With democracy becoming an endangered species, is sustainability in peril?

A reflection by Sara Parkin, November 2018

In 2008, I wrote a '**provocation**' for the *Foundation for Democracy and Sustainable Development*: "Are Political Parties getting in the way of the sort of collaborative democracy we need to tackle sustainability? If so, what can we do about it?" Ten years later, I revisit my thinking in the light of the corruption of our current democratic systems.

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Some Definitions

Democracy—a system whereby a group of people can organise and decide on matters of collective concern.

Sustainability—quality of something which assures its capacity to continue into the long term; in this instance, the human endeavour.

Sustainable Development—a process whereby we move towards a state of sustainability for human life on earth.

The definitions of 'sustainability' and 'sustainable development' acknowledge that the rest of life on Earth would endure without human beings. That makes our concern a social one: how do we live in a way that makes it not only possible to engage with life on Earth, but also agreeable for all life, including ourselves?

I use the words 'we', and 'our' throughout my reflection to represent 'us'— the demos or citizenry. And, unless stated otherwise, I write about the United Kingdom.

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Preface

This has been written as a ten-year reflection on an earlier paper in which I concluded that political parties were more of an impediment than a help in our quest for a sustainable future for all life on earth. It was a (sort of) tongue in cheek call to revolutionise the way we select our political representatives.

Today, however, it is impossible to ignore the assault on democratic institutions and processes around the world. The cause and aftermath of the 2008 financial crash, as well as the electoral shocks in the United States and United Kingdom, require a larger canvas for analysis and a different call to action.

The scene is set by considering the vulnerability of our shoddily maintained democratic system and our misplaced complacency that those who have benefitted most from the now globally dominant neoliberal economic philosophy would lie back and accept a move to political strategies and policies that favour sustainable development. Heeding advice to 'follow the money' I found a strong, and not unexpected, link between very rich libertarian ideologues and contamination of the electoral process. These are people who want small government, low taxes and the freedom to move their (particularly financial) capital wherever they want. They hate regulation, working openly to dismantle the political unions of Europe and the United States.

What did we sustainability wonks expect? A roll-over realisation that we were right, followed by a rapid transition to sustainability-oriented governments around the world? Are we really surprised that 'the empire (of the ultra-rich)' is fighting back, not least when they were rattled by the Clinton-Blair years with social democratic governments in two-thirds of the European Union? Or that they would prove to be great strategists and tacticians

in how they went about that fight, not least in the deployment of digital technologies?

Here in the United Kingdom, our parliamentarians forgot that parliament is sovereign and that they are supposed to represent us their electorate. This memory loss led them to agree to a referendum on UK membership of the European Union—as if throwing a yes/no button to the mob (us) was the best option to resolve a monstrously complicated, almost existential, issue which internal party feuding had kept clear from public debate for far too long. A difficult decision was made worse by an un-clarifying debate dominated by lies and dreadful political leadership on both sides. And most of the media, thrilled by the soap-opera, but bamboozled by the arguments, served us ill.

So, what to do? The worsening negative trends over such a long period suggest that waiting for political parties and governments to find a sudden vocation for leadership is not a good idea. That vacuum puts the leadership role down to us, one that we can pick up in a way that makes it easier, rather than harder, for others to follow.

Do we have an attractive, people-centred story to tell about how good an outcome sustainability for the human endeavour could be? No. The exhortations and threats of doom that we environmentalists favour, falls short of the hope inspired in the neighbourhoods by the rhetoric of Donald Trump or the likes of Nigel Farage. So I've considered how to start a more positive story.

I've also thought about how to counter fake-news with truth. If we behave as though sustainability was normal we can ask subversive questions that ensure people start to think harder about what is possible or necessary. For example, what evidence of dangerous climate change do you want to see before urgent action is

taken? Why do we prioritise recycling, when the volume of waste is overwhelming and growing?

Engaging with politicians is unavoidably important. There is no time for revolutions, tongue-in-cheek or otherwise. By stiffening the resolve of our parliamentarians and local councillors to strengthen the democratic process and, wherever we can, joining in, a difference could be made quite quickly. This would be even more true if the move to reclaim the digital world for good gathers speed. Gaining control of our data, and supporting campaigns to subject artificial intelligence (huge data consumers) to human rights legislation and standards, for example, might bring the promise of digital communication back into the service of sustainability and democracy.

Seemingly mundane activities—such as telling good stories about sustainability, bolstering our elected representatives to defend and promote both democracy and pro-sustainability policies, and taking back control of our data—may seem pallid in the context of the billions of dollars and pounds spent by libertarian ideologues. But they can be DIY Trojan horses rallying the attention of the media, the chattersphere and our institutions around the ideas that really matter.

Perhaps the most frustrating thing for a sustainability wonk, or a caring citizen, is the feeling of powerlessness in a world where we can't control our ecosystems and particularly our human institutions, which are the systems we use to decide and act together. Now we have something practical and deliciously subversive to do.

See you on the front line.

Sara Parkin
November 2018

Introduction

So fast has the context for this reflection changed in the past two years, it has been difficult to find firm ground from which to update my thoughts on the nature of democracy and its role in our quest for sustainability. With **Freedom House** reporting 2017 as the 12th consecutive year of decline in global freedom, it is hard not to feel democracy has become an endangered species.

When I wrote my original piece in 2008 we were still living the uneasy calm before the breakers of the financial crash finally made landfall. There was little to disturb my focus on how the UK democratic system could, in practice, make sustainability easier rather than harder to achieve. We had a decade, I said, to get it sorted.

But here we are, ten years later. Not only is our democratic system not helping us achieve sustainability, it is also under considerable strain and appears to be taking us further and further away from sustainability.

The crashing waves of the financial crisis exposed the viciousness of an economic system that erodes both nature and human welfare. It laid bare the corruption of its latest technologies and spotlighted the massive inequality iceberg, its tip colonised by the world's billionaires (2,208 of them in 2018 according to **Forbes Magazine**). Together they hold US$9.1 trillion (12% of global GDP).

How quickly did the new digital technologies, tools and expertise move from being benign blessings for learning, democracy, communications and self-empowerment to 'weapons' used against us by hugely powerful data analytical companies aided and abetted by the 'once on our side' Amazon, Facebook and Google.

No wonder that, despite my best efforts, I have failed to keep the same focus on the mechanics of our electoral system. Writing in Autumn 2018, it is impossible to ignore the bigger game now being played out— one in which the mega-rich are mobilising the mega-powers of digital technologies to abuse democratic systems for their own ends. Some call it 'gaming the system'. I call it profoundly immoral, especially when you explore the libertarian ideology that seems to link so many of those involved.

