

# A World Wide Web

(Drawing together a number of factors, September 2010)



## Introduction

Headlines have been dominated by a possible economic recovery for quite some time now. In 2010, it was 'green shoots' that were said to herald recovery. In 2011, the discussion over a U-shaped, W-shaped or V-shaped recovery has been the focus of attention. We are being deluged with statistics from government, research institutes, etc. Each scenario appears to have a sound logic behind it, and as a result of the massive amount of data, they all seem to be underpinned by 'watertight' arguments.

This article brings together a number of factors covered in previous publications and supplements them with a number of new perspectives. In other words: a small contribution to 'data mining' for a better grasp and understanding of the issues, but especially to indicate that the discussion over our future is not only about financial economic data and factors. After all these data are an exponent of thinking in terms of and about the old systems. In our opinion we should primarily consider how we want to organize society. This cognitive process should not be suffocated by a tsunami of data that creates the illusion of control, insight and influence.

## Predicting the future

Discussions on the vast quantity of data and the possible types of recovery are driving burgeoning uncertainty and confusion. Is anyone still able to see the wood for the trees? The key question we should be asking ourselves is whether we are conducting the right discussion. The discussion currently being conducted is based on an economic system that has been around for many decades, and which has functioned well over the course of that time. Though that system appears to have proved its worth, the time may have come to make way for something new. For this reason, gathering data from the old system with the aim of predicting what is to come is a futile exercise. In our book "The Future of a Truly Stable Economic Order"<sup>1</sup> we wrote the following:

*"Man has tried to predict the future since time immemorial. The desire to know what tomorrow will bring is primarily a result of the uncertainty of the present. But experience proves that most predictions fail to be borne out in reality. This is not only the case in the alternative world of the psychic, but also in the everyday world of politics and economics. The key reason that predictions tend to fail is that hope springs eternal in the human breast: we tend to create a biased picture of the outcome we desire."*

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<sup>1</sup> Written by Marieke de Vrij and Jan J.Ph.M. de Dood and published by De Vrije Mare in 2009.

*"Poor predictions are also caused by faulty calculations. Such mistakes are down to a failure to take account of all the separate fragments that make up key elements of the future. This results in unreliable outcomes. The correlations between the fragments are not clear, while the fragments themselves appear to have no intrinsic value when viewed in isolation. Furthermore, this prevents the identification of key features of separate fragments, resulting in them being seen as just generally applicable to the whole picture. Slowly but surely, they are viewed as being roughly equal in value, while they are far from equal in importance."*

*"Predictions are also unreliable as they are often based on (very) old data, though it is not possible for us to appreciate the conditions that inform such data, as we were not there to experience them. We can learn from the frameworks of a given age, but not from the hearth of experience. Such frameworks are therefore no more than a suggestion of how things were and what it felt like to be there. Moreover, every researcher views the past and the future through his or her own slanted vision. One has to be prepared to look beyond one's own self in order to provide accurate and valuable predictions."*

*"In this sense, every age has its own zeitgeist. It is extremely tricky to predict the spirit of an age that is yet to come. A zeitgeist is often recognizable with hindsight, but the barely unidentifiable spirit of a future age is potentially a valuable element in the correlating factors involved in predictions about the future."*

In short: predicting the future is virtually impossible.

### **Greyscale**

As a result of the many crises, global unrest, and the ferocity and scope of the changes, a sort of greyscale zone has been created in which people are trying to find answers beyond the limits of the old system. However, in exploring these greyscale zones, people are clearly trying to find something familiar. This is well-illustrated by the use of abstract language. The subject is shrouded in mist. When people do talk more directly, it is often possible to identify more specifically where their uncertainty can be found. By posing rhetorical questions to try and generate greater clarity one undermines incorrect assumptions and exposes underlying fallacies. It is a greyscale zone.

The reason people operate in this greyscale zone is that they do not want to dig too deep. After all, the consequences are simply overwhelming. Additionally, people suffer from a lack of motivation and drive to operate in clear reference to the consequences. There is a tendency to live too much in the present and participate too little in the future. And people are afraid of facing the possibility that the old system is already past its sell-by date.

We really need to examine new values in order to operate in the way that now appears necessary. He who does not dare to leave the old behind effectively paralyses himself.

Practical examples of this modus operandi are not only found in the financial sector, but also in many other sectors and in politics. The parties present a sort of new policy based on an analysis of the events of the preceding period. But in fact they all offer the same thing, based on the old system, or rather a refined version of the old system.

