

# Neo-collectivist Consciousness as a Driver of Transformative Sociocultural Change

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## Abstract

*This paper situates the novel concept of neo-collectivist consciousness, developed by the author, within the framework of social and cultural dynamics of the 21st century. The dominant features of neo-collectivist consciousness are determined by integration of the value systems of collectivist and individualist cultures, as revealed by the scenarios derived from Causal Layered Analysis. The emerging neo-collectivistic culture espouses progressive elements of traditional collectivistic cultures and integrates them with those features of individualistic societies that foster sustainability. Further, Cultural Creatives and sustainable communities are identified as weak signals of the emerging neo-collectivist consciousness.*

**Keywords:** Sustainable communities, cultural creatives, individualistic culture, neo-collectivist consciousness, Causal Layered Analysis, social change.

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## Introduction

The survival of planet Earth is hanging by a thread. More than ever before, humankind has a reason to worry about an impending global catastrophe, as just recently greenhouse gas concentrations crossed the symbolic and significant 400 parts per million thresholds, even in Antarctica, according to the World Meteorological Organization (2016). This situation will hasten climate change, and apart from natural planetary cycles, it is also due to population growth compounded with unsustainable practices of the 21st century. Suzuki (1997) points out the root cause of the need for endless growth that can be “suicidal for any species that lives in a finite world” (Suzuki, 1997, p.212). He believes that it is the arrogant belief that although there are about 30 million species on the planet, humans have the right to use and abuse the natural resources exclusively for their own advancement. Since current problems cannot be solved with the same type of consciousness that created them (according to Einstein’s much quoted statement), there is an urgent need to investigate alternatives to the materialistic worldviews of the prevailing individualistic cultural paradigm in the West, as well as analogous used futures that are now spreading elsewhere. As the result of globalization, even former communist countries who were valuing ideology over materialism are now joining third world countries copying the materialistic

value system originally developed in the West. Seeking alternative solutions, this paper is undertaking the exploration of the type of consciousness that may foster sustainable futures through integration of dominant past and present values and worldviews, embodied in the collectivist and individualist cultural paradigm (sections 4 & 5). The integration of the characteristics of these two cultural systems resulted in development of a template for a new type of consciousness, identified and labelled by the author as neo-collectivist consciousness that is already germinating in certain sections of society, as a weak signal of cultural change. This new neo-collectivist consciousness (section 6.3) considers the past through creative traditionalism valuing the wisdom of previous generations (Bussey, 2015), as well as it looks to the future by embracing sustainability thinking. Thus, neo-collectivist consciousness integrates past, present and future to attain sustainable futures.

## Methods and Methodology

The current research is analysing social change as reflected in the transformation of values and worldviews, resulting in changed social consciousness (Rifkin, 2010; Sorokin, 1970). These changes of consciousness become evident through analysis of the evolution of consciousness along an extended time span, offered by macrohistory, as a methodology. Macrohistory is offering broad perspectives and specific tools for the study of the grand cycles of change in the history of diverse cultures. Macrohistorians are concerned with identification of patterns and drivers of social change (Christian, 2005; Galtung & Inayatullah, 1997). Scholars engaged in macrohistory identified a variety of patterns of change such as linear, cyclic, pendulum, bifurcation and spiral patterns (Galtung & Inayatullah, 1997). These patterns can have a predictive value and offer insight into deeper sociocultural changes. Although most of the above patterns can be useful in revealing causation to various degrees, for the purposes of this paper, the principal methodology utilised is Sorokin's theory of social and cultural dynamics (Sorokin, 1970). Sorokin's broad historical analysis presents an, "integrated conceptual approach to the nature of humanness, knowledge, conflict resolution, and prosocial forms of human organization" (Johnston, 1999, p.25). Thus, the macrohistory perspective of this paper, presents an integral approach to the problems and solutions of the 21st century.

Russian sociologist Sorokin (1889-1968), who migrated to the USA to escape persecution in his homeland, was 'forgotten' for a few decades. However, he was recently re-discovered, as his concepts seem to be relevant in understanding current upheavals and emerging social trends worldwide. Sorokin's theory of social and cultural dynamics is based on a comprehensive analysis of 2,000 years of history; and when put to test over the past 60 years it yielded remarkably accurate predictions about current sociocultural developments.

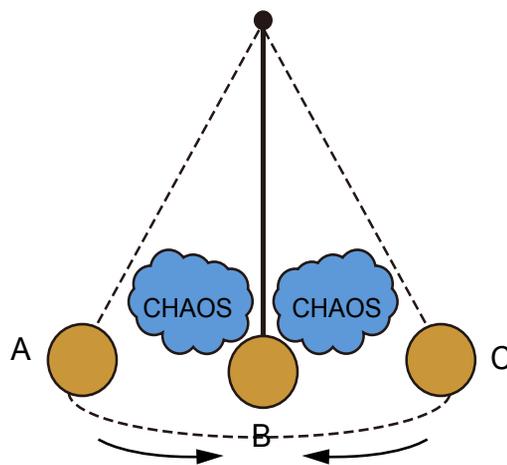
Already in the 1950s, Sorokin described features of the current postmodern period with uncanny accuracy. According to his theory society is presently transitioning from 600 years of a Sensate culture to the Idealistic culture of creative futures (Nieli, 2006). Apart from these two 'culture mentalities' detailed below, Sorokin also recognises the third, Ideational mentality. These culture mentalities are typically prominent in corresponding historic time periods. For example, analysing the beginnings of the past millennium, Sorokin observes the Ideational epoch in the Middle Ages, with a value system comprised of absolute, eternal, and everlasting values, embedded in extreme religiosity. The contempt or indifference towards the material world, typical of the Ideational epoch, is also detectable in artistic expression, where the artist's individual contribution is not acknowledged materially or otherwise, and the predominantly symbolic works of art are, "merely the visible signs of the invisible world and inner values" (Sorokin, 1970, p.34).

