PART 3: MOVING TO GREATER HARMONIC VIBRANCY

CHAPTER 7: WHAT PEOPLE ARE EXPERIENCING; WHAT PEOPLE ARE DOING

So far in this book, I have laid out some basic principles of Ecosynomics, as follows: it is possible to experience harmonic vibrancy and abundance, as we know from the times we have done so. This desirable experience, by definition, involves all five relationships (to self, other, group, nature and spirit) and all three levels of perceived reality (things-matter, development-motion and possibility-light). The actual experiences we have in different situations are the results of the agreements we are party to. This means that we have it in our power to change our experience for the better by changing our agreements.

I have also shared my analysis of the role the discipline of economics has played in shaping the agreements that govern many, if not most, aspects of life in modern society. Economic thinking embraces only the things-matter level, where scarcity is the norm. Yet it has evolved to see scarcity everywhere. Its pervasiveness as a foundation for human agreements means that scarcity and low vibrancy really are the "normal" experience for most people most of the time.

On the other hand, economic inquiry into four key aspects of human activity—resources, resource allocation, value and organization—has created a wealth of knowledge and insight about how things work at the things-matter level. Ecosynomics builds on this foundation of understanding. With the agreements map, Ecosynomics also carries the inquiry to the higher levels of perceived reality. It does so by using the core questions at the heart of the four main lines of economic study as lenses on human experience at all three levels and in all five relationships. The perspective gained through this rich analysis enables us to sense the underlying agreements shaping our experience and, potentially, the opportunities we may have to change them for the better.

Now, in Part 3, it is time to consider what this kind of change looks like and how you can go about creating it for yourself. These are questions I have been pursuing for many years. In the next chapter, I will lay out a four-step process for moving toward greater harmonic vibrancy. This process has grown out of my hands-on experience working with individuals and groups to bring about more of the experiences they want. To prepare the way for that, I will present in this chapter some broader findings I have made through two main avenues of exploration: asking people what they are experiencing and looking at what they are doing.

ASKING WHAT PEOPLE ARE EXPERIENCING

First, I will share some striking survey results showing that many groups of all types are already experiencing the outer circle of harmonic vibrancy. This is important information. Knowing that others have succeeded in bringing greater vibrancy and abundance into their lives offers assurance that it is possible.

In 2010, I gathered a team of people interested in exploring how the Ecosynomics framework applies to the real-life experiences people are having in different sorts of groups. We created a survey, which asks dozens of questions about experiences in each of the five

relationships. A little bit later, we added a non-verbal version of the survey by using the stick figures I introduced you to in Chapter 1 to depict low, medium or high vibrancy in each of the relationships. This graphic survey avoids language barriers and takes only a minute or so to complete. You can take the survey yourself, in either form, at the websites: survey.net or http://instituteforstrategicclarity.org/take-the-survey.

As of October 1, 2013, 1,600 people from 789 different groups in 89 countries have taken the Ecosynomics survey. The respondents are about equally divided between men and women (53 to 47 percent). The groups they are reporting on include mostly work groups (64 percent); some civic, church and sports groups (25 percent); and a smaller number of families (11 percent). About half of the groups (48 percent) include between 10 and 100 people. Just under a third (31 percent) are smaller than that; 12 percent have between 100 and 1000 people; and 9 percent have over 1000. The responses so far have mostly come from people we have invited to take the survey, whether as members of a specific network, a classroom assignment, or as members of a group we were visiting. About 10% of the responses have come from people who found the survey on the web.

The two graphs in Figure 18, below, provide a strong visual image of the results we are seeing in these surveys. The figures in the graphs are three-dimensional cubes (it would be nice to graph data for all relationships at once, but a five-dimensional graph is not technically possible.) Each dot represents the response of one survey taker and is located within its cube according to how that individual rated the vibrancy of his or her experience in three of the relationships. In the left-hand cube, the relationships are self, other and group. In the right-hand cube, they are self, nature and spirit. The rating scale for each relationship is from 1 (low vibrancy) to 5 (high vibrancy).

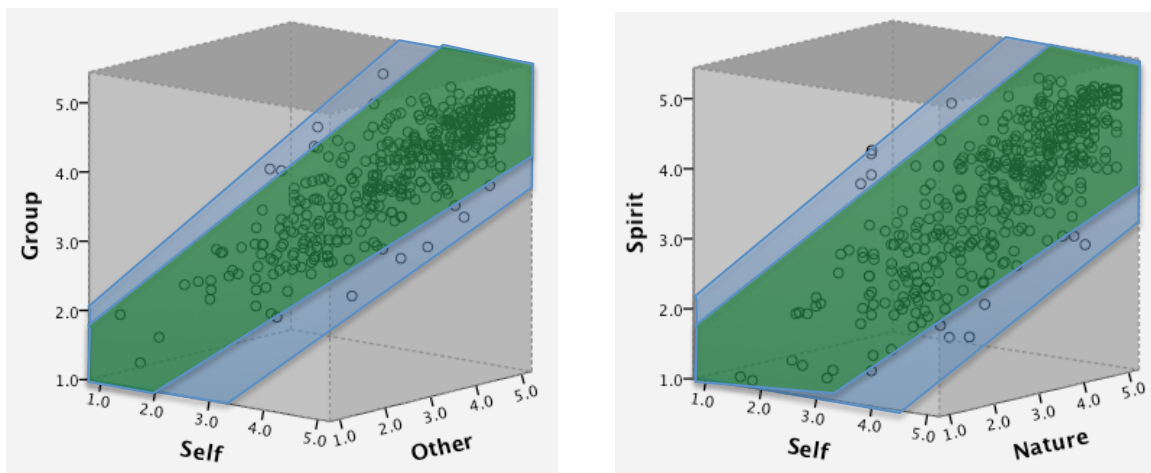## Surveyed Responses to Primary Relationships
(1,600 surveys)

Figure 18: Harmonic Vibrancy Survey Data

Each cube has 1,600 dots. In both cubes, the dots form a clearly defined band running from the lower left-hand corner, where there are low vibrancy scores on all three relationships, to the upper right-hand corner, where the scores indicate high vibrancy in all three relationships. This pattern means that there is a strong correlation between the levels of vibrancy experienced in these relationships. In other words, a low level of vibrancy in the relationship to self comes with correspondingly low levels in relationships to other, group, nature and spirit. High vibrancy in one relationship means high vibrancy in all. There are no instances of someone experiencing a high level of harmonic vibrancy in the relationship to self and low vibrancy in relationship to other, group, nature, or spirit. They all come together at the same level.

In Figure 19, I have superimposed one of these cubes on the now-familiar image of the 3-Circles of Harmonic Vibrancy. This allows you to see clearly how the pattern in the survey data confirms the experiences of low, medium and high levels of vibrancy that so many people have described in my conversations. We can also take heart from the fact that so many dots cluster at the high end of the continuum in each graph. This tells us that it is quite possible for groups to function in the outer circle of harmonic vibrancy and abundance. The challenge now is to understand how they are doing this and enable more people to enjoy this positive experience.
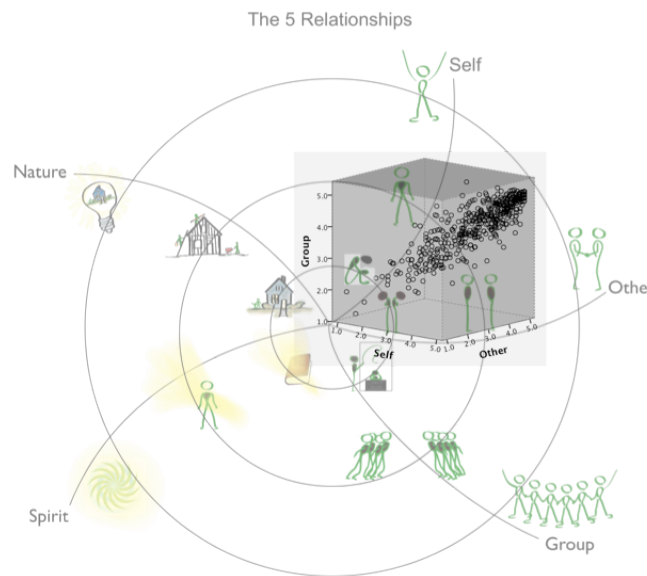

Figure 19: Comparison of Survey Data to 3-Circles of Harmonic Vibrancy

SEEING WHAT PEOPLE ARE DOING

One way I have approached the question of what groups are doing to move to higher levels of harmonic vibrancy is to use the Agreements Map to analyze a number of well-documented innovations using the Ecosynomics framework. These examples seem,

superficially, to be quite unrelated. Through the perspective of Ecosynomics, however, we can see that all of these innovations involve moving from operating only at the things-matter level to functioning at a higher level. The Agreements Map makes it possible to see similarities and patterns that suggest what is actually involved in this kind of a move. In other words, we can begin to recognize a move to a higher level of harmonic vibrancy and abundance when we see one.

