed by members. Appointment of the boards of directors would be by these assemblies, or sortition (chosen by lottery) from members, who would monitor the processes, worker standards and conditions, output quality and similarly. Many more business would have returned to small corner store business, the family business model on which Adam Smith predicated his economic theory.
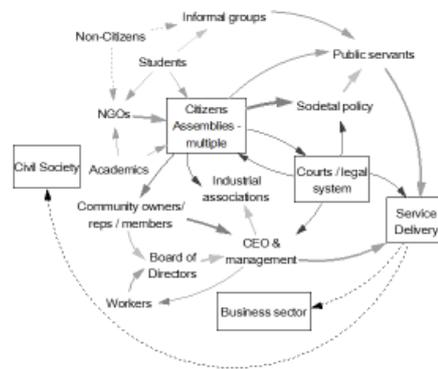

Making a new model

Figure 5

These will be supported and informed by a multitude of community groups of NGOs each active in its area of interest. These NGOs may also deliver services for their communities.

For practical purposes most assemblies will be geographically situated. Natural Resource Management experience suggests that geographic alignment of these local government areas be grounded within watersheds which allows the social, economic and environmental realms to be better aligned. But non-geographically located legitimate interests can still be included.

Over increasing geographic scale, nested assemblies can go up to the global level, abiding by the principle of subsidiarity, and each level taking advice from 'lower' and 'higher' levels.

Of course there is going to be politicking and jockeying for position and influence but the system designed in accord with democratic principles will have mechanisms built in to account for and minimise the impact of that.

In this situation, one of the cultural changes has been an acceptance that part of one's civic duty is to take a turn in a citizen assembly. This will carry rewards in status and future career opportunities as a 'community elder'. Community elders will be the magistrates, advisors, appeal judges and so on. This society will also feature more leisure time, less consumption driven work, be more localised and more globalised, using electronic communications and limited travel. Slow life will be the norm.

National governments as such would have ceased to exist although some large scale organisations such as disaster management/relief, coordination of climate change adaptation, coordination of governance of the global commons, trade, nuclear weapons technology and waste, governed in turn by people chosen by sortition from 'lower' level assemblies.

We really want the changes to begin now. Change will have to most likely occur in two phases: a reform phase, incrementally improving the current situation and a transformative phase. Both will have to occur simultaneously with more reform early, moving across into transformative change as momentum builds.

I'm not going to pre-empt where the transforming culture series is going in regard to method, but will list some ideas about what types of changes might occur under each heading in table 1.

Table 1: Governance Reform Transform

Phase	Process	Details
1A	a) Electoral Reform	Democratise political parties Limits to political party donations with real time transparent donation reporting (including in-kind support) Registration as political parties should be open to all political movements in the community without discrimination Public funding of political parties to allow for long-term policy development, assist party members to debate and democratically determine their party policies, and attract and empower individual party members Mandatory standards to political advertising
Phase	**Process**	**Details**
	b) Voting Reform	Introduce voting systems (such as multi-party or Hare-Clarke) to ensure representation for each party, and independent candidates, closely match the proportion of the electorate which supports them Voter intention is paramount: voter should be able to vote for as few or as many candidates as they want and minor mistakes should not invalidate their vote
	c) Parliamentary Reform	Limit the power of the government executive Review the Westminster government-opposition system to build more multipartisan 'in the national interest' governance
1B	Establish Community Democracy	Using transition towns as a model, and kitchen table conversations as a process, and building on other community initiatives, grow community (neighbourhood or community of interest) investment in the skills of self governance Citizen groups to take over municipal councils and build mechanisms for democratic process Build electorate based community governance structures to chose candidates (see Indi)
1C	Democratise corporations	Begin to arrange shareholder power Re-mutualise businesses Shareholders and staff change businesses into cooperatives
2A	Build subsidiarity	Work with all levels of government to devolve decision making down and delegate effective service delivery to the most effective level
2B	Build regional and even global networks of self-governing communities	And promote development of further self-governing communities

3	Continue to consolidate the transfer of power and authority to communities	

Discussion and Commentary

Bob Webb and Wendy Russel both wondered about the need to make explicit that this is challenging capitalism and the 'growth' consumption/productionist economy. I see it is more an implicit rather than a direct challenge, wherein the changes proposed will alter the current economic model, and change how capitalism operates without becoming engaged in discussion about an impersonal entity (Capitalism) but rather directly focusing on the entities who are be their behaviour creating the situation, the corporations themselves, and the people who are running them.

Dierk van Behrens observed that corporations are not a homogenous entity. There are different models of a corporation, with different control structures, and even 'tween' organisations such as the Grameen Bank, who are focusing of service and community development as well as reasonable profit. Indeed this diversity within the 'corporate' world does need to be acknowledged as it demonstrates openings for changes to occur. Ethical investing and 'triple bottom line' reporting are further examples of how the transition is already emerging. However while some smaller, local businesses and corporations do demonstrate benign behaviour, and may be operating within Princen's Principle of Sufficiency (Princen T. The Logic of Sufficiency. Cambridge, Ma. USA, London, UK: MIT Press; 2005) the large transnational ones are not. Further the Corporations law designs the system to guide large companies to operate in the way they are; as Paul Gilding alludes, the directors of companies are as caught up in the system as we are.

Bob Webb further noted that there are emerging trends in Australia reinforcing governance on a 'regional' scale of five to ten LGAs. Building on these initiatives where they exist to leverage better governance of particular issues, and promoting this scale of governance is important to the transformation. A theme in the recent Future Earth Conference on distributed infrastructure helping develop more self-reliant communities is one such initiative.

Wendy Russell reminded us of the need to consider what needs to occur within each societal sector, and, as John Dryzek has said, to look at the trade-offs that are required between sectors during the transformational period.

Val Brown opened a series of discussions. First, in what context am I wanting to bring democracy – developed / developing nations? Is this something that would work in all human systems? While I believe that all human societies have the capacity for and will benefit from democracy, I only feel capable to focus this work in Australia. However this does not preclude others from taking the ideas into other locales where their experience and capability will allow them to use it.

Secondly, Val sought an overarching / primary principle, not covered in the list given in Figure 2. This provoked a long discussion out of which arose agreement that a (we did not settle on the language for this) primary or overarching principle or assumption is that **all human beings are capable of equally valuable contributions to governance**. Another point is that the Principles in Figure 2 are Guiding Principles, and that additional such principles may be required such as Accountability and the separation of powers (judiciary and parliament).

Gill King asked about how to deal with non-participants. On one level, any such choice would need to be respected, but each community would need to establish for themselves precisely how they would deal with this situation.

Gill also stimulated discussion about the mechanics of creating regional governing entities. Is this to be a naturally evolving redistribution of power or something more sudden and radical? How will money and power be taken from State and Federal governments? Is it a matter, as shown by David Holmgren and his permaculture practice, and the Transition Towns movement, of establishing parallel institutions and practices and allowing the central authorities to atrophy? (I think Franzi Poldy might here interject that the central authorities would actively try to discourage such a state from developing and strong resistance would be met). That said, it also may be possible to make our alternative society look so good that the people sent to oppress us may want to join us.

Dierk then introduced a set of humanity related factors, which in essence advised of the necessity for any transition system to work with the genetic and psychological pre-dispositions of humans. However it is also noted that humans are psychologically and socially very adaptable, and will respond dynamically with the societal situation in which they find themselves. Michael Ignatieff and his *The Needs of Strangers* was given as an example demonstrating that humans are capable of identifying as one with other human beings, permitting their personal resources to be used to meet the needs of strangers. Many examples of charity and altruism support this observation.