

# Designing Thriving Ecosystems for the Future with Social Architecture

World Future Review

1-9

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## Abstract

A quick review of history shows that the development of more advanced technologies is paralleled by the unfolding of improvements in human intuition, sensitivity, and transpersonal awareness. Having experienced this phenomenon many times already, humanity today stands at the threshold of an integral, holistic age that promises not only technological marvels, but, if we are willing to explore our minds and hearts with similar fervor and dedication, one that will enable us to develop and consciously apply our inner resources to co-create the future and advance toward the emergence of a possible new species: "Homo universalis."

## Keywords

social architecture, stages of social development, human future, natural ecosystem, inner development

Our world evolves toward more freedom, consciousness, and complexity, and this evolution is speeding up. Our survival has always depended on our ability to adapt to emerging conditions of existence. What is new in our history is the scale at which interlocking developments are manifested on a global level never before seen. Humans from all over the world get instantly in contact with a simultaneous acceleration of technological development. Thus, for the first time in the history of *Homo sapiens*, humans are being challenged to adapt all dimensions of their being, that is, on bio-psycho-social and spiritual levels, even as major transformations are taking place in an extremely short period of time: fifty years compared with the hundred thousand years from the Stone Age until the 1960s. This phenomenon has led to gaps in our individual and collective development.

Regarding individual inner development, we can observe that, at least in the first world, cognitive and mental abilities are often more developed than emotional health, biological resilience, or spiritual qualities. This imbalance can produce

health disorders as a consequence of too much technological impact within a too short period of time (pollution, pesticides, chemicals, electro smog, etc.). It also can lead to power abuse, unrestrained greed, and sociopathic behavior when emotional/psychological issues are not resolved. Furthermore, it may induce destruction of human and natural ecosystems through unethical behavior. In that case, we may assume that the levels of consciousness that embody wisdom, empathy, and spiritual awareness are not (yet) accessible to people who act in this way.

In the dimension of interrelatedness, gaps may be observed between various cultural backgrounds with their different values systems and worldviews, each claiming to be true, and struggling to preserve their mind-sets and *modus operandi* and impose these on the others.

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The concurrence of those factors—speeding up, inexorable technical progress, global connectivity, differences in levels of consciousness, cultural diversity, and imbalance in the inner dimensions—requires an urgent leap to a radical new way of thinking and acting to properly address this high complexity and its challenges. This fresh thinking and acting comes along with the emergence of the next level of consciousness in our evolutionary spiral: the integral/holistic worldview.

To manifest this state of being and operate from there in all fields of society, the concept of social architecture offers a helpful frame for creating, designing, recalibrating, and reorganizing human ecosystems in a functional, life-sustaining way first, and then for connecting them adequately to our natural ecosystems. In the following pages, we will introduce some of the core principles and methodologies of social architecture.

## Levels of Consciousness as the Basis for Social Architecture

The study of levels of consciousness and their emergence throughout human history is a valuable compass for understanding where we come from, where we are now, and where we might go. Examining the past 100,000 years of

*Homo sapiens* evolving, let us recognize that the unfolding of evolution follows a design that the theory of Spiral Dynamics<sup>1</sup> precisely describes.

Briefly, what I am proposing is that the psychology of the mature human being is an unfolding, emergent, oscillating, spiraling process marked by progressive subordination of older, lower-order behavior systems to newer, higher-order systems as man's existential problems change.

—Prof. Clare Grave<sup>2</sup>

The Spiral Dynamics integral is a bio-psycho-social map of living human systems that focuses on natural designs and offers wholly new integral solutions that are ecological, systemic, and life-affirming. The eight observed levels of existence reveal the hidden complexity codes that shape human nature, create global diversity, and drive our actions.

Every time our conditions of existence change, new coping systems emerge naturally as adaptive intelligences to best respond to the new challenges and ensure our survival and further evolution. Each level includes and transcends the previous ones so that our capacity for grasping higher complexity increases. The stages alternate between “Self-sacrificing” I and “Self-Expressive” WE levels.