### **New conduct and new or rejuvenated leaders**

In practice, this means that we need to change our behaviour. But we must also alter our consciousness. What is more, we need new leaders, or at least a new type of leader. Since we have already covered this in detail in our article "*Mens-en tijd*"<sup>2</sup>, we will suffice here with a brief quote about new leaders.

*"In terms of future leadership, the necessary ingredients will have to be expressed very differently than has been the case for the last few decades. This is why the old leaders will not be the new leaders. In practice this means that leaders who were very successful in the past because their ingredients were very effective must a) become very receptive to the new energies and stop referring to what was achieved in the past, allowing the new to arise from within, or b) take a step back, knowing that they have done their bit, and become facilitators of the newcomers. Not by reactivating the old in the new leaders, but by carefully sensing what the newcomers require so they become acutely aware that they now have the chance to effectively communicate the new. And, above all, to have respect for the old learning of the former era. Furthermore, history must record that the methods of the past were functionally effective at that time."*

To arrive at new ways thinking and doing business, we must stop focusing on the vast quantities of data produced, or on the analyses generated using models that are no longer relevant. Rather we must concentrate on the question of how we want to organize society. But what does the ideal society look like? How can we realize it and what should be our own contribution?

### **Pavlov, Maslow and crises**

As indicated in the introduction, the media focus primarily on the economy. We hear about growth statistics, corporate profits and losses, purchasing-power charts, pension deficits and surpluses, etc. Moreover there is a trend towards the prevention of problems like those we have seen over the last few years. This is in effect a sort of 'Pavlovian' response mechanism. Something goes awry somewhere, and having ameliorated the initial acute problems, politicians and other policy makers reach for the usual measures. Committees and working groups are set up, but the conclusions are known before they are published: more legislation and regulation, more supervision and improved codes of conduct with and between the parties involved.

What does not happen, or what we do not see often enough, is an investigation into what actually lies at the root of the problems and crises we are facing. Problems and crises are tackled separately, without considering whether they might be related to other (potential) problems and crises. In short: we are so preoccupied treating symptoms, that we are missing out on the integral connections, even basing our methodology on old, irrelevant data and models. If we want to arrive at genuine solutions, we will have to look at our world and our societies differently.

In "*De zesde crisis*"<sup>3</sup> we indicated that in addition to the five major crises we are supposedly faced with (Water, Food, Energy, Financial/Economic and Climate), there is also a sixth crisis. We called this sixth crisis a crisis of awareness. In this article on the sixth crisis, we indicated that the stated crises were integrally connected.

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<sup>2</sup> "*Mens-en-tijd*" [Time to be human], published in July 2010 at [www.dedood.nu](http://www.dedood.nu), under Blog.

<sup>3</sup> "*De zesde crisis*" [The sixth crisis], published in November 2009, at [www.dedood.nu](http://www.dedood.nu), under Blog.

We established a tentative link with Maslow's pyramid of needs<sup>4</sup>. However, we did not cover specifically the underlying relationship between the crises in the context of the pyramid of needs.

As stated above, we are supposedly facing five major crises. A water crisis, a food crisis, an energy crisis, a financial crisis and a climate crisis. These crises are not only interconnected, but in Maslowian terms there is a sort of hierarchy in their interconnectedness. The sequence in which we have stated the crises was not random. The five crises each represent a level of human development. Water concerns the basis of our existence, the rationale behind all life on earth, and therefore also of humanity. Food relates to growth, individual but also collective. (Is there sufficient food to safeguard the growth of humanity?) Energy stands for creativity and dynamism. Financial is symbolic of structure, and finally Climate stands for systems. After all we are talking here of not only increasingly 'higher' needs in the development of humanity, but also ever greater complexity.

This hierarchy might be seen as reflecting the evolution of mankind. The crisis of awareness we are talking about is thus also the stage at which we are invited to think about the next step in this process of evolution. However, we are not talking this time about a 'small' step within a development cycle / pyramid of needs, but a giant leap (the so-called paradigm shift) to the next development cycle. Or as we stated in May 2010 during a conference over Plan B<sup>5</sup>: we will have to think about factors that will facilitate the shift to Civilization 2.0.

### **Land value(s)**

As stated previously, we need to think about the next step from an integral perspective. It will also be clear that this is a very complex process. Obviously, the question as to "Where to start?" soon arises. Although there could be a number of possible answers to this, in this article we will begin with the pyramid of needs as described in relation to the crises. This means that we should start by thinking about how we want to handle our water and food (in the broadest sense). After all, these factors form the basis of our existence here on earth. The solutions for the other issues and crises at the levels stated above (energy, financial and climate) will largely be realized once we have created a truly sustainable society and practice in terms of water and food systems (a major benefit of an integrated approach).

