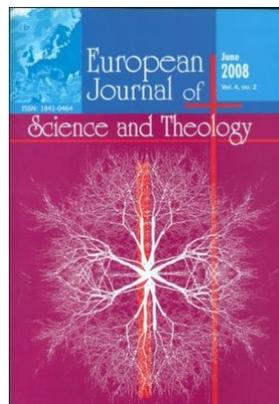
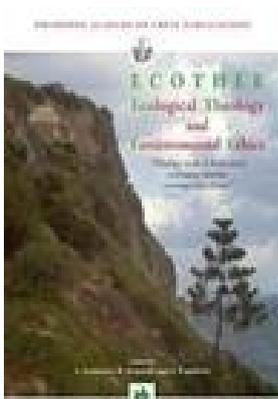


[Ecological Awareness:
Exploring Religion, Ethics and Aesthetics](#)

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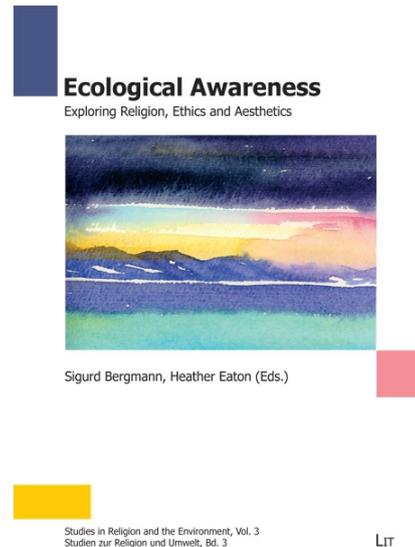
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Please note: This article is the outcome of the GEIG conference in Urbino in context with the [EARTH CHARTA open-space in Urbino](#) and the [BAMBERG presentation](#) with the title: oikos & ecumene & ecodomy - (sacred)spaces - as fullness/emptiness/potential

The paper needs to be seen as an outcome of the Hans Jonas 90th birthday event in Germany in 1993 an the work on UN data harmonization. See also the UN-AMR-2008 update for a broader picture, the Emergence Series contribution for the Konrad Lorenz Institute, and the work of Stephen Jay Kline on Reductionism *AND* Synoptism. Please study the GLOBAL CHANGE collection of papers **** and how a connection is seen in clarifying and moving borders, grids, and schemata in order to come to presentations which can we shared and negotiated. Issues to be elaborated are local and global covenants and the agreement on commons in common frames of references. Unfortunately, due to various constraints, only a very short section of what needs to be presented and broadly discussed could be published in the article with LIT. Please see also the forthcoming proceedings of the [NEW RENAISSANCE](#) where try to bring some of the pieces of the puzzle to the picture.

Below is the original larger version - as it was later published and enlarged !! On the right you see the PELICAN WEB internet site on Human Sustainable Development, the final printed version of LIT publishers contains only 6 from 36 references and 20 from 32 footnotes. Enjoy the links besides !! The printed more “terse” version and professionally edited version is highly recommended as a starter and to see the other contributions in the LIT volume !!

This is an [expanded and edited version in 5/2011](#)

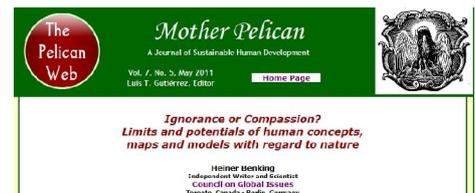


[Ecological Theology and Environmental Ethics](#)
ECOTHEE Orthodox Academy of Crete, June, 2008

**Missing Context and Orientations
in Modern Times**

*Outlining the Problematique of the Human Predicament
and sharing Commons in a global Embodied Covenant*

see also: [Dialog and Deliberation](#), the [AGORA ROUNDTABLE exercise at the Academy](#), [Dialog background papers](#), and this retrospective inquiry: [21stCenturyAgora](#)



Ignorance or Compassion?
Limits and potentials of human concepts, maps and models with regard to nature

Ignorance or Compassion?

