Spiral Dynamics: a visionary set of values for humanity's sustainable development.

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Abstract

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Wouldn't it be easier that we all agree on the perspective to tackle contemporary problems? That we have clear vision on a future and based on it we choose our stand when confronted by choosing a mindset or reacting to a situation. If for instance, a caravan of thousands of migrants arrives to our country: what is the best perspective? What is the future that we want to create? What is the way of acting with full integrity? And more important, what are the values that guides us? Why are so many people choosing to become vegetarian, buying solar cells for their homes or rain collectors, choosing to use their bicycle over their car? Is it just a trend? Is the level of consciousness really rising in the society? Designers are taking a stand and working actively for proposing ideas into the wicked problems and driving social innovation. As a guild, there should be agreements and a shared heterogenic vision.

Introduction

> Cruelty as entertainment, human sacrifice to indulge superstition, slavery as a labor-saving device, conquest as the mission statement of government, genocide as a means of acquiring real estate, torture and mutilation as routine punishment, the death penalty for misdemeanors and differences of opinion, assassination as the mechanism of political succession, rape as the spoils of war, pogroms as outlets for frustration, homicide as the major form of conflict resolution -all were unexceptionable features of life for most of human history. But, today, they are rare to nonexistent in the West, far less common elsewhere than they used to be, concealed when they do occur, and widely condemned when they are brought to light. (Pinker, 2007)

Following the idea of Harvard evolutionary psychologist, Steven Pinker, one might be able to agree that in our contemporary society is possible to see a wide common vision, perhaps rejecting violence, and conversely finding more diplomatic ways for conflict resolution.

Those times where we needed to sharpen our group skills to hunt mammoths are long gone. We might not understand the mayan ancestors and their human sacrifices but surely we would not repeat those rituals in the main plaza. Bragging about how many people one killed, how many women one raped, and how many kids were enslaved is a difficult thought to even put in this paper. Considering a race better than other one, acknowledging how valuable is the opinion of a woman in a political context, having equal rights, having a kid lecturing about global warming at the United Nations, those are things that just started to happen less than a century ago. And it does not end up there, we are starting to question if it is alright to have a slaughter house where animals are just part of a production line. If their meat is really good for us at all. If borders between countries are really necessary or if the answer lies somewhere else. If capitalism or socialism were really ever the answer or the target should be something else than increase money and production. If the meaning of progress really is industrialization, pavementation, and commercial potential.

Perhaps an ethos of our time is still undefined in the common imaginary. The proposal in these lines is to start to explore a basis for a manifesto. This commonground agreement might serve as a guideline for a zeitgeist in the efforts that designers and in general social innovators or sustainable developers must follow. Consequently, when confronted with the scenario of whether or not to build a train line in Yucatán, developers could agree if the values for sustainable development, or sustainability for all, are truly being met. Of course there will be always room for interpretation and efforts to bend the perspective. As an educator, the value seen in this hypothesis would be the code, a hippocratic oath, that could be shared with design students.

Research Problem

In the scope of working for a sustainable development designers often find themselves confused by the wide range of definitions, methodologies and goals for sustainability. It is known that a sustainable development should not only consider long term cycles of the environment, but also long term impact in a society, and if not financial long term stability, at least resources to keep the proposal running. Therefore, considering environmental, societal, and financial means or resources, are already enough complex situations to consider. As educators, academics seek to consider life-cycles and strategic forecasting of design proposals. Students are given a wide set of tools and methodologies to calculate the impact and measure the value for people, organizations and market. However, each situation needs to be considered individually. The education as designers gives professionals a mindset, the ability to work in a team, a research toolbox and critical thinking, at least until certain level. Educators are agreeing on a more strategic approach to problem solving and holistic thinking. Nevertheless, there is

little discussion about the ethos of the profession. What should we include in hippocratic oath for designers and social innovators?

The research problem digs in evolutionary psychology. In the way that values have been defined throughout time. And from there, how to define values for a truly sustainable future? Rittel and Webber (1973) define the problems that were too complex to solve fast, from a single discipline perspective, and in just short term, as wicked problems. They realize how governments and organizations were struggling to propose solutions. And that these problems needed to be systematically attended with an strategic approach. Moreover, wicked problems cannot be solved within a day, it may take decades to change the tendency, they might never really end but just become under control. Therefore, if they can take half a century to be solved, and in those years human value system changes so much, how to establish a solution that would be valued and appreciated even after 50 years have passed.

Every day the wicked problems become more wicked than ever. Society is confronted by problems that has never been there before. As humanity, we are learning how to live in a connected world consisting in over 7 billion people. How do professionals guide themselves towards a sustainable development of the future? How do they decide between short term benefits, status, gratification, reducing costs, or alternative solutions that does not follow productivity only? This theoretical research aims to address those problems and consider that spiral dynamics not only helps us to define the core values of our era, but allows us to forecast, educate, and transition towards the core values of a better future society.

