

BUILDING AN EMPTY CENTRED ORGANISATION

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ABSTRACT: *We are in the 21st century trying to resolve problems using forms of association, incorporation and business structures that were pioneered in the 19th century. Not only do these forms of association seem not only to not be capable of resolving our problems, they have become part of the problem. This factsheet shows a different way.*

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THE PROBLEM WITH EXISTING ORGANISATIONS

How do we build organisations that truly work in the 21st Century towards the Great Turning? What kinds of organisation can take on and run truly successful projects, which empower their members, build community and work in service to the Earth? What organisational structures can be so inspiring that it stimulates thousands of new initiatives at all levels of the community? This is the ultimate goal of Dragon Dreaming, as given the social, economic, political and environmental difficulties we are currently facing, only a liberation and unleashing of this creative human potential is strong enough to make the kind of difference we need.

In Dragon Dreaming, it is important to recognise the role existing organisations play in the context of our contemporary problems. Without this context we will make mistakes, blame people inappropriately, and create structures that will not only just not work, but may actually make matters worse, contributing to the problem rather than the solution.

David Korten argues persuasively that a publicly traded, limited liability corporation is a gigantic pool of money, with all of the legal rights but none of the responsibilities in law of an individual person, that is legally required to act as a sociopath. It is governed, he argues, by absentee shareholder owners, and unaccountable managers. It works exclusively for the short-term financial gain of these already wealthy shareholders and managers. In its constant seeking for profits, is in the business of maximising its benefits and minimising its costs, owing no real loyalty to anyone or anything, except for legal contractual obligations established in a market place. One of the best ways of making money on capital invested in such circumstances is to privatise the profits and to externalise and socialise the costs, passing as much of the business costs as possible on to the community, on to future generations or to the non-human environment. Thus corporations ultimately make the fastest profits when they have little or no regard for human or natural consequences. In this way conventional business corporations can be seen as being in the business of converting life energy of people and nature into money. This, if true, is a damning indictment, but given the current crisis in the world economic system, the examples of Monsanto, McDonalds, Halliburton and Exxon, and the collapse of major companies like Enron, and others, it would seem to have a great deal of truth.

It would be easy use these comments to demonise corporations and the people who work in them, but this would be a big mistake. Firstly these corporations have such power and prestige because we let them. Each dollar or Euro spent on purchase made there acts by way of a vote of approval, and through our power in being able to direct our spending according to our preferences, can have a big impact for change, especially if we she this with our own networks

and communicate with the company expressing our reasons for our actions in not supporting their enterprise. It is also important to recognise that every person working in such organisations does so for important and valid reasons, seeking to meet their valid, fundamental human needs. Recognising this can help us build open channels of communication, and can help us identify those people whose sympathies may be more closely in accord with our own. Demonising the organisation as a whole will only alienate and marginalise these people, weakening their power within the organisation to make the kind of difference we would otherwise like to see. The behaviour of the organisation as a whole, castigated by Korten and others, is not the result of a conspiracy theory, but is simply the result of the consequences of the economic rules we have established a long time ago.

For example, Paul Hawken, in “the Ecology of Commerce”, showed that the reason why companies producing goods unsustainably can do so more cheaply than those who produce goods sustainably, do so only because that there is an external “hidden subsidy” in the cost structure, not paid in the costs of production. This cost will ultimately have to be repaid, but it is future generations or the non-human environment that will bear the burden. He shows that if this hidden subsidy could be identified, and that they were fully built into the costing mechanism, then goods produced sustainably would always be cheaper than their counterparts produced unsustainably. Any unsustainable enterprise would then be automatically unprofitable, and would rapidly go out of business. Hawken further showed that even those companies that pride themselves on their social and environmental responsibility, like the Body Shop, or Ben and Jerry’s Icecream, when examined closely are still built upon the same operating principles as the others, and are still damaging the living body of the Earth, albeit to a slower rate and a lesser degree. If we are to create the Great Turning, something else needs to be done.