Limits and potentials of human concepts, maps and models with regard to nature

Heiner Benking

Hindrances to and directions towards alternative futures

This chapter reflects on the challenges and problems we face in times of unprecedented change across times and magnitudes. It discusses how humans manage and mismanage their environment. It focuses on the role of underlying perceptions and conceptualizations of how we communicate about and treat our fellows and other life forms surrounding and sustaining us.

Instead of harassing a scapegoat, in this case science and technology, for causing unprecedented impacts with unknown consequences, the chapter emphasizes three particular notions:

1. our conceptual and cognitive limitations,
2. why we are at a loss when inflicting change without an adequate understanding of the scales and the dynamics of our impacts, and,
3. why we are leaping in the dark, without any frames of references¹, overview and orientation², without appropriate concepts and precepts.

Instead of lamenting, I want to explore how to come to grips with these challenges, and meet them by designing extensional³ models to get at the issues, scales and dimensions of human interactions with Life into a common frame of reference. The focus is on the schemas, maps and models that we create to make visible and sharable the extended realities around us. The goal is to better understand the realms of change, including technology, but for which we need concepts to realize concretely their impact. The chapter revisits basic root-metaphors like *Space* and *House*. It investigates how concepts and analogies like Oikos, Ecumene and Eudomy or Oikodomia⁴ can help us to design and negotiate *common grounds as scaffoldings so can point at, relate and connect issues across scales*⁵.

One impulse to take this approach is found in the belief that God is an ecological God, a Creator who did not create Nature as a Dichotomy, Grid, or Schema, but as a Living Universe. This is why it is necessary to revisit our human over-claims and oversimplifications⁶ best in an hierarchy of constitutions as layed out by Jay Stephen Kline .

I will concentrate on the field of sign systems, representations and communications. I will look at maps and models as super-signs⁷ and superstructures, and further how these are combined with each other. My hope is to contribute in such a way as to open up a social space for to negotiate and re-design alternative futures. Such an open minded vision, well aware of the complexity of human ecology, could resist an all too usual perspective often expressed in postmodern dogmas such as: There is no overview, there is no orientation possible, or the postmodern Cyberculture nightmares⁸ that try to make us believe that all it doomed to failure and nightmares.

¹ A layout of common frames of references is presented in Proposing a Conceptual Superstructure, Work-Report of a Vision to explore issue-scapes like virtual landscapes by making use of Surveyors' abilities and Views, FIG XX, Melbourne. A Rio Earth Summit 1992 review and outlook) Benking, H.: (1994) on behalf of Brown, N. (director UNEP-RONA)

<http://www.ceptualinstitute.com/genre/benking/melbourne.htm>

² Overview & Orientation or Overclaims & Oversimplifications ? Discussion paper and presentation at "Understanding and Sharing in a Cognitive Panorama", at InterSymp'97 – Culture of Peace, 9th International Conference on Systems Research, Informatics and Cybernetics, Baden-Baden, August 18-23, 1997 <http://benking.de/ceptualinstitute/overview.htm> See also overclaims discussed by Jay Stephen Kline.

³ An "extensional" definition of a concept formulates its meaning by specifying its extension, that is, every object that falls under the definition of the concept or term in question.

⁴ With "Oikodomia" I mean the art of inhabiting instead of dominating the earth, our house. Eudomy as a term is used extensively by Ernst Conradie. In recent ecumenical literature the Greek metaphor for "oikos" (house) has been widely explored to develop a broader, integrated understanding.

⁵ See: Pointers to possibilities: Ekistics, Dymaxion World and Eco-Cube, in: Patterns Essential to Individual and Global Health? by Anthony Judge, <http://www.laetusinpraesens.org/docs10s/lifedisx.php#poin>

⁶ Overclaims and Oversimplifications, see Footnote 2 above.

⁷ Using Maps and Models, SuperSigns and SuperStructures, proposed for M I S T 2 0 0 5 , Multimedia, Where do we go from here ?, International CODATA Symposium on Multimedia in Science and Technology, Berlin, September 19-20, 2005, <http://benking.de/systems/codata/CODATA-MIST2005.htm>

⁸ Cf. Lévy and his report *The Second Flood* to the Council of Europe, October 1996.