Theoretical background and contribution

This paper aims to be a conversation starter of the set of values that defines our contemporary era. Based on the work of Ken Wilber, a proposal of the evolution of values for a sustainable human society is analyzed, mostly through the interpretation of Don Beck. This argumentation, along with the work of authors like Dustin DiPerna, Steven Kotler, Peter H. Diamandis, and Yuval Noah Harari, among others, is meant to give basis to an idea of ethical formation, positive (constructive) perspective towards the future, and awareness development as a compass for designers. These authors refer constantly to the works of Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi and Steven Pinker who were also reviewed in order to find the academic basis of their ideas. Kotler mentions that creativity is better seen as establishing new connections with the resources and information that one has. Therefore, the endeavour here is to put the pieces of this puzzle together in order to visualize the direction that human potential can take.

Research Methodology

The UNESCO has been making a proposal for world's sustainable development. This, following a vision of how would a better 2030 look like. The vision has been inspiring millions and educators are running jams and workshops around the subject. Collectively, it is giving clarity to creative management and understanding of the milestones needed in order to achieve each goal. The work of Ken Wilber has been proposing a similar forecast. Analysing the history of

humankind he has been noticing a spiral where we move from individual to collective in a constantly growing awareness. Based on this data, he forecasts a movement towards a conscious collectivity and specific set of values that are built on top of each milestone reached by the travel of human development and DNA information.Basically, the idea is that we are not isolated individuals trapped in a certain time of history, but that we are a collective organism that is passing information forward throughout generations, building on the shoulders of giants. Each level of evolution is in every one of us, it is our responsibility as a generation to integrate the steps or "memes" of this evolution and integrate them.

Integral theory is Ken Wilber's attempt to place a wide diversity of theories and thinkers into one single framework. It is portrayed as a "theory of everything" ("the living Totality of matter, body, mind, soul, and spirit"), trying "to draw together an already existing number of separate paradigms into an interrelated network of approaches that are mutually enriching." Esbjörn-Hargens, S. (2010).

Over the following lines I will describe each one of the personalities included in the Spiral Dynamics theory. This description is based on the work, of Don Beck and Clare Graves. The following lines will be taken from the magazine "What is Enlightenment?" (2002) and the Audio Learning Course given by Don Beck himself on May 3, 2007. In order to start to review them, one should be clear that it is a view of human consciousness evolving throughout time. Since the moment that humans were hunters-gatherers to the contemporary society and beyond, establishing the basis of where the human evolution of consciousness, values, and social organization would lead.

At the very beginning, around 100,000 years ago human started at the Beige level. Beige it's a virtually automatic state of existence, driven by the imperative psychological needs that trigger the very basic survival equipment with which we are born. It is humans simply struggling to survive in environments where there are other animals. Yet we are more sophisticated and seem to have more conceptual skills for bonding into protective clans to preserve what we have and fend off predators. The father in the survival clan eats first because if the strongest dies, the family has no hope. So, the key to Beige is survival using instinctive intelligences, with a more heightened sensory system with which we can see better come here better we can sense things with the hair standing on the back of our neck. Simply staying alive is more highly valued than anything else.

One can find pieces of Beige in straight people who are basically hunter gatherers, who get what they eat where they find it. And also, it's evident in newborn infants, who eat when they are hungry. And some people, when exposed to a catastrophe, may be regressed to Beige. Higher-order priorities suddenly vanished in the midst of personal tragedy, extreme suffering, or deprivation.

The second level of the spiral is Purple. Purple is animistic, tribalistic and mystical. In this world of Purple, we tend to have the first evidence of human bonding the sins of a kindred spirit, that I am someone because I belong to a certain clan or certain tribe.

In this stage a mutation occurred to awaken in the brain the first real ability to assign cause-and-effect. This was the first sense of the metaphysical. In the Beige mind event seems to be scattered, each one on two weeks have come without much predictability. But, for example if the moon is full and the cow dies the purple mind connects the two events one causing the other. So the awakening of the metaphysical system, together with the capacity to work more firmly in a team arrangement occurred in the transition from the dawn people (Beige) to the mystical people (Purple), precipitated by the change in life conditions that occurred in the Ice Age.

The Purple meme is heavily laden with such so-called right brain tendencies as heightened intuition, emotional attachments to places and things, and a mystical sense of cause-and-effect.

The Red zone is the first raw, egocentric self. I am someone. In purple we have become very successful. We had found food, we had to stabilized our lifestyle, we had conquered what we thought were the dragons in our life. Everything was smooth, boring. So many of the youth became disconnected. They saw that there was something about the reason that, rather than being protected, was being contained, limited.