While most people see and experience scarcity as the norm in many aspects of their lives, there are plenty of examples of people breaking through to create abundance for themselves. For example, a school in El Salvador has tripled the percentage of young girls entering and staying in primary school. A community health center in Texas maintains top-hospital-level services for an increasingly uninsured population, when all other centers are cutting even basic services. A textile mill in North Carolina pays living wages to its high-craftsmanship shop workers in an industry that has outsourced its low margin commodity products to low skilled workers in Asia. A small town in New York has created the equivalent of hundreds of jobs by circulating millions of dollars of trade with its own local currency. A private currency system in Japan has replaced a large percentage of expensive, hospital-based elderly care not covered by the national insurance plan, with a more effective system based on people exchanging "caring relationship" credits.

I have met many of the people involved in these activities, and I have seen how they are redefining what is possible through innovations in human agreements. In science, cases such as this are called "positive deviants."[88] They are deviant because their behavior differs from the norm, and their deviant behavior leads to positive outcomes. These outliers are important to researchers in that they suggest how those whose behavior is "normal" might change to get better outcomes for themselves. That is how I want to use these cases and similar ones I will discuss in this chapter.

As I started to gain a better understanding of the innovations I was personally acquainted with, and as I gained greater clarity about the principles of Ecosynomics, I realized that thousands of groups around the world are making similar abundance-creating breakthroughs. This led me to explore a wider range of reported innovations, such as Asset-based Community Development and the cooperative movement, from an Ecosynomics perspective. I recognized that the groups involved in these activities had shifted from operating solely at the things-matter level to functioning effectively at both the development-motion *and* things-matter level. They seem to have made different kinds of agreements and created abundance for themselves by doing so. Similarly, I could identify groups working at the possibility-light level and see the positive results of that. The Ecosynomics perspective makes these innovations recognizable as moves toward abundance with some common elements, which may help people replicate them in other areas.

A couple of caveats about these examples: First, since they are not formal Ecosynomics experiments, I cannot tell you that I know the innovators have explicitly embraced the fundamental assumptions of abundance. Nor can I say for certain that they have stepped into the outer circle of harmonic vibrancy in the five primary relationships. Future Ecosynomics research may address these questions. However, because the outcomes they are achieving and the processes and structures they are using are well documented, I can

show you with the Agreements Map how they are working at different levels to create greater abundance.

Second, I have not been exhaustive in searching out existing innovations. I am sure there are many being documented in fields I do not even know about. However, if I have rather easily found a handful of innovations involving thousands of groups, I believe it is safe to say there must be many thousands more out there beyond what I will share with you here. The move toward greater vibrancy and abundance is not, in other words, the isolated experience of a few lucky people; rather it is a broad-based phenomenon from which many are benefiting.

INNOVATIONS AT THE THINGS-MATTER AND DEVELOPMENT-MOTION LEVELS

A huge shift in the abundance experienced in groups can come from working with structures and processes on multiple levels. Remember that, at the things-matter level, one only thinks about what one has. At this level, groups perceive that they either have resources or they do not, and this perspective makes the resources seem scarce. The groups then organize their interactions only around working with those scarce resources. They find value in having the resources and exchanging them for other resources they also value. However, there are "costs of scarcity" associated with operating only at the things-matter level, as we saw in Chapter 6.

For example, because they are not thinking about the development of resources, organization and value over time, groups often have experiences such as having to pay higher prices for last-minute purchases, not being prepared to take advantage of new opportunities, having lots of redundant processes, or having high rates of burnout and turnover among group members who feel underappreciated. This is all that is available when the things-matter perspective is all there is.

In contrast, at the development-motion level, people approach resources, organizing and value in a very different ways. They think about *both* how much resource they have *and* how they can grow or enhance that resource over time. In organizing their interactions, groups holding this perspective think about how group members can build their capacities and strengthen their relationships over time. They also think about the value the development of those capacities and relationships will have, both for those within the group and for those who interact with it. The "costs of scarcity" experienced when groups operate only at the matter-things level do not occur at the resource-development level, because the benefits of abundance created through resource development have been included. We can see this dynamic clearly in the innovations I will now describe.

Firms of Endearment

The first innovation I want to present is documented in the 2007 book *Firms of Endearment*.[89] It involves large, for-profit corporations choosing to define business success in terms of "humanistic performance" as well as financial performance. The authors of this study

selected thirty companies that met their criteria for a high level of positive relationships with employees, customers, investors, partners and society—their defining characteristic of humanistic performance. A "great" group, they said, is "one that makes the world a better place because it exists, not simply a company that outperforms the market by a certain percentage over a certain period of time."[90]

The *Firms of Endearment* authors organize the descriptors of great groups by stakeholders:
- *Employees.* A happy and productive work environment motivates, values, and rewards employees.
- *Customers.* Honoring the legal and unspoken emotional contract with the consumer strengthens the relationship.
- *Investors.* Investors value the financial and emotional relationship with the group.
- *Partners.* A mutually beneficial, symbiotic relationship with business partners brings synergies to both.
- *Society.* Communities appreciate the group's values and outcomes, welcoming them where they operate. Creating value with government leverages the strengths of both.

To render these findings in Ecosynomics terms, I placed the relationship descriptors on an Agreements Map (Figure 20, below). A glance at this map shows groups that are functioning fully at the development-motion to things-matter levels.[91] This is where everything on the heat map is in green, the areas of a high index of success.

This use of the Agreements Map extends the way I used it in chapter 6. Here I am mapping characteristics that someone else has found to be common in a subset of groups, in this case, companies meeting the *Firms of Endearment* criteria. For example, the authors write that these companies "demonstrate their commitment to the local community in highly tangible ways." This is evidence to me that they develop and deliver outcomes, which are visible through the resources lens. That these companies "honor the legal and unspoken emotional contract with the customer" provide evidence that they see themselves as bound in a contractual relationship and pay attention to it. The existence of the contract and the relationships show functioning at both the things-matter and development-motion levels, as seen through the resources lens.

The *Firms of Endearment* authors also documented a tendency in these firms to have decentralized decision-making processes. I take this as evidence of developmental-level practices, as seen through the resource allocation question of "who decides?" Through the value lens, I found a number of indicators of things-level health—frontline staff paid above average wages in their category, and in general, highly motivated employees who feel valued and well rewarded. Signs of development-level health showing up in the value lens were the development and maintenance of financial and emotional relationships with investors and the incorporation of the government as a partner in value creation. Through the organization lens, the study identifies things-level health of a happy, productive work environment, which moves into development-level health with the evidence of a symbiotic and mutually beneficial relationship with business partners. These nine characteristics found in the *Firms of Endearment* study provide ample evidence for organizational health at the things and development levels. This is what the green band Figure 20 means.
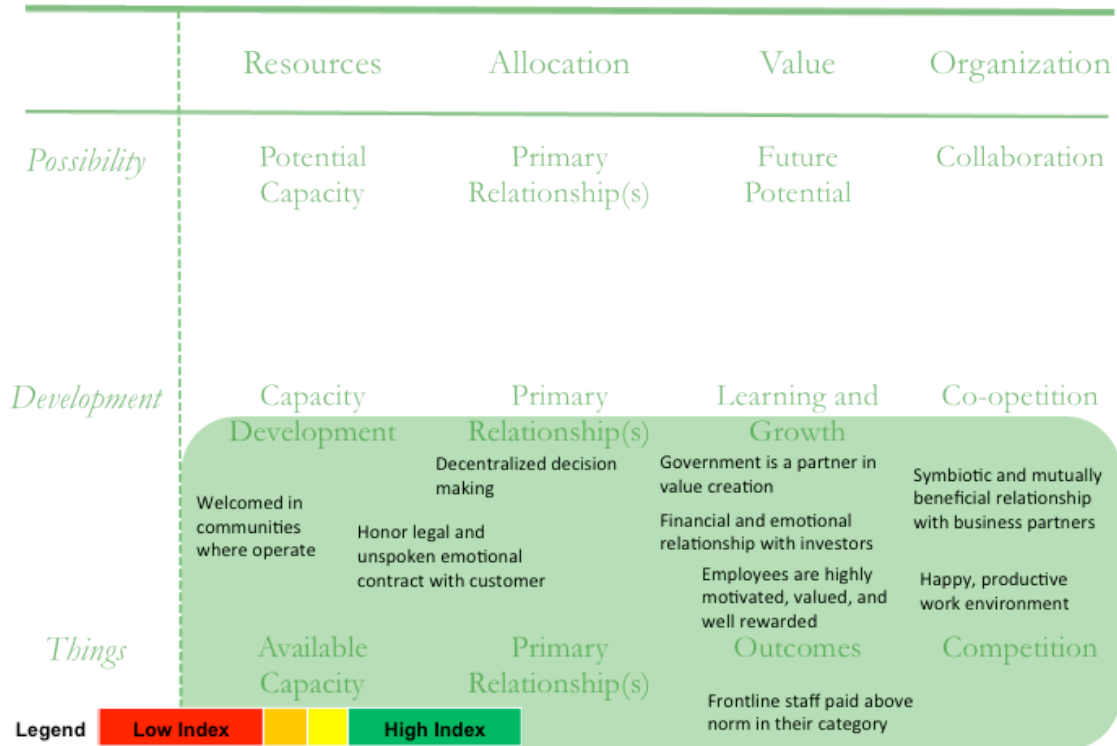
	Resources	Allocation	Value	Organization
Possibility	Potential Capacity	Primary Relationship(s)	Future Potential	Collaboration
Development	Capacity Development	Primary Relationship(s)	Learning and Growth	Co-opetition
Things	Available Capacity	Primary Relationship(s)	Outcomes	Competition

Decentralized decision making

Welcomed in communities where operate

Honor legal and unspoken emotional contract with customer

Government is a partner in value creation

Financial and emotional relationship with investors

Employees are highly motivated, valued, and well rewarded

Frontline staff paid above norm in their category

Symbiotic and mutually beneficial relationship with business partners

Happy, productive work environment

Legend Low Index High Index

Figure 20: Firms of Endearment Agreements Map

As you may remember from Chapter 2 (Figure 10), the pattern we see in the *Firms of Endearment* Agreements map correlates with the experience of living in the inner-to-middle circle of harmonic vibrancy. The authors of the study also seem to recognize this higher level of experience when they write of the "both-and" definition of success in these companies. By this they mean that the companies define success both in terms of financial performance and in terms of humanistic performance, i.e., meeting the needs of multiple stakeholders. Figure 21, below, renders their observation in Ecosynomics terms. In my experience, all of the groups innovating at the development-motion/things-matter levels share this characteristic "both-and" definition of success.