This explanation should not be considered as a mean of condoning the acts of corporations in the past or the present. The first corporations established on the modern pattern were the Royal Monopolies like the Dutch and English East India Companies. With a license to conduct legalised piracy on the high seas, these companies made enormous profits by exploiting India and Indonesia respectively. At the time the East India Company went into India, the country had a wealthy middle class of merchants and artisans and the quality of Indian cottons and other manufactures was famous. After two centuries the Middle Class had all but disappeared, 95% of the population were reduced to peasantry or landless labourers on tea, opium, cotton and other export estates, and the railways and transport systems were designed to carry cheap raw materials out of the country and import British manufactures in as fast as possible. The destruction of the Indian cotton Industry was a deliberate part of Imperial corporate policy, as it permitted the textile revolution of Lancashire cotton.

Similarly in Indonesia, at the time of the arrival of the Dutch, Indonesians and the people of Holland were roughly the same size. After three centuries of forced deliveries of pepper and other spices, and the extraction of the profits to Holland, by 1947 the height of the average Dutch person had significantly increased, while that of the average Javanese had fallen.

When Adam Smith wrote his textbook on Capitalism, "An Inquiry into the Wealth of Nations", it was argued that a "Law of Natural Advantage" made specialisation of trade to be of benefit to all countries involved. The case was put that by Portugal specialising in wine production, the West Indies specialising in sugar production and Britain specialising in manufactures, all would benefit. What Smith did not say was that the sugar production in the Indies was carried out on the backs of black slaves, captured in Africa. Tribal chiefs, anxious that their people avoid slavery themselves were keen to buy European guns, and in return to pay for the costs of these imports, they had to provide the first "factories" operating along their coasts, with slaves captured from their neighbours. The profits made were huge, on each leg of the voyage of this triangular trade, and they were repatriated to England. The Duke of Devonshire, one of the chief slave traders, invested his profits in canal building, which began the British industrial revolution and saw "factories" employing women and children for long hours, in unsanitary unsafe conditions, for very little return. Even the Anglican church was involved in this inhumane traffic.

As Immanuel Wallerstein, Andre Gundersen Frank and "World Systems Theory" shows, the "underdevelopment" we see today in so-called "Third World" countries developed as a result of these arrangements. The gap between rich and poor nations we see today was not only that the rich improved themselves just by their own efforts, but that this improvement was made possible by systemic worsening the conditions of those living elsewhere. US wealth developed, for instance, through the destruction and killing of tens or even hundreds of thousands of Native Indians. The divergence in the "World Development Field" between rich and poor nations, that in 2000 was on average at 90:1 by 2000, was only 54:1 in 1950, and in 1850 was only 12:1. As the rich got richer, the quality of life of the poorer, worldwide, has worsened. Even in the case of Portugal, the other example used by early economists in their fallacious arguments, the terms of trade of Portuguese wines, particularly Port, Madeira and Sherry, often under English owned vineyards and importing businesses, were organised that the price of such exports fell in value whilst "hidden subsidies" of the type spoken of above, saw the prices for manufactured goods constantly rise. The Portuguese economy stagnated, whilst Britain prospered. Such unequal balance of trade is preserved in tariff arrangements between Third World and so called "Developed Nations" by the World Trade Organisation to this day.

In our economy there has always been a problem in the way in which such profits are calculated. First of all, it is important to separate the "profit" from the legitimate cost of production, taken by the owner of a small business in return for the work he has done in

establishing his enterprise. But often there is an extra “surplus” to this income, confused with the return on the owner’s labour. In a totally free market based upon perfect competition, there should be no profits at all! Anyone making a profit would be priced out of business by another new producer who was prepared to take a smaller profit, and so on, until the rate of profit fell to zero, and the price of a good merely reflected its costs of production. But this rarely happens. Profits made in Industry, therefore are really a kind of monopoly payment, caused by the fact that the market never is, and under present conditions, never can be “free”. Profits are a kind of non-reciprocated benefit, in which there is more taken than is given, an imbalance that prevents a sustainable economic system from ever developing. Markets cannot be free, as we have seen, because most potential consumers, the future generations, are constantly outside the market place, and their preferences are never considered in production or market decisions. As the Dutch and English East India Companies, and the slave traders knew, profits were only made when the goods traded were not set at a truly reciprocal price, and one party was in a weak or dependent position in the transaction and was exploited by the other.