The Ideational epoch is always followed by a transitional period called Idealistic, where all previous values undergo a gradual change, and elements of the previous and next epochs become integrated into a new inclusive value system, like in the example of the Renaissance period. Thus, the Idealistic epoch's cultural expressions are both spiritual and material, and involve spirituality

and personal transformation (self-development), balanced with the material elements of the external sensate world. The era following the Idealistic period is called the Sensate epoch. Sorokin stipulates that the values in this epoch become increasingly superficial and materialistic with a desire for immediate, transient, and short-lived experiences, with art and the physical environment designed specifically to arouse and satisfying the senses. These basic culture mentalities are further divided into sub groups that provide nuance to the main groups by detailing the lead-in and tailing-out characteristics.

Sorokin postulates that the reasons for social change are inherent to the system (principle of immanent causation), and as such, are not influenced by outside circumstances to any significant degree. This view is diverging from the more popular externalist theories of change, such as the ‘stimulus-response’ theory of behavioural science. Therefore, following Sorokin, this research is essentially focusing on underlying inner causation of world events in the form of values and worldviews.

The second fundamental reason for a change in sociocultural systems is inertia, when a specific culture have exhausted all the options offered by a particular value system, and thus the culture reached its upper limit (principle of limits). These two laws advance cultures in a cyclic manner, from one extreme to the other and back again, with intermediate periods between each of the two major epochs (Ideational and Sensate). The movement of the epochs over time can be visualised by the movement of the pendulum (Figure 1), hence, some authors refer to Sorokin’s theory as the pendulum theory of social change (Daffara, 2004).



*Figure 1.* Sorokin’s Pendulum Theory demonstrating the dynamics of sociocultural change - two major epochs swing back and forth in time, connected by transitional periods displaying chaos and subsequent integration of polarities.

In this paper, macrohistory, as methodology, is embedded in critical futures epistemology. Further, the analysis is also enhanced by insights from cross-cultural psychology. Thus, the paper is essentially interdisciplinary, in line with a growing trend in academic research (Lyll & Meagher, 2012).

The method of choice for the vertical analysis of diverse forms of cultural systems in this research is the Causal Layered Analysis (CLA), developed by Inayatullah (1998). This futures studies tool considers four layers of phenomena, progressively deepening the inquiry. The layers consist of litany, social causes, worldview, and myth/metaphor; considering both tangible and intangible components of a given issue. Physical and social structures comprise the tangible features of surface layers that are obvious to the casual observer. However, the more important

considerations in the CLA analysis are the intangible elements, such as belief systems, worldviews, and metaphors existing on a subconscious level, that underlie all observable external phenomena. This perspective is closely aligned with the methodology of this paper.

## **Weak Signals of Social Change Characterised by Sustainability Thinking, Social Engineering and Chaos**

The important role of sustainability thinking in facilitation of significant social change is widely recognised in the discourses of the 21st century (Ravetz, 2006; Stamm, 2009; Tibbs, 2011). However, the common definition of sustainability usually refers to the material domain, where apparently all problems can be solved by modern technology. This techno-optimistic approach is expanded by Jeremy Rifkin (2011), proposing the theory of the Third Industrial Revolution. Rifkin's revolution facilitates the merging of the internet and renewable energy sources, to affect economic and social systems worldwide. The processes proposed by Rifkin are endorsed by the European Union Parliament, and implemented by some heads of state, global CEOs, social entrepreneurs, and NGOs. On the social level, economic changes affecting the interconnected Generation X and the Millennial Generation are coupled with a new dramaturgical consciousness, "propelling a younger generation to global cosmopolitanism and a universal empathic sensibility" (Rifkin, 2010, p.554). However, Shirky (2009) points out that just as this newly found collaboration can be positive when young people join to defy oppressive governments, it can be equally negative, when for example, girls share advice for staying dangerously skinny. Nevertheless, it is heartening to see the emergence of some lofty ideals in the midst of the garbage dished out daily through television and social media. The resilience of this progressive trend is currently demonstrated in the emerging value system advocated by the Cultural Creatives (Ray & Anderson, 2000), indicating an incipient cultural change. Thus, as predicated by Gidley (2007), evolution of consciousness is intimately linked with sociocultural change.

## **Social Engineering: Worldwide Collaboration as an Indicator of Social Change**

Rapid change in human consciousness facilitated by modern technology is evident in the gradual expansion and development of collective intelligence worldwide. This new phenomenon is a form of universally distributed intelligence, functioning in real time, and resulting in a collaborative mobilisation of skills, understanding and knowledge (Levy, 1999). However, shared skills and knowledge don't always lead to higher consciousness, as their use depends on the goals and value system of the user. Consequently, the genocides in Africa, and the rise of radicalised Islamism, and emerging tribalisation, are all facilitated by knowledge shared through modern technology. These variances in the use of technology would be due to evolutionary processes. From a macrohistory perspective, every culture is subject to its own patterns of change since, "the existence of different levels of being having different values is an evident and undeniable manifestation of the great law of evolution" (Assagioli, 1973, p.98). Nevertheless, these examples of misappropriated shared knowledge via technology are neither a judgement, nor a negation of the positive evolutionary potential of collective intelligence.

Uses of collective intelligence in the West can be identified in activities connected with the collaborative commons. This new form of collaborative governance is inspired by the work of Elinor Ostrom (2015), and implemented in the common management of urban, environmental, cultural milieu through formal institutionalised public-private-community partnerships. Thus, collaborative governance consists of social innovators, public authorities, businesses, community

organisations, and knowledge institutions (schools, universities, cultural institutions). According to Ramos (2012, p.2), collaborative networks are acting as “seed-beds of change and transformation, and are the foundations for emerging global movement(s) and projects for change”.