Political parties are, like many of us, proving to be corks in a storm of events we are struggling to understand, never mind respond to. My reflection today is rooted in the larger challenges of coping with vast and corrosive inequality, and malevolent interventions in our democratic processes, which are linked by their hostility to sustainability.

In 2008, I concluded that political parties have had their day. Now, I would say: it depends. Here's why.

Scene Setter I: Misplaced complacency and the 'new' ideology on the block

In 2016, when the UK electorate voted to leave the European Union, and the US electorate voted President Donald Trump into office, politicians and political commentators alike seemed shocked to the core. How could the general public reject the incontestable truth of neoliberalism that human affairs are better mediated by market forces, as free from government interference as possible? Ever since the 1980s, when President Ronald Reagan and Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher began putting neoliberal theories into practice, neoliberalism has provided the 'normal' frame for political and economic news and debate, with all political parties correlating the failure of communism with the unquestioned certainty that 'neoliberalism' is the only way to make the world go round. Even the more socialist political parties, which at first resisted the case for neoliberalism, eventually capitulated.

Now we are paying the price of that complacency because, down in the local neighbourhoods where life is not experienced ideologically but for real, a resounding (but not wholesale) rejection of free-market economics as the only legitimate option was developing. Real communities living real lives are bearing the brunt of neoliberalism's unfairness and its carelessness of both nature and those least able to defend themselves.

Just how unfair was proved during the 2008 financial crash, when the criminally negligent behaviour of those who cost the global economy trillions of dollars escaped largely unsanctioned while citizens embarked on years of belt-tightening and dwindling hope of anything better any time soon. Protecting the natural world became another early victim of austerity.

Now the complicity between a values-denuded economic system and its fellow-travelling political system is so obvious we feel foolish for not noticing it sooner. Even the **IMF has published research** on whether the neoliberal agenda has increased inequality which in turn impacts the viability of its own idea of economic growth.

No wonder 2015 and 2016 saw popular kick-backs against the 'same-old' economic and political ideas running the post-crash show. Large numbers of UK and US voters chose the 'kick-all-their-asses' option or did not vote at all. Many young voters did not even see the point of registering to vote, so irrelevant did they see the democratic process to shaping the sort of world they want.

The cracks in the consensus that neoliberalism is the only way to operate may be hairline, but they are showing and there are a lot of them.

It would be wonderful to think that it is pro-sustainability ideas which are opening people's minds. But, while I think more people do see the links between worrying

environmental degradation and the perpetual de-prioritisation of the less well-off by our politicians, I am concerned that failing to see the rise of ever more overt activity by some extremely rich people is to miss an exceptionally dangerous trick.

It is not new that big money influences political processes. Former US Vice President and climate change campaigner Al Gore has long argued that the US democratic system is being 'hacked' by big money and corporate interests, such as those of the billionaires Charles and David Koch (the largest funders of climate change 'deniers').[1] In the United Kingdom, the size and influence of the corporate and private wealth parliamentary lobbyists is notorious.

But this is different. A new ideology, 'libertarianism', is now championed quite openly by some of the best-known and richest billionaires. In brief, libertarians are 'beyond neoliberalism', putting liberty for the wealthy minority above all else and seeking to enshrine that in the nation's governing rules.[2] They are for: individual freedom and the supremacy of capital, particularly financial capital. They are against: any government role beyond maintaining the rule of law, keeping social order and securing national defence. Regulation, they hate. Hence the enduring hostility to the European Union.

Who they are matters too. Jane Mayer notes the attendees at one of leading libertarian activist Charles Koch's 2010 funders 'summit' were "mostly businessmen; very few were women. Fewer still were non-white". Most are defending inherited wealth largely made in the financial sector.[3] They have been joined by a new generation of libertarians including some of the newly ultra-rich digital pioneers like Amazon's Jeff Bezos; Uber's Travis Kalanick; Palentir and Pay Pal's Peter Thiel (also a founder investor of Facebook), and Jimmy Wales (Wikipedia). Billionaires, one and all. Many are devotees

of Ayn Rand, and her extreme philosophy promoting "the virtue of selfishness".[4] Another is Alan Greenspan, Chair of the US Federal Reserve between 1987 and 2006. He noted in his memoir that he was "intellectually limited until I met her".[5] However, in his 2008 evidence to a US congressional committee, Greenspan admitted he had "discovered a flaw in the [free market] model that I perceived is the critical functioning structure that defines how the world works".[6]

The era of Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan gave libertarians a boost in the 1980s, but they found it harder to embed their political philosophy into the governing rules of nations. As the social democratic kick-back of Clinton and Blair's era started, Charles Koch openly explained that "who rules" was insufficient to secure power for libertarian views, so the rules themselves had to be changed. He set about organising a 'constitutional revolution',[7] saying "since we [very rich libertarians] are outnumbered, stealth must be our winning strategy." Originally prompted by economist Friedrich von Hayek, Koch and like-minded funders supported hundreds of think-tanks and research institutes as 'the artillery' for their war of ideas, including the blandly-named Institute of Economic Affairs in London.[8]

Nevertheless, libertarians lost confidence that neoliberal policy alone would get them what they wanted: by the end of the 1990s, 'social democratic' values were in government in the United States and in two-thirds of EU states. The apparent reconciliation of market economics, social welfare and an increasingly open, liberal culture was unsettling. Then the 2008 financial crash happened, and the vulnerable flank of the rich was laid bare by a tremendous anger at escalating inequality. Open hostility to the ultra-rich grew in popular and political power.

Following the financial crash and throughout Obama's two terms of office,

libertarians stayed on strategy but below the public radar and got very busy. Charles Koch started to "train up younger people to help the campaign".[9] Libertarians won control of the Republican Party machinery, supported the Republican Tea Party movement and targeted judiciary and state governments. Crucially, in 2010, an organisation linked to billionaire Robert Mercer, Citizen's United, took the US Federal Election Commission to court and succeeded in removing the limits on how much individuals and corporations could give to 'independent' political activities. This opened the door for 'superPACs' (US political action committees) to raise and spend unlimited sums supporting individual campaigns.[10]

The objective of all of this? A libertarian administration with enough power over its institutions to change the rules.

Scene Setter II: Vulnerability of a democratic system shoddily maintained

The other shock of 2016 was the exposure of how easily and fundamentally our democratic systems can be corrupted.

