

Australia21 Conference

Shaping Australia's Resilience:

Policy development for uncertain futures

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It is a pleasure and honor to speak at this important and exciting conference. I wish I could be with you in person, but I am happy to at least be with you electronically. Because this issue of resilience is one I am passionate about, not only through my research, writing, and yes, activism, but as a mother and grandmother deeply concerned, as so many of us are, about what kind of future our children will inherit.

This passion has animated my research, my trans-disciplinary, cross-cultural, historical research over several decades, probing a question that is critical for resilience: the question of what kind of social conditions, what kind of social configuration, will support, rather than inhibit, the expression of our enormous human capacities for consciousness, for problem solving, for empathy, for caring, for creativity -- the capacities that are key to resilience.

From Old to New Thinking

I am going to suggest to you that to answer this question, and with it, the critical question of what kinds of communities will not only in the short term but in the longer term make for resilience, we have to move beyond old social categories, such as right vs. left, religious vs. secular, capitalist vs. socialist, Eastern vs. Western, and so on. Because, as Einstein said, we can't solve problems with the same thinking that created them.

If you really think about it, none of these conventional categories describe a society's core configuration. Most critically, all fail to give adequate importance, if they give any importance at all, to the cultural construction of the most foundational human relations: the relations between adults and children and between women and men, the relations that we know from psychology and now also from neuroscience, profoundly

shape nothing less than the development of children's brains, including whether they will be flexible or inflexible, sensitive or insensitive, caring or cruel, creative or destructive.

So I am going to ask you to join me in something we hear a great deal about, so much so that it's become a cliché, thinking outside the box, to consider a different set of social categories that *are* inclusive of the cultural construction of our primary parent-child and gender relations - the relations where people first acquire their core beliefs about what is normal or abnormal, moral or immoral, possible or impossible: the categories of **partnership systems** and **domination systems**. Categories introduced through my research but increasingly used by others -- and I here want to thank Professor Bob Douglas, one of the movers behind this conference, for the excellent use he has made of them.

I am going to suggest to you that for real resilience we must accelerate the shift away from the domination systems we've inherited – systems of top-down rankings, man over man, man over woman, race over race, religion over religion, and yes, man over nature – which are simply not sustainable..

I want to first clarify that by a partnership system I don't mean a completely flat organization, there are hierarchies, but they are what I call hierarchies of actualization rather than domination, hierarchies that are used not to disempower but to empower others, as is essential for resilient communities. Nor do I mean just working together, people work together all the time in domination systems, terrorists cooperate, monopolies cooperate, invading armies cooperate.

What I mean is the social configuration I will touch upon as I discuss a key aspect of this cultural shift: fundamental changes in economic systems.

Toward a New Economics

We've been taught to think of economics primarily in terms of capitalism vs. socialism. And to move forward, we must incorporate the best elements of both market and centrally planned economics. But we have to go further.

As developed in my book *The Real Wealth of Nations*, we urgently need economic systems that recognize something that once articulated may seem perfectly obvious. This is that the real wealth of nations, of our world, is not financial (and we

certainly saw that in the melting into thin air of all those credit swaps and derivatives). Our real wealth consists of the contributions of people and of nature. Therefore we need what we have not had: economic rules, practices, policies, and measurements that give visibility and real value to the most important human work -- the work of caring for people, starting in early childhood, and caring for our Mother Earth.

Now people tend to do a double take just hearing caring and economics in the same sentence. But that's a terrible comment, isn't it, on the uncaring **values** we've learned to accept as driving our economic rules, policies, and practices.

We would not have our economic, environmental, and social crises, global warming, desertification, and all the catastrophic consequences these portend, not to speak of chronic poverty and hunger, if we had economic systems that really invest in caring for people and nature.

So we've got to move to a more caring economic system. And I will briefly here touch on **four** key action areas.

Changing Economic Indicators

First, and this is basic, are changes in how we measure economic health, and I am deeply involved in this through our Center for Partnership Studies Real Wealth Public Policy Initiative, working with the Urban Institute in Washington DC on new economic indicators that go beyond GDP and GNP.

Consider that these conventional measures of economic health actually include activities that *harm* and even *take* life. So making cigarettes, the medical bills, the funeral bills, are great for GDP. Oil spills are wonderful for GDP (the cleanup costs, the lawsuits, etc).

But not only do these conventional economic measures put negatives on the plus side; they give absolutely no economic value to the activities that contribute the most to human well-being. And by this I mean the **life-sustaining** activities without which none of us would be here: the life-sustaining activities of the household economy and of the natural economy. So an old stand of trees is only included in GDP when it's cut down -- whereas the fact that we need trees to breathe and circulate our water is ignored.

Similarly, the caring and caregiving work performed in households is given no value whatsoever.

Some people will say we can't quantify the value of this work. But not only can it be, but it is already being, quantified.

For instance, a Swiss government survey found that if the unpaid "caring" household work that has traditionally been considered "women's work" – whether done by a woman or a man -- were included, it would comprise 70 percent of the reported Swiss GDP! Other national so-called satellite reports show a contribution of 40-50 %. This is huge – and needs to be valued.

Changing Economic Valuations

This takes me to a second area for action: changing conventional thinking about values – because economics is at bottom about what is or is not valued.