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<sup>4</sup> According to Maslow, a number of needs must be met before a person can develop as a normal and healthy individual. These needs have a hierarchical relationship. This concept of meeting needs is not only applicable at the individual level, but can also be applied to groups of people and therefore also society at large.

Maslow's theory assumes that one only shifts up to the next level of need when the previous need is met. To operate consistently at a higher level, it is not possible to jump a level. Transitioning to the next level always correlates with a process of awakening (either consciously or subconsciously). If one need has been met, one then asks oneself, what now? How should I organize my life further, which priorities should I now set, etc. Basically we also do this as a society.

The pyramid of needs is really a sort of development cycle. We run through this cycle again and again, but if development is healthy, we experience it each time at a higher level. This creates a positive spiral-shaped cyclical pattern. However, sometimes a blockage arises in the development at a given level. Such a blockage holds us back from advancing to the next level. We then develop a negative energy in the level concerned, and have to take a 'step back' to start afresh the process of constructing a genuine framework for that level.

<sup>5</sup> In 2001, Lester Brown set up the Earth Policy Institute with the goal of making a practical road map to a sustainable future. He focused his research on increasing the coherence between environmental issues and economic and political processes that have gripped the world today. Lester Brown's Plan B focuses on the following major objectives: to curb purported global warming if possible, to combat poverty, slow population growth and restore ecosystems. His starting point is not what is politically feasible, but what is necessary. See also [www.planb.nu](http://www.planb.nu).

To illustrate the above, we have included below a number of texts on land value from the book mentioned earlier, *The Future of a Truly Sustainable Economic Order*<sup>6</sup>. These excerpts suggest that a major part of the problem (and therefore also of the solution) in the financial world finds its genesis in the approach to land, the basis of the water and food systems.

*"The US dollar is still considered the global currency. Its value has become increasingly unstable over the years. Not least because of the process of globalization and the economic rise of countries such as China, South Korea, the Arabic (oil) states and Russia. The future role of the dollar is becoming increasingly a subject of debate."*

*"To show the status of the dollar in all this, we link it to land prices. Throughout history land has always been important, and it remains so today. He who controls the land controls the way in which it is used and what role it plays. The dollar is now considered as a reflection of land values to a much lesser degree than in the past. It is seen much more as the pivot upon which the global economy balances."*

*"Basically, the dollar is a reflection of land values. In recent centuries, the global economy has (almost entirely) revolved around products related to land (farming, water and minerals). If we now consider the dollar's land value, then we see that this value is less easy to assess because the equitable value of land is still related to the products that are extracted from it. However, the economy has changed further in recent years, and many products are no longer related to the land. A large number of products in the economy has nothing to do with the quality of commodities. The rise of the service sector and developments in the IT and internet sector mean that the economy is no longer reflected in land values. Undermining the value of the dollar in the process."*

*"However, now that the global economy is off balance, land values are again becoming essential. After all, it is one of the few things one can always fall back on. In any case, applying land values is an important and historically recognizable method. However, looking at land values, we observe a number of problems. Contaminated ground, mineral scarcities, water supplies that no longer provide pure water and food production carried out in unsustainable ways. Management of the food chain lies in the hands of a few (major national companies and multinationals, but also the political class), with land values surrendered to those who do not govern honestly. That is, one does not yet appreciate that the entire dollar issue — as well as the economics of and within the monetary system — are derived from something which in fact no longer exists in its original form. Namely: the change in land values."*

*"There are many economies/countries that, in order to comply with western criteria, accelerate inappropriate and polluting land use. Furthermore, they have increased water uptake without safeguarding its purity. They have as it were loaded the Earth's ether with waste materials, failing to purify it in time, a shortcoming that has resulted in them suffering under the emissions from their products and the consequences of this for society. China is a good example of this, but is definitely not alone."*

*"What happens is that one demands the last minerals 'at any cost', regardless of the damage caused. And still men in all the world's regions persist in accelerating economic production, eroding the basis of healthy land, pure water and clean air. Eventually this*

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<sup>6</sup> See also [www.dedood.nu](http://www.dedood.nu) under The Future... Transformation of the Financial Order.

*will have major consequences. Add to that the tendency to combat power with might, and we face a situation that is far from wholesome."*

*"The challenge now facing the global economy is to reanimate land values. The soil must be made fertile and ready for building, water must once again be pure and minerals already used must be recycled as far as is possible. To achieve this we require a transitional phase that must be implemented effectively using frugal policies. This reanimation cannot be carried out without adequate effort across the globe."*

### **Profit, loss and solidarity**

In the discussion and dialogue about possible changes in our society, there is often friction between short-term and long-term solutions and effects. This mostly relates to profit and loss in monetary terms, but also in relation to power.