## Some Characteristics of the Eight Stages of Development

### Automatic Existence (BEIGE) “I”



Source. von Musetress (Eigenes Werk) [CC BY-SA 3.0 (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/>)], via Wikimedia Commons.

The immediate satisfaction of basic physiological needs, like shelter, food, water, procreation, build the core code. There is no awareness of distinct self; the human lives in symbiosis with nature in survival bands, equipped with sharpened instincts and innate senses. This level of existence is seldom seen in the present world in its historical collective expression. In our individual development, it corresponds to the first eight months of infancy. As adults, each time we struggle for physical survival facing wars, severe diseases, epidemic, unemployment, or the like, we may regress to this level of consciousness.



Source. Flooding from Typhoon Ondoy (Ketsana), Philippines 2009. Photo-AusAID (10695613325) Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade—[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Flooding\\_from\\_Typhoon\\_Ondoy\\_%28Ketsana%29,\\_Philippines\\_2009\\_Photo-AusAID\\_%2810695613325%29.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Flooding_from_Typhoon_Ondoy_%28Ketsana%29,_Philippines_2009_Photo-AusAID_%2810695613325%29.jpg).

*Animistic, Tribalistic Existence (PURPLE) “WE”*



Source. “Massai-003” by Willy Horsch—own work, scan from original. Licensed under CC BY 2.5 via Wikimedia Commons—<http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Massai-003.jpg#/media/File:Massai-003.jpg>.

At the second subsistence level, people’s need is for safety and belonging. Therefore, humans gather in tribes and live according to many rituals and rites, deeply linked to nature and spirits. Here a form of existence based on folk tradition arises, and being is a mystical phenomenon full of spirits, magic, and superstition with shamans and chieftains we trust. We



Source. “Historisches Oktoberfest 2010 (5033830831)” by digital cat from München, Bavaria-Historisches Oktoberfest 2010. Licensed under CC BY 2.0 via Wikimedia Commons—[http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Historisches\\_Oktoberfest\\_2010\\_\(5033830831\).jpg#/media/File:Historisches\\_Oktoberfest\\_2010\\_\(5033830831\).jpg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Historisches_Oktoberfest_2010_(5033830831).jpg#/media/File:Historisches_Oktoberfest_2010_(5033830831).jpg).

see this level of existence alive in many areas of South America, Africa, Asia, and among native Australians. These are the indigenous intelligences. We link to this level any time we celebrate, experience family bonds, value folklore and native cultures, exchange services, have a sense of belonging to a group, practice rituals, and link to some objects or places that are meaningful to us. The needs of the collective are always in focus, individuals have no right to step aside, as this would be seen as a threat to the safety of the clan.

*Egocentric, Exploitative Existence (RED) “I”*



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At the *egocentric level*, self-assertive individualism and impulsivity come to the fore. On a collective level, this corresponds to the age of exploitive empires, feudal systems, where the self is more powerful than the group, physical force will be arbitrarily imposed on others, and the strong and tough prevail whereas the weak serve. It is about getting space for oneself to enjoy immediate sensory satisfaction without taking other people’s needs or interests into account, nor the long-term consequences of one’s own actions. Morality and guilt are no issues. We go through this significant development stage when we as children and later on as teenagers break free from the family and assert our own identity. We want to express our will claiming spaces for self-expression and heroic actions and to enjoy the feeling of personal power. We seek risky adventures and continually test limits.



Source. “Breakingfree” by Brookie—Own work. Licensed under CC BY-SA 3.0 via Wikimedia Commons—<http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Breakingfree.JPG#/media/File:Breakingfree.JPG>.

## Absolutistic, Moralistic Existence (BLUE) “WE”



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At this level, the quest for meaning and purpose in life is the focus. We yearn to dedicate our life to higher causes and we find satisfaction in serving an ideal or an authority. This authority may be a political system, religious beliefs, or a corporation. We find stability through order, structures, and laws. We perceive that certain rules are prescribed for each class of people and that these rules describe the proper way each class is to behave. We value discipline, obedience, and morality, conforming to a collective and tradition. We recognize that our actions have consequences.