We realise now that it was our years-long semi-detached approach to the European Union that made it possible for exit partisans to peddle myth and mischief. Exit partisans who manipulated a bad-tempered, ill-prepared and badly-informed referendum in which only 37% of the population of voting age voted to leave the EU, while 62% either voted to remain (34%) or did not vote (28%). No wonder the leaders of the 'leave' vote—Michael Gove and Boris Johnson—were pale-faced and shaken on their first post-poll TV appearance: they did not expect to win.

Nor did the 'remainers', led by Prime Minister David Cameron, expect to lose, though they campaigned with a startling insensitivity to the neighbourhoods' concerns.

How was our democratic system so weakened that the government could

involve us in a flagrantly bad democratic process to resolve what was, truth be told, an internal Conservative party feud? Why did members of parliament vote to hold the referendum, when it usurped their constitutional role as our representatives charged with using their best judgement on our behalf? What were they thinking when they left the decision over something of such huge national and international significance to amateur us? As Freedom House, an independent watchdog promoting democracy and freedom in the world puts it: "Referendums represent a radical reduction of democracy to its most skeletal form: majority rule … Whatever the intent … referendums are an end run around the structures and safeguards of democracy."[11]

That was in June 2016. A few months later in the United States, a billionaire property developer and reality TV star with a bad tweeting habit swept into the White House despite polling nearly three million fewer popular votes than his main opponent.

So here we are, in 2018. Big environmental, social and economic challenges for the United Kingdom, the United States and the whole world loom larger and more urgently than ever. These challenges are unlikely to be resolved except through wise leadership and careful collaboration at all levels of society. And yet in the US White House there is a regime inimical to sustainability; and UK 'leavers' believe, without hard evidence, that political and institutional separation and low-grade trade will serve the neighbourhoods and the natural world well.

In 2016, in both countries, political parties seemed unwilling or unable to stop unfolding events in the campaigns, waiting until the 11th hour to wake up to their far-reaching implications. Meanwhile, the public-facing exploiters of weaknesses in the democratic processes—Donald Trump and Nigel Farage—knew exactly what was going on.

Only afterwards did we find out about the people, money and organisations in the background: people favouring unregulated freedom for financial capital, protection for themselves and their wealth plus the right to direct their philanthropy, and investments, as they choose, rather than through taxes.

Pouring buckets of money into elections to influence the outcome is not a new phenomenon. But what made 2016 a landmark year was the scale of money spent on trying to influence people's feelings about candidates in countries once considered democratic exemplars. Techniques that were honed as financial trading algorithms and through contracts with the military and governments in what NATO calls 'cognitive warfare' were applied to influence electorates on a massive scale.[12]

The advertising industry uses similar techniques to persuade us to buy this coffee rather than that one. What is different is the partnership of ideologically motivated billions and highly sophisticated capabilities of technology companies, like the SCL Group which includes Cambridge Analytica.[13] These new partnerships led to a new type of contamination of the electoral process in which voters were micro-targeted through social media.

In March 2017, Alexander Nix, then Director and/or CEO of all ten SCL Group companies told Forbes Magazine "we were able to … predict the personality of every single adult. Pretty well every message that Trump put out was data driven."[14] In the United Kingdom, Leave.UK talked quite freely about 'in kind' help from Cambridge Analytica.[15] And until mid-March 2018, Aggregateiq Data Services Ltd (previously SCL Canada) carried a quote from Dominic Cummings, the official UK campaign Vote Leave's Campaign Director: "without a doubt, the Vote Leave campaign owes a great deal of its success to the work of Agregateiq. We couldn't have done it

without them."[16]

Subsequently, Mark Zuckerberg confessed that tens of millions of profiles were illicitly 'scraped' from Facebook, with similar datasets easily obtained from other sources, such as Google, land registries, club memberships, credit cards, electoral registers. Hackers can fulfil almost any order that cannot be bought. CNN reported an FBI alert after Arizona and Illinois voter databases were hacked in July 2016.[17] Companies like Cambridge Analytica process the data to find patterns that fit clusters of people with similar profiles to words that prompt the desired emotional response: 'take back control!', '£350m/week for the NHS', 'Make America Great Again', 'drain the swamp!'. Mercer's SuperPAC, Make America Number One, paid US$1.5 million to Cambridge Analytica in 2015 and 2016.[18] Billions of tailored messages were then put out through social media, augmented by posts from artificial 'bots' posing as real people. The Oxford Internet Institute estimates that before the EU referendum, one in three tweets were sent by bots, all in support of the Leave campaign, while in the run up to the US Presidential election, one in five pro-Trump tweets were from bots.[19]

The relationships between many of the people involved in this story is revealing. Robert Mercer has long funded the Republican Party and holds libertarian values. He is friends with Nigel Farage who was beside Donald Trump during and after his presidential bid.[20] And he has worked closely with Steve Bannon (once on the board of Cambridge Analytica), funding his libertarian propaganda outlet, Breitbart News. Bannon launched a UK version of Breitbart to support Nigel Farage and went on to become Trump's campaign manager and strategic advisor.

US and UK electoral systems have not proved strong enough to withstand abuse from external malevolent intervention or from manipulation and misuse by

participants. And whichever way you look at how the campaigns were run, the result is chaotic decision-making in the United States by a pastiche president, and a government and opposition distracted by internal ideological quarrels in the United Kingdom.

By the end of 2016, Freedom House was already concerned that the immaturity of these two so-called advanced democracies had jeopardised the cause of democracy around the world.[21] As Russian President **Vladimir Putin told CNN** on 17th June 2016: "America lectures everyone on how to live and on democracy. Now do you really think the presidential elections there are democratic?"

Uncomfortable as it is to admit, it is Donald Trump, Nigel Farage and their immensely wealthy and determined backers who have been the ones best in touch with the hopes and fears of the neighbourhoods. Today, Farage and Trump's erstwhile political strategist, Steve Bannon, are criss-crossing Europe drumming up support for a "nationalist populist revolt" that might ultimately transform the EU into a "confederation of free and independent states".[22] The next step in the Koch constitutional revolution apparently is to begin disunifying the United States.[23]

Complacency has side-lined the continual attention democracy needs to stay in good working order. Now we are paying the price. Whether through ignorance, complicity or incompetence, political parties must take a lot of the blame for not defending our democratic systems from corruption for ends so inimical to sustainability. Our MPs voted to hold the EU referendum. They have also for years self-interestedly failed to properly nurture and improve our hard fought for democratic systems and down-played strategic issues like sustainability for party political reasons.

So here we are, seeing a full assault on the integrity of major political unions, the

United States and the European Union. Not to improve the quality of decision and policymaking for sustainability, but to separate, bring into conflict and weaken them all in the name of securing power for libertarian values which benefit the ultra-rich above all else.