However, in these discussions and dialogues, we must realize that profit and loss really need to be approached from a different level of consciousness. We may have to learn to be more satisfied with having our basic needs met. Everybody will have to face this prospect in the time to come, regardless of global politics. The people and/or countries that do not wish to participate will become increasingly alienated in this context. All we are basically talking about here is integrity and solidarity.

We also see the discussion about profit, loss and solidarity occurring at a certain level in Europe. We see that the situation in Greece, not to mention Spain, Portugal and Ireland, runs from difficult to catastrophic in financial and economic terms. This of course has consequences for Europe as a whole. In this regard, there are various ideas under development as to how inclusive Europe is or is not.

However, people often conflate inclusiveness with shareability, meaning in effect that we seem incapable of sharing our resources. At a more logical level of thinking, we see matters in terms of whether they are profitable or loss-making. We tend to focus on profit calculations, and are unaware of people's need to express themselves within an egalitarian framework and thus to expand our global view. Although in individual terms people fail to convert these values in undiluted form, this really is the nexus of the problem. People desire equality.

Satisfaction is only created when one truly and genuinely perceives that values which may not be profitable, might yet be beneficial. If one seriously takes this to heart, then it becomes easier to understand that we could identify the concepts of 'genuine value' and 'genuinely valuable' better in future. In other words: that which is true in essence and represents sustainable existence.

We need to keep the total perspective in mind and to see the future as the primary focus. And should ask ourselves genuinely what the countries stated above need to ensure harmony with the European Union, what is communitarian in essence and what is needed to create progress on new principles. The current 'problem' countries also have qualities that must be synergized with the 'live' qualities in other countries that are still profitable. If we miss the chance to retain the 'problem' countries, we will eventually miss other great opportunities.

Incidentally, this not only applies at the national and EU levels, but also at an individual level. In India, for instance (but also in other countries), many people live in the most cramped, rough conditions. However, they are often spiritually enlightened. They demonstrate great strength of mind. Despite so much simplicity and humility, they barely perceive how great they are. Why? Because they suffer poverty, food shortages, a lack of decent housing, and so on. If these people are included in the global order and are given greater opportunity to enjoy the ordinary values (economic, financial, etc.), and their

intrinsic enlightenment is given the chance to participate in the global order, then we will see them contributing to the illumination of the whole body of humankind. But since the financial and economic resources are all so unevenly owned (often in the places where spiritual enlightenment might be considered under par), there is a vast imbalance between inner light and outer value. Rebalancing of value systems is seriously overdue. After all, spiritual authenticity is also a value system that is at least as valuable and important as the economic value system.

### **In closing**

Coming back to what we mentioned in the introduction, we could state from a broader perspective that as the world becomes more and more manic, we increasingly lose our moorings. Political leaders are dealing in an excessively hurried way with matters that are of essential importance. This in turn means that the good sense of other third parties involved is given less airtime than it should be given.

In fact this illustrates that people are tired of bearing responsibility, and though they are ready for change, the last step towards the changes needed is difficult to execute. A great deal of fresh understanding is already out there – tried and tested and considered effective, but not yet activated sufficiently.

We will have to be kind-hearted in this process. This does not mean that we need to 'dumb down', but that we must be open to more direct communication, and present our vision more openly and clearly to the outside world. Because kind-heartedness must never mean resignation.

For example, this means that in relation to the current political process in the Netherlands (but also worldwide), those who act out of kind-heartedness will have to associate together to arrive at clear and accessible messages. They must clarify matters for everyone. Not as a vision that agrees with or can be used to form any opinion, but as a proposition that current reporting fails to do justice to the matters at hand in the sense that there are no possible solutions offered for all the live issues in the world. There is plenty of scope for improvement here, enabling the vision to crystallize and be better positioned in the marketplace of ideas. This means that we can no longer rely on the old system of reporting. And when a message is authentically reported, losing nothing of its power and clarity, then people everywhere will be touched by it. This will have a major positive influence on natural human emergence.

We must keep in mind with all this that change takes time. That the deconstruction of the old system and development of the new one cannot take place separately from one another. The old system will have to be given time to let go of certain matters, and the new system requires time to develop other matters. In the transition from old to new, we will have to ensure a clearly defined relationship between the activities of both systems aimed at modernization and sustainability. If we do that properly, we spin a web, a World Wide Web in which we can capture the future.

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