

Time to Call Our Bluff

An invitation to withdraw our consent from current economic leadership and do what needs to be done

by Peter Merry

bluff, to deceive or seek to deceive by concealment of weakness or show of self-confidence or threats (orig. in poker to conceal poor cards). – **call someone's bluff** to expose or challenge someone's bluff (Chambers Concise Dictionary)

"Words ought to be a little wild, for they are the assault of thoughts upon the unthinking."

J.M. Keynes

The news is filled with stories of nations on the edge of economic collapse, going with a begging bowl to the financial markets, European Union and International Monetary Foundation for billions of dollars of "rescue package". Should the markets or institutions be gracious enough to lend them the money (which must be repaid with significant interest), the countries must introduce a package of "austerity measures" to get their economy "back on track". To please the High Lords of the global economy, funding is cut to public services, people are made unemployed, subsidies for the environment and international development are slashed – all in the name of "getting our economy back on track".

But what are we actually talking about here? Do we need to go along lemming-like with the commands of the current economic priesthood? Or could we start questioning the consensus reality, testing its integrity and authenticity, seeing if the emperor really has any clothes?

Although it may seem and feel like an unthinkable course, it is my belief that if we did choose to withdraw our consent and asked ourselves what we really needed, the world would not fall apart around us, our lifestyles would not plummet to the depths of a depression. The good people of Greece, Ireland, Portugal, Spain and others "in need" would know exactly what they needed to do to ensure that their societies functioned well, people who needed care were cared for, the natural environment on which we depend was looked after properly, and that what we really needed to provide in terms of goods and services was provided in a way that nurtured people and planet. We

have abdicated our responsibility for the running of our household (*economy* from the Greek *oikos*, a house and *nomos*, a law) to people educated in abstract mathematical models that have become increasingly detached from the realities of people's lives. It is time to reclaim that responsibility and break the consensus trance.

Imagine...

Imagine what would happen if instead of going along blindly with the demands of our outdated agreements and concepts of how we should run our households, communities and countries, our leaders were simply to refuse. The people and governments of Ireland, Portugal, Spain and others simply said "No. We don't want your money and we don't want your conditions." Before we go any further, just feel for yourself what that would feel like... When I imagine that, I feel tension first, but then an enormous relaxation and sense of groundedness in my body.

So here we are. We stand in our own power. We have a current situation that by the old paradigm looks like our economy and country are going down the plughole. But what if we were to refuse to judge the beauty of our society, culture and people any more by those criteria? What if we were to look at the real value of the contributions people make in their daily activities, the value that our creativity, dedication and innovation adds to people's well-being and our planet's vitality? What if we were to decide to stop doing stuff that clearly is not aligned with the best of who we are and to start doing things that are truly meaningful and gainful for the demands of our times?

Would this mean the end of our civilisation? Would this mean world war? Would this mean armageddon? Of course not! It would simply mean that we simply do what needs to be done, regardless of the economic rules that most of our current leadership say we should follow (simply because they see no other option). In fact, it is my belief that it is precisely the continued enforcement of our outdated beliefs about economics and society that will plunge us into greater darkness and despair. We just need to accept that times have changed, the solutions and models we created to solve problems of the past don't work any more, we need to let them go, look again at who we are, and start to re-organise.

One step at a time

So, I hear voices crying, where is the big plan? If we don't have a big plan of how to organise everything differently, how can we let go of the old? Well, maybe we don't need a big plan. Maybe we just need to continually connect to reality as it is in the present moment, take decisions that seem workable for the current reality, address new tensions one at a time as they arise, and dynamically steer our way into the future.

In fact, if you study the science of non-linear transitions (and we happen to be in one right now), there is no other way to do it. From the old paradigm that we are still immersed in, even as we sense its demise in every cell of our being, we simply cannot see the future that will emerge out of this transition. The best we can do is stay as close to present reality as possible, keep sensing into the general direction we want to go, listen deeply to what resonates and what creates tension, act to the best of our ability, prototype and learn, while letting go of any attachment to pre-conceived outcomes.

These unstable yet hugely fertile times require a very different approach to organisation and leadership. Do we know how to do this? Yes, small organisations and civil society initiatives have been experimenting with this for years. As is the nature of these kind of transitions, we now need to look to the fringes, where people have broken free of the old consensus reality, find the things that are working, experiment with them ourselves and keep learning – step by small step.

It is much simpler than we think. Our highly intellectual civilisation has created complex models around the basic realities of exchanging value, rooted in ways of seeing the world that believe in a reality of strident individualism, a world made up of lots of separate parts and an over-glorification of the mind and the measurable, at the expense of the heart and the immeasurable. Yet biologists and physicists increasingly describe a reality of interconnectedness, collaboration and mutual care.

Let us let go of all the models and theories that we hold of how people should be organised, look closely at ourselves and those around us, ask ourselves what really needs to be done, and start, one step at a time, to re-organise ourselves in a way that honours the best of what it is to be human, that assumes a fundamental interconnectedness with the rest of life around us and that releases that mysterious spirit inside us we call Life. Can we do it? Of course, it is simply who we are.

Peter Merry is founder and Chair of the Center for Human Emergence (Netherlands) – www.humanemergence.nl, and Director of the new [Hague Center for Global Governance, Innovation and Emergence](#). He is a founding partner of [Engage!](#), a fellow of the [Centre for Human Ecology](#) and a member of the faculty of [Wisdom University](#) Europe.