Where are we now?

With respect to sustainability, we are in a worse state than ever, I fear. Since the first Earth Summit in 1972, no significant negative trend has been slowed, never mind halted or reversed. We have more than doubled the number of people on the planet (we are now 7.5 billion), nearly doubled 'greenhouse gas emissions', and shrunk forest cover so much that tropical forests, the 'lungs of the earth', are now thought to be a net contributor to carbon emissions. More than 800 million people still have no access to clean water and/or are hungry. Everywhere wild species, large and small, are struggling to survive and secure their habitat. Meanwhile we are told we are 15 times richer today than we were 50 years ago: global Gross Domestic Product (GDP) stands at US$81 trillion.[24]

Much faith, especially by governments, has been placed in digital and technical innovations to stop the increases in resource use, industrial output and pollution that have been driving these negative trends for decades. But a 2017 paper from MIT finds "no dematerialization occurring even for cases of information technology with rapid technical progress". In other words, we cannot rely on 'unfettered technological change' to achieve sustainability.[25] It is as if we environmental campaigners have wasted the last fifty years.

And now democracy is under threat too. Wobbly in 2008, democratic institutions are now vulnerable to global scale breakdown, with malign forces capitalising

on longstanding neglect. After reporting a net decline in global freedom for over a decade, **Freedom House's report from June 2017** concluded that the strategy of some states, most notably Russia and China, is to "capture the institutions that undergird political pluralism. The goal is to dominate not only the executive and legislative branches, but also the media, the judiciary, civil society, the commanding heights of the economy, and the security forces."

Freedom House doesn't talk about the motivation behind these moves. Is it hubris, power for its own sake, or fear of losing control? Or is it just about money? For if you follow the money, you find the motivation that links libertarian ideologues to modern authoritarians: the last thing the 2208 billionaires want is to share their 12% of global GDP more fairly; the first thing modern authoritarians who are not yet billionaires want is to become and stay one. Neither want sustainable development, nor its prescription for collaboration, transparency, sharing, fairness and justice—all the things needed to reverse the trends described above.

1 | Just what did we sustainability wonks expect?

If we have been foolishly complacent about our democratic systems, then organisations campaigning for sustainability have been criminally naïve. Did they really think our leaders would wake up one day and say: 'my goodness, these green people are right, it is the very systems we use to run the economy and society that are causing us to degrade the environment and create inequality! Let us start at once to do things differently and put the well-being of all people and nature first.'

Did we really expect those benefiting from the economy's current business model to voluntarily give up their advantage? Are

we really surprised that the ultra-rich have redoubled their efforts to stay rich and in power?

What is surprising, is that we—the people, the sustainability campaigners, the political parties and the media—haven't got on the case harder and stronger sooner. It's been nearly 50 years since **Limits to Growth** and **A Blueprint for Survival** were published. Yet sustainability remains nowhere near where it should be on the political agenda, on either side of the Atlantic. President Trump has aggressively rolled back environmental regulation. And the UK government squeaks about maintaining EU environment protection standards while defanging The Environment Agency and Natural England. All parties say the economic system is not working, but none, except the Greens, give an iota of a suggestion that sustainable development might provide a better alternative.

So why are so many sustainability campaigners still focusing on governments, trying to persuade them to take up often minor (and technical) policies on their behalf? Amazingly, NGOs persist in believing, despite all the evidence of the last half century, that political parties are the best route to change at the speed and scale we need.[26]

2 | Parliamentarians forgot parliament is sovereign and that they represent citizens.

In 2015 both Houses of Parliament voted to hold a referendum on UK membership of the European Union. A simple choice: remain or leave. In doing so, our elected representatives passed the buck for a historical political decision to us. Unfathomably, MPs abdicated their responsibility under our democratic system to exercise their best judgement on our behalf and justify their decision through debate in parliament and talking to constituents.

It took a brave citizen, Gina Miller,

to remind parliamentarians of their responsibilities. She argued, successfully, through the courts that the decision to trigger Article 50 (to launch the process of leaving the EU) should be made in parliament. The court case and government's subsequent appeal led to vicious attacks, not only on her, but also on the High Court judges who upheld the decision. Her campaign during the rushed 2017 election, Best for Britain, was aimed at candidates in all parties who would use parliament to scrutinise any deal for the UK to exit then renegotiate a new relationship with the EU with our interests as a priority.

For years, EU membership has been the subject of painful argument inside the Conservative and Labour parties and neither were keen to include us, the citizens, in their frequently ferocious fights. Then UKIP, a new party with the sole aim of taking us out of the European Union, emerged, deepening the in-party angst but forcing the debate into the public. Our media failed us badly by concentrating on party-political embarrassment rather than the issues at stake. As a result, we voters feel estranged from politics and therefore little interested in joining a party.

Despite (or perhaps because of) dwindling membership, for years political parties have been moving away from representing we fickle citizens, while still expecting some sort of loyal deference. Witness Labour's visceral shock when it lost its Scottish strongholds to the SNP in 2015. Did they really expect citizens to keep voting for a party claiming to represent the left-behinds when, after three consecutive terms in Westminster, Labour still had not pulled them out of grim poverty?

Because they are estranged from citizens, political parties tend to be viewed like a soap opera or spectator sport. The media's preference for reporting personal drama instead of policy effectiveness doesn't help. Some academics even suggest that political parties have lost their roots in society,

seeing themselves only as governments or governments-in-waiting.[27] It's not surprising that we often find our interests represented more effectively outside the political party world—in newspaper columns, TV and radio or even vicariously through social media. However, neither the ballot box nor the intermediary NGOs are serving the sustainability cause well.

So wrapped up in themselves are the political parties, they fail to see any conflict of interest in toeing the party line even if it is at odds with what they judge to be best for their constituents or the country at large. Direct intervention in the relationship between MPs and constituents, through party whipping in parliament, further weakens trust in our system of parliamentary representative democracy. Every part of our democratic process is bathed in the blandishments of lobbyists and party self-interest. What voter can confidently say that their best interests are truly and safely represented in parliament?

3 | Our electoral system is not strong enough to resist digital contamination; nor, it seems, is our democracy.

It's been four decades since I went door-to-door leafleting for the Green Party. In those days, the two big parties, Labour and Conservative, slogged it out on the national stage, arguing less about policies and more about ideologies, while we tramped the streets talking through the issues we thought mattered most. Our peep was drowned out by their crowing. At my count for the 1979 general election, Labour's Denis Healey, standing in the adjacent constituency, told me that we Greens were right, but it was political suicide to say so.