The study also shows that the *Firms of Endearment* companies are extremely effective, producing greater, more sustainable financial success than comparable companies. In Chapter 6, I suggested that groups working consciously at both the development and things levels tend to be more competitive than those just working at the things level, if for no other reason than that they do not have the same development-level costs of scarcity. The *Firms of Endearment* study supports this observation. The authors discovered that these companies working at the motion and matter levels equaled the three-year financial performance of the companies in the classic study, *Good to Great* (2001).[92] However, they exceeded the performance of the *Good to Great* companies by a ratio of 1.7 to 1 over five years and by a ratio of 3.1-to-1 over ten years.[93] None of the eleven companies in the *Good to Great* study met the criteria set for *Firms of Endearment*. The two studies defined success at different levels. The *Firms of Endearment* were selected for proven success at both motion and matter

levels, while the *Good to Great* companies were selected for success at the matter-outcomes level only.[94]

Figure 21: Definitions of Success for Firms of Endearment

Before anyone begins to judge the companies in either of these studies, however, let us be clear that we do not know what practices the companies actually have. They might be working at a higher level than depicted in the studies. All we know is what the authors saw through the lenses they used. Significantly though, other well known surveys find similar matter-and-motion results. One of these is the "Great Places to Work" survey highlighted annually in *Fortune* magazine. "Great Places" assesses trust in management (an indicator of relationship to the group), pride in the job (an indicator of relationship to self) and camaraderie with other employees (an indicator of relationship to the other). These are all matter-and-motion level characteristics. As with the *Firms of Endearment* study, matter-and-motion level groups outperform matter-level-only groups in the "Great Places" study. Its "100 Best" companies outperformed the S&P 500, a barometer of stock market performance, by two-fold between 1998 and 2009.[95]

Asset-based community development

A couple of years ago, I was sitting on the front porch of a friend's house, telling him what I was learning about Ecosynomics. He told me how his church was using a process called

asset-based community development (ABCD). He said it sounded like the principles I was uncovering were similar to those on which this process was based, so I looked it up. ABCD is the name two Northwestern University professors, John Kretzmann and John McKnight, gave to community-building work they described in their 1993 "guidebook," *Building Communities from the Inside Out*.[96] Since then, the approach has been adopted widely. At ABCD global conferences in 2007 and 2009 representatives from two-dozen countries presented their stories of ABCD-based citizen initiatives in communities ranging from remote rural areas and towns to large urban metropolises.[97]

Most traditional approaches to urban issues focus on the community's deficiencies and its needs.[98] A recent United Nations report described this approach as follows: "need-based government policies typically focus on what communities lack as opposed to what they have. For decades, governments—both in developed and developing countries—have used a 'standard deficits calculations approach' . . . to quantify community needs (such as an x number of housing units to be built, or a certain amount of retail space, schools, parks, public spaces, etc.). Urban planners, for example, calculate housing deficit as the difference between the necessary number of dwelling units and the number of units produced."[99] "Contrasting the typical need-based "deficit model," the UN report continues, "an asset-based approach does not seek to quantify needs. Instead, it aims to encourage an attitude favorable to change and capacity building by cutting across professional boundaries. Some consider this to be a community-design process, based on which 'the environment works better if people affected by its changes are actively involved in its creation and management instead of being treated as passive consumers.' This asset-based approach seeks to identify, and capitalize on, the tangible and intangible assets available to a community, rather than [focusing] on what it lacks."[100]

With ABCD, moreover, the definition of community assets is broad. It includes the usual physical resources, buildings and other infrastructure, financial resources and so forth. It also takes into account intangible assets. These might be the specific capacities of people in the community or relational assets, such as the connections among community members, and between them and people and institutions outside the community. Once the community gets clear about the full range of resources it has to work with, ABCD looks at how the existing relationships can support new agreements regarding how these assets might be developed over time.

To create the Agreements Maps in Figure 22, below, I used descriptors from the work of Kretzmann and McNight. The maps clearly show very different levels of functioning. The "needs-based" map depicts an approach in which the focus is wholly on the things level. Communities taking this approach see their resources only in terms of needs and deficiencies in the neighborhoods. They delegate decision making to top-down planners, who allocate resources based on the single criterion of meeting those needs. The planners design development activities based on "solutions" to the "problem" of unmet needs and deficiencies. All of this activity is centered on the lower things levels of concrete outcomes.

In contrast, the ABCD Agreements Map shows an approach that starts from an assumption of abundance of resources in the community. I noted on that map that these resources typically include the actual things the community has, in terms of physical infrastructure and spaces, as well as its intangible resources such as people's skills. I also noted that ABCD draws as much as possible on the tangible and intangible resources of the public, private and non-profit institutions within the community. The ABCD approach also counts relationships as a valuable resource, a practice I mapped at the development-motion level. I even saw ABCD stretching into the possibility level with its emphasis on seeing the potential in the community's existing economic resources and local places.

Through the resource allocation lens, I also saw strong contrasts with the needs-based approach to development. ABCD answers the "who decides?" question with bottom-up, localized decision making on specific issues, which takes place within a larger, community-wide, multi-stakeholder process of consensus building. I mapped the local, outcomes-focused process at the things level and the larger-scale, consensus-building process at the development level. Seeing the development potential in the community's own local history and culture is a core value in this approach, and organizing in collaborative networks that capitalize on the power of local associations is a core strategy. Thus, through both the value and organization lenses, I see ABCD moving into functioning at the possibility-light level. I color-coded the map to highlight these patterns: a strong focus on the things and development levels shows up in the broad green band, while the narrower yellow and red bands capture forays into developing resources and seeing potential. While the map for needs-based development indicates its things-level approach with a narrow green band at that level.
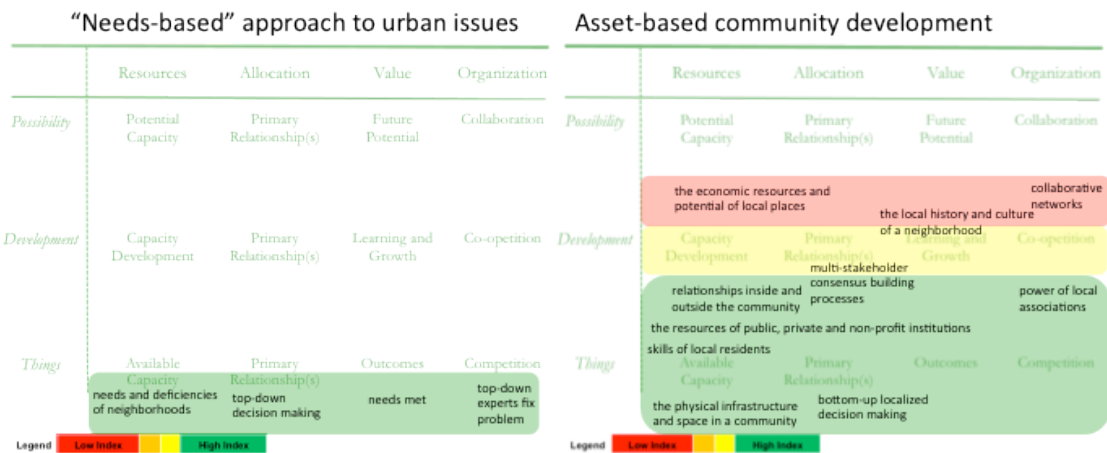

Figure 22: Agreements Maps of Needs-based Approaches to Urban Issues and ABCD

The research of Kretzmann and McKnight, and now many others, has provided a wealth of examples of how community assets, broadly defined, can be the building blocks of sustainable urban and rural community revitalization efforts. For instance, in Minneapolis, Minnesota (USA), a Latino immigrant community joined forces using the ABCD approach to develop a traditional marketplace, Mercado Central, in an inner-city neighborhood. This

development used the community's capacities to create its own economic engine for change in a way that reflects its Latino traditions.[101]

The Mercado story starts with Isaiah, a coalition of churches in the Minneapolis area committed to mobilizing congregations to social action. Isaiah's community-organizing efforts identified the community's talent and energy around the related issues of building a more unified church community and addressing the economic and cultural needs of the immigrant population in different parts of the city. Once people in the different congregations came together, they realized they already had the land, experience, leadership and community relationships needed to create something to address all of their issues at one time. This was the Mercado Central. Within ten years from the launch of this project, the community raised and spent $2.4 million to purchase and renovate three dilapidated buildings for the marketplace and secured over $277,000 in loans to new Latino businesses. Overall, forty-four businesses either started up or expanded in the local community, providing seventy new jobs employing mostly local people. In the first year of the Mercado Central's operation, it contributed over $80,000 in sales taxes to the city and state.