Referring to social change, Levy (1999) postulates that we are at the beginning of a new era, a paradigm shift of the magnitude of the Renaissance. From the perspective of the Pendulum Theory, the Renaissance period in history was the Idealistic transitional period connecting the Ideational and the Sensate epochs. However, currently we are supposed to be in the transition from the Sensate to the Ideational epoch, and as such, it is preceded by the chaos of the brake-down of the dominant social order (see section 3.2). Chaos, upheavals, wars, and brake down of the social order in the transitional period are therefore an integral parts of social change (Botta, 2015). Further, Stavrianos (1976) postulates that the ‘dark age’ is required for progress, as it gradually eliminates the old non-functional social system. Thus, wars and upheavals in Iraq, Syria, Libya, and the attempts of the Arab Spring, all can be understood as grim, but necessary vehicles of social change, according to the pendulum theory.

Nevertheless, concurrently new systems are emerging to replace the old. Levy’s claim of the new Renaissance is evidenced in the rapid spread of collective intelligence using peer-to-peer (P2P) platforms (physical, digital and institutional) - aspiring to live together (collaborative services), grow together (co-ventures), and create together (co-production). Internet based P2P services such as Tradepal, catering for real-time marketplaces; Bitcoin, an alternative currency; Open Garden, a connection sharing application providing Internet access to other devices using Wi-Fi or Bluetooth, are all expanding at a steady rate.

As with all collaborative enterprises, cooperation among participants is the principal characteristic and requirement of the P2P systems. The system can only reach its full potential with contribution from a large numbers of nodes (participants). Latest research is aimed at exploring how virtual communities self-organise and introduce incentives for resource sharing to foster cooperation. According to Antoniadis (2007), incentive mechanisms in P2P systems could be based on principles from game theory, and as such, should be directed towards a more sociological/psychological approach. This approach could eventually have universal impact on changes in general psychological functioning and personal growth, in accordance with Levy’s paradigm shift.

Personal change can be facilitated by introspection, prompting individuals to reflect on what they do, say and think. This approach to self-development has become widespread in the Western world through the past few decades, with the popularisation of certain types of meditation originating from India. In the West, introspection has been advocated by the father of modern psychology Wundt, at the dawn of the 20th century as voluntarism, the process of organizing the mind (McLeod, 2008). However, arguably the most comprehensive teachings about introspection have been an integral part of Buddhism for centuries. These teachings were adopted by a significant number of individuals throughout the Western world, contributing to subtle changes in consciousness. Consequently, it appears that some evolutionary aspects of Western culture may have derived considerable benefits from incidental cross-cultural influences. However, not all intercultural interactions lead to positive social outcomes

## **Chaos: Intercultural Tension as a Result of Sociocultural Change**

Clashes between differing worldviews are unavoidable in the current multicultural climate where conceptions of identity and subjectivity are being challenged (Huntington, 2007; Oliver, 2001); giving rise to the fixing of, “the Other in a kind of basic objecthood” (Sardar, 1999, p.71). Ideological differences have recently become more intense, leading to physical clashes, partly as the result of recent mass migration from the East to the West and the inevitable mixing of cultures. Culturally rooted behaviour condoned in one part of the world is not necessarily acceptable

in another. There were particularly striking examples of collisions of worldviews and related moral positions in many European cities at New Year's Eve celebrations in 2015. In an obvious orchestrated attack, groups of men of African and Arab origin decided to attack European women in a gang rape game called 'Taharrush' (Charlton, 2016). These games are apparently quite common in North Africa; however, they are not condoned in the European culture. The tension between the differing worldviews/religion is creating anxiety and chaos that is not easy to resolve. These appear to be the hallmarks of the late Sensate era, facing the inevitability of a major change, as predicated by Sorokin (1979).

Blending of cultures is unavoidable in our current interconnected world, requiring tolerance and major adjustments in sociocultural systems worldwide. Some extremist groups in both Africa and the Arab peninsula are vehemently resisting the infiltration of Western democratic ideas into their culture that are foreign to their traditional worldviews. A well-known example of such an extreme stance was the case of the fifteen year old Malala, who was shot by the Taliban on a bus ride home from her school in Pakistan in 2012, just because she was promoting education for girls (Yousafzai & Lamb, 2013). On a larger scale, another shocking example of extremists trying to impart strict Muslim values on the female population and prevent girls' schooling in Nigeria, Africa, is the case of the Chibok school girls' kidnapping by Boko Haram in 2014. This extremist terrorist organization believes that western-style modern education lures people away from Islamic teaching and way of life. Apparently, according to Islam slavery is condoned and the sole purpose of women is to serve men (Lister, 2014). Earlier kidnappings of girls in Algeria in the 1990s and early 2000s was justified by the same rationalization (Lazreg, 2009).

The outcomes of these crimes against women can result in two divergent scenarios. Some women endure many years of persecution and emerge positive and victorious, like Ang Sun Suu Kiy (Bonne, 2010). Similarly, contrary to expectations, Malala Yousafzai was not deterred by her near death ordeal, and continues to promote education for girls; even becoming a well-known figure all over the world, as a promoter of peace and an activist for women's right to education. In the past few years she achieved admiration from both men and women, and is a recipient of numerous prestigious prizes, such as the Nobel Peace Prize, Sakharov Prize, Simone de Beauvoir Prize, Honorary Canadian citizenship, National Youth Peace Prize, to name a few. On the other hand, some of the 219 girls from the Chibok kidnapping were brain washed and radicalised to become jihadists, alongside their captors. They often end up as suicide bombers, and were observed to flog women who cannot recite the Qur'an properly, and slit the throats of captured males (Smith, 2015).

It is evident that the issue of religion is at the centre of the above upheavals. Radical Islamists often specify the reason for their attack on Western society as a disgust over immoral over sexualised clothing and behaviour. They also claim moral superiority based on their religion, and a lack of it, in the West (Afolabim, Adi, & Bodunde, 2016).