Since that moment I have been attuned to political double-speak and the self-interest of political parties. Nevertheless, I was still devastated when it so infected the Liberal Democrats in 2010 that the dazzle

of ministerial posts scuppered a genuine opportunity to reform the electoral system. That same year a group of observers from the Royal Commonwealth Society (from countries like Bangladesh, Rwanda and Sierra Leone), found our electoral process "fair on the day", but "corruptible".[28] This did not provoke any thoughts of reform. Instead, political parties started looking at how Barak Obama used social media to win the vote in 2008 and 2012.

All political parties, except perhaps for UKIP, were wrong-footed by the arrival of ideologically-driven billionaires using military-grade techniques to manipulate data and get specific outcomes. In the 19th century it was the steel, rail and coal magnates who dominated what became known as the Gilded Age. Today it is the financial and digital titans like Amazon, Facebook and Google who are wreaking what Jonathan Taplin calls "digital destruction".[29] And it is not just our electoral systems that are being contaminated; many of our decision-making institutions and processes are being completely side-lined.

A couple of examples. The first is a project being trialled in Toronto, Canada where Alphabet (Google's parent company) has teamed up with city-shaping property developers and institutional investors. Their vision is of cheap modular buildings, parking systems, pedestrian-sensitive lighting, delivery robots, advanced energy grids, and self-driving cars. Public domains will become the "property of a private entity". Alphabet claims that in the past "prescriptive measures were necessary to protect human health, ensure safe buildings and manage negative externalities. Today ... cities can achieve those same goals without the inefficiency that comes with inflexible zoning and static building codes."[30] But the project's business model is built on vast data-surveillance and user-profiling that has obvious possibilities for misuse.

Let's consider for a moment. Alphabet wants to replace the rules and codes that we determined together democratically with privately run (and owned?) cities and flexible spaces determined by 'market forces' shaped by our personal data.[31] Who would have thought that we would have to start fighting to defend our local authority planning departments!

Just in case you think this is unrealistic fantasy, think about the UK Government's Industrial Strategy which includes UK-wide installation of smart meters. The **Smart Meter Bill**, which became law in May 2018, establishes the Data and Communications Company (DCC) to ensure that the smart metering system works smoothly. Through the DCC (run by private company Capita), energy companies (and others) can collect energy consumption data remotely. So just as we hear Facebook tell 87 million people that their private information is far from secure, our own government is facilitating further exploitation of our personal data by private companies.

You may not feel this future is as dystopian as all that, just part of the way the world is going. You may feel lots of ads for more efficient appliances are a fair price for having a privately-owned surveillance device in your home. You may feel too, that the prospect of robots caring for your old mum and your kids while you work your socks off to pay their electricity bills, is not so bad as all that.

Or you may share my concern that there seems to be fundamental shifts of power going on here—away from us, our public realm and our democratic systems to the privately-owned digital monopolists.

Which leaves the conundrum of the role of Russia, number one suspect in disrupting western democratic processes. The Atlantic Council thinks Russian leader Vladimir Putin is primarily concerned with discrediting democracy and sees "rabble-rousing as an integral part of modern

conflict".[32] I agree and think the dominant logic playing out here is of the very wealthy protecting not only their assets but also their positions of power. Just like libertarian ideologues, modern authoritarians like Putin don't want democrats or social democrats in power because they are theoretically the most likely to undermine his sort of power through increasing regulation, taxes, constraints on moving money and other assets, transparency and so on.

Whatever the objective, I cannot see how democratic systems, as currently structured in the United Kingdom or United States, can resist this scale and type of ongoing interference. We are witnessing a profound geo-political shift in the principle fuel for capitalism. Mined fossil fuels are giving way to mined data. Fossil fuel billionaires may be manoeuvring to squeeze the last dollar out of oil, but the digital monopolies are preparing a new world of endless profit out of marketing every detail of our beings and doings to the highest bidder.

UK political parties may be trying to be more social media savvy, but they are proving straws in the wind before the hurricane of democratic interference by companies and individuals holding immense wealth and poorly regulated power.

. . .

In summary, any economy geared to sustainable development would by definition be inimical to today's scale of inequality and the current behaviour of massive wealth. And it seems libertarian ideologues understand this better than most sustainability wonks.

What happens next in the United Kingdom depends on the libertarians. Their options are to leave party politics and weak leadership to do their worst and let the UK democratic process reach the same sort of

stasis it has in the United States. Or maybe to be more proactive on behalf of like-minded Conservatives like Boris Johnson or Jacob Rees-Mogg. At the end of an interview with Steven Bannon on economic nationalism and populism, Lionel Barber, editor of the Financial Times, called Bannon "a weaponiser of ideas", confirming that the libertarian campaign is likely to be ongoing and vigorous.[33]

We can hope regulatory bodies will tighten up our 'corruptible' systems. But the technology that made possible the 2016 interventions has not gone away; neither has the money nor the ideology behind it. All that money that doesn't believe in climate change, or believes that colonising Mars is a good idea, or that eternal life is possible.[34] It's all tipping us away from anything that contributes to a sustainable way of life.

In or out of government, UK political parties cannot seem to grasp the existential danger of what is happening to our democracy, nor comprehend the long-term implications. As a consequence they appear to be enemies of democracy, and therefore of sustainability. Yet I can no longer defend my 2008 call for a revolution to get rid of them. We simply do not have the luxury of time to indulge in such a campaign. More importantly, it would be too dangerous a distraction. The job now has to be to rally around to defend and secure our democracy, which is under attack. And we have to do that with political parties if possible; and despite them if not.

Moving the direction of society's travel, socially and economically, towards sustainability will require the mother of all collaborations, for which resilient democratic processes and strong institutions will be vital. You may have guessed that I am not partisan to the United Kingdom leaving the European Union. That is not because the EU is perfect—far from it. But it is a collaborative venture on the sort of scale we need.

Ecologically disruptive and difficult times are already upon us, so restoring and repairing the institutions we have rather than throwing away the wheel and starting again makes more sense. In fact, we do not have time to do anything else.

What do we do next?

I believe that what we saw in 2016 is a taster for more to come. Whatever the outcomes of the very welcome regulatory and legal investigations into that year's electoral system irregularities, it seems sensible to assume that libertarian-leaning, anti-sustainability ideological marriages between money and technology will continue to be used to prosecute the agenda of the very rich. Freedom House has already warned that our future is one in which "individual leaders and nations pursue their own narrow interests without meaningful constraints, and without regard for the shared benefits of global peace, freedom, and prosperity."[35] The recent success of the libertarian or nationalist and populist parties as commentators are starting to call them, suggests that the disillusionment with traditional left-right politics is as deep as it is enduring.