Classical economists will say that what's valued is a matter of supply and demand, and that is part of it. But much more important are the underlying cultural values that are so unconsciously entrenched that we're often not even aware of them.

Let me give you an example. Professions that do *not* involve caregiving (plumbing and engineering) are paid far more than those that do (like childcare and elementary school teaching). So in the United States, people think nothing of paying plumbers, the people to whom we entrust our pipes, \$50 to \$100 per hour. But childcare workers, the people to whom we entrust our children, according to the U.S. Department of Labor are paid an average of \$10 an hour, with no benefits. And we demand that plumbers have some training, but not that all childcare workers have training.

This is not logical. It's pathological. But to understand, and change, this distorted system of values, we have to go deeper.

Resilience in the Post-Industrial Age

To begin with, and this takes us to a third key area for action: we have to demonstrate that caring economic policies and practices are actually more, rather than less, effective.

Contrary to the common belief that caring, caregiving – what many people think of as soft, fuzzy stuff – is not economically effective, caring pays very well, not only in human and environmental terms, but in purely economic terms.

I have a great deal of data on this in *The Real Wealth of Nations*, and will here give you just one example out of hundreds of studies. Companies that are regularly on the *Working Mothers* or Fortune 500 lists of the best companies to work for – that is, companies with good healthcare, childcare, flex time, parental leave, and other caring policies – have a substantially higher return to investors. And it makes sense, doesn't it, that when people feel they and their families are cared for, they work very hard to keep their jobs, to make their companies successful.

Even beyond this, and here we come to caring *public* policies, investing in caring for people, starting in early childhood, is essential not only for resiliency, but for economic success as we move to the post- industrial knowledge/service era, a time of seismic technological shifts when automation and at an every more rapid clip robotics, are replacing humans in manufacturing and other jobs, when economists tell us that the most important factor for economic success is what they call “high quality human capital”: flexible, creative, innovative people, people with highly developed capacities.

Now the development of these human capacities doesn't just happen in universities. Both psychology and neuroscience show that whether people develop these capacities or not largely hinges on the quality of care children receive, starting very early on.

All of which takes me back to what we started with: the fourth area for action: accelerating the movement from domination systems to partnership systems.

Cultural Transformation and Resilience

Because economic systems are embedded in the larger culture, they are very different depending on the degree to which a society orients to the domination or partnership side of the continuum.

The good news is that there is already movement in a partnership direction, and we especially see this in the nations that today are regularly in the highest ranks not only

of the United Nations Human Development Reports but of the World Economic Forum's Global Competitiveness reports: Nordic nations such as Sweden, Norway, and Finland.

At the beginning of 20th century, these nations were so poor that people fled famines in droves. So how did they change to nations with a generally high standard of living for all? A major factor is that they started to really invest in caring for their people – and this investment in human capacity development in turn resulted in more resilient, efficient, and enlightened communities.

These nations adopted caring policies: government-supported childcare, universal healthcare, stipends to help families care for children, elder care with dignity, generous paid parental leave for both mothers and fathers.

But none of this happened in a vacuum. It happened as these nations moved more toward the configuration of the partnership system.

The **first** part of this configuration is more democracy in *both* the family and the state, and without both there is no real democracy. The **second** is a major effort to leave behind traditions of violence: for example, the first peace studies came out of Nordic nations and so did a strong men's movement to disentangle "masculinity" from its dominator equation with domination and violence. The **third** part of the partnership configuration, in contrast to domination systems where women are rigidly subordinated to men, is a major effort toward more equal partnership between the female and male halves of humanity. So women are approximately 40 percent of the national legislatures. And with this came greater support for more caring policies, not only by women but by men.

Because it's only as the status of women rises, as it did in Nordic nations, that men no longer feel so threatened in their status, in their "masculinity," when they embrace more stereotypically "feminine" values such as caring and nonviolence.

So Nordic nations not only gave priority to caring for nature, as through solar energy and other means, but to caring for their people, creating a higher quality of life for all.

And it is not only in these nations that we find this correlation between how gender roles and relations are culturally constructed and quality of life; it's been verified by cross-cultural studies. To illustrate, in the study "Women, Men, and the Global

Quality of Life,” the Center for Partnership Studies compared statistical measures from 89 nations on the status of women with measures of quality of life such as infant mortality, human rights ratings, and environmental ratings, and we found that in significant respects the status of women can be a better predictor of quality of life than GDP. Other studies, such as the World Values Surveys and the World Economic Forum’s Global Gender Gaps reports, show the same. We must take these studies into account in economic and social policy if we are to have more resilient, more caring, more stable communities.

Moving Forward

I would like to give you more information about the utility of the social categories of the partnership and domination systems as analytical lenses for studying and improving human society. But there is no time, so I will close by again thanking you for this important conference and urging you to join me to help create caring economic systems that give visibility and value to the most essential work: caring for people, starting in childhood, and caring for nature.

As I have briefly illustrated, it’s only as we build caring economics, and with this, accelerate the shift from domination systems to partnership systems, that we can realistically expect resilient people and resilient communities. So let’s do it – for ourselves, for our children, and for generations to come.

I thank you.