The Pendulum Theory assigns religion a central role in sociocultural change. The most significant difference between the current Sensate and the successive Idealistic epoch is the change of values towards more spirituality/religiosity. Sorokin's principle of limits determines that the current disregard for the importance of spiritual values and practices in the Sensate epoch is nearing the end of its lifespan. There are already signs of yearning for a more spiritual existence (Alexandrova & Nancy, 2012; Bachika, 2002). Moreover, Gidley (2005) recognises the need to re-vitalise Western culture through a synthesis of rational and trans-rational (spiritually inspired) thinking. The necessity to integrate the horizontal (mundane) and vertical (spiritual) dimensions of life to cure our 'maladies' is also emphasised by (Giri, 2013). Thus, the above extreme behaviours of radical Islamists can be viewed as the function of a social and cultural change in the drawn out traumatic process of inevitable cultural transformation. Moreover, the fundamental disparity of Eastern and Western values is augmented by an inherent cultural incompatibility of their respective individualist and collectivist worldviews.

## **Integration of Collectivism and Individualism: An Evolutionary Journey**

This research would not be complete without a comprehensive analysis of the characteristics of collectivism and individualism, since the source of current worldwide tension appears to be the ideological incompatibility of these two cultural value systems.

Collectivism has deep-seated roots in the history of civilisation. Traditional collectivism was a dominant social organisation in agrarian societies of the past. It was characterised by the requirement for self-regulation and adjustments to the needs of the group and to the common good, by subjugating personal needs and desires. This type of social organisation would naturally foster cohesion and resilience, aimed to withstand foreign threats of any kind. Throughout millennia collectivism served as a powerful system to secure successful survival and advancement of our species. An example of this resilience are the Aboriginal Australians who follow a social system characterised by strong interdependent, collectivist motives. Values such as connectedness, family, tradition, and conformity are still strong determinants of Aboriginal behaviour mainly in rural communities (Fogarty & White, 1994).

However, in the past few centuries, collectivism has been gradually replaced by an individualistic social organisation, as the result of the advancing capitalist economic paradigm. Nevertheless, there are some current examples of collectivism still remaining in some remote areas in Europe, as well as, in most Asian cultures, particularly in Japan and China. In these cultures, children are taught to fit in with others and avoid standing out from the crowd. A popular proverb in Japan warns children not to be too individualistic as, “the nail that stands out gets pounded down.” Children learn that throughout their lives they can rely on family and friends, that they should be modest about their personal accomplishments and not diminish others’ achievements. Consequently, the accomplishments of their group/tribe are more important than their own personal achievements. Asian youngsters typically learn to define themselves in terms of the group affiliations. Their harmonious relations with others and their pride in group achievements become the basis for their sense of self-worth (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Diener and Diener (1995) point out that in Japan, self-esteem does not correlate with subjective well-being to the same extent as it does in Western cultures that are driven by individualistic goals and desires. This cultural denominator clearly supports individual resilience and social cohesion.

Asian socialisation practices foster interdependency and connectedness of people to each other, whereas Western parenting teaches children to be self-reliant, and to view themselves as special individuals. Children are encouraged to excel in competitive endeavours and to strive to stand out from the crowd (Cross & Markus, 1999). Thus, Markus and Kitayama (1991) argued that American culture fosters an independent view of self. American youngsters learn to define themselves in terms of their personal attributes, abilities, accomplishments, and possessions. Their unique strengths and achievements become the basis for their sense of self-worth. This conditioned attitude often breeds greed, envy, and self-criticism, leading to lower self-esteem (Kitayama, Markus, Matsumoto, & Norasakkunkit, 1997), since there are only very few winners in the ‘dog eats dog’ world of late capitalism, riddled with social inequity.

Growing discontent with social inequity is becoming evident in many part of the Western world. However, social injustice is not a new phenomenon. What is new is the spread of defiant and critical attitudes to this imbalance. This outlook differs from past acceptance of oppression by the ruling classes, when hierarchy was considered to be ordained by God. In the networked and globalised world of the 21st century there is a call for transparency, and there is increasing social pressure to eliminate injustice and discrimination, to develop tolerance and integrate values on the cultural level, as well as in the economic domain, to advance a peaceful global community (Groff, 2002).

### Deep Cultures: Analysis Of Pros And Cons Of Distinguishing Self-Construals

In view of current social upheavals worldwide, it is crucial to consider the influence of culture on human behaviour, and the effect of these behaviours on our potential for securing sustainable futures. Culture can be defined as, “the learned and shared behaviour of a community of interacting human beings” (Useem & Useem, 1963, p.169). This interaction is aimed at strengthening the particular culture, and according to Damen (1987), it serves as humankind’s primary adaptive mechanism. As such, it helps cultures to survive adverse environmental conditions, whether these are induced by humans or by nature. Remarkably, it appears that current human behaviour, particularly in high politics, reveals a culture not particularly concerned with long-term survival.

Closer examination of the internal drivers of cultures can facilitate understanding of the above paradox. Culture is most often viewed as a homogenous entity, however, cultures are comprised of individuals governed by intrinsic self-construals, defined as a range of self-relevant schemata applied to evaluate, organise, and regulate the individual’s experience and actions (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Therefore, Marcus and Kitayama (1991) compare the impact of self-construal on the individuals’ cognition, emotion and motivation, within two distinct categories: independent (individualist) and interdependent (collectivist), depending on the individual’s cultural background, as compiled in Table 1.