I propose to think about what we do next as not only exercising the precautionary principle on behalf of our democracy, but also, given the evidence, actively intervening in its defence. Nothing of what follows involves demanding others to do something. It is not a manifesto. But, learning from the strategies of the libertarians, it is a revolution of sorts.

It is a plan of action that we—as citizens and as sustainability wonks—can carry out ourselves using whatever opportunities present themselves. The task is to create a public and political appetite for democratic processes robust enough to get us onto a path to sustainability in the short term, and resist 'corruption' in the long term. I see no advantage in waiting for government or

regulators to act. They may or may not act and we can't wait to find out.

The same goes for political parties. Either they are part of this or they are not, and their past performance is not encouraging. So we have to proceed as if political parties are neither barriers, nor sole agents of change, but instead as if they are potential allies in a joint and urgent venture.

Please do not quail. I'm going to highlight four things we can all get started on tomorrow. I believe all four will make it easier for each of us to be an effective pro-sustainability activist, wherever we are. And all will help make joining us an attractive option for others.

1 | Have a positive, hopeful and people-centred story to tell about sustainability.

Martin Luther King did not say "I will reduce racism by 17.5% from 1990 levels by 2020". He said "I have a dream …" Hearts and minds are rarely won by warnings of doom or statistical targets, more often by positive stories. So why is it so hard for sustainability advocates to articulate their dream of a sustainable life in a way that inspires enough hope and courage to make it a reality?

Some say that the 2015 **UN Sustainable Development Goals** give us the story-line we need But that's 17 goals and 169 targets that cover everything but the kitchen sink. And they contain a potentially fatal internal contradiction: Goal 8 is about continued growth through the same economic logic that has caused the other afflictions the goals are supposed to reverse.

Naomi Klein's **The Leap Manifesto** for Canada is perhaps closer to what we need. And many UK NGOs already do like Klein's manifesto and 'call for' government or businesses to do this or that. My argument is that we cannot wait for others to heed our call: governments, businesses and others (including political parties) have

proved at best partially deaf and always deadly slow.

Instead, we can show leadership by doing things ourselves and calling attention to them as much as possible. Some have already started: think of the **Transition Town** movement, the **Community Energy Coalition** or **The Orchard Project**, for example. As yet, however, this sort of activity has not coalesced into a logical narrative of hope for the future on the scale we need.

One of the reasons the UK Vote Leave and US Republican Party were so successful is that they had a narrative which reached into the neighbourhoods and gave 'hope' that things would get better. If we are to inspire similar 'hope' through a change to sustainability, then we will need a sense of what 'good' would look like. What are we hoping for? What can people expect if they join in?

For me that picture of 'good' looks like this:

- Success is when people feel good about themselves, their relationships and the place they live.
- We all feel there is order and meaning (a purpose) to our lives.
- The logic shaping the economy is of 'fewer people consuming less stuff'.
- Our livelihoods are focussed around growing natural, human and social capital.
- Financial and technological systems support the above.[36]

This is my own sustainability bottom line, which I use as an aid to shape my narratives in ways appropriate to whoever I am with and whatever I am trying to do. It is not a list to parrot, rather to think about and then translate into your own story—one that fits your style and situation. For example, all those surveys on what makes us happiest boil down to the things in the first bullet point. So why not make them the goal of society, rather than GDP? Think about the jobs there would be putting

nature back in control of her ecosystems, and prioritising growing our potential and the richness of our social connections. What would that sort of economy look like? Especially if the financial system and our choice of technologies were geared to support it, rather than run roughshod over us?

Should you be struggling to see what 'good' would look like for the sort of democratic system that can provide resilience and security then seek out the work of the **late Elinor Ostrom**. She won the 2009 Nobel Prize for Economics for demonstrating the role of public choice in decisions that influence public life, and described how communities are designing sensible rules for sharing resources like land, fisheries, forest, water and even police services.

However we tell our story of sustainability, one thing is sure: it must star people and offer a happy ending. There is nothing more powerful and energising—for you and your audience—than an attractive and logical view of what the future could be, presented in a way that connects more to our hopes than our fears.

2 | Live in truth. Be a truth-seeker. Ask subversive questions.

What if we behaved as if sustainable development was today's normality rather than something that might happen in the future? This is the tactic used by Vaclav Havel, the writer and playwright Czech dissident who became president of his country after the break-up of the Soviet Bloc. Before that happened, Havel would behave as if free speech and the freedom to associate with whomever he wished was normal. He was repeatedly arrested and often jailed, but he kept it up. 'Living in truth' he called it. Whenever possible he questioned his jailors and the authorities: "Why is it wrong to speak or write as I think? Why am I not allowed to get together with my colleagues and friends whenever

I want?" This kept his oppressors on the back foot, having to justify their refusal of some basic human rights, while Havel pressed forward on the front foot of life as it should be.

Imagine doing the same with sustainability. How refreshing to be asking questions that push our interlocuters towards the logic of sustainability. Why, for example, are diesel cars still on the road? When did human life become an acceptable trade-off for polluting economic activities? What more evidence do you need to implement serious climate change policies? What gap between rich and poor is reasonable? Why do we prioritise recycling over waste reduction? Why can't we afford big investment in renewable energy when we can find trillions to bail out the banks?

All the time you are living in truth and questioning, you are on the front foot: it is the other side that has to justify their position. This will make them think, and you can help to nudge them along towards the logic of sustainability.

If you are living in truth, you are also likely to be a 'truth-seeker'—someone who looks for information, connections and people you can trust. In the current climate of 'fake news' and betrayals by once trusted people and organisations, growing your skills and reputation as a 'truth-seeker' will become ever more important. Asking subversive questions helps. Where did you get your information? Where can I find out more?

Grow your own constellation of trusted sources: websites, organisations, people. I tend to go to someone I know and trust first. If they don't know the answer to my question, I ask for their recommendation for where to go next. In that way a trail, and eventually a nexus, of trusted sources is created. Develop those relationships carefully and they should become collaborators in the quest for sustainable development as the new normal.

That said, beware the echo-chamber of the

like-minded. We have to be open enough to see the world from the perspective of others if we are to be trusted and therefore convincing.

3 | Stiffen the resolve of elected politicians to strengthen democratic processes. Join in.

As part of our quest for sustainability, and in defence of the sort of democracy we need to get there, one thing we can all do is follow Gina Miller's example and keep reminding our representatives in national governments and local authorities of how UK parliamentary democracy is supposed to work.