Thus, instead of asking the city to meet its needs, the Latino community of Minneapolis built on its own assets, created its own abundance and ultimately, contributed from its abundance to the broader community. The initiative gave people greater freedom to provide for themselves. It also reduced their costs of scarcity, by decreasing their dependency on externally provided resources while increasing their cooperative efforts within the community and with associations outside of the community. With Mercado Central, the community was able to meet its immediate economic needs, such as employment and building renovation, and build a sustainable capacity to provide for those needs in the future by developing its own leaders and community relationships. This example nicely illustrates an innovation that involves a step toward the development-motion level, while including the just-what-exists things-matter level.

From an Ecosynomics perspective, it is not surprising that communities around the world are embracing the ABCD approach. In fact, it is part of a broad pattern of recognition of a core principle of Ecosynomics—that focusing only on the things-matter level perpetuates the scarcity that exists there. At both the national and international levels, since the 1990s, there has been a shift of emphasis from providing food and other necessities to poor individuals and communities toward helping those communities and individuals develop "sustainable livelihoods." This shift has involved a growing awareness that focusing solely on current "needs" at the things-matter level causes people and groups to enter agreements that generate dependency on others to provide for those needs. The most detrimental agreement is a cultural acceptance of the idea "I am poor," lacking in all capacities and potential. This is completely different from the thought, "In this moment, I do not have enough money or food."[102]

Through new approaches, like ABCD, the underdeveloped communities are collectively identifying and enhancing the agreements, relationships and capacities that enable them to create the assets they want to satisfy their needs on their own. This gives them greater sovereignty over how they develop the assets they want, and it contributes to building community along the way. All of which leads to the experience of a fuller and freer life for

community members. This is the essence of the move from a matter-level only to a matter-motion level mode of operation.

Town meetings

Having grown up in the southern parts of the United States and spent most of my early adulthood in Spain and Mexico, I was shocked when I moved to New England in 2002 and experienced its form of local government. I was used to living in places where few people knew who their elected officials were, much less became involved in the process of decision-making. When I went to my first annual town meeting in Wilton, New Hampshire, almost everyone I knew in town was there. Everyone had a copy of the booklet with all of the budget proposals that had been prepared by the town's elected "selectmen," plus specific project proposals that had been put forth by some of the citizens.[103] Most people were well informed, and everyone had an opportunity to speak up and ask whatever questions they wanted. And speak up they did. I was amazed that such a large proportion of the town's residents showed up for and engaged in the process. At the end of the day, it was the citizens who voted on each point, not the selectmen.

Town Meeting, as this process is called, is both a moment-in-time and an institution. As a moment-in-time, it is when town's eligible voters gather to appropriate money to run the town and to vote on salaries for the elected officials, as well as on any changes to the town's local statutes or by-laws. As an institution, Town Meeting is the legislative body for the towns.[104] This form of local government has been practiced in New England since the start of English settlements in the 1600s and is still alive in over 3,000 towns in seven states.[105]

Yet, when I started thinking about it and investigating the topic of local government more broadly, I realized it might also be seen as part of a much larger, more recent pattern of innovation. This is the movement toward citizen engagement and participatory budgeting, which started in Porto Alegre, Brazil, in 1989 and has since spread to over 140 municipalities in Brazil and over 1,500 cities across the world.[106] The core idea in this movement is that an increase in the frequency, extent and diversity of citizen engagement in local government leads to an increase in the quality and positive impact of the decisions made by local governments, community organizations and public agencies.[107] This is a significant innovation compared to the predominant model of expert-driven town or city management, in which few, if any, citizens engage in the process and none can feel that they truly share responsibility for the outcomes local government produces.

In the Agreements Maps below in Figure 23, I have tried to capture the essence of differences between these two models of local government in Ecosynomics terms. In the traditional model, town management is the responsibility of elected politicians, who run organizations of town employees. Their focus is strictly on outcomes. The objective is to maintain the town's health, as assessed through its basic infrastructure of common resources, such as education, water, fire, police, and transportation, while staying within the established budget if possible. These town managers rely on expert opinions to guide decision-making, or perhaps a public referendum for particularly large, novel or controversial issues. I have mapped these aspects of the traditional model at the bottom of the things-matter level. In a few more vibrant communities, the town leadership begins to open to the

community through open meeting consultations with citizens. I have placed this on the map to suggest that it is a foray in the direction of functioning at the development-motion level.

The spirit and practice of local government in communities using the town meeting or other form of participatory governance looks quite different. In these communities the citizens themselves decide on the budget and make up most of the committees that manage how it is spent. The outcome of maintaining the health of the basic infrastructure is still a central goal. However, the town meeting is also guided by three key operating principles, which I see as development-level, and even possibility-level, practices. First, there is the principle of citizen participation; not just in budgeting and management, but also in the development of the town's vision for itself and how it will use the tangible and intangible resources it values. Second, there is the principle of transparency and stewardship of the public process; meaning that the citizens take responsibility for the transparency of the information and the process in which decisions are made and results assessed. Finally, there is the principle of shared responsibility for public resources. In other words, the town meeting form of local government depends upon citizens having a clear sense that "this is our town."
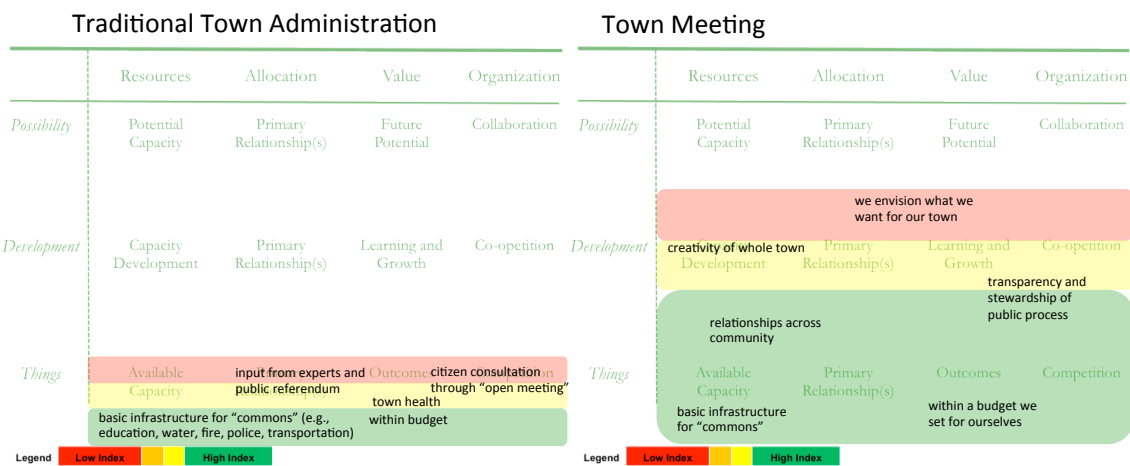

Figure 23: Agreements Maps of Traditional Town Administration and Town Meeting

My color-coding of the Agreements Map for traditional town administration, with green covering only the lower part of the things level, conveys the fact that this model focuses mostly at that level, on very specific results. Some towns operating traditionally are inspired to engage their citizens a little, occasionally, while remaining focused on the desired outcomes. This is what the yellow and red bands at the higher reaches of the things level conveys. In contrast, I have color-coded the map of the town meeting model with a broad green band covering all of the things-matter level and the lower part of the development-motion level, transitioning to yellow in the upper part of the development level. This pattern is meant to convey the fact that, while outcomes are important, the town also gives lots of time and attention to the clear assessment of the resources they have, to the value they assign to those resources, and to their maintenance over time. Citizens share responsibility for stewarding those resources for the benefit of the whole town and for including as many

citizens in the process as want to be involved. Some towns venture even farther into the realm of possibility by collaboratively envisioning the future they want to choose.[108]

Cooperatives

Cooperatives are everywhere. The name of these organizations defines their purpose: to enable people to achieve cooperatively something they could not achieve on their own.[109] In many cases, the specific purpose of the cooperative is to provide greater purchasing power to consumers willing to act together. Cooperatives have been formed to buy and sell a wide variety of products and services, such as farm supplies, biofuels, groceries, and arts and crafts. Many cooperatives provide social services, such as healthcare, childcare, housing, transport, and education. They also operate in financial services in the form of credit unions, farm credit bureaus, mutual insurance companies, and cooperative finance programs. Many utilities, such as rural electric, telephone, and water companies, just to name a few, are organized as cooperatives.