I insist that Futures are not just given⁹, they must be created as stated not only by Ozbekhan¹⁰, and what we create we better jointly negotiate beforehand in shared extensional models.

We are responsible for our actions, tools and means. Contemporary conventional science and its impacts on our cultural behaviour all too often make us think in boxes. We respond to the urge to label everything with a fixation on exact and linear description even when we know since Ilya Prigogine that we can not represent and understand complex, dissipative, and living structures with such undercomplex¹¹ approaches.

It seems like that the more we have impacted our environment and have lost control, the more we stick to exactness and definitions without considering the context and purpose. But Life and the Creation are not made to fit our modern-times technology-driven dogma. With this chapter, I desire to unsettle our belief in precision without concretion and context. I want to examine our fixation on terms irrespective of the context and encourage widening awareness to imagine and experience nature(s). Will we go on with ignoring the complexities, interactions, and sufferings in nature or can we deepen our compassion and widen our awareness with regard to nature?

Complexity and perplexity

My experience with presenting such an approach over the last 20 years has, in general, had little impact.

This may have various reasons: 1) the complexity of overwhelming problems we face when confronting the environmental crisis, 2) my unclear articulation, 3) missing terms and shared experiences, 4) the issues and impacts described are transcending scales, domains, and terminologies, transcending our personal experience and *Anschauung* or 5) the inability of science and technology to outline and contain the impacts created by exploring new lands, themes across scales and cultures without control over the impacts. It is interesting to realise that the more we focus on complexity, the more we realise that we are perplexed, and that we ignore and discard anything not fitting the picture or the box.

As the author, I am aware that the presentation and wording are inadequate. How can that be any different given that we experience increased awe the more we gaze (Santanya) in view of the beauty of the living Cosmos? The author believes that there are no adequate words and pictures, as we don't have the necessary perceptions and conceptions to realize the impact and dynamics we cause onto the environment and the Creation. We have still not yet not formulated an appropriate ethics - an ethics within open space and time horizons – as requested by the philosopher Hans Jonas in his famous book *The Imperative of Responsibility*.¹²

The point of departure is concisely summarised by Lewis Thomas (1913-1993):

*The greatest single achievement of science in this most scientifically productive of centuries,
is the discovery that we are profoundly ignorant;
we know very little about nature and understand even less.*

My aim is to plea for alternative ways to outline – embody and reify - the scales and effects we create in order help us to confront, instead of neglecting, the damage we inflict. As technology provides means and tools to impact on the micro- (including nano-), and macro-scale, on time-scales and in invisible realms, we also need to keep in check and have oversight of what we create, or which impacts we cause. In projects under the auspice of the International Science Community and Policy Makers, some experiment with such an approach with drawn and built models or schemas. This combination of model-spaces is called a *Cognitive Panorama*.¹³ It was also later presented as an Embodied Covenant¹⁴ to other communities. But the sad fact is that neither science and policy, nor our thinking and learning in schools, are ready to

⁹ Schwartzkopf, Friedemann, *The Metamorphosis of the Given: Toward an Ecology of Consciousness, Revisioning Philosophy* 20, Peter Lang, New York, 1995

¹⁰ See Hasan Ozbekahn, his theory of planning and futures creation from 1968
<http://www.panarchy.org/ozbekhan/planning.1968.html>

¹¹ See the term undercomplex and other terms in the Encyclopedia of Systems and Cybernetics, Editor: Charles Francois
<http://wwwu.uni-klu.ac.at/gossimit/ifsr/francois/encyclopedia.htm> <http://benking.de/systems/encyclopedia/newterms/>

¹² Jonas. Cf. also the Symposium in memoriam of Hans Jonas' *Prinzip Verantwortung: Wege zu einer integralen Umweltwissenschaft* in 1993, <http://benking.de/jonas-1993.html>