Source. “2june 2007 422” von Utente: Jollyroger-Eigenes Werk. Lizenziert unter CC BY-SA 2.5 über Wikimedia Commons—[http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:2june\\_2007\\_422.jpg#/media/File:2june\\_2007\\_422.jpg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:2june_2007_422.jpg#/media/File:2june_2007_422.jpg).

We are willing to take responsibility, being rewarded or punished according to right or wrong living, and we are susceptible to guilt. This level of consciousness emerged as a necessary one to constrain the ego-dominance of the former red level, enabling humans to become social beings on a larger scale. Here we start building structures and infrastructures, prerequisites for the functioning at the next stage of evolution.

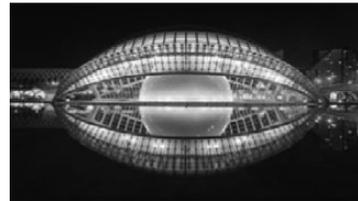
We are willing to take responsibility, being rewarded or punished according to right or wrong living, and we are susceptible to guilt. This level of consciousness emerged as a necessary one to constrain the ego-dominance of the former red level, enabling humans to become social beings on a larger scale. Here we start building structures and infrastructures, prerequisites for the functioning at the next stage of evolution.

## Materialistic, Multiplistic Existence (ORANGE) “I”



Source. “Oersted discovers electromagnetism” von Unbekannt—Illustrerad vetenskap 10/2011. Lizenziert unter Gemeinfrei über Wikimedia Commons—[http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Oersted\\_discovers\\_electromagnetism.jpg#/media/File:Oersted\\_discovers\\_electromagnetism.jpg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Oersted_discovers_electromagnetism.jpg#/media/File:Oersted_discovers_electromagnetism.jpg).

At the *materialistic level*, we strive to conquer the physical world by understanding how it works, and we develop and utilize the objectivistic, positivistic, scientific method. Historically, we see the emergence of this level with the Renaissance and the Enlightenment characterized by the breaking free from the dominance of the church and the booming of sciences. We strive to ensure mate-



Source. “El Hemisférico, Ciudad de las Artes y las Ciencias, Valencia, España, 2014-06-29, DD 71” by Diego Delso. Licensed under CC BY-SA 3.0 via Wikimedia Commons—[http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:El\\_Hemisf%C3%A9rico,\\_Ciudad\\_de\\_las\\_Artes\\_y\\_las\\_Ciencias,\\_Valencia,\\_Espa%C3%B1a,\\_2014-06-29,\\_DD\\_71.JPG#/media/File:El\\_Hemisf%C3%A9rico,\\_Ciudad\\_de\\_las\\_Artes\\_y\\_las\\_Ciencias,\\_Valencia,\\_Espa%C3%B1a,\\_2014-06-29,\\_DD\\_71.JPG](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:El_Hemisf%C3%A9rico,_Ciudad_de_las_Artes_y_las_Ciencias,_Valencia,_Espa%C3%B1a,_2014-06-29,_DD_71.JPG#/media/File:El_Hemisf%C3%A9rico,_Ciudad_de_las_Artes_y_las_Ciencias,_Valencia,_Espa%C3%B1a,_2014-06-29,_DD_71.JPG).

rial satisfaction, improvement and prosperity in this life, and see the world as a place full of opportunities and alternatives. We value autonomy, pragmatism, strategic thinking, and goal-oriented actions, and we are success-driven.

*Sociocentric, Humanistic Existence (GREEN) “WE”*



Source. “Rainbow Gathering Bosnia 2007” by Aljaz Zajc—Own work. Licensed under CC BY-SA 3.0 via Wikimedia Commons—[http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Rainbow\\_Gathering\\_Bosnia\\_2007.JPG#/media/File:Rainbow\\_Gathering\\_Bosnia\\_2007.JPG](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Rainbow_Gathering_Bosnia_2007.JPG#/media/File:Rainbow_Gathering_Bosnia_2007.JPG).