The two Agreements Maps below (Figure 24) present my analysis of the innovation of the cooperative movement from an Ecosynomics viewpoint. Cooperatives offer consumers an alternative to the predominant pattern of individualism in market systems. The most obvious benefit of this innovation to cooperative members comes at the things-matter level in the lower prices for goods and services that can be negotiated by a large group buying collectively. A large group of people purchasing something in a transaction has much more power in the transaction with a large supplier than an individual can have, simply because of the higher volume of demand. I capture this in the Agreements Map at the things level of how exchanges are organized. With no cooperation an individual faces a large supplier on his own; whereas a cooperative represents a group that has more leverage in bargaining with that supplier.
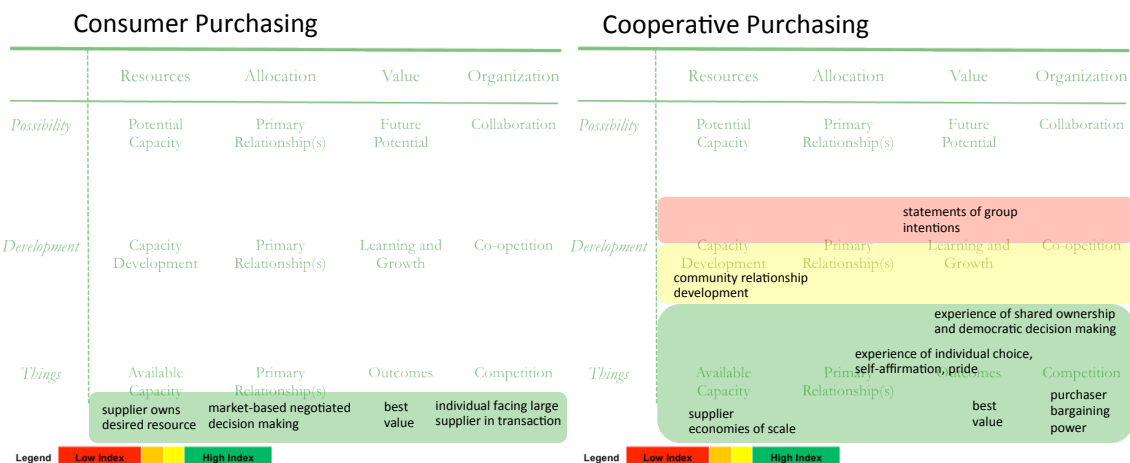

Figure 24: Agreements Maps of Consumer Purchasing and Cooperative Purchasing

Significantly, cooperatives also add the power of the development-motion level of relationships to the individual's experience of the things-matter level purchasing transaction.

This increase in purchasing power through aggregation of individuals has a double impact. The cooperative brings a development-motion level to the relationships among individuals, inviting them to act *both* individually *and* as a group and to enjoy the benefits of both positions. The individuals act together through shared ownership and increased demand and on their own through individual choice. In coming together and developing relationships around a shared purpose, this individual and group impact increases the choices and power of individuals. Shared ownership brings the individual into the decision making process about what the cooperative does. A community begins to form. Within the cooperative, individuals have greater bargaining power; increasing the choices they can make for themselves individually.

This innovation shifts the thinking from the idea that one has power *either* as an individual *or* as a group to the realization that one can have power *both* as an individual *and* as a group. This is, of course, a key aspect of the Ecosynomics perspective. We know that we experience higher levels of harmonic vibrancy when all five primary relationships are healthy. When we focus on either the individual or the group, we tend to sacrifice the other one; but when we focus on both the individual and the group, we tend to strengthen both. The cooperative innovation suggests one way of achieving this simultaneous strengthening of the experience of the relationship to the self and to the group. In addition to the economic power I just described, social power comes through democratic participation and community-relationship development.

In a study of Latin American cooperatives, Professor Albert O. Hirschman, an economist at the Institute for Advanced Study, described the social impact of cooperatives in this way, "For many groups, the fact of joining forces, be it even for a modest purpose, such as setting up a cooperative consumer store, has a great deal of symbolic value. It is an act of self-affirmation that fills people with pride and may even be felt as a beginning of liberation, particularly by long-suffering and long-oppressed groups."

One historian suggests that some weavers started the first cooperative in Scotland in 1769. Since then it has become a worldwide phenomenon. The United Nations named 2012 the International Year of Cooperatives. At that time, the International Co-operative Alliance had 240 member organizations in 90 countries, representing 800 million individuals. In Europe, there were 58,000 cooperatives with 13.8 million members. In the USA, 14 federations represent 40,000 cooperatives with 75 million individual members. Americans hold 350 million memberships in cooperatives. Just these American cooperatives alone have over $3 trillion in assets, bring in nearly $654 billion in revenue, and provide two million jobs with $75 billion in wages and benefits paid. The scale and scope of this movement demonstrates powerfully that shifts toward greater vibrancy and abundance need not be just for the lucky few.[110]

Complementary currencies

A few years ago, I was talking with a friend about the beauty of the paper currency in some countries. He showed me a BerkShare. At first I thought it was play money. He assured me it was real and told me about the community in the western part of Massachusetts that had created the BerkShare to serve as a complementary currency. In the moment, this sounded

like a great innovation. In all of the economics classes I had taken, and after years as a business professor, I had never heard of complementary currencies. How many could there be—two or three? I then discovered the writings of Bernard Lietaer. He had identified two complementary currencies existing in 1984, observed their growth to 200 in 1990, and has now documented over 4,800 in existence today![111]

These are called complementary currencies or alternative currencies, because people use them to complement, not replace, their national currency. To see the innovation in complementary currencies, I will start by describing the currencies we all know—national currencies. Most countries have their own currency, the money people can use to buy stuff in that country. For example, Japan has the yen and Mexico has the peso. With approximately 195 countries in the world, there are about 180 "national" currencies, allowing for some shared currencies like the euro and the dollar.[112] I call these "fiat currencies" because national governments decree the value they place on the paper bills that constitute their currency. The paper the currency is printed on has no value of its own. Rather it symbolizes, in a form that is easily held, counted and exchanged, something else that does have value. Governments and banks carefully control who gets to print it and how much there is in circulation. In other words, this money is designed to be scarce.[113]
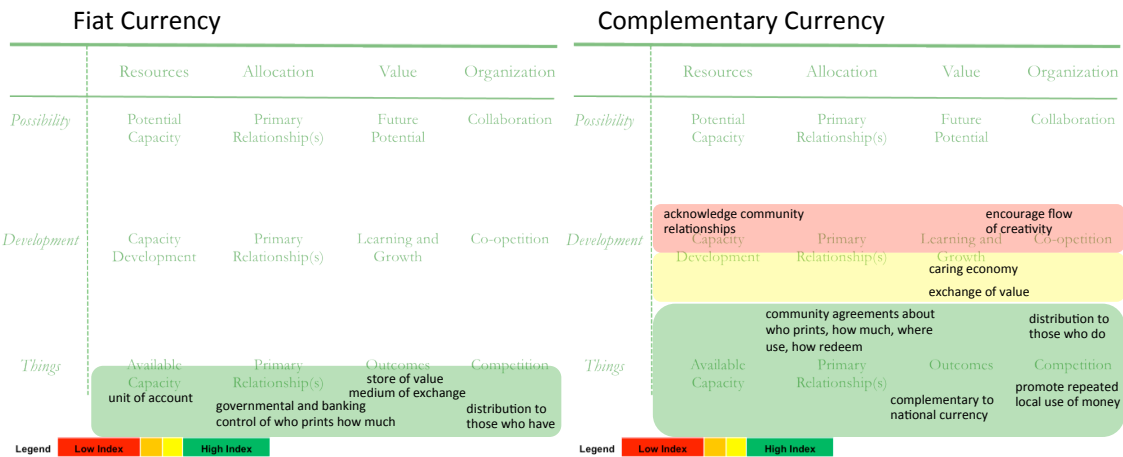

Figure 25: Agreements Maps of Fiat Currencies and Complementary Currencies

The Agreements Maps in Figure 25 compare fiat currency and complementary currency from an Ecosynomics perspective. Economists describe three functions of money: it is a medium of exchange, it is a unit of measurement for accounting purposes, and it is a repository of value.[114] These three functions described the things-matter levels attributes of what is seen in the fiat currency systems through the lenses of resources, organization, and value, which I have captured in the Agreements Map.

The motion-level innovation of complementary currencies speaks directly to the nature of agreements people make around the value questions explored in Chapters 4 and 5. These questions are: what is the value of an exchange, what is the mode of the exchange, and who participates in the distribution of value in the exchange? Complementary currencies shift the things-matter level assumption of scarcity into a development-motion level assumption of

abundance by changing the agreements that back up the currency. When looking through the value lens in Chapter 5, I showed how the three value questions look quite different at the light, motion, and matter levels. The three questions address the value, mode, and distribution of exchange. The motion-level expands the "what is of value?" question to include both the things we pay for and the things we do not usually pay for in our experience of day-to-day life and in our own development. Examples include our time taking care of family and volunteering at the local soup kitchen.[115] The motion-level also expands the "mode of exchange" question to include a broader definition of how we might exchange it, bringing into question matter-level concepts such as interest rates (e.g., positive, neutral, negative) and what is being exchanged (e.g., paper, time, bartered things and services).