The job of MPs is to represent our best interests by exercising their own informed judgment, not by blindly following party lines or whips. Being informed means knowing the issues, knowing the range of views of their electorate, sounding out ideas for policy and action, and arguing and deciding for the best outcome that is most in tune with strong democracy (and sustainable development).

I am not sure how clearly our politicians understand just what is at stake but I do know that our democracy will remain an endangered species if they don't defend it robustly. What do we need to do to make it incorruptible? What systems of vigilance do we need to keep it so? These are questions not only for government but for regulators like the Electoral Commission and other key institutions, such as the judiciary, the media. They are also urgent questions for public debate so get them into as many letters, columns and blogs as you can. It is worth monitoring and learning from the strategies and tactics of the libertarians. "If you know the enemy and know yourself, you need not fear the result of a hundred battles" is the 2500-year-old advice of Chinese military strategist Sun Tzu, still taught in Business Schools around the world and good advice in many circumstances![37]

If you haven't done any political engagement before, don't start by reading Sun Tzu but by exploring **www.theyworkforyou.com**. Go to your MP's local surgeries and events (whether you voted for them or not) and ask lots of questions —about democracy and sustainable development. Do the same for your local councillors and for other parties. Don't be timid. Take a friend. Work on your own version of 'what good could look like' and explain to others what you are doing and why. Ask them to help.

We can work with MPs and local councillors so everyone gets a good enough grip on the sustainability narrative—and learns how to give it wider resonance by using questions rather than demands. In the 2018 November mid-term elections in the United States, a record number of women ran for seats in the House, the Senate and for Governorships. Inspired by the #metoo campaign in this case, there is no reason why we cannot do the same, inspired by securing our democracies for sustainability.

4 | Reclaim the digital world for good.

Is it impossible to use the internet to further sustainability and democracy? We have to hope not, even if it seems as though we're heading for a libertarian's dream world in which our personal data is lifted and sifted to sell us the services and products data-mining algorithms say we want. John Naughton, Senior Research Fellow at Cambridge University is unequivocal that surveillance is actually the business model of the day. Companies like Amazon, Facebook, Google and Twitter make their billions out of user data, a by-product of what they do. (Indeed, Google and Facebook make respectively 87% and 95% of their revenues from selling data.) Freely given information about us is being harvested and sold for corporate profit, eroding both democracy and our human rights.

I am not alone in believing we can still turn the tables and make the internet a force for good. Harvard academic Doc Searls, for example, blogs on a developing robust fight-back against the "vampires ravenous for the blood of personal data".[38]

The trick will be to starve the data vampires of blood (more and fresher data) and to pin them to their coffins with the stake of transparency and ethical oversight.

We could start by hunting down our own data in their many online homes (Facebook may be massive but is the tip of the iceberg). By reviewing our digital settings, permissions and terms and conditions we can keep the bare minimum in the public domain. We can resist answering questionnaires, liking or not liking things, filling in details unnecessarily on any website and unsubscribe to everything we don't need. We can learn to be vigilant about others collecting information that is more useful to them than it is to us: for example, transport companies only need to know we paid for our journey and what route we took, not our home address or reasons for travelling. Instead of searching for self-worth through the number of likes our Facebook posting gets, we could spend the time fostering an intimate group of genuine friends, especially locally, who genuinely care about us.

It should become easier for us to see and control how others get and use our data now that the EU's **General Data Protection Regulation** has become law. (If it doesn't, we will bombard the organisation with 'why' questions!) We've also got more help from browser plug-ins such as Disconnect Private Browsing, Privacy Badger and Ghostery, so we can block snoopers covertly tracking our on-line activity or pushing unwanted advertisements. One of Doc Searle's 'spin offs' is **Customer Commons**, which is developing a quick and simple way for anyone visiting an organisation's website to set their terms for the visit. We can also ask our MPs to prove

that they are taking seriously the impact of largely unregulated digital expansion on our privacy and the integrity of our democratic system. Including data-hungry Artificial Intelligence, a new technology spreading ethics-free, fast and with little regulation. I like the move to situate AI in the context of Human Rights.[39]

If the campaign to beat the data vampires gets big enough, there's no reason why de-activating our cache of online data can't regain us the potential of digital technology to serve our quest for sustainability. Look at the new global network **Data for Democracy** that gives like-minded scientists and technologists the space to "organise, to transform, to collaborate, and to support each other's projects." Maybe we can get help linking up stories about positive things that contribute to sustainability.

Shrinking our digital habit could be rewarding for both ourselves and for nature. We are more likely to find happiness in smaller circles of people who care about us for our real selves, rather than as an audience for their own antics. And every email we send, Google search we type, and minute we spend online has a carbon footprint. Naughton estimates that cloud computing already uses about 7% of all electricity consumption (a proportion that is rising rapidly).[40]

Conclusion

Political parties everywhere are complicit— as we all are—in failing to slow, never mind stop, any of the major unsustainable trends over the last half-century. If that is not enough, we have (all) been disgracefully complacent about the democratic systems so central to how we decide and organise, in our localities or as countries.

As a result, we face urgent deadlines for preserving the ecosystems that make life on earth possible and reforming the corruptible systems on which we rely for collective

decision-making.

We don't know yet if that corruption—particularly, but not only, the digital manipulation of campaign messaging—will lead to reforms that secure the democratic process from future interference. The largest parties in both the United States and the United Kingdom are in disarray, riven by ideological differences and under a media spotlight that by and large cannot resist personal drama and scandal at the expense of helpful critical curiosity about the motives and ideas at stake.

For us sustainability wonks, I am afraid the front line lies not at the door of political parties, but of the libertarian ideologues, old and new. The battlefield is uneven: they have billions to spend, we don't. But this after all is a battle for ideas and for power and we know (don't we?) that power without ideas does not last forever, even in the most repressive states. As Charles Koch himself has pointed out, very rich libertarians are in a tiny minority. But, but, but ... the tiny minority is spending its billions very strategically in pursuit of its ideological objective. A reference perhaps to Koch's admiration for the tactics of Lenin.[41]

As I write, the Sweden Democrat party holds a paralysing balance of power after Sweden's September 2018 General Election. The country could end up with a 'populist/nationalist' party entering government as they have in Austria, Finland, Hungary, Italy, Norway and Poland. In countries like Germany and Switzerland the same ideology is growing in influence. Bannon is planning to take what he calls 'the movement' to Brussels to prepare for the 2019 European Parliament elections.[43]

Our strength is that we have the future idea that matters most of all and, at the moment, there are a whole lot more of us. We have millions of signed up partisans and even more interested and concerned sympathisers who want to do something

but are not sure what is for the best. The longer we leave it, the harder it will be.