¹³ On the Cognitive Panorama see http://benking.de/systems/encyclopedia/newterms/#_Toc87362164

¹⁴ Cf. Ecological Integrity, Democracy, Governance, and Education: The NEED and a WORK-REPORT towards an embodied Covenant – Earth Charter Open Space, AND Global Ecological Integrity, Human Rights, and Human Responsibilities: Intersections Between International Law and Public Health, June – July 2003 Urbino, Italy
<http://benking.de/covenant/sld001.htm>

go beyond words and dualisms, labelling and box-thinking. In the article On Sectarianism of Science¹⁵ Nathan Keyfitz explains that we still educated in schools and universities to give disciplines advantage over other fields, and not to support inter-/trans-disciplinary collaboration, along and across space and time scales.¹⁶ I believe that science and technology have some homework to do. They are liable to create impacts they can neither oversee nor control. These damages created are beyond the individual turf or sector of any ego, or any given discipline or application and so need to be seen as a whole. Examples of what is meant here is not only the Cognitive Panorama mentioned above, but a combination with other works like from Stephen Jay Kline or Ingetraut Dahlberg. Kline for example has presented a schema with hierarchies of constitutions which can help us to leap-frog out of the box of single disciplines and give space for both reductionism and synoptism (as he calls his holistic approach to wholeness). Dahlberg as another example created switching systems in the field of knowledge organisation so we can bridge repositories and terminologies.

The claim is that it is possible to agree on frames and outlines and so share oversight or overview, call it in Klines multidisciplinary foundations “synoptism” and so established agreed understanding beyond a certain domain, sector, position, or disciplinary verbiage and dogma, AND at the same time exploit the benefits of reductionism. Kline has paved the way to go beyond the “either-or” – maybe we should revisit and study more deeply his foundations for multi-disciplinary thinking.

In the last decades faith communities have seriously responded to the environmental challenge. They have trained their eyes on what is caused by irresponsibility and intellectual isolation and egoism. I acknowledge the need for ecumenical (and inter-religious) perspectives about impacts. There is also the need for a watchdog function to enhance responsible care for the planet and future generations. Modern science has ignored the need to put its house¹⁷ in order, and it searches again for a theory of everything (TOE) instead of deepening its experiential and pragmatic¹⁸ qualities. Modern science avoids offering alternative, pragmatic maps and grids to help us frame topics and issues. With these we could better negotiate the challenges that might inflict vast and fast deterioration caused by naïve and blind large-scale experiments at the expense of the Creation.

In my conclusions, I quote the Original Prospectus of the Club of Rome report¹⁹ as the prevailing ways of thinking and reasoning that have much to do with the worsening of the global environmental situation. This is seen as a sign of the existential crisis and challenges we face as humanity by continuing as usual. We are fixated on being right and knowing, when in reality we are just closing our eyes and ignoring what we inflict onto others²⁰ by not expanding our level of compassion and reducing the suffering in the world.

Creation and conceptual commons

Greek theologian Alexandros Papaderos demanded – in his invitation to the ECOTHEE event 2008 for which an earlier version of this contribution originally has been prepared – that theology needs to be involved in finding solutions. He claimed that we need religion-based scientific approaches, and that God (greek Theos) needs to be understood as an ecological God. Nevertheless, questions remain: What do we mean by ecological? How do we make this concrete so we can communicate and share with others, and avoid the impact we create when damaging Nature and all living beings in creation.

I suggest we need to revisit maps and models, and that this is valid for different cultures and belief systems. Maps can

¹⁵ Cf. the feature about Nathan Keyfitz “On the Sectarianism of Science”, in: Options, International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis, Summer 1994, p. 17f., <http://www.iiasa.ac.at/Admin/INF/OPT/options-backissues-scanned/opt94-2sum.pdf>,

¹⁶ Cf. Heiner Benking and Anthony Judge, *Design Considerations for Spatial Metaphors reflections on the evolution of viewpoint transportation systems*, <http://www.laetusinpraesens.org/docs/spatialm.php>