The distribution question at the motion level suggests that the person experiences value at both the development and outcomes levels. One way this is done is by keeping the currency moving locally. Economists use the "velocity of money" to determine how much a currency is exchanged in a given period of time within a given geography. Simply defined, the amount of value exchanged equals the amount of money times the velocity of money. I captured this in the Agreements Map as "promoting the repeated local use of money." This means that when $100 comes into a community, it is available for increasing the total value exchanged in the community. National currencies promote money coming into the community, say via wages and then being spent at a large store, which usually takes the money right back out of the community. It was exchanged once for a total value to the community of $100. A very different approach uses complementary currencies, such as the BerkShare to local use. A consumer buys $1 of BerkShares at the bank for 90 cents of USA national currency. This BerkShare can only be redeemed at the bank by local businesses. This design promotes that same $100 to be used a dozen times locally before it comes back to the bank and leaves the community. This would be $1,200 of total value exchanged from that original $100. This greatly increases the local output.

The creators of each complementary currency decide which of these motion-and-matter-level features it designs into its complementary currency.[116] Again, the main point to make with the Agreements Map is to highlight the explicit differences in the two systems, so that people can be aware of the choices they are making in the agreements they enter. In the case of time banks, a complementary currency now in communities across the globe, people create their own "currency" by giving hours of their own time to an activity that someone else wants and receiving credit they can use to obtain services they need. For example, I can give a day of management consulting to a local business, knowing I can get two weeks of daycare for my child with the credit I create. This is different from having to work under a contract for a national currency, in which case employers tend to have the upper hand in determining how much they will give you for how much time you give them. With the time bank, you as an individual decide how much currency you want to create.

In complementary currencies, cooperatives, town meetings, ABCD and *Firms of Endearment* we see very different types of groups; operating in different arenas and in different parts of the world, making agreements that bring greater abundance into their lives. Without the Ecosynomics framework, it would be difficult to discern a pattern in these apparently disparate developments. Yet there is clearly a common pattern of shifting from a things-matter perspective to embrace the more dynamic perspective of development-motion.

Having recognized this, we are now in a position to bring together lessons from these different experiences to shed light on how to bring about such shifts in other areas.

Now I want to share examples of innovations that generate even greater abundance by taking on the perspective of possibility-light, to function at all three levels of perceived reality simultaneously.

INNOVATIONS AT ALL LEVELS

To the motion-matter level innovations we just saw, the possibility-light level adds an additional dimension of potentiality, opening up even greater choice, freedom and flexibility for responding to the conditions and demands life presents. To frame this in the negative, if one is stuck in a things-matter perspective, or even a development-motion perspective, the options for how one responds to challenges will be limited. The innovations I will now share illustrate how some groups manage to hold all three perspectives together and what they are able to accomplish by operating at all three levels as part of their work.

Groups that operate at all three levels take a distinctive approach when addressing the four basic economic questions. They think first about what they would like to achieve. Then they consider what resources would support them in achieving that objective and how to develop those resources over time in order to have what they need when they need it. In organizing human interaction, these groups look for, recognize and invite in the potential they see in the people they work with and in their relationships. They choose the capacities and relationships they want to develop over time and, with these developing resources, are able to be at their best at any given moment. Finally, they think about value in terms of their vision of what can flow from the development of their capacities and relationships, and their vision embraces the benefits to be enjoyed, not only by group members, but also by all who interact with the group.

This grounded-potential path envisions abundance and takes the steps needed to bring it into reality. It also avoids the costs of scarcity experienced at the things-matter and development-motion levels that are not experienced when simultaneously engaging all three levels together. I will share some examples I have found.

THORLO

In Chapter 3, I introduced you to THORLO, the small textile company in North Carolina (USA) that I have been working with for nearly a decade. I described its unusual "role growth compensation conversations" and, in Chapter 6, its practice of "surfacing surprises" as part of a larger process of "integrated collaborative conversations." Now I want to use the "definitions of success" graphic and the Agreements Map to look in a more general way at how THORLO works with all three levels of perceived reality.[117]

By any measure of business success, THORLO is functioning effectively at the things-matter level. Its high-tech socks, designed to provide preventive foot care, are highly competitive in the marketplace and have been since their introduction in the 1970s. Over the past decade,

THORLO has maintained a gross margin on branded products that is 14 percentage points higher than its branded competitors. Its gross margin on commodity products in the same period has been double that of the competition. Recently, THORLO was able to reduce its workforce by 15 percent and its inventory by 30 percent while maintaining production rates, delivery schedules and product quality. Thus the company has found a way to be sustainably innovative and profitable, despite the fact that it produces all of its products in the U.S. at its North Carolina mill, while most of its competitors have moved production to low-wage factories abroad. Using the framework and tools of Ecosynomics, we can uncover the sources of these impressive outcomes in THORLO's organizational culture and way of operating.

First, let's look at how the company's definition of success shows its focus on all three levels of perceived reality (Figure 26). You can ask anyone at THORLO, from top leadership throughout the organization, what success looks like in their business and they will reply, "brand stewardship." This is the term they use to convey the company's mission to provide its customers with the best foot health possible through THORLO brand socks. Everything they do is measured against this criterion. For example, every major decision within the company must pass the "more life" test: does the solution to this problem add more life to the consumer's experience and to the employee's experience? In looking for an answer to this question, the folks at THORLO are careful to consider all five relationships at all three levels of perceived reality.

A second way THORLO defines success is by its ability to create "sustainable relationships" with all of its stakeholders, by which it means its loyal customers, loyal employees, loyal suppliers and vendors, and loyal shareholders, in that order of priority. For customers, the company uses "product integrity" to assess the quality of the total consumer experience. For employees, it uses "cultural integrity." This is a composite measure that considers the things-matter question of what pay each employee is receiving, relative to the wages they would receive in similar positions in the region, together with the development-motion level issue of how that employee's professional development is progressing. THORLO assesses the sustainability of its relationships with suppliers and vendors with a metric it calls "business systems integrity." This is the percentage of the orders delivered by THORLO that meet all expectations. Finally for shareholders, it uses "capital integrity," which is determined by calculating the company's return on investment and the efficiency of its use of capital.

THORLO routinely uses these "four integrities" in decision-making, to ensure the quality and sustainability of its critical relationships. The cross-functional nature of some of the criteria, for example in the ability to deliver an order exactly as specified, means that it takes a cross-company group or conversation to make sure that the standard is being met. This happens through the Integrated Collaborative Conversations (ICC) structure-process noted on the Agreements Map below (Figure 8). The sustainable relationships definition of success encompasses the level of development of capacities and relationships as well as the things-matter level of outcomes.

Finally, THORLO also defines its success at the things-matter level, as creating "sustainable value" for those same stakeholders. In this domain, it uses traditional financial indicators to

track its success, for example, return on invested capital, the percentage of profits available for future investments, and the percentage of revenues from premium-priced products. This definition of success includes the outcomes level for the five primary relationships.
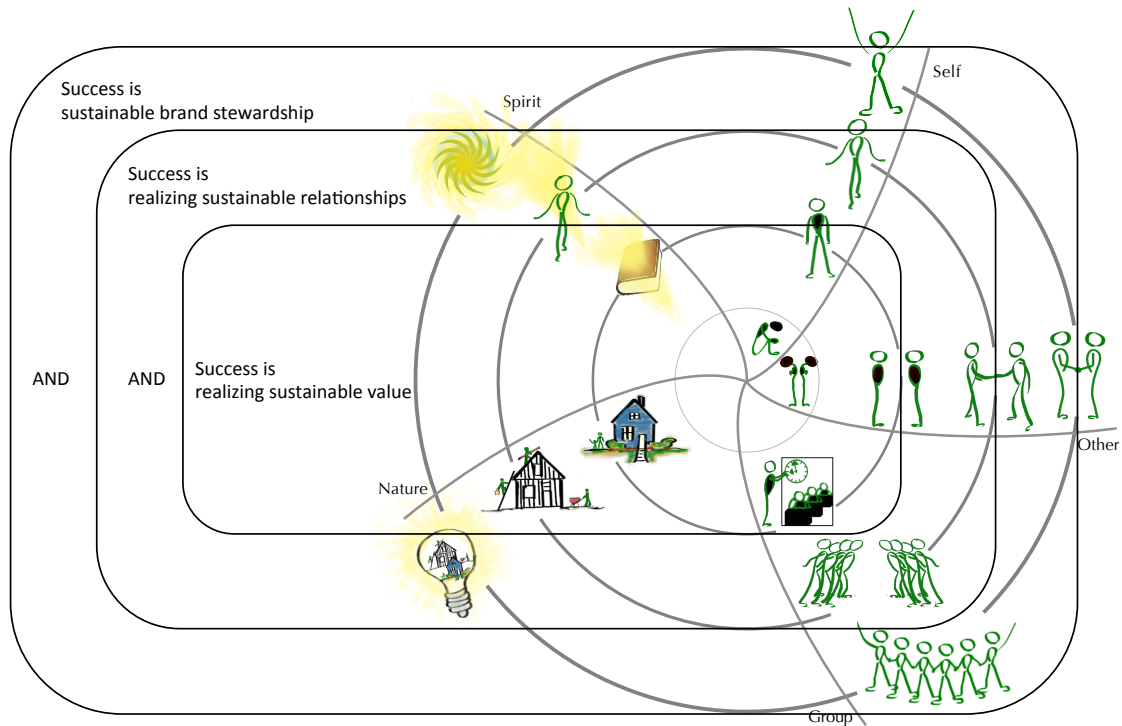

Figure 26: Definitions of Success at THORLO

The Agreements Map in Figure 27, below, offers a more detailed examination of the practices that show THORLO functioning at the things, development and possibility levels of perceived reality. In previous examples, I shared the evidence by lens, starting with what I saw through the resource lens at the different levels, then the allocation, value, and organization lenses. For the THORLO case, I will organize the information by level of perceived reality. At the things-matter level of perceived reality, the level of outcomes, I look through the resource lens and see a strong, widespread awareness of the capacities available in the company. This is evidenced by clear written descriptions and established measurement systems for jobs, processes and financial indicators.