At the *relativistic* level, we become centrally concerned with our inner self and personal evolution and care about interrelatedness, mutual growth with developing awareness for feelings. We are anxious to be accepted and seek harmony, peace, and love for all humanity. We feel that humans are all equal, want to care and share, and we accept and value differences. This level thrives at re-establishing the balance of life, which has been torn asunder by the individualistic and materially focused former level that led to submitting nature to human will without considering the consequences for the planet.

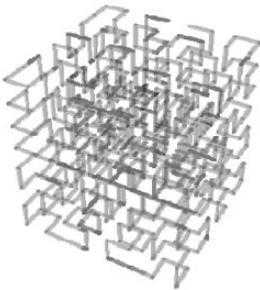
**The Emergence of a New Human Being**

The transition from the first six levels described as “First Tier” to the next ones in “Second Tier” is considered to be a quantum leap in our evolution. Quoting Prof. Graves:

The present moment finds humanity attempting to negotiate the most difficult, but at the same time the most exciting transition the human race has faced to date. It is not merely a transition to a new level of existence but the start of a new “movement” in the symphony of human history.

We are passing the threshold from the state of “Surviving” to the state of “Being.” We will no longer be identified with one single specific value system, in conflict with others. Instead, we can choose a perspective depending on people, context, situation, and value all systems for their unique contributions to human evolution.

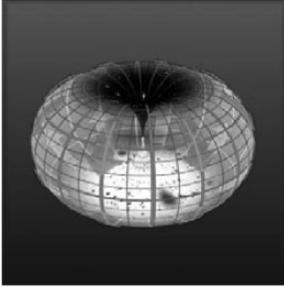
*Integral Existence (YELLOW) “I”*



Source. “Moore3d-step3” by Robert Dickau—Self-made, using Mathematica 6 and much scratch paper. Licensed under CC BY-SA 3.0 via Wikimedia Commons—<http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Moore3d-step3.png#/media/File:Moore3d-step3.png>.

We are now confronted with chaos and high complexity on a global level where the world is in danger of collapse. We realize that neither the materialistic nor the sociocentric worldviews can resolve worldwide challenges. We are able to grasp the meaning of passing to a more complex level of consciousness that values and considers all previous stages and meshes them into a flex-flow, functional, and natural design that befits a living system. We focus on the big picture and align human ecosystems with natural ones, thereby exploring new ways to link freedom with responsibility.

## Holistic Existence (TURQUOISE) “WE”



Source. “Bryan Brandenburg Big Bang Big Bagel Theory Howard Boom” by Bryan Brandenburg—BryanBrandenburg.net. Original Source. Licensed under CC BY-SA 3.0 via Wikimedia Commons—[http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Bryan\\_Brandenburg\\_Big\\_Bang\\_Big\\_Bagel\\_Theory\\_Howard\\_Boom.jpg#/media/File:Bryan\\_Brandenburg\\_Big\\_Bang\\_Big\\_Bagel\\_Theory\\_Howard\\_Boom.jpg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Bryan_Brandenburg_Big_Bang_Big_Bagel_Theory_Howard_Boom.jpg#/media/File:Bryan_Brandenburg_Big_Bang_Big_Bagel_Theory_Howard_Boom.jpg).

### Further Design Principles and Methodologies for Social Architecture

Architects are supposed to have expert knowledge of the building materials they use for construction. They are aware of the unique quality of all materials, their potentials and their limits. They know how to combine them so that they harmonize, reinforce each other, ensure sustainable stability. In the best case, architects also pay attention to choose non-toxic stuffs and to integrate houses and other buildings properly into their natural surroundings. Excellent architects will strive to mesh aesthetic and functional aspects and are often considered to express both arts and engineering in their work.

Social Architects do similar work with people and their resources. We consider the following foci for our designs.