¹⁷ House is a metaphor or symbol for a very powerful shared concept – See the footnote on “oikos” above. I use in this article *House* and *Space* to present something extensible, immersive and known in many cultures. It is only one possible way to locate, outline and find knowledge. Cf. my chapter http://www.ceptualinstitute.com/uiu_plus/iss98/house-of-eyes.htm 19.2.2010 and the author in this German series on postmaterialism, in “Die Natur” Volume , Passagen Verlag <http://benking.de/skizzen-2003.htm>

¹⁸ Cf. Herbert Stachowiak and his work on models, pragmatism, education, planning, linguistics, cybernetics, aesthetics, ...

¹⁹ Cf. Alexander N. Christakis, *A retrospective structural inquiry of the predicament of mankind prospectus of the Club of Rome*, http://quergeist.net/Christakis/RETROSPECTIVE-INQUIRY-Club-of-Rome-Original_Prospectus.pdf 19.2.2010 and this recent interview looking back onto the Human Prospectus after the first presentation by Hasan Özbekhan in 1968. <http://sddinternationalschool.wikispaces.com/file/view/40yearsProblematique.pdf>

²⁰ There has even been a whole scientific field developed, called Panetics. An evolving, pan-ethical search for ways to reduce human suffering inflicted by individuals acting through governments, institutions, professions, and social groups. A synthesis of insights from East and West, it is a new approach to research, policy analysis, decision making and management. <http://paneticsworldwide.org> For more see Ralph G.H. Siu in the references.

enable communication about geographical position and orientation, but can additionally enable communication about paths, goals and alternatives. We can then explore ways to extend that use, both the scales and the contents covered, and in particular by developing common frames of reference with a view to assisting communications among otherwise disparate points of view. The construction of common frames of reference is a key method in extending maps to become conceptual commons, or common cognitive spaces.

The use of schemas or maps (with agreed upon scales and rules of map construction) is common to many cultures. Order-schemas or cosmologies in different cultures have been revisited²¹ and so the need to look into how such “constructions” are used to communicate meanings, contexts and values and provide a discursive, communicative frame that makes sense and gain in deliberations insights.

Some cultures have created conceptual commons, which go beyond lists of words. They use imaginary depictions and models to relate issues, problem areas and solutions. Important in our context is that they can assist with meaning making and help capacity building in participatory, dialogic processes. We can explore ways to expand the boundaries and the range of issues we can display, embody, negotiate and change. We can add and negotiate frames in common spaces that include other sign systems, different scales, as well as additional thematic and media dimensions, if we only want to.

Viewing “in-between” (Schrägsichten) – oblique perspectives on change across all scales

A crucial challenge in the environmental crisis is to perceive and interpret environmental change. Understanding challenges is connected to broad and rapid change, like

- 1) highly complex, diverse, dynamic and rapid environmental change along and across scales,
- 2) our moves beyond the meso-scale of our living world through the impact of globalisation or global change,
- 3) rapid dramatic multi-lingual and multicultural change influences believe and value systems,
- 4) change in signs system and media, their use in daily life and the loss of lingual and cultural diversity.

All this implies the need to dramatically change the ways and means by which we represent, conceptualise, understand, learn, and teach; i.e., think and communicate in the broadest sense. It seems obvious that we are not equipped and cannot adapt appropriately in view of the scales and the dynamics, and the different sign-representations involved. Gregory Bateson has urged us to develop antenna for change so we can perceive temporal differences. In a series of the Konrad-Lorenz Institute,²² we discussed order schemas and how through emergence we might be able to develop other ways, means, skills and senses and ways to communicate and negotiate.

Friedrich Rückert, in his *Wisdom of the Brahmins*, summarises the challenges to connect our physical and mental being-in-space:

*Whoever imagines mental barriers (semiphors)
which actually do not exist and then thinks them away,
has understood the world.
As space is entrapped in geometry's network of lines,
thought is caught in its (own) inherent laws.
Maps make the world comprehensible to us;
we are still waiting for the star-maps of the spirit.
In the same way that ambling through fields
we risk getting lost, the spirit negotiates its terrain.²³*

HOW CAN WE REACT TO THESE CHALLENGES/POTENTIALS?