Table 1. *Determining features of interdependent and independent construals of the self*

Interdependent	Independent
sensitive to others	self-centered and self absorbed
knowledge about persons or the self will only extend as far as the focal context (the relationship or situation)	knowledge of the self is more elaborate and distinct in memory than other persons
tendency to categorise based on social context and others’ reactions	tendency to attribute behaviour to the individual’s internal traits (Fundamental Attribution Error)
emotions will be expressed in accordance with social expectations	need to be experts in expressing emotions to manipulate situations for selfish gains
intensity and frequency of emotions is controlled and emotions are other-focused	need to acquire expertise in asserting feelings to achieve individual goals
motives are social and involve seeking connectedness and interpersonal harmony	motives are ego-focused, aimed at enhancing one’s self-esteem, achievement, and self-actualisation

Both, dependent and independent self-construals carry inherent limitations; and consequences of divergence from the explicit or implicit rules of the culture can be severe. In Asian cultures, there is considerable emphasis on sympathy, caring, respect for superiors (Confucian heritage), and actions based on other-oriented situations. Consequently, motivation, cognition and emotion of individuals need to be adjusted to fit this model. Since emotions are other-focused, expressed emotions are likely to be discouraged on the individual level, and lead to inhibition and ambivalence (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Therefore, the Asian character is often viewed by Westerners as ‘cold’ and controlled.

Consequences of having an independent construal of the self can involve aggression and interpersonal conflict in the process of seeking personal and social gratification. Often there is an inherent ignorance of others’ needs and feelings, and an urge to push ahead or socially separating the self in order to achieve. In contrast to interdependent behaviour, independent individuals are often not as effective at controlling emotions as interdependent individuals. This culture-based disparity

can lead to overt judgements and criticism. For example, Marcus and Kitayama (1991) note that the Eskimos regard anger as childish.

In sum, individuals as building blocks of cultures, display culture bound cognition of self-construal with diverse objectives. Collectivist cultures favour individuals with interdependent self-construal working for long-term resilience of the whole culture, often at personal costs to the individual. On the other hand, individualistic cultures foster independent self-construal with heavy reliance on personal strength and focus on short-term individual gain, often at the expense of long-term survival of the whole culture. Clearly, there are ‘irreconcilable differences’ between these two cultural paradigms (see Table 1).

## **CLA: Vertical Analysis of Social Organisations**

This section provides a comparison of the collectivist cultural system, dominant worldwide in the past and largely still prevalent in developing countries, with the individualist cultural system typical of the current postmodern Western society. The integration of the characteristics of these two systems results in a novel neo-collectivist scenario with a potential to foster alternative sustainable futures.

### **Collectivistic cultural characteristics**

The determining attributes of the collectivistic social organisation were briefly outlined in Section 4. The principal aspect of the worldview is belief in an innate order and divinely pre-ordained hierarchy. Consequently, the typical collectivist society has a solid spiritual structure based on a given religion. This side of the collectivist culture can be positive or negative. The negative side of the typically androcratic culture displays a patriarchal dominator model with a strong militaristic worldview, leading to ‘othering’ (Eisler, 1987; Milojevic, 2013). Apart from regular military warfare to assert power, the second most important role of the rulers in many collectivist societies was their spiritual leadership. Typically, rulers claimed to be anointed by God, and became heads of their respective churches, instilling a theocratic regime favouring control and suppression on every level.

However, collectivism does not have to be violent and totalitarian. The ultimate collectivist culture according to Confucius (Lau, 1992), should be under the leadership of a virtuous ruler, who would be granted the power over his people on the basis of moral merits instead of lineage. This type of ruler would strive for personal and social perfection, wisdom and understanding of the human character. This understanding would result in long-term social stability, as he would be capable of selecting ministers with desirable characteristics. As much as Confucius tried to put his doctrines into practice in ancient China around 500 BC, society was not ready to implement them in any significant way. Throughout his life Confucius was ridiculed and physically attacked, and the description of his efforts ends with these two words *pu-yung*, “he was not used” (Watson, 1958, p.172). Thus, apart from some rare examples of virtuous rulers hundreds of years later, China, as well as the rest of collectivist societies, were mostly plagued by totalitarian rulers, even to present day. This is the downside of collectivism. The Confucian heritage that holds order as paramount, and pairs it with formulaic legalism, is a convenient excuse for the current Chinese regime to legitimise suppression of alternative views.

Collectivist cultures traditionally worship deities, and gain their cultural identities through association with a particular religion. This religion then acts as a glue, contributing to social cohesion (Geertz, 1993). The natural hierarchy in society is usually not questioned, and the top of the hierarchy is always the God and his human embodiment (king). The God (or main God if there are several) is always of a male gender in patriarchal societies. Thus, the metaphor selected for the CLA befitting this cultural organisation is sourced from the Christian bible, and depicts the good

shepherd (Jesus) looking after his flock. This image of a wise and caring provider, analogous to the theory of Confucius, would be a desirable future in collectivist cultures. Individuals in traditionally stratified societies, such as was the case of ancient Egypt, do not object to being looked after or ruled by a dominant authority, provided this authority is not overly abusive. This system persisted for millennia in relative peace, and uprisings were unheard of, even in times of famines. This scenario derived from the first column of the CLA is aligned with the collectivist paradigm.

### **Individualistic cultural characteristics**

The second column of CLA analyses the individualistic system of culture. As opposed to the collectivist culture, authority in the mainly Western individualistic societies is under constant scrutiny, where democratic processes rather than dictatorship are the governing leadership styles. Society is organised along the scaffolding provided by rules and regulations devised by policy makers, rather than the Gods. These rules are most often governed by the market, as ‘money makes the world go round’. In fact, the desire to earn and own more is an overwhelming aspiration in the late capitalist epoch (Sorokin, 1970), and individuals who succeed financially are generally revered and celebrated as heroes/heroines. Hercules and other ancient heroes, such as Prometheus, saving other humans, are not admired as much these days as is Donald Trump or Clive Palmer, who ‘made it’ by themselves and for themselves. Western society might have inherited the democratic political system from the Greeks, but seems to be moulded foremost along the ancient Roman values of patriarchy, physical strength/aggression, all characteristic of a bellicose culture (from Latin *bellicus* ‘warlike’). War begets war, and apart from some brief periods of peace in the in-between periods, lasting peace is unachievable under the current paradigm. Sorokin’s (1970) research of over 2,000 years of human history demonstrated sociocultural changes on many levels, however, the amount of wars did not diminish. War seems to be still one of the most enduring traits of human culture across the globe (Sorokin, 1970).