#### *Appreciating Singularity*

We acknowledge each person as being unique with specific talents, capacities, and aversions. According to the conditions of living and the dominant operating values systems of the stakeholders, we get information on their needs and preferred communication and leadership styles,

The knowledge and competence acquired at the previous level will bring us to the level of instantaneous and transpersonal understanding that will help us explore ways for re-ordering life chaos. Planetary concerns rank above national interests and the meaning of common goods come to the fore. We acknowledge the interlocking forces creating dynamics and synergies on all levels, we are aware that any change in one field impacts all other parts of the whole. We are embedded in a cosmic spirituality, where we are each deeply aware of our role as co-creator with Nature and Spirit and are willing to manifest our Essence and Higher Self in union with others to be in service to humanity.

which ways of bonding and relating they value most, which forms of organization and structures they can best cope with, and so on. Besides exploring needs and underlying motivations, we pay attention to the heart’s desires, the calling of people. What do they yearn for? What makes them feel alive? What do they want to contribute to? Doing so, we link the personal and transpersonal dimensions—ego self and essential self—of individuals and invite them to live and express enlarged dimensions of their being.

Social Architects aim to create the conditions for each person to express their highest potential by connecting their being to their natural ways of operating based on their value profiles.

#### *Striving for Unity in Diversity*

In a second step, social architects focus on bringing all stakeholders with their unique gifts and capacities together, and to explore ways of valuing and integrating differences, overcoming conflicts and polarization that may naturally emerge out of “our being different.”

Helpful thereby is the formulation of a higher purpose, an overarching goal that each person will feel deeply connected to. Working out this overarching goal may be compared with the roof truss and pillars that make a

physical structure sturdy, and enclose the space, in which all parts can be linked to each other. When individual purposes are aligned to a collective goal, people will be naturally motivated to achieve this overarching objective, for in doing so, they are simultaneously fulfilling their own heart's desire.

Giving people time and space to elaborate a common vision is crucial to assure the sustainability of the human ecosystem to be created or redesigned. Commitment to this higher purpose will help to maintain confidence in challenging situations where people may feel discouraged and will ask, "why am I doing all this?" Time and space for re-connecting individuals with the vision and re-affirming or modifying it should be offered on a regular basis. Besides, understanding and addressing what is happening below the surface—for example, concerns about the misuse of power, discrimination, and pressure from the outside—are important factors in making unity happen. Mapping the complexity of the system not only helps people develop a shared understanding of problems and fears but also helps them identify opportunities and gather strength. This openness leads to building trust as a basis for further unity.

### *Going beyond Unity to Achieve Synergy*

After people have a clear idea of their personal higher purpose and are aware of their singularity including their needs and abilities, and once they have formulated an overarching goal in alignment with their individual drives and desires, we then pay attention to designing natural synergies that boost co-creation and individualized contributions. We assume that everything we need is present and focus on identifying the potentials of all stakeholders. Social innovation is expressed by unleashing resources, linking and reorganizing them in a way that adds value to the whole system. Synergies are based on the diverse values systems of the stakeholders, each bringing different qualities. The balance between the I/me and the we/our systems should be aimed at.

RED and ORANGE will bring the required creativity, boldness, striving for success as well as the will to take action and result-oriented implementation. On the other side, PURPLE, BLUE, and GREEN will focus on bonding, caring, belonging, mindfulness, structure, sense, and order. Necessary minimal structures, infrastructures, and diverse methods that properly address the different values systems will then be implemented functionally to support and facilitate synergies.

The second Tier levels, YELLOW and TURQUOISE, will take responsibility for maintaining the space for all that is and all that is becoming from a functional and holistic perspective, allowing the highest and healthiest to manifest in each individual, in the collective, in the field of interrelatedness, and in transpersonal dimensions.

Each contributes with their unique talents and capacities, integrating their accessible levels of consciousness, beyond judgment and separation, expressing the joy of feeling truly aligned with one's higher purpose and transcending ego limitations. This state of being fosters conscious evolution.<sup>3</sup> We no longer feel like random passengers on our human journey; instead, we realize that we have a role to play in evolution and recognize ourselves as co-creators with Nature and Spirit. We commit ourselves to co-designing a life-sustaining future that works for all.