And what has changed? Today, when the average wage for a Chinese worker is 0.50c an hour, and that of a German worker is \$45.00, where do you think the bulk of German Manufacturing Industry (or US or Australian, for that matter) is going to seek to locate? We have witnessed an extraordinary period as a result in which the Chinese economy has been growing at over 10% per year, doubling in size every 7 years, and the export of Chinese manufactures to the USA has only been funded by credit and speculative bubbles created within the US economy that have now all burst. This now threatens the sustainability of the whole world economy. The Great Turning demands another form of organisation, and Dragon Dreaming is built upon these alternative structures, and is building them into its projects.

Joanna Macy in her book “The Dharma of Natural Systems”, has explained how the search for the nature of reality in ancient pre-Socratic Greek thought polarised between two different views, that of Parmenides and that of Heraclitus. The aristocratic and rather misanthropic Heraclitus argued that everything was always in a state of flux, and the only permanence in the universe is that everything is impermanent. Everything flows, or “Panta rhea”, he declared. As a result everything was both coming into being and dissolving and strife and contention were normal consequences in the order of things. Unlike the Buddha, whose acceptance of this view was motivated by his compassionate search for the origins of suffering, Heraclitus seemed to accept suffering was a normal part of things – in later times as a result he was known as the weeping philosopher.

Parmenides, was afraid of the revolutionary chaos, and the challenge to authority that could result from the model of Heraclitus. He believed in “eternal truths” and that which is real endures and the flux observed in nature is by way of an illusion, created by our senses. Drawing

upon the grammatical construction of things, all that “is” proposes the existence of things, and since nothing can come from nothing, reality is therefore ultimately unchanging. Reason alone gives us access to this reality, the senses create confusion and deception.

The Aristocratic Plato, in his philosophy, attempted to join these two philosophies together by proposing that the ideal of an object is unchanging, though its form, only a shadow on the wall of the cave of our perception, is constantly capable of change and flux. This view, the basis of the Neoplatonists ideology that the ideal realm was the mind or logos (word) of God, was incorporated into Christianity by Saint Augustine, and has influenced our thinking ever since. This “concrete” nature of things however, implies a structure of power that has led to the problems with organisations above. In a concrete objective view of reality, an object has “power” if it can influence the behaviour of another object, whilst the influence of that object can somehow be reduced or curtailed. This invulnerability, whilst being able to exert “power over” creates a hierarchical view in which the power of one object is superior to that of other objects, because it can push the others around, but not be pushed in return. In Aristotelian philosophy, the unmoved mover was the creator. Linked together in the Medieval world view this created a hierarchy of a “Great Chain of Being” with God, in heaven, at the top surrounded by his angels and archangels, mirrored on Earth with the Saints, the Pope and the Clergy, Rulers and the nobility, with power over the commoners, and peasants, controlling tame animals, and at the bottom was the wilderness, inhabited by demons, and under the Earth we have Hell, the abode of Satan.

This concept of “power over” that we find at the heart of every corporation and organisation, was accepted uncritically by Newtonian physics, and was incorporated uncritically into modern politics and economics. It is found in modern medicine too. Our “brain” is considered more important than our “body” because it is considered it holds our mind and thus our soul, which is closest to the divine. The body is considered “physical” and merely material and not a “spiritual” realm, situated on the Earth, often considered the realm of dirt and decay. We still speak of “the head” of an organisation, or the “body” of its members and we speak of those we employ as “hired hands”. In the modern secular view, Scientific and Technological Progress has displaced the divinity, but now it is the Transnational Corporations with their shareholders, boards and management, that have replaced the church organisations. Governments and their bureaucracies have replaced aristocratic rulers and nobles, citizens, customers and clients have replaced commoners, the workers have replaced the peasantry, and at the bottom we have the unemployed, raw materials, and at the bottom terrorists, waste and pollution. Rates of pay and remuneration, working conditions, status and rewards all follow this hierarchical top-down system. We are here working uncritically with the same ancient model, updated for modern circumstances.