If we accept the assumption that Western culture is based on the foundations of ancient Rome, based on a “blend of historicized myth and mythified history” (Waswo, 1997, p.3), it is prudent to examine the roots and deep seated values of that culture more deeply. Many facets of Roman art and culture were directly adopted from Etruscan and Greek originals (Bartlett, 2009). The foremost personification of Roman Empire was Mars, a symbol of power and majesty, morphed from the Etruscan deity Maris, originally a spirit of farming and agriculture. In Roman mythology, Maris was merged with the Greek Ares, resulting in the distinctive emblem of the imperial god of war (Bartlett, 2009). Thus, the Romans inherited elements of both, the Etruscan and Greek culture, and transformed them to suit their more hardened cultural attributes.

Following the Romans, industrial and post-industrial societies of the West have a high regard for personal power and status. However, the competition to ‘get there’ can be a tough and lonely endeavour. Therefore, the myth/metaphor of the CLA for the individualistic culture is the image of the Greek Titan Atlas carrying the world/cosmos on his shoulders. According to one of the many versions of the myth, Atlas had to hold up this heavy weight as a punishment meted out by the king of the Gods Zeus, because he sided with the Titans (and against Zeus), in the war of the Titans against the Olympian gods. The individualist metaphor of Atlas points out that rocking the status quo is not encouraged and may be punished, even in democratic individualistic cultures.

In individualistic societies, where competition is a common way of advancement in life, individuals often stand to fight by themselves, just like the character of Atlas. With the demise of the classic extended family, that was a supportive and nurturing environment, there are new and diverse designs for domestic partnerships, with the resulting propensity for divorce, remarriage, single parents, joint custody, abortion and two career households (Booth, Jagger, & Wright, 2000). Materialism, another major feature of the post-industrial society is the source of extra pressure on

the shoulders of individuals and households. Often it takes a ‘titanic effort’ to balance work and home, and to hold together all the different components of family life (Beck-Gernsheim, 1998).

Myers (2003) postulates, that there is both a psychic and environmental cost to materialism, and that human morale have not been increasing along with economic growth. Myers points to two reasons why materialism and increasing affluence fail to satisfy - the adaptation level phenomenon, where people always want more than they already have; and social comparison, as somebody else always has more than they have. Similarly, according to Csikszentmihalyi (1999) affluence does not make people happy. Csikszentmihalyi noted that although high tech gadgets are prevalent, low consumption recreations continues to be more satisfying. Accordingly, talking to friends makes people happier than watching television. It appears, that as predicted by Sorokin (1970), the post-industrial consumer society reached its limits in a ‘crisis of modernity’, and is ready to enter a new evolutionary cycle. This new phase will be characterised by globalisation turning into slowbalisation, with less available physical and financial resources, and more focus on the Economy of Happiness (Bakas, 2009).

Table 2. *Causal Layered Analysis of three systems of culture*

	COLLECTIVISTIC	INDIVIDUALISTIC	NEO-COLLECTIVISTIC
Litany	‘Concentric world’ defined by a central ruling figure and stratified society with clear demarcation between classes.	‘Carpentered world’ dominated by straight lines, right angles, and rectangular rooms, buildings, and furniture.	Experimental amalgamation of evolutionary advantages of both, collectivism and individualism. Depolarisation & harmony.
Social causes	Clearly defined ruling institutions (secular and spiritual often overlap), and their roles are fixed and incontestable. Churches and royal palaces are the most dominant architectural features.	Institutions and governments often change, yielding to public or market pressures. Leadership is always secular. Ever expanding shopping centres and large variety of banks/lending intitutions ‘feed’ materialistic cravings.	Leadership style is characterised by maturity and a strong moral core. Minimal number of institutions needed, as internal authority rather than external authority will prevail.
Worldview	There is an innate hierarchy and order in the universe, and as long as we abide by the rules and stand together we are strong, protected and taken care of.	We are all special individuals and exercise our freedom of choice by building our life by standing on the shoulders of others rather holding hands in unity.	Nested worldview, where the individual acknowledges the necessity to be integral part of the whole, and work for a common good.
Myth/metaphor	The good shepherd looking after his flock.	Atlas carrying world/ cosmos on his shoulders.	Kuril, the water rat turns the world upside down.

### Neo-collectivistic cultural characteristics

As we are becoming a global community, there is an urgent need to integrate the divergent worldviews of collectivism and individualism into a new worldview, “which honours both our unity and interdependence, as well as our diversity—of races, ethnicities, cultures, nationalities, and religions” (Groff, 2002, p.701) Accordingly, in the third column of the CLA (Table 2) this paper offers a unique scenario to merge cultural differences through the four vertical levels of the neo-collectivist social organisation.

Vertical levels of social structures are also explored by László (2006) in his analysis of the next stage of sociocultural evolution in the third millennium. László proposes the engagement of deeper levels of human communication and consciousness in the form of intensive evolution. Intensive evolution undertakes to transform deeper internal structures; whereas the current commonly prevailing extensive modality of sociocultural evolution is expanding along a two-dimensional plane, in the form of conquests, colonisation and consumption (László, 2006).