How can we respond to these challenges? Should we expand our focus and emphasis on individual values and actions and put more efforts to following the commandments and golden rules? I believe so. We should look into *values and ethics* but let us remember that this addresses primarily the individual, personal level. Philosopher Hans Jonas requested in his “The Imperative of Responsibility” a future ethics with space and time horizon. The philosophical anthropologist Helmuth

²¹ See the author: Sharing and Changing Realities with Extra Degrees of Freedom of Movement, Computation for Metaphors, Analogy and Agents: An International Workshop at University of Aizu, Aizu-Wakamatsu City, Japan, 6-10 April 1998, which focussed on: Metaphors, Life-Like Agents, Imitation & Embodiment, Analogies. Agents: An International Workshop at University of Aizu, Aizu-Wakamatsu ... <http://www.ceptualinstitute.com/genre/benking/landscape.htm>

²² “Worldview Compositions in cognitive spaces – a necessary evolutionary step”, hosted by the [Konrad Lorenz Institute for Evolution and Cognition Research](http://www.konradlorenz.at/), Altenberg, Austria, 30 January 1997. Weltbildkpositionen in anschaulichen kognitiven Räumen - ein notwendiger phylogenetischer Schritt , In: Summer School 1997 Emergenz und die Psychologie des Menschen, Konrad Lorenz Institut, publication pending, <http://benking.de/worldview-compositions.html>

²³ Rückert, 50-51, (my translation).

Plessner showed that we are humans who can assume an ex-centric positionality.²⁴ UNESCO wrote about humans as model-makers (model-making animals)²⁵. We are not bound only to the material and physical, but can include intangible, imaginary, conceptual dimensions or aspects. One precondition is that we stay concrete, so that we can negotiate; that is, use models with a certain, known fidelity and with a clear pragmatic purpose to help us with orientation and navigation, finding shared ways and means, instead of being correct or right or knowing all and everything. Central is the consideration that there is detail, domain and survey knowledge. This refers to knowledge with a different granularity. By taking individual viewpoints out and seeing issues from a distance, new insights can emerge. The challenge is to concert the different eyes and models along and across scales. Going beyond the detailed specialist view is correct and the generalists view is odd. We could work with oblique views or slants in ecological research (in German: *Schrägsichten*). Maybe this term could offer an image and a metaphor to encourage other embodied new and imaginative positions and perspectives? So let us explore assumptions about different positions and perspectives.

FALSE DICHOTOMIES?

As humans we are in the box, we think in the box with our jargon – we think in dualisms such as good vs. bad, black vs. white, heavenly vs. worldly, material vs. spiritual, given vs. not-given, speciality vs. university. We typically stay within our in-group terminologies, use our jargon in our well-bounded sectors or faculties. Let me focus, as an example on local vs. global, or Special vs. Global Interest Groups in order to show that something in-between is missing. The founder of the General Model Theory and Systematic Neo-Pragmatism, Herbert Stachowiak, presented ideas on the spectrum of meaning. It could be called shades of meaning depending on the context.

K. H. Wolf²⁶ presented an Encyclopaedia of Words in Space, where words are explained through their opposites and neighbourhoods. In the field of terminology research we speak about Concept and Context Mapping²⁷. Another example is the presentation of isms or schools of thought in one coherent schema. Perhaps such schemas could be extended and presented in greater detail. Yet, if we accept that there is space between words, we can for a moment imagine also space between dimensions. With such an embodied and reified approach, making use of the human experience with extensional dimensions, we are already close to leaving the extremes of dichotomies and “fundamentally” being right and correct.

MODELS OF THE INTANGIBLE AND IN-BETWEEN

Think global is the often-cited motto and requirement since the Earth Summit in 1992 – but how? How can we act local when we do not know where we are? And do not see how fields of impacts relate and interact?