Understanding the background to this history is important in Dragon Dreaming. This information on the divergence and polarisation of the World Development Field that has occurred as a result within the world socio-economic and political system over the last 400 years is thus the ultimate manifestation of a millennial logic, designed to maintain civilised human power and control over a chaotic living system. Realising this can and does have a huge and empowering effect for people hearing this story for the first time. It also can help us clarify what is needed in order to steer ourselves properly to where we want to go. One person at a Dragon Dreaming workshop when these organisational details were outlined for the first time, expressed a huge sigh of relief. "Oh!" she said, "This disempowering system has been in operation for a long time, for centuries. It hasn't just happened within my lifetime!" By setting it into a proper historical context, she no longer felt guilty or to blame in any way for what she saw as the destruction of our world, and realised it was the consequences of the specific rules of the system that we have been building for centuries, if not millennia. It gave her a freedom to realise that if she adopted other rules it would produce other consequences, and opened up a space by which she could implement personal changes to these rules within her own life and projects.

How then do we build an alternative corporate model? We do it by firstly recognising that this mechanical "power-over" model is antithetical to life. The never-ending accumulation and growth of profits is ultimately cancerous and will kill any host ecosystem in which it has hatched, unless brought into stability with the maintenance of the living processes of the Earth. At the same time, by using a Living Systems Model for a new kind of organisation we can see that different outcomes can be achieved, if we adopt different rules. In a living system, the greatest energy flow is always located closest to the membrane, the boundary, the periphery of the living system. The centre of the cell, the nucleus, is where the energy is intentionally kept lowest, as excessive energy here would result in damage to the DNA information which created the organism in the first place. As the model of the "Empty Centred Organisation" shows, by keeping the energy at the periphery, and by having nothing at the centre of the organisation except a set of agreed principles, maximises the possibility of creativity and innovation, what has been called "competition" – the integration of cooperation and competition, can be achieved.

The alternative to the Hierarchic Principle of power over, a power which is ultimately based upon the power to destroy, is the Partnership Principle of "power with" or "power through", a very different principle, ultimately based upon the power to create. Drawing on the Buddhist Principle of Interdependent Co-arising, a humanised revision of Heraclitus' flux, Macy argues that the models of the whirlwind or vortex, of the candle flame or the neural net, offer better organisational principles than the static top-down, centre-peripheral pyramidal structures of conventional organisations. In both the candle flame and the whirlwind, the energy is highest at the periphery, not at the centre. In fact the centre of a candle flame, when compared to the

brightness at its edge, is comparatively dark and cool. In a hurricane, the eye of the hurricane is completely calm, and has the lowest pressure, whilst gale force winds spiral around its periphery. The energies are fed from the outside inwards, rather than the other way around. In both, as with the latest theories of epigenetics in biology, it is the contact with the larger environment, which calls both flames and hurricanes into existence. In biology, it is the larger environment which turns on and off particular genes, causing one cell to develop as a liver or another to develop as a heart. In both cases, it is engagement and exchange of energies with the larger environment which leads to the maintenance of the candle or the hurricane, or for that matter, the living cells of our bodies too. These principles are carried to the pinnacle of organisations in the living neural networks of the human brain. An organ comprising just 2% of our weight, it nevertheless consumes 20% of our living energy. Fluctuations in this amount can cause illness or death. Between any two cells there are multiple pathway connections, and thus like in a heterarchy. Multiple redundancy is built into the system, giving it a robustness and an ability to operate through network power rather than hierarchical “power over”. The miracle of human consciousness is an “higher” tier emergent property, in which the whole becomes greater than the sum of the parts.