Through the allocation lens at the things-matter level, I see well-documented evidence of structures and processes to support local group and individual decision-making. For example, people throughout the organization are always actively engaged in multi-functional, cross-company teams, in which conversation is explicitly focused on tending to all five primary relationships. I also see at this level that THORLO concretely expresses the value it places on the capacities and experience people bring to work each day through above-average pay. This is rare in an industry that has sent most jobs to low-wage countries. Finally, through the organization lens, I find processes designed for high efficiency and effectiveness, including industry-leading quality-control practices. I also see a long record of

low employee turnover and high profitability, both of which run counter to the textile industry standard.

At the development level, through the resource lens I see various ways in which THORLO is paying attention to its people's development. These include clear definition of the developmental steps in each area, for example, from novice to master craftsman. These definitions acknowledge an employee's investment in the mastery of a profession, which is further supported by periodic role-growth conversations with every employee. Through the allocation lens at the development level, I find processes like the role-growth conversation that invite employees into continuous inquiry about their own development and that of the groups they are part of. My notation in the value column of the map at this level captures the added value THORLO personnel experience in an environment so supportive of developing capacities and relationships. As one employee it, "I live like a millionaire, without the responsibilities of a millionaire. I get to do what I love to do with people I love and enjoy, and I get paid well for it!" The company's focus on sustainable, self-funded, growth is further evidence through the value lens of its effective functioning at the development level. Through the organization lens, we see processes that keep everyone informed about, clear on, and in agreement with the company's core values and direction. One of the outside observers who gathered data for THORLO's Assessment Map was surprised to find such a strong procedural focus on development. "While a lot of companies talk about it," he wrote, "I have never seen such a lack of self-serving political issues. Everyone is focused on shared goals and contributions. There is no in-fighting."

At the possibility-light level, I found evidence of uncommon practices made common. For example, the company has a practice it calls "100 percent responsibility." This means that anyone who sees potential in another person or possibilities for new developments is responsible for speaking up and giving his input. This is a possibility-level practice seen through the resource lens. Through the allocation lens, I see decision processes supporting possibility in the five primary relationships. Through the value lens, I see possibility-level functioning in the fact that most people at THORLO will tell you that the opportunity to work with others exploring and manifesting possibilities is more valuable to them than their monetary compensation. Through the organization lens, one sees many processes and structures supporting intentional work with potential. For example, each cross-company team has an assigned co-host whose role it is to ensure that potential is acknowledged and worked with, and that the voice of everyone in the meeting can be heard. THORLO's organizational structure also integrates the constant flow of information and decision-making through the three levels of reality, so that strategic conversations take place at all levels throughout the company.

Looking at the color-coding of the THORLO Agreements Map, we see the pattern of a healthy organization. The band of green extends from the things-matter level all the way into the lower half of the possibility-light level, signifying that most people, most of the time, are aware and functioning effectively at those levels. The yellow band indicates that some people, some of the time, are aware and functioning at the possibility-light level.

To summarize, this map tells a story of high efficiency and effective policies that reflect healthy functioning at the things-matter level, the level of outcomes. We also see healthy expressions at the development-motion level, reflecting a liquid conversation across areas

about the flows of strategic resources. This figure also shows quite a few strategic processes at the possibility-light level, explicitly exploring possibility in the short and long term throughout the organization. All of this is interwoven very clearly in a process-structure that THORLO calls the integrated collaborative conversation, working the continuous chain of transitions from light to motion to matter to motion to light.
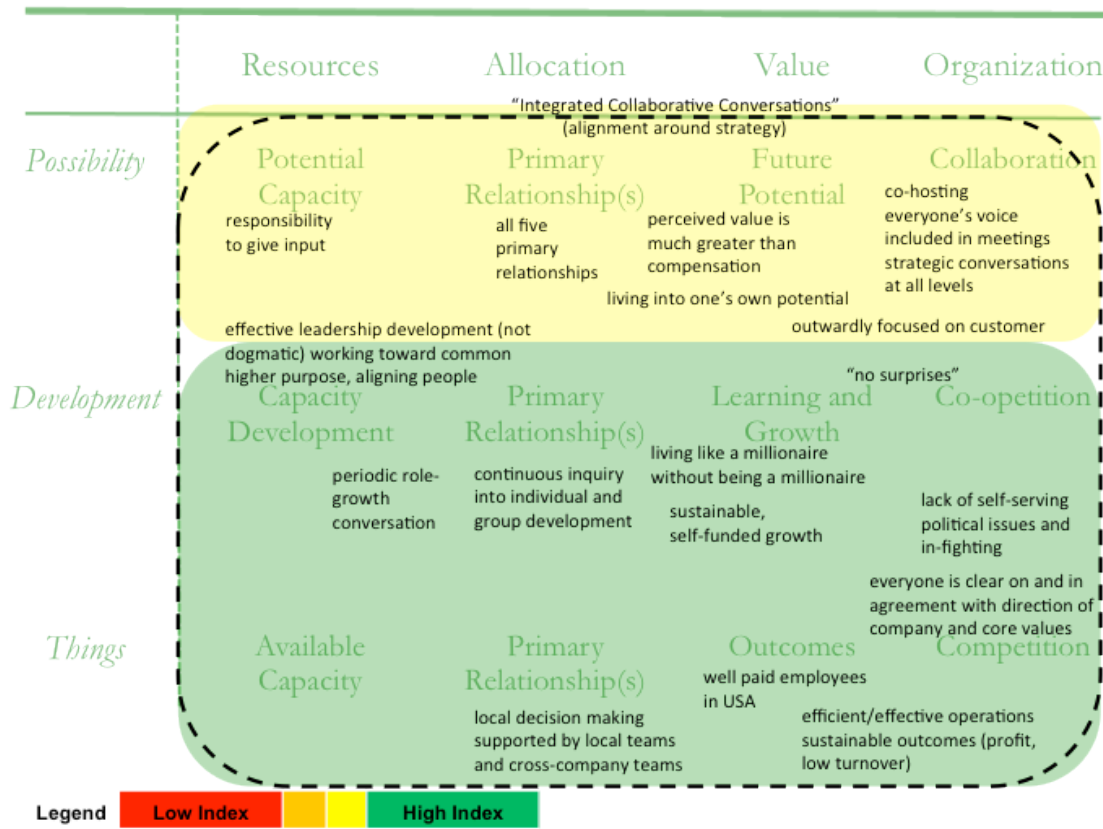

Figure 27: THORLO Agreements Map

Together the pictures in Figure 26 and Figure 27 offer an Ecosynomics explanation of THORLO's seemingly extraordinary business outcomes. Starting with "more life" and an assumption of abundant potential in the five primary relationships, the people of THORLO have found, customized and invented structures and processes that support their agreements. Basically, those agreements are to see potential, choose how to develop it, and deliver high quality, profitable outcomes in most everything they do. While they will be the first to tell you they do not always practice what they know, they work hard at maintaining awareness of what they know. THORLO folks describe this way of being and working together as just a healthier, nicer, more efficient and effective way. It is a fundamental agreement. They look around and see potential and beauty, and they enjoy finding effective ways to engage that potential and bring it to the customer experience. In the words of one THORLO engineer, "We 'see' more life, and say, 'Yes.'"

Global action networks

My colleague Steve Waddell introduced me a few years ago to an emerging phenomenon, which he identified and named Global Action Networks (GANs).[118] These GANs are pursuing an alternative to traditional approaches to dealing with large-scale problems that exist across national boundaries and affect people both locally and globally. GANs arose because the traditional approaches were not working well on these issues, such as poverty, corruption, climate change, disease, and the disappearance of natural resources.

The traditional approaches rely on national governments and inter-governmental organizations like the United Nations. This approach tends to isolate groups or sectors, driving them to act alone, competing with other agencies for the limited resources available for global concerns (see Figure 28). For example, there are countless instances of water projects around the world in which one humanitarian aid group provided a water pump in one village while another group provided training to maintain a pump in a different village. The placement of the pump and the training rarely coincided. Similarly, one group might be working on keeping girls in school, while another works on building schools for girls to go to, while yet another is providing funds for teachers, but all in different regions of the country. The shortcomings of these uncoordinated efforts are obvious to the people working on the projects at the local level. However, they are not in a position to influence an initiative in which the funding, planning and project timelines all come from an international agency that is typically unaware of the situation on the ground.[119]

I used these well-documented cases to create the Agreements Map on the left side of Figure 9. Through the resource lens we see the separate aid efforts competing for limited resources, with a strong focus on short-term delivery of the resources available in the moment. This is a classic things-level mode of operation. In most of these traditional aid organizations, resource allocation happens at the headquarters office, located in a developed country. From there, global policy edicts guide local implementation. Through the value lens, we see that this approach is focused on achieving the specific goals of each project. The organization of these efforts reflects the belief that the most efficient way to manage the limited resources of the international group is to mount problem-eradication programs. The steps of this approach are straightforward: identify a problem, engage experts to develop a solution, direct local actors to carry out the expert-designed plan, and the problem is resolved.