The Red is an elite individual beginning to move away from the bonding element in Purple, which had become overplayed. So what Purple produced, through with success, was the need for strong individuals who are sent to power, who dominate home for example, in a military environment where we don't have the time to vote. What begins to spring free is assertion of raw self, the renegade, the heretic, the barbarian, the Hedonist.

There are both positive and negative expressions to all the names, including Red.
In red, we see how high crime rates, we see all kind of rage and rebellion, but we may also see wonderful spurts of creativity, heroic acts, and ability to break from tradition and chart a whole new pathway. And Red rebellion and impulsiveness could only happen because Purple, through bonding, stabilize things. Also Red was a rebellion against the rituals and sacrifices forced on the youth by the Purple system, In painful rights of passage, for example. Memes are not free floating entities. Red is not better than Purple. It's different. So you have to ask first and foremost what are the life conditions if the life conditions requires you to be strong and self assertive, or to fight your way out of a horrible situation, then the Red meme is the way to be. Red is not an aberration, but a normal part of the human meme repertoire. This perspective is fundamental to Spiral Dynamics: you accept that the memes do not represent a hierarchy of "better," but rather that each can be expressed in a positive and negative way, and that the whole spiral with its assortment of meme codes is inside the person and may be called upon in response to the demands of the change in life conditions. The previous memes are not forgotten

or left behind in the path, they are included and integrated in order to transcend into a collective evolution.

In the Blue, there is a search for a transcendent purpose, a recognition If the importance of order and meaning, a universe controlled by a single higher power. Society could no longer function with the constant presence of Red, which is war-like, gang-like, WarLord like entities, so we have to grow up, to solve the problems created by red success. Here for the first time is the capacity to feel guilt (red feels shame, but not guilt). In the Blue system, people gladly accept authoritarianism and self-sacrifice for the common good.

Blue is designed to handle the threat of Red. But as blue moves away from having to contain the violence in Red, it goes on its lifecycle towards its own healthier version, taking the form of more institutionalized systems, in which righteousness, discipline, accountability, stability, perseverance, and order prevail.

What also seems to occur in the brain is a heightened capacity of obstruction, and that abstraction ability attaches itself to a cause. This is where many of the religions and the "isms" started to appear.

Orange is about advancement, improvement, and progress. Once again you play out the Blue meme to its ultimate. You make it very, very successful. And then what happens, the individual gets restless. "But I am an individual. I want to assert my personal autonomy". "No", Blue says. "You must stay in line and conform to the dictates of the system. Don't you want to go to heaven? don't you want to have a retirement? And Orange says, "Yes, but I think I can produce a heaven on earth. I think I can increase the size of the cake." Thus we had a great enlightenment which is simply the individual spirit breaking free from what had become very restrictive forces. The Orange meme started to appear as individuals striving to help, they invented the scientific method, they opposed the religious dogma, they believe in optimism, in changeability. A belief that we can indeed shape our future. The Orange meme is their free thinker, The mathematician searching for an explanation of the universe, the musician writing his best play, The left side of the brain at it best. As the others expression, The Orange could have a negative influence call me their capacity to engineer things can benefit the consumerism and capitalism over this sustainable development and a responsible use of the environment.

The Green meme is the final level of the Spiral's first tier. At its peak, Green is communitarian, egalitarian, and consensual. Without Orange we wouldn't have Green, because in Orange the inner being was bypassed and ignored. Our science left us numb, without heart and soul, and with only the outer manifestations of success. The so-called "good life" was measured only in materialistic terms. We discovered that we have become alienated from ourselves, as well from others. So Green, this fairly recent memetic code, emerged out of the ages of industry, technology, affluence, and enlightenment, to declare that in all of these undertakings, the basic human being has been neglected. The focus shifts from personal achievement to group and community oriented goals and objectives for green, we are all one human family. Green begins

by making peace with ourselves and then expands to looking at the dissonance and conflicts in society and wanting to make peace there too, addressing the economy gaps and inequities created by Orange, and also a Blue and by Red, to bring peace and brotherhood so we can all share equally. Gender roles are derigidified, glass ceilings opened, affirmative action plans are implemented, and social class distinctions blurred. Spirituality returns as a nondenominational, nonsectarian "unity."

About 30 years ago the researcher Clare Graves started to notice a different pattern in the evolution of the tiers, transcending the previous colors. A growing curiosity about just being alive in the expansive universe. He finally came to the conclusion that something unique was happening and did not appear to be just the next step up from green level. It seemed to be a new category, the Second Tier. For the first time in human history we have photos of the planet taken from the moon, we began to understand the planet itself as a total ecosystem in a way that was never possible. The Yellow meme is the first level of the Second Tier, is years in the future. It is sensing the interconnection of everything. Yellow will have an enhanced vertical perspective with the ability to transcend and include and value what came before, and also to anticipate what will be next. The eight meme code, Turquoise, will rise in conjunction with the seventh, Yellow. They have been described as Yellow: "Left brain with feelings" and Turquoise: "Right brain with data". The Second Tier, through structures and platforms, will combine elements of Yellow and Turquoise in searching for the quality and depth of thinking that can deal with complex problems.