Incorporating these principles in Dragon Dreaming projects, for example, has led us to a first principle that no profits are ever made. All projects try to cover all of their costs, including, where possible providing a fair liveable return on work done that is not freely and voluntarily given. The rate of this return is set equably through agreement with all who carry the risk, at a figure considered to be fair by all parties. In this way we can build a system in which the huge gap between managers and workers is avoided. At the completion of a project, if there is a small surplus made (and this is usually the case), the agreement is that this surplus is not split up as a bonus or unearned income to the people who developed or worked in the project. Rather the group comes together to decide which other Gaia project they would like to donate this surplus towards.

This has an amazing effect. Gathering sufficient funds for the start of any project is often a difficult and time consuming task. It is an important way of testing the validity of your project’s strategy, as if it is impossible to get the money you need, it is clearly a case that there is something wrong that is blocking your project at this stage. An unsolicited donation to your project, given freely and without strings attached, can be a powerful morale builder at what otherwise could easily be a very difficult time. By re-balancing this difference, we ensure that the reciprocity of giving and taking is maintained.

For example, in one project, a group of 9 people, wishing to have an experience of the nature of an authentic community, over 10 weeks came together to organise a “Community Building Long Weekend”, which brought 128 people together for three days. Despite budgeting to just cover costs, the project made an embarrassingly large surplus. At the last gathering, half of this

surplus was donated to another project that was struggling to save the last Old Growth native forests of Western Australia from the woodchipping industry, but there was still a large amount of money left. At the last gathering the 128 people were gathered in a circle and the organisers explained that they were aware that many people on low income had spent considerably to get the resources to come to such a weekend. They placed all the surplus money into a hat and said that anyone could help themselves as much as they felt they needed to cover the expenses of getting home and living over the next week. The hat was passed around the circle and people were free to take the lot.

When the hat came back after having been passed around the circle, and people had taken what money they needed, the organisers were astounded to find that there was more money in the hat than when it started! A number of people, touched by the generosity of the organisers, had in fact added money to the hat. This real story reminds me of a certain famous man, nearly 2,000 years ago, who when gathering a huge group of people for such a time, fed everyone with two small loaves and three fishes, and at the end had baskets of food left over. In fact, with the money that finally returned in the basket, a further seven projects Community Building received a start up grant over the next three years. Such magic can happen by this means.

THE SITUATION OF THE GAIA FOUNDATION

In the early 1960s, the Bank of America realised it had a huge problem. Bank Americard, the first Credit Card was facing a huge backlog of credit clearances, and it was not sure if it was still economically solvent. In panic, a small working party was established under the Chairmanship of Dee Hock, and through his work he realised that the anarchy witnessed in the system, was the result of its hierarchical nature. As a result his work led to the creation of Visacard, as an organisation that was not owned by shareholders, but was a service organisation owned equally by each participating bank or credit organisation. Linked together by protocols of communication, and a common set of performance indicators, Visacard until recently was a good example of an empty centred organisation. Later, at the Sante Fe Institute, the major research organisation on Chaos and Complexity Theory, Hock spoke of the nature of what he called a Chaordic Organisation, an organisation that is not hierarchical, nor anarchic, but which has the properties of both chaos and order combined in a harmonious and innovative manner. Paralleling the structures found in evolving living systems, a chaordic system has the characteristic that it encourages holarchic, panarchic and heterarchic forms of organisation.

A *Holarchy*, derived from Arthur Koestler's term, holon, is an emergent system comprised of elements that can in turn be considered systems in their own right. Holons tend to emerge from the bottom up, as distinct from hierarchies that emerge from the top down. Complexity in a

holarchy emerges when a critical mass of elements are brought into relationship so a new structure can emerge, servicing and reordering these elements.

A *Panarchy* is a system described by Lance Gunderson and C. S. Holling in their book of the same name that hangs together as a result of the interaction of its potential, its complexity and resilience. Panarchic systems are ordered systems of information flow which exist as a result of a constant throughput of energy, and thus are prone to sudden changes at critical thresholds as a result of continuing changes in energy flow.