To succeed we will have to be a lot less naïve, and a lot more honest about where the most important battle-line lies. And we need to become a whole lot smarter and inspiring in how we prosecute our case.

Notes

1   A Gore (2017 film) An Inconvenient Sequel: Truth to Power, Paramount Pictures.

2   For a fuller definition of libertarian ideology, see the Encyclopaedia Britannica.

3   Jane Mayer (2016). Dark Money: The Hidden History of the Billionaires Behind the Rise of the Radical Right. Scribe: London, p12.

4   https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_people_influenced_by_Ayn_Rand (accessed 9 Sep 18 with a lot of deletions since first accessed in March). Bezos and Brin, for example, are rowing back from the libertarian label.

5   Alan Greenspan (2007). The Age of Turbulance. Penguin Press: New York, Chapter 2.

6   https://www.theguardian.com/business/2008/oct/24/economics-creditcrunch-federal-reserve-greenspan

7   Nancy McLean (2017). Democracy in Chains. Scribe: London, page xxv.

8   Jane Mayer (2016). Dark Money: The Hidden History of the Billionaires Behind the Rise of the Radical Right. Scribe: London, p 76-80

9   Nancy McLean (2017). Democracy in Chains. Scribe: London, p xxvi.

10 See Carole Cadwalladr, The Observer New Review, 26 Feb 2017 (accessed 27 Aug 18). Cadwalladr received the Orwell Prize for journalism in June 2018 for her investigation of digital and financial intervention in the 2016 UK Presidential election and the UK referendum on EU membership. See other articles on:

https://www.orwellfoundation.com/journalist/carole-cadwalladr-2/

11 Freedom House (2017). Report, page 3. www.freedomhouse.org

12 Cognitive Warfare: "recoding the mass consciousness to turn patriotism into collaboration". See Carole Cadwalldr's article at https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2017/feb/26/robert-mercer-breitbart-war-on-media-steve-bannon-donald-trump-nigel-farage (accessed 8 Jul 18)

13 https://beta.companieshouse.gov.uk

14 https://www.forbes.com/sites/jasonbloomberg/2017/03/05/does-trumps-weaponized-ai-propaganda-machine-hold-water/ (accessed 19 Mar 18)

15 http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2017/02/24/exclusive-tiny-canadian-company-helped-swing-brexit-vote-leave/ (accessed 4 Apr 18) See also (accessed 4 Apr 18)

16 Accessed 17 March 2018 but quote taken down days later. Author has a screen grab.

17 http://edition.cnn.com/2016/08/29/politics/hackers-breach-illinois-arizona-election-systems/index.html (accessed 26 Aug 18)

18 https://www.nytimes.com/2016/08/19/us/politics/robert-mercer-donald-trump-donor.html

19 Quoted in Carole Cadwalladr, The Observer New Review 26 Feb 2017 For more, see Oxford Internet Institute's Computational Propaganda Project for evidence of use of bots during UK EU referendum and the US Presidential Campaign http://comprop.oii.ox.ac.uk/

20 https://www.politico.eu/article/robert-mercer-us-billionaire-who-helped-trump-campaign-also-helped-leave-eu-brexit-donald-trump-nigel-farage/

21 https://freedomhouse.org See the 2016, 2017, 2018 reports.

22 https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/jun/06/steve-bannon-far-right-radicalise-europe-trump

23 https://www.esquire.com/news-politics/politics/a14841457/convention-of-states-campaign-secession/ https://conventionofstates.com/

24 World Bank national accounts data, and OECD National Accounts data files: https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.CD

25 Christopher L Magee and Devazas T C, 'A simple extension of dematerialization theory: Incorporation of technical progress and the rebound effect' in Technological Forecasting & Social Change 117 (2017) 196-205

26 The 33-strong Real World Coalition of UK SD NGOs, for example, frightened PM John Major so much when it published The Politics of the Real World just before the 1997 election that he queried its legitimacy via the Charity Commission. Instead of exercising its political power, however, the coalition disbanded after Tony Blair's election, believing (oh so mistakenly!) that its agenda(s) would be taken on board by the new government.

27 See for eg Peter Mair (2013) Ruling the Void: The hollowing of western democracy Verso:London

28 https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/election-2010/7693655/General-Election-2010-British-voting-system-too-corruptible-warn-Third-World-observers.html (accessed 2 Mar 18) Have not been able to locate the original report, supposed to have been published on 25th May 2010

29 Jonathan Taplin (2017) Move fast and break things London:McMillan

30 See https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2017/oct/21/google-urban-cities-plannings-data

31 The privitisation of public space has been going on for some years. For more see https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2015/aug/04/pops-privately-

owned-public-space-cities-direct-action

32 http://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/ new-atlanticist/understanding-the-role-of-russian-propaganda-in-the-us-election (accessed 28 Aug 18)

33 https://www.ft.com/video/a308774b-49e5-447e-a66c-1ee5b4208956?playlist-name=popular

34 Another Libertarian tract from Jacob's Rees Mogg's father: James Dale Davidson and William Rees Mogg (1997) How to survive and thrive through collapse of the welfare State New York: Simon Shuster. See too: "I stand against confiscatory taxes, totalitarian collectives, and the ideology of the inevitability of the death of every individual," Peter Thiel https://www. cato-unbound.org/2009/04/13/peter-thiel/education-libertarian

35 https://freedomhouse.org/report/ freedom-world/freedom-world-2017

36 Taken from my new book provisionally titled: Sustainability: What Good Would Look Like? Hopefully out early 2019.

37 Sun Tzu, The Art of War. Many translations and editions

38 https://blogs.harvard.edu/ doc/2018/03/23/nothing/

39 See for example Dunstan Allison-Hope's report at https://www.bsr.org/en/our-insights/blog-view/human-rights-based-approach-to-artificial-intelligence

40 Thirty four percent used by our devices, 29% by networks, 21% by server farms and 16% by manufacturers of all the kit.

41 "The art of any propagandist and agitator consists in his ability to find the best means of influencing any given audience, by presenting a definite truth, in such a way as makes it most convincing, most easy to digest, most graphic, and most strongly impressive." V I Lenin, The Slogans and Organisation of Social-Democratic Work (1919) via www.marxist.org website (accessed 9 Sep 18). See also Jane Mayer (2016) Dark Money. Scribe: London, p 54.

42 https://www.thedailybeast.com/inside-bannons-plan-to-hijack-europe-for-the-far-right