Since Memes are not types of people but forms of adaptive intelligences in people, yellow and turquoise are still under development at this time. Different people possess different fragments, or components, or even versions and this makes the formation of what one could call "creative brain syndicates" with insightful interactions and dialogue even more important. It is going to require some deep dialogue, and it is about to be seen if humans will rise to the occasion.

Results and Analysis

The Second Tier as described by Graves and Beck, is about to be seen in the upcoming generations, probably more clearly in the generation that is currently in formation. It is clearly an interconnected society, that is addressing and sharing quickly the problems of the environment. This generation has been given a world with problems but also a concern about the environment and some tools to start advert it. The characteristics of the memes in the second tier include interconnectivity, ability to work in group, a concern for the environment, they can see problems in a systemic approach, they are more flexible, spontaneous, and understand the nature of change. Not only is possible to notice these characteristics in the current university students, but they are also the abilities and competencies that are being shaped in design professionals, the "Move Fast, Break Things" that Facebook promotes in their employees, the "Flow" state that Google and Apple seek in their creatives, the difficulties that Amazon establishes in their policies for teamworks, like the rule of forbidding to reply with just a "No" to any proposal, instead of that they should always argument and discuss the point. Spiral

dynamics is a way to understand the evolution of human values and intelligence throughout time but also is an opportunity to foresee the better values that society can evolve into. Design formation is by definition a multidisciplinary approach that is taking a stand in this evolution, by specializing in fields like sustainability, social innovation, universal design, distributed economies, transition design, systemic change, living systems, biomimicry, among other examples. It is raising as a methodology that could be used in a wider scope, advising companies and organizations, influencing public policies, enriching the understanding of the urban environment and empowering communities for self- management.

Designers are always working with the future. Projects are rarely for the immediate moment or the past. A desired outcome of this work would be a call for a platform where creatives, designers, cultural agents, an visionary dreamers start to agree on the future that as members of the human race would like to build. The future should not only be forecasted, predicted or prospected, the future should follow the vision that we have as a collective. This platform should be a collective playbook with strategies for development that could direct the efforts of practitioners and educators. A tool for collective imaginary where we start to practise solutions, make mistakes in a controlled environment, prototype social action, and agree on common values that enrich the transition towards a Sustainability for All humanity.

Impacts on Sustainability

How do we inhabit that territory before we live in it?
Sounds like postmodernity, The nightmare of Korzybski, the map *will* become the territory. It is a fact that we are building the world together, constantly, every present minute. What if we learn to prototype reality more efficiently? At least as educators and for foreseeing the possible impacts. Three main perspectives are leading the initiative of this research:

1) The future of sustainability education. Not only in academia but as an available tool for everyone interested in the subject or curious about future planning. The platform should be playful and the learning should become addictive. How are we going to share sustainable development insight to the isolated communities at the distant corners of the world? The most likely solution is: vía apps, mobile access, video games, and youtube channels.

2) Forecasting failure. To quote Sheryl Sandberg's book "Lean In": Fail fast, fail better. Nasa astronauts spends years practising mistakes and possible outcomes when things do not go as expected. This increases resilience when confronted with stressful situations in a harsh environment. If we become failure gurus like the keynote speakers of the "Fuck Up Nights, aka: FUN" we would be able to learn fast and try again. Prototyping solutions in a controlled environment would allow us to review possible failures and find means to avoid them.

3) Open design. A crowdsourced platform that can reach complexity. Understanding complexity as the increase in possible solutions of the variables in a given situation. As a participant, one will not only propose a project and foresee the possible outcome, but will combine it with the ideas of the other participants increasing the possible outcomes of the combination of variables, peer to peer style. A collective exercise of speculative design leaded by and agreement of values that could envision sustainability for all.

Conclusion

The university is the place to start and experiment. Design education should be enforced to propose alternative in ever more complex problems. The epistemological definition of design should be stretched and design methodologies put into a test in different fields. In that sense, academia could become a repository, a collective playbook with strategies for development. Ken Wilber's vision and inspiring work is just an excuse to create a common vision for these strategies to develop further. His work will be enriched along the way, the important factor would be the creation of this roadmap for societal evolution. Designers should include in the user/people understanding more tools to understand what people values more, that would bring means to propose well being. If all you have is a hammer, everything looks like a nail to you, if you just build personas through marketing analysis tools then people will always be your customers and you will only design for profit. The question here is, what if we need to design with another purpose? What if well-being is more important than profit? If we are about to set on foot into a sustainable future it might be a good idea to start to imagine not only how it would look like but also who are ge going to be in that future in order to manifest it.

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