A *Heterarchy* is a system in which there are multiple connections of overlap, multiplicity, mixed ascendancy and redundancy, in which systems of power and authority flow and change rapidly, and that an element in a relationship may have the power to make decisions about the allocation of resources in one minute, in one context, but may be subject to the decisions made by others in another context.

In corporate organisational terms for Holarchies, Panarchies and Heterarchies, the elements may be people, or organisations. But according to living systems theory they may equally be functional tasks and activities in a living ecosystem, horizontal gene transfer between bacteria, or even the flow of information – memes – in a culture. Dragon Dreaming is based solidly upon these principles.

We discovered how to put these principles into operation in Western Australia as a result of the experience of the Gaia Foundation. Within the global economic framework, in Western Australian law, incorporation of an organisation is intended to protect the people involved through giving limited liability for debts incurred in engaging in business. This means, that if the project makes a loss, people are protected against a total loss incurred by the enterprise. In order to register for being eligible for receiving any government grants, all not for profit organisations now have to be incorporated. But as David Korten and Dee Hock show, these kinds of organisations, built upon organisational models in the 1860s, have built in problems that make for difficulties in the 21st century. Built on hierarchical structures of power, members of an organisation are supposed to elect an executive committee to rule over the “body” of the organisation. The “head” of the organisation is then considered to be answerable to the Executive Board. The separation between Managers and Workers that is thereby established is a huge cost that is rarely considered in these arrangements. The constitution, which governs organisation is set up as a legal document, and takes great effort and significant expense to modify. Ultimately, as in situations of rapid change like those we experience today, the constitution is often obsolete from the day it was created. As a result, close examination of most organisations show that they rarely if ever operate purely according to the ways spelt out in their constitution. In fact, what keeps a modern not for profit organisation intact is not its constitution, but the invisible network of relationships that operates within and without the

organisation. Examination of many organisations showed us that not-for-profit organisations, by their very structure, have just created two groups of people who can blame each other when things go wrong. Dragon Dreaming, rather than building its projects according to an obsolete constitution, aims to build it on the living networks that exist behind the formal structure of an organisation.

When things go wrong, and they often do in conventional structures, the workers and members blame the executive for not performing their functions as they are required to do, and the executive blames the members for not getting involved, or the workers for not being prepared to work harder for fewer rewards. This win-lose struggle with lose-lose outcomes is being played out currently on a massive scale with the contemporary world economic crisis. In fact, what we see here is just another example of two zero sum win-lose games being played out, and ultimately producing a lose-lose negative sum outcome for everyone. It means that only a win-win game is now sustainable, even in the immediate, let alone the long term view.

Also in a conventional top-down, centre-periphery, power-over, not for profit organization, the struggle to find new board members is unceasing and ongoing, and consumes a great deal of energy that could be spent elsewhere. In the not for profit sector, where executive boards are comprised of volunteer members, sucking of energy from the periphery to the centralized structure means that the workload, and financial and legal responsibilities of those at the centre of the organisation are so burdensome, that members of the executive eventually suffer burnout and “new blood” is constantly required.

The Gaia Foundation of Western Australia, when it started, was typical of such organisations. After half a dozen meetings we had established a draft constitution, but for some reason we never took the next step and legally incorporated. The members of the Foundation were more interested in project work, which is where all their energy went. And this was the arrangement from 1987 until 1993. Early in that year one of our members conceived of the idea of acquiring an old house in an inner city suburb which could be established as a meeting space, with a Permaculture garden, a Library, and a small bookshop. Independently a member decided to donate a house to the Foundation which had all of these characteristics, with two conditions.

Firstly, the house was never to be sold. Private ownership of land was an anathema to this person and he wished that the house would be in perpetuity taken off the speculative real estate market.

Secondly, a means had to be found to pay out his partner for her half-ownership of the property.