In contrast, the way GANs operate tends to bring people and organizations from the different sectors together to tackle big challenges at local and global levels simultaneously. To give you a sense of what a GAN looks like and how it works, let's look at the example of Transparency International (TI). TI came into being in 1993 with a mission to stop corruption and promote transparency, accountability and integrity at all levels and across all sectors of society. By 2010 it had a global headquarters staff of 138, based in Geneva, Switzerland, and an annual budget of a little more than 18 million Euros—a small amount to cover a worldwide fight against corruption. Outside of Geneva, TI consists of a network of more than ninety national chapters. Each chapter works in its own country to engage key people in government, civil society, business, and the media to promote transparency in elections, in public administration, in government procurement, and in business. The global network of chapters, along with their local partners, mounts advocacy campaigns to raise

international awareness of the corruption problem and to put pressure on national governments to implement anti-corruption reforms.[120]

These efforts have made some significant inroads against the problem of corruption. For example, they have provided a common language for talking about corruption and a common standard for measuring it. TI has also made corruption the topic of a national-level conversation within many countries. For example, Transparency Ethiopia, in cooperation with the Ethiopian Federal Ethics and Anti-Corruption Commission, convened prominent reporters in a public roundtable discussion of the existing barriers to reporting on corruption. This group agreed to continue what started as a one-time discussion by coming together to support an on-going series of public anti-corruption discussions. Similarly, TI El Salvador partnered with two federal agencies to launch an initiative to enhance fiscal transparency by subjecting the country's budget process to more citizen access and input. In this way, TI has been able to make global changes, one nation at a time, with very limited resources but an effective strategy of collaboration.

TI's strategy is representative of how other GANs, such as the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict and the Global Water Partnership operate. The GANs do their work by focusing simultaneously on the three levels of perceived reality. The GAN keeps the topic of its global advocacy—its deep vision for the change that is possible—front and center, as an organizing principle. This is what we see through the value lens. This possibility-light level focus drives the work of the whole network. From within its possibility-light vision, the GAN chooses the highest-leverage, development-motion level processes to bring that possibility into development in local settings around the world.

Through the resource lens, we encounter another GAN principle: to see the best in everyone. Many GANs do a good job of documenting what different groups have to offer. This is a possibility-level approach to resources. Looking through the resource allocation lens, we find that GANs typically seek to engage all relevant voices at all levels of decision-making. Organizationally, they make this possible in part by maintaining a strong focus on "glocal" (global-local) network communication and learning systems. They do a lot of experimenting with ways to share across the globe what is being learned locally. One organizational innovation that particularly intrigues me is the GAN pattern of maintaining a very lean staff in headquarters. Often you will find a group of fewer than 20 people coordinating a networked organizational structure that spans the globe. At the same time, the GANs, show up strongly in local action, delivering clear outcomes for their funders. This is effective functioning at the things-matter level.
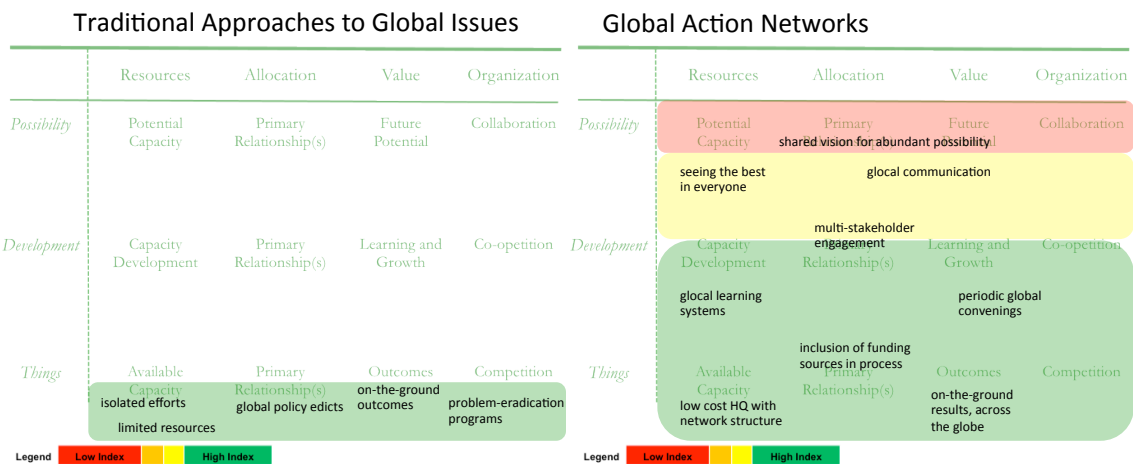
Traditional Approaches to Global Issues

	Resources	Allocation	Value	Organization
Possibility	Potential Capacity	Primary Relationship(s)	Future Potential	Collaboration
Development	Capacity Development	Primary Relationship(s)	Learning and Growth	Co-opetition
Things	Available Capacity — isolated efforts, limited resources	Primary Relationship(s) — global policy edicts	Outcomes — on-the-ground outcomes	Competition — problem-eradication programs

Legend: Low Index — High Index

Global Action Networks

	Resources	Allocation	Value	Organization
Possibility	Potential Capacity — seeing the best in everyone	Primary — shared vision for abundant possibility; glocal communication; multi-stakeholder engagement	Future	Collaboration
Development	Capacity Development — glocal learning systems	Relationship(s)	Learning and Growth — periodic global convenings	Co-opetition
Things	Available Capacity — low cost HQ with network structure	Primary Relationship(s) — inclusion of funding sources in process	Outcomes — on-the-ground results, across the globe	Competition

Legend: Low Index — High Index

Figure 28: Agreements Maps of Traditional Approaches to Global Issues and GANs

GANs provide a great example of what Ecosynomics is all about. No matter what global issue they are taking on, the founders of these GANs all seem to see the same thing when looking through the resource lens—they see abundance. They see this abundance at all three levels of reality—in the future that is possible, in the capacities and relationships to develop over time, and in the worldwide actions that people can take on to bring about that change.

Through the allocation lens, the GANs hold all five primary relationships to be necessary to work with the abundant possibilities they envision. In the self, they believe they need the best each individual can bring. In the other, they know that their work requires collaborative processes of mutuality among the different members and stakeholders engaged in the work. In the group, they see that each person and perspective needs to be clear in the contribution his or her work makes to the higher aspiration. In nature, they have to be able to take an audacious possibility, develop high-leverage capacities to achieve it, and deliver very real outcomes, all over the globe. In spirit, this audacious goal can only be achieved if all of the creativity available, everywhere and in everyone, is brought to the work. This means that they are clear that they cannot achieve what they want without the explicit inclusion of all five primary relationships from the beginning.

Thus, when they look through the value lens, they see the need to develop global-local, multi-sector, multi-stakeholder approaches for identifying the allocation criteria everyone holds in common, as well as the criteria unique to each stakeholder. This does not keep them from assessing on-the-ground results from their localized efforts around the world. Finally, through organization lens, the GANs have taken on the commitment to experiment with continuous learning systems that facilitate sharing globally what is being learned locally. This ongoing communication is interwoven with periodic global face-to-face meetings that are carefully designed to support all five primary relationships. GANs provide us a concrete example of what working in such a system can look like.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I have used the Agreements Map to highlight the differences between various pairs of systems that seem to have similar goals but different approaches to achieving them. It can be difficult to see why the experience of one system seems so different from another: why town meeting is different from traditional town administration; why needs-based development is different from asset-based development; why traditional ways of addressing global issues are different from GANs. The Agreements Map helps to make the differences easier to see by capturing evidence of the underlying agreements in each system. These are the understandings that everyone knows about, uses and could describe, and they help explain why living in the different systems can be so different at the experiential level.

This use of the Agreements Map demonstrates how the lenses derived from the four basic questions of economics can clarify our experiences of the five primary relationships at the three levels of perceived reality. The maps organize the evidence of what the experience in a particular system is like and allow comparison between that and the experience of a different system. We can ask ourselves, which experience do we prefer? Then we can start to uncover the agreements that support the preferred experience and begin to think about how we can shift our agreements in that direction. This is the topic of Chapter 8.

Before I move on to describing a process for making such a shift, however, I want to state clearly that I do *not* assume that one system is "better" than another because people are working with more levels of perceived reality—that is, more of the map is colored green. I believe that higher vibrancy agreements bring out more human potential and lead to greater development of that potential. I also believe that they incur lower costs of scarcity, as discussed in Chapter 6. That does not mean they are better. They are just different.

For example, the needs-based developmental approach has helped many people. One large recent example of this is the development of the United Nation's Millennium Development Goals. As one of the intellectual authors of the goals, economist Jeffrey Sachs made clear in his many speeches that this initiative addressed some very basic needs that had to be met, such as providing inexpensive bed nets to fight the mosquitoes causing malaria. It is a relatively easy solution to a huge problem that just needs to happen.[121]

One approach is not necessarily better than the other, and the agreements supporting them are very different. The point of this whole exercise is to enable ourselves to choose the experience we want by choosing the agreements that support that kind of experience. To choose the system we want, we need to be able to see and work with agreements. With that clarification, let's move on to looking at ways to do just that.