Considering László’s theory, the ‘Social Causes’ level of the CLA is referring to a new phenomenon concerning self-control and social behaviour of individuals. Current social and legal structures are designed to cater for a population with a considerable proportion of antisocial and criminal behaviours. However, the current paper assumes that humankind is evolving along a spiral pathway, and that consciousness in the general population will be progressively elevated (Beck & Cowan, 2006; Masini, 1983; Pór, 2014). This type of evolution would result in diminishing need for external controls to maintain social order; and will culminate in the majority of the population exercising a highly evolved internal moral compass grounded in the new neo-collectivist consciousness. This theory of advancing consciousness is also reflecting the utopian theories of medieval theologian Joachim of Fiore, who envisaged a transition from the “reign of justice”, in an imperfect world, to the “reign of freedom” in a perfect society (Hobsbawm, 1965, p.11). This vision, based on the Bible, is embedded in a Trinitarian structure, where the Old Testament represents the age of the Father (with the marriage of the state and the Jewish law), and the New Testament representing the age of the Son (with the priestly state and the Christian revelation). The third ‘tempora’, or age, is not a brand new testament, but a new interpretation of both previous Testaments that would lead to the approaching age of the Spirit in the ‘Eternal Gospel’, endowed with a “spiritual” or “intellectual vision” (Behun, 2012). This last age of Joachim of Fiore is the most pertinent to the present millennium, rife with upheavals and corruption, where apocalyptic views are common and the consequent millenarian scenarios depict disasters or battles to purified the world to ensure a new and better social order. Thus, there is a marked overlap of Joachim’s scenario, which was supposed to begin in 1260, and the currently proposed neo-collectivist spiritual consciousness.

Apart from historic perspectives, the neo-collectivist worldview also embraces cross-cultural approaches to co-creation. To build the new worldview based on collaboration, inspiration can be drawn from traditional Islamic concepts, since the meaning of architect in Islamic countries designates the individual who co-creates with the community (Sardar, 1999). Similarly, Giri (2013) proposes a process of integration honouring diversity, in the form of differential integration. Giri contrasts this type of weak integration with earlier practices based on logic and machinery, which he views as strong integration. His new form of integration is an art form involving creativity and nurturance, leading to the realisation of weakness that becomes, “the lubricant and binding thread for integration as an unfolding, evolving and emergent journey of realization of connectedness and wholeness” (Giri, 2013, p.114).

Neo-collectivistic cultural characteristics are somewhat similar to the desired features of the accomplished human promoted by Neohumanism (Bussey, 2010). Neohumanism conceived by Sarkar (2011) takes characteristics of the integrated personality beyond the inherent human self-interest and encourages a broader sense of purpose aimed at collective welfare (Bussey, 2010).

This welfare work includes, but also spans beyond the immediate environment; in fact, it involves responsibility for the care of the whole universe. Similarly to Sorokin, Neohumanists also views the evolution of humankind as a movement along a cyclic trajectory (parikránti): cycling through The Labourer-Worker (communism), the Warrior Age, Intellectual Age (religious or other), The Military, and the Age of Capitalists (the accumulator oligarchy) in a set pattern (Sarkar, 2011). The fixed view of predetermined patterns of social change denies the effect of external or internal forces to retard or accelerate this ‘eternal motion’, except for rare examples of counter-revolutions (Sarkar, 2011). This aspect of the philosophy is akin to Sorokin’s ‘immanent causation’ (Sorokin, 1970).

Another complimentary pathway of social transformation inspired by cross-cultural perspectives utilises mindfulness, a Buddhist psychological tradition aimed at developing inner wisdom and compassion (Nandini, 2015; Pór, 2014). Cultivation of individual mindfulness, akin to Sorokin’s creative altruism (Johnston, 1999), can spread out into the wider community in the form of shared mindfulness as, “an essential doorway to the collective intelligence and action required to re-orient where we want to go as a society” (Pór, 2014, p.40). Mindfulness in the context of the new neo-collectivist consciousness is bound to have a potentially harmonising societal impact. According to Bussey (Bussey, 2013, p.25) harmony can be a normative goal, “as an element of social process that calls for social actors to reflect on their actions and their effects on the world around them”. This new attitude of shared mindfulness nested in neo-collective consciousness is an essential driver of transformative change.

The metaphor level of the CLA specifies the native Australian water rat, the kuril, as the bearer of change. In the garden of the Gallery of Modern Art in Brisbane, Australia there is a statue of the tiny rat turning a large elephant on its head, called ‘The World Turns’. This statue symbolises the merging of cultures and openness to other stories (Cormack, 2012). The sculptor Michael Parekowhai portrayed a small rat, the kuril, as a hero facilitating transformation.

In fact, a number of prominent futurists, sociologists and psychologists are in agreement about the importance of inner transformation leading to higher levels of consciousness, as a prime tool of sociocultural renewal (Grof, 2000; Groff, 2002; Havel, 1990; Sorokin, 1967; Taylor, 2008; Wilber, 2007). Thus, neo-collectivist consciousness, on the individual, as well as on societal levels, has the potential to foster social transformation for the realisation of sustainable futures.

## **Neo-Collectivism at the Fringes of Society: SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES**

Once again, like so many times before, humankind is at the threshold of a new era in human history, this time leading us towards a new global community (Groff, 2002). This new global culture will require a new mythology to describe the present and the past as well as the future (Lévi-Strauss, 1955). Postmodern questioning of the prevailing Western capitalist paradigm and formation of new mythologies with memes containing symbols inherited from past wisdom cultures, merged with some unique new ones, have been progressively evolving in sustainable communities since the 1960s. The imminence of cultural transition to the next phase of human evolution is indicated through certain emerging fringe groupings moving away from egocentric individualistic worldviews, and upholding values more central to collectivistic cultures, such as sensitivity to others, with motives that are not self-centred but social; and involve seeking connectedness and interpersonal harmony. As the enactments of the new ways of thinking, individuals congregate to alternative sustainable communities (SCs), subscribing to these new knowledge patterns.

During the 60 years of existence of alternative movements setbacks were frequent, but there were also some major gains, as Western culture is reaching its zenith (Galtung, 1981; Sorokin, 1970). Nowadays, new ideas that could lead to societal renewal are more readily integrated (Botta, 2016), although it is still not easy to reverse the dominator-based cultural worldview, and enable focus on pacifistic alternatives (Milojevic, 2013). However, Gidley (2007) postulates that

humankind is becoming more conscious of its own evolution for the first time in human history, and this leads to a realisation of responsibility for co-creation through co-evolution. Consequently, Lloyd Moffet (2013) expresses optimism for the maturing of human potential that is demonstrated in religious communities as well as in modern intentional sustainable communities (SCs) determined to create parallel, alternative societies.