Immediately this happened, all hell broke loose. Members of the Foundation were suspicious of his act of generosity and suspected some form of foul play. They wanted official inspections of

the property and grounds, and a legally binding agreement. Meanwhile the person donating the property was awaiting a settlement. A meeting called to solve the problem finished with most of the people present leaving the organisation. But it was an essential development as the effects were very positive. With the house now a Gaia property, two meetings were called upon to create the constitution that could take legal ownership, and groups of 70 people gathered to work over two weekends. The conclusion was one that Dee Hock, founder of Visacard would have approved. It was recognised that of its very nature the Gaia Foundation could not be incorporated.

The core of the Gaia Foundation is an agreed set of principles that all who get involved understand. These three principles are simple, yet profound, and are articulated in every Gaia Project. Secondly it was recognised that the Gaia Foundation had no executive centre, no core, other than these principles around which all projects revolve.

The organisation of the Gaia Foundation is wholly determined by its projects. Everything it does is organised as a separate autonomous project, and there is nothing that is not done as a project. Each project has a team of people involved in conducting or maintaining the project, and is deeply Sociocratic, where decisions are made by the “socios”, a group of people who have deep relationship with each other. Decisions are based upon consensus of this group of individuals, in a principle of equality, not of one person one vote, but in terms of the power, and responsibility, of an individual who can block consent on any matter. Each project continues until completion, or in the case on ongoing projects, until the energy required to sustain that project is depleted, and the team members disperse to engage in activities elsewhere. Like with Sociocratic circles, each Gaia Project has its own goals and the responsibility to execute, measure, and control its own processes

There are, however, some projects that are sustained for long periods of time. One of these is the Gaia Foundation website, which acts as a vehicle for communication between the general public and the foundation. A second is the Gaia Foundation’s list server, which acts as a networking medium between those who consider themselves members of the Foundation, through a commitment to the three principles. A third is the Project Support Project, which is a project which whilst undertaking few projects of its own, but aims to support other projects undertaken by members with advice, information, training and support.

These are considered to be “second tier projects”, projects that are sustained in a Holarchic fashion as a result of crossing a threshold having an existence once a critical mass of first order projects have been reached. In the case of the Gaia Foundation in Western Australia, this tended to happen naturally when the Foundation was engaged in a critical mass of about 6 other projects, and with about 35-40 people involved. Like with the Sociocratic naasthoger (next higher) circles, such second tier projects have no power to impose anything on the

projects. Projects in fact contact such second tier projects, like the Project Support Project, for their assistance. Unlike the Sociocratic model, however, there is a freedom associated with this affiliation. Projects are free to associate or disassociate with the Project Support Project as they wish, without the obligations found in Sociocracy.

Remember in Dragon Dreaming the four quadrants revolve around the centre. At the centre what is that? The centre of the Dragon Dreaming wheel is an empty centre, a place of creation and of dissolution. It is neither Dreaming, nor Planning, not Doing nor Celebration, but in some way is the integration, the climax and apotheosis of all four. The Centre represents the place from which life (and the Dreaming) starts, and the place, were at the end of things the Celebration returns to that point of stillness. The centre is the place from which one can not distinguish self from other, or thinking from action. It is the emptiness for a reason. It is the nothing.

Amongst the Muslim Sufi tradition, the quest for the beloved led to a mystical contemplation of the "nothing which is the everything" and the "everything which is the nothing". There is even a deeper "nothing which is nothing" as well as an "everything that is everything". Getting beyond all categories gives us contact with the divine. Holding these ideas in the mind simultaneously creates the paradox of all paradoxes, the pattern behind all patterns, the pattern which connects of Dragon Dreaming.

Remember, Dragon Dreaming is a double helix, not one. It is a spiralling into the centre and out from the centre simultaneously. It is the dance of the nothing that creates the everything - we call this "The Big Bang". And it is the everything that with the passage of time will become the nothing once again, we call it the "Heat Death of the Universe". We exist between these two great mysteries, similar in some way to the mystery in this our own lifetime, between birth and death. All we can do is journey from one to the other, building the bridge as we travel. This bridge, between start and finish, birth and death, creation of time and space and the end of time and space, between night and sleep and day and wakefulness, marks us and our lives.