### *Linking Human Ecosystems to Natural Ecosystems*

Spiral Dynamics Integral emphasizes the fact that the core value systems emerge as the product of interaction between external conditions of existence and internal complex adaptive intelligences. That is why social architects observe carefully the environmental conditions that are specific to the systems in which people live and work. The conditions in which stakeholders live are directly related to the challenges they face and as result to their dominant existential level. To build a comprehensive understanding of the human ecosystem, we will consider different factors like socio-economic aspects, education,

employment, health conditions, religion, history, safety and security issues, and access to food and water. These aspects are often linked to the natural ecosystem with its geographical specificity like landscapes, natural resources, temperature, lighting conditions, rivers, soils property, humidity, and so on.

Changing the geological character may foster or hinder evolution of people. Irrigating dry regions or drying swampy soils for farming can ensure the satisfaction of bio-physical needs and open up for the next level of complexity. On the contrary, modifying the delicate balance in natural ecosystems through deforestation, for example, can make people regress to previous levels or prevent further development as they must focus on physical survival. Embodying an integral and holistic view means permanently keeping the big picture in mind, and having the ability to zoom in and out, according attention to smaller scales when needed, then getting back to the broader outlook to integrate new aspects, in constant dynamics between all dimensions. We deeply recognize that all existing and becoming ecosystems are intrinsically tied to each other and that each change in one part will impact other elements. That is why transformation and changing issues will always be considered from a long-term and integral perspective. Their implications and consequences will be anticipated in the different sectors of nature and society. We have often experienced how changes that were supposed to bring short-term benefit actually had a devastating impact in the long term. This awareness leads to a high sense of ethical responsibility for the whole and suggests that we should follow designs that serve the individual, the collective, and life itself.

### *Embedding Human and Natural Ecosystems in the Cosmic Field of Energy*

Erwin Laszlo<sup>4</sup> has introduced the idea of the akashic field. He posits that the substance of the cosmos is a field of information. The “quantum vacuum” is the fundamental energy

and information-carrying field that informs not just the current universe but all universes past and present. It is the constant and enduring memory of the universe. Such an informational field can explain why evolution is an informed, not random, process. Teilhard de Chardin<sup>5</sup> described in his theory that after the physiosphere and the biosphere we will see the emergence of the noosphere where the earth will get its collective eyes and humans will be united in spirit. The Internet today actually contains the technological prerequisites for the noosphere. According to these two theories, humans will unconsciously interact with this field, imprinting it in each moment with our thoughts, feelings, and actions. On the basis of these hypotheses, we can choose to ignore this huge transpersonal and transcollective database or to connect to it and use this potential for creating our future. Tapping into the knowledge of this cosmic field requires first to acknowledge it and bring attention to it, then to aim at developing our sensitivity and exploring methods and responsible ways to connect to it, and doing so building new competences. Finally, we will be challenged to define and set frames for using this knowledge wisely, by following high ethical guidelines.

### *The Qualities of the Future Human*

The massive, exponential development of technologies that impact all societal sectors triggers the raising of ambivalent, often passionate feelings: fascination and enthusiasm on one side, and fear, resistance, and condemnation on the other. This central global issue shifts our attention to a future that will be dominated and formed by the potential of technologies that evokes science fiction. At the same time, behind the scenes, we notice the emergence and unfolding of extraordinary abilities in the field of intuition, sensitiveness, and transpersonal awareness that counterbalance the mind’s preoccupation with technology. In alignment to the design of evolution and as our conditions of existence are changing and require news abilities to survive, humanity may actually unfold new sensitive capacities that will boost our intuition and enhance our

potentials beyond what now seems possible. History tells us that this is nothing new. We have already experienced this emergence many times in the history of *Homo sapiens*, developing new aptitudes as our conditions of living changed and required us to adapt. Therefore at the threshold of the integral, holistic age, we can be confident that the tremendous creative force that has been manifesting during our evolutionary journey will care for our further adaption in all dimensions of our being to enable our survival. It is up to us to develop and use consciously all resources for co-creating our future and take the next turn on the spiral toward the emergence of a possible new species: the “Homo universalis.”<sup>6</sup>

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### Notes

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