The neo-collectivist paradigm practiced in SCs is offering an ideal experimental platform for the co-creation of sustainable futures in a collaborative manner. However, lately the influence of new ways of thinking and living spread beyond the perimeter of isolated alternative communities into the cities, where whole suburbs are designed to co-operate to be totally sustainable (Franzen, 2016). Moreover, there are already prototypes of major cities in existence in Asia and the Arab peninsula, following the same patterns of a new social organisation (Anderson, 2011; Botta, 2016; Mueller, 2013). These cities and villages can be considered models of the spatial application of neo-collectivist principles.

## **Cultural Creatives and New Progressives as Emerging Examples of the Neo-Collectivist Consciousness**

In addition to the spatially defined localities based on sustainability thinking and neo-collectivist consciousness, there is also a rapidly growing movement with similar worldviews, transcending spatial boundaries. According to macro-sociologist Ray and psychologist Anderson (2000), there is an emerging force in Western society - the 'Cultural Creatives'. This rapidly growing subculture, which in year 2000 already numbered around 50 million adults in the USA, may represent over one quarter of the adult population (Ray & Anderson, 2000). It was estimated that there are also an additional 80–90 million cultural creatives (CCs) in Europe. The figures were based on surveys of more than 100,000 Americans over thirteen years, sponsored by the Fetzer Institute and the Institute of Noetic Sciences. The central concerns of the CCs, and the resulting wisdom culture are defined as: glo-cal, empowerment, responsibility, partnership, sustainability, spirituality, and globally linked liveable communities.

Although most of these characteristics appear to be similar to the hippy culture of the 1960s, Ray and Anderson (2000) are adamant that this is quite a different phenomenon. CCs are well educated professionals, leading-edge thinkers, creative individuals (artists, musicians, writers), and mainstream as well as alternative health care providers well integrated in society, whereas hippies were typically drop-outs of varying social and intellectual backgrounds and usually on the periphery of society.

Still, the author proposes a hypothesis that CCs are essentially the maturing seeds of the hippy movement. As an analogy to the development of the individual, hippies could be representing the rebellious teenage stage of social evolution that is followed by the next stage of maturation represented by CCs. The characteristics of this next stage of maturation have been variously described by Maslow's 'motivation theory' (Maslow, 1943) as a higher level need - perhaps an amalgam of the self-actualization and self-transcendence needs (Maslow, 1976); by Kohlberg as the sixth stage of moral development - the post-conventional morality driven by universal ethical principles (Kohlberg, 1973); and according to Loevinger's Ego Development Theory (Loevinger, 1976), this mature stage would display traits of the integrated personality, moving from 'worldcentric' to 'kosmocentric' worldviews.

Ray and Anderson (2002) followed up their theory by transferring it into the political arena, where the CCs are becoming the "New Progressives". The main concerns of the New Progressives are: opposition to corporate globalization (big business interests), ecological sustainability, women's issues, consciousness issues, national health care, national education, and an emerging concern

for the future of the planet. Their political leaning is neither left nor right and not even ‘the mushy centre’, but an entirely new political/moral stance. Although the New Progressives don’t have a high public profile they are still a force to be reckoned with, comprising 36 percent of the population and 45 percent of likely voters. The New Progressives, as a specific branch of CCs subscribe to an alternative worldview encompassing a new set of memes with spirituality and social issues as active concerns. Since these, and most of the other memes espoused by CCs, are also inherent to the neo-collectivist paradigm, CCs can be considered as a gradually strengthening weak signal of sociocultural change.

## Conclusion

This study of the evolution of human consciousness, as reflected in social change, examines social change through internal drivers, rather than the more common externalistic dialectic perspective implicating external agents of change. Euro centrality is one of the limitation of the study, as it is not geared toward a comprehensive analysis of other ethnicities, since they all have their own unique evolutionary pathways beyond the scope of this paper. However, the author acknowledges that the unprecedented mingling of cultures across the globe in the 21st century poses new research opportunities and challenges worthy of exploration from a socio-political perspective.

This study provides a comprehensive comparison of the two dominant cultural systems (collectivistic and individualistic) to gain insights into their underlying principles, as reflected in their divergent worldviews. CLA, as a tool, facilitated the creation of a new scenario by integrating the most progressive features of both cultural systems. This new scenario was coined by the author as neo-collectivist consciousness. This neo-collectivist scenario is new, as it implies that it is a contemporary derivative of the classic ‘old collectivism’. Further, the neo-collectivist scenario was embedded in macrohistory, and demonstrated a fit with postmodern social developments as described by Rifkin, Sorokin, and Sarkar.

This paper specifies that cultural conditioning needs to be transformed to achieve an inclusive society accommodating diverse worldviews. Sustainable communities on the fringes of society are providing a training ground for negotiations of complex cultural interactions, as they are attracting members from a variety of cultural backgrounds. Hence, SCs are predisposed to be vanguards of the new neo-collectivist consciousness. However, the rapid change in human consciousness is also expanding into mainstream society. One of the examples of the shift in consciousness are the Cultural Creatives, who also subscribe to a paradigm akin to the neo-collectivist one.

Further, according to Sorokin’s theory of social change, current society is moving from late Sensate towards the Idealistic epoch. The author postulates that this sociocultural transition is expected to culminate in the development and spread of collective intelligence and a consequent shift from the current information economy into an economy based on human interactions.

The current interdisciplinary ‘large picture’ - macrohistory analysis is enhancing the field of social sciences by combining macrohistory with a cultural psychology perspective, to highlight evolutionary aspects of collectivism and individualism. Moreover, the current exploration of ‘megatrends of the mind’ - the human consciousness from an evolutionary perspective, is filling an identified research gap (Gidley, 2013).

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