Let us revisit the process of adding perspectives and dimensions. To solve a problem you need to take your own viewpoint out is a quote you can find in one way or the other in many traditions. So to step-back or to find a high ground seems obviously the right thing to do if you need directions or general orientation. What I am proposing here is to conceptualize and think by not taking extremes. Consider meaning as a spectrum between the poles and outside and beyond this narrow focus on dichotomies. And in this way once can see issues from different positions and distances. The astronauts for example were deeply impressed when the Earth was hidden behind their thumb! Perspective is a cognitive concept grounded in physical, and at times optical experience.

The UNESCO and Club of Rome Reports on Learning are highly recommended²⁸. They suggest it is time to bridge the canyon between coded and non-coded, material vs. spiritual, or old and new thinking! We have to remember that all such dualistic schemas are in some way fundamentalistic ways of thinking and knowing. Such arbitrary, “exact” definitions, lines and boundaries are man-made constructions to help us exclude, make one position and view superior. They are inappropriate and can not be found in Nature. What needs to be carefully scrutinized are living world questions and not finding the nearest connections between two points on a plane. We live at a dynamically changing, diverse and complex planet with many interlinked fields, spheres, levels and elements. Thus our approaches and tools need to be appropriate. As humans can step conceptually out of the box and take in many viewpoints²⁹, why not try?

IN A NUTSHELL

²⁴ Cf. Heiner Benking and Sherryl Stalinski, *Concreteness in Integral Worlds*, Proceedings XXVII Annual Jean Gebser Conference, Worldly Expressions of the Integral, Ohio University, Athens, OH, <http://benking.de/gebser2001.html>

²⁵ Please see the UNESCO education reports Richardson et al. see “man as a model making animal”

²⁶ Wolf, 3-4.

²⁷ CONCEPT AND CONTEXT MAPPING - TOWARDS COMMON FRAMES OF REFERENCE, TKE '96 Terminology and Knowledge Engineering, INDEKS Verlag, p. 35-47, Vienna 26-28 August 1996, Section 1: Terminology and Philosophy of Science, <http://www.ceptualinstitute.com/genre/benking/term/terminology.htm>

²⁸ Richardson, Jacques, George Marx and Esther Tóth. *Models of Reality - Shaping Thoughts and Action* (in particular chapter "Models in Science Education"). UNESCO: Lomond Books, 1984

²⁹ Seminars: Paradigm Mapping and Out of the Box Thinking – see also Kline and Ostrom on structuring and nesting, relating issues, levels, sectors, views and purposes.

Signs, and Supersigns, Maps and Models

So far in my text the reader finds the usual alphanumerical, sequential format. But as I have shown, trying to put into words living, highly varied and dynamic matters are not possible. We have to compromise and hopefully trigger our imagination to set new courses of action. The religions have a long history of using what today is called cross media: images, icons, symbols, words, metaphors and stories. The hope is to get some help from our belief systems to revisit the basic assumptions, conceptions and impacts of modern technology and science-driven humankind.

The Human Predicament and the Problematique

We realise more and more the hubris of science. There is poor planning and prognosis. Science extrapolates from trends and selected certain available data for *prognostic futures*, ignoring *normative* and *participative futures*. Modern technology driven futurists seem to believe only in *engineering blueprints* and neglecting *architectonic aesthetic design* and allowing little space for the not-given and sacred, and so are our modern education and policy systems, oversimplifying, over-claiming and over-compromising, trying through ignorance to handle challenges in under-complex and inhumane ways

For the author the early works of the Club of Rome nearly 40 years ago were decisive. My teachers introduced me not only to the Limits to Growth and the fight in the media about words and dogmas as there are now natural growths, linear growths, and exponential growths. But people fight over words and close their eyes. When I wrote my Diploma in Surveying Engineering the Methodenstreit, the struggle about the right methods was in high blossom. The Limits to Growth had been hitting the streets but the original intentions seemed to have been lost in view of communicating the obvious. The fact is that educated and good willing people run away from each other when they cannot find a common language. This led later to the clash within the Club of Rome in 1970 when one group within the Club favoured the new possibilities of computer modelling, and the other insisted on epistemological and overarching concepts of ontology and pragmatics in view of the human predicament.

