

## Proposed post symposium blog post

A few weeks have passed since the Laszlo Institute's Symposium on finding a new paradigm in politics, and many insights delivered from the many contributors have had some time to settle, become comfortable and to reach out and seek unexpected connections with each other. Though many trends from the personal to the technological were explored, one trend above all seemed to be mirrored by all, in one way or another. The need and desire to move towards a distributed networked-based society, away from the clunky organisation and nation-based operating system that has tried to make sense and manage a world that it is ill-equipped to make sense of, let alone manage.

Complex monoliths such as states suffer from effective feedback loops and are too slow to react even when they have reliable data, such as the ample evidence of environmental degradation. Private monoliths are swifter in taking action, but their bottom line is rarely if ever influenced by the long term survival of the species as the horizon is commonly the next quarterly earnings report and the necessity to demonstrate secure profits to shareholders.

Fortunately, it seems clear to me that we are moving towards a more network-based society. In part based on now relatively tried and tested technology, such as the various communication channels that have manifested across the world wide web, making such online symposiums as ours a few weeks back possible. In part, the natural evolution in the wake of such newly borns as blockchain and similar distributed ledger technologies that are set to take on more and more tasks previously only manageable by large, central and well-funded entities.

The old behemoths, states and large private corporations will no doubt do what they can to slow this process down for reasons of revenue and maintained control, but Pandora's box has been opened and there is no way the technology is going to be squeezed back in. Such is the defining nature of such boxes, once out, forever out. I am by no means an enemy of the state as a concept, or at least not states based on deep, permeating democratic practices (in as much as such entities exist today) rather than states captured by powerful special interests and bureaucratic machinery incentivised towards perpetual growth. But I do not see long term solutions arising even from the most democratic versions of these structures. Perhaps if we had another century to gradually move these behemoths towards real sustainability, but time, as should be amply clear to everyone, is not on our side as is.

My inkling concern, however, is that we conceptualise these future democratic, autonomous networks with a similar frame of mind. As more dynamic entities than traditional monolithic, and culturally speaking mono-cropping, entities, but large, single entities nonetheless. Single entities that retain a small but still hierarchical leadership layer, gatekeepers as it were, who must be politically appeased if one network is to combine with another.

Pretty much everyone I know in the network space has put a lot of time, thought, passion and other forms of energy into their network and will not want to compromise their vision or have

their members migrate to another network where they have less influence. This is not a bad thing, it is a human thing. I think this is partly based on tribalism, on wanting people to join our project, our team, our structure where we have a well-defined role that is personally beneficial but also based on the conceptual notion of the traditional organisation as a single entity with defined parameters.

We are so used to thinking about organisations and organisms alike as single beings that we forget that they are also the sum and synergy of their parts. The many humans performing various tasks in the organisation and the many trillions of cells in our body diligently doing their thing so we can breathe and walk and write blog posts about the bigger picture of it all.

If we take a step back and examine this network with this more granular perspective, a new possibility presents itself, a new concept of self-organisation, a new type of culture. When we look at the network not as a the thing but look at the smallest component of the network, the indivisible atoms, we find the individual. The conscious part of the unconscious whole.

Decentralisation, a strong theme of at least the first day of the symposium, means empowering the individual, all individuals, to join or create networks in order to deal with the issues that are burning in their hearts and minds. Decentralisation and democracy alike are based entirely on the validity of individual choice, after all.

This is not meant to endorse the theme of radical individualism, which one might argue is one of the narratives underlying our current story, but rather to acknowledge the individual as the atom but the community, the group taking action together, as the molecule. And molecules are where the magic of life and evolution happens.

So, to return to a new paradigm of politics, it seems any paradigm with the ambition to survive and eventually thrive would need to build on this. Would need to work on this atomic level, bringing all the disparate atoms together into one might species-wide molecule. To give individuals the tools to join each other in order to achieve common goals, and to see where this leads. Certainly, tools create culture, so there is plenty of opportunity to nudge the process on one direction or another, but it must evolve on its own.

The key to networking the networks, in my mind, is thus not through negotiating common ground between networks with compatible objectives, but through supporting the individual connections that are the basis of all networking. The network, inasmuch as it is an entity, is the synergetic sum of the individuals it consists of and has only the vibrancy that its members bring through their activity.

We have almost arrived at the point in our technological evolution where states and organisations will no longer by necessity be required to ratify and monitor agreements as such commitment will be possible to make on both local and individual levels. In theory, at least, it will not be technically necessary to maintain much of the political structures that kept the global peace, or at least assisted in avoided global conflicts leading to the destruction of our civilisation

since the second world war. This is quite fortunate as this governance structure so far has proven woefully incapable of delivering the protection of nature, broad human rights, a more sustainable distribution of resources and other crucial features if we are to survive and thrive as a species, a paradigm shift is clearly needed. A new and far more powerful path is opening up thanks to the rapid development of information technology.

With the advent of the age of connectivity through smartphones, blockchains, AI and much more, it is becoming possible for us as individuals to vote directly or through liquid democracy systems of signalling and delegation on issues that traditionally needed to be discussed by the United Nations. We could, as individuals, ratify the agreements we deem good and just and use the technology literally at our fingertips to make sure that we, as consumers, live up to the standards we have set for ourselves.

I think the next huge shift for democracy will manifest through conscious consumption as it becomes apparent that every purchase, every financial choice we make is a clear vote on what kind of a world we want to live in, what kind of environment we will pass along to our grandchildren. A vote that unlike most democratic voting today actually has direct and intended consequences. Such actions, tied to our values and goals, will give us a sense of agency, and the receipt that we have exercised that agency, in a way the old political structures could never attain by their very nature.

What we need for this to unfold is a new type of global “passport” or other individual identifier, owned and controlled by us, that we use to vote as a members of our species, on global issues that affect us all and on local issues that affect us directly personally. A portal through which we define our values, goals and standards and hold ourselves up to these as conscious, democratic consumers. A decentralised, portable and autonomous layer of identity that we can use to access all our networks as well as services, where we stake our reputation behind what we present as valid information, chose to share and openly endorse.

A layer of identity that more than a simple client that allows entry into the global network we call the world wide web also helps sustain it. Acts as a node and information carrier of its own, sharing the burden of sustaining an open and free network, thus providing both content curation and actual, physical support of this network. The latter is crucial as the trend among internet providers is the opposite, to control and limit data flows through firewalls and other means, depending on if the information is curated by a state or a private monolith.

An infrastructure of this nature would almost by necessity have to be an open source and peer-to-peer project, which in turn would allow for broad evolution through individual selection in a very real sense. A base layer run not by large, private organisations or symbolically democratic to openly autocratic nations but by individuals and local community collectives, and used to meet both local and global challenges in an entirely new way.

My point of this lengthy tirade is that any new paradigm that does not start with decentralisation and individual autonomy at its core will not really be a new paradigm but at best an upgrade of

the old. But if we can find a way to unite individuals around common goals, their networks will follow to stay relevant, and the corporations will follow as profits will depend on this and in time, political parties will evolve using this base layer of liquid democracy to create new legislation and deeper democracy where nations will feel like ever more archaic remnants of an old story of separation.

Or not. But we won't know if we don't try. At the Laszlo Institute is one of the best equipped institutions come networks to help curate such a broad movement. And who knows, in a year from now perhaps this will be the theme of the 2022 symposium of the new paradigm in politics.