One example is evident between an architectural design and an engineering blueprint. The oversimplification of technological fixes lead people to believe that they just need to make a list of problems, and then one by one, tackle the problems. Another way is to look deeper into interdependencies, into how one's actions have repercussions onto the other, and how the drivers are invisible. At times too the issues are overwhelming for an individual approach, because they are extremely complex, diverse, and dynamic.

Education, Dialogue and Governance

Even as kids play in the sand-box we are used to negotiating situations, even military simulation and gaming are using such modelling. But when we try to step out-of-the box and do paradigm mapping we are confronted with ignorance and negligence. I would like to report on more recent work on Education, Governance, and Dialog and Decision Cultures, but this needs another location. So let me close with mentioning again workshops called OUT OF THE BOX THINKING and PARADIGM MAPPING³⁰ developed for and with foreign students in 1980's. This is continued within youth workshops where we train the intercultural negotiation and reflection of other positions, perspectives, backgrounds, and concepts at other places in different times. It needs to be mentioned here that the work with youth is not only a life-spring for creative, cognitive and imaginative new thinking. Combining it with the old habitual, rooted, concrete and solid thinking of traditions is in my view essential. Too much abstract, lunatic, intangible thinking is part of the problem we have ourselves created and we are facing today.

Show or Schau?

In a nutshell: Are we opting for an abstract, disembodied conceptual world full of ignorance and negligence, or are we going into times of in-betweening, sharing and compassion? This chapter emphasized the possible infliction of suffering by irresponsible use of technological and scientific ways and means. The question, 'is humanity destined to self-destruct?'³¹ invited many answers. Many of them might be seen as too pessimistic. The approach presented here is trying to confront and tackle the issues raised, and not giving in, as it is a duty to take care, share our views and protect the creation, differentiate between a deep and tangible "Schau" versus flat, shallow, empty and perplexing "Show".³²

³⁰ See Kurt Hanks <http://www.amazon.com/Kurt-Hanks/e/B001K873Q0> 21.2.2010

³¹ See Caldwell Is Humanity Destined? and my invited response: Schau or Schau? <http://benking.de/show-schau.htm> 21.2.2010.

³² For further reading I recommend *The Optics of Ethics: Scales, Patterns, Scales, Horizons, Proportions, and Consequences in Shared Perspectives*, Africa Beyond Poverty, World Future Studies Federation, <http://benking.de/Global-Change/globalstability.html>. Nairobi 1995 <http://newciv.org/cob/members/benking/opto.html> 19.2.2010, and I would also like to include thanks to Kim Veltman who's work on Perspective and Knowledge is highly recommended. Cf. H. Benking and K. Veltman, *Interfaces for Cultural Heritage – Cultural Dimensions of Interspaces*, Advanced Visual Interfaces, AVI'98, L'Aquila, Italy, 1998: <http://benking.de/avi.htm>

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This paper contains some more links and references and is a short version of these 2 presentations/publication:

- Benking, Heiner: *Missing Context and Orientations in Modern Times, Outlining the Problematique of the Human Predicament and sharing Commons in a global Embodied Covenant, Ecological Theology and Environmental Ethics*, *ECOTHEE* Orthodox Academy of Crete, June,2008, <http://benking.de/futures/Benking-ECOTHEE-2008.pdf>
- Benking, Heiner: *OIKOS, ECUMENE, ECUDOMY / - (sacred)spaces as fullness/emptiness/potential*, *International Symposium* Nature, Space and the Sacred: *TRANSDISCIPLINARY PERSPECTIVES* University Bamberg 2007, <http://www.quergeist.info/bamberg2007.htm> <http://benking.de/religion-ethics-ecology/> see Blog: http://www.newciv.org/nl/newslog.php/_v396/_show_article/_a000396-000038.htm

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Heiner Benking
Independent Writer and Scientist
Council on Global Issues
Toronto, Canada - Berlin, Germany

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