Embodying a Timeship vs. Empowering a Spaceship


Grounding paradoxes for spaceships and timeships

Missing dimensions and dangers?

"Renaissance Zones" vs "Technopoles"?: Science parks | Free zones | "Agricultural zones" | Eco-villages | "Renaissance zones"

**Grounding paradoxes for spaceships and timeships**

The metaphor of "space" vs "time" is used in this context in order to raise the question as to whether mainstream, and especially western, thinking is not locked into a form of "space-based" thinking. This might be understood as distorting recognition of any "time-based" thinking that could be vital to meaningful development of society. The question posed in this way follows from previous explorations of the way in which thinking might be locked into a "static" approach, when a "dynamic" approach might be more fruitful (*From Statics to Dynamics in Sustainable Community*, 1998). A specific criticism has been made of Project Logic, notably in relation to the challenge for African cultures (*Knowledge Gardening through Music: patterns of coherence for future African management as an alternative to Project Logic*, 2000).

Given the significant failure of many development decades and other programmes in enabling billions to get out of the poverty trap, the challenge is here framed in terms of whether mainstream institutional initiatives could be usefully understood as "spaceships". For whatever reason, it would then appear that such spaceships are effectively "grounded" and unable to perform as originally intended and promised.

Is it the case that people around the world need to recognize the degree to which they have been lured -- effectively programmed -- into a cargo cult mentality? The "spaceships" are not coming to help. Indeed the "institutional space ships" typical of the international system (UN agencies, multinational corporations, etc) have demonstrated over the years the ephemeral nature of the assistance they may choose to offer or withhold -- "Health for All by the Year 2000"! It is only their own crews and passengers that tend really to benefit sustainably from the projects in which they engage (as exemplified by the array of privileges accorded to them as the new nomenklatura). Those responsible for the "space programme" have no insights into how to put things together -- except for destructive or exploitative purposes -- or for the benefit of the few. Those at Damanhur might indeed be accused of the form of cargo cult science identified by Richard Feynman (*Cargo Cult Science*, 1974) -- except that instead of waiting for institutional promises to be unfulfilled, they have found unusually innovative ways to nourish their collective quality of life. It is the illusion of the "institutional spaceships" that they are capable of delivering innovation sustainably to the peoples of the world that has proven to be the most insidious form of cargo cult.

The reasons repeatedly put forward for why these "institutional spaceships" do not work is that they lack fuel -- and are therefore inadequately empowered. The possibility that they may be completely inappropriately designed and conceived is not considered. Efforts to "reform" them amount to little more than tinkering. Is it possible that from a design perspective, empowering such spaceships designed with current understanding is like trying to improve the design of aircraft using steam engines?

Efforts to operate many institutional spaceships can be usefully compared to a group of kids in a discarded airplane, pretending to crew it, and imagining they can travel in it. For example, during his time as head of a major UK government ministry, Tony Benn was very articulate in indicating that he had "all the levers of power arrayed before him" but finally recognized that, although "he could pull on them at any time", but "they were not in fact connected to anything".

The table below is a very tentative effort to summarize the possible challenges to reflection about how time-based thinking functions in contrast to space-based thinking. Of particular interest is the sense of identity or invariance in each case -- and of what can be transformed without losing the ability to recover that sense.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Thinking: space-based versus time-based</th>
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<td>Space-based thinking</td>
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*Laetus in praesens*

Alternative view of segmented documents via Kairos
Possibly as a ploy of the Damanhur Rocking Boat, it is important to recognize the possible nature of its limitations. These are likely to conform to the adage of policy scientist Geoffrey Vickers: A trap is a function of the nature of the trapped (Freedom in a Rocking Boat, 1972).

In seeking to inquire into the apparent success of Damanhur, it is important to consider the role of "harmony" and its potential as a "space programme" thinking (declarations, treaties, etc). It has been too easily forgotten that it is from music that the theory of "harmony" has been developed -- not from any efforts to engender socio-political harmony.

By combining or hybridizing such polarized thinking in various ways, "yang ships" and "yin ships" can become a variety of forms of "yang-yin ships" or "yin-yang ships". Such an exercise was previously attempted with the right hand column of examples focusing on space and territory, whereas the emptiness and discontinuity of time can be represented by a broken arrow (vagina / emptiness of moments). The full set of these possibilities suggests that space-time travel involves a degree of flexibility in modes of understanding for which space-based thinking is inadequate. Such an exercise points to the possibility that current institutional spaceships are effectively grounded and unable to fly because of an inadequate relationship to time and an inadequate understanding of appropriate resources. A time ship is not a machine in any conventional sense. It functions otherwise. It needs to be embodied rather than constructed in order to operate.

Who gets to travel in a spaceship? The smallest possible minority of the population. What of the fantasies of space colonies? What proportion of the population will have that opportunity -- and at what cost in non-renewable resources? It is true that such travels will be hyped as the glory of humanity "going boldly where none have gone before". But as food for the imagination it is possible that people may be far better nourished by timeships in which many can travel. Essentially there is more meaning in a good popular song than in the product of "space programme" thinking (declarations, treaties, etc). It has been too easily forgotten that it is from music that the theory of "harmony" has been developed -- not from any efforts to engender socio-political harmony.

**Missing dimensions and dangers?**
Amber-Lynne. *An Open Inquiry to Damanhur*, QDm International, March 2003) that: The game represents a planet as something to fight over and queries its appropriateness as a model for the priorities of others, especially given that the energy and attention given to it belie the notion that it is "just a game". Given that "Damanhur is a Mystery School where all things are known as creative on many levels", she challenges the underlying premises of *Super Risk*:

- a worldview that sees territory and resources as something to be controlled and conquered
- an enactment of the premise that there is a basic scarcity of resources calling for competition
- that there is such a thing as "A People in contrast to People or Life"

She argues that this kind of territorial thinking is anchored in a worldview associated with the reptilian brain that is inaccurate and limited with respect to research associated with the Gaia Hypothesis or Quantum reality -- however useful the game may be in training people "to think of many options and outcomes at once". In the light of the possibility acknowledged at Damanhur that "the activities of the *Super Risk* game were being reflected in the world" (through some resonant effect on the collective consciousness of humanity), the competitive territorial focus seems inappropriate. She cites other views that the scarcity mindset is sustained by repression of the Great Mother archetype, especially when the complementary archetypes of warrior, sovereign and magician are given full expression. She further questions the apparent elitism cultivated by the *Super Risk* mindset.

The instigator of *Super Risk* responded in the same issue (*Falco's reply to Peta*) indicating that:

- the questions being explored in the game were:
  - whether it was possible to arrive at the formulation of ethics, or moral behaviour, when guided by various existing streams of social conditioning and starting from a widespread utilitarian condition that is totally based on defensiveness and fear of enemies -- rather than assuming that world dynamics was based on wealth and cooperation
  - whether, in the light of experience of many generations of the game (over thousands of years), it is possible to engender more appropriate feelings and behaviour, based on agreement rather than conflict. Only through these mechanisms can new conditions of complexity be born that in turn lead to others that we would call chivalrous
  - understanding of the game depends on a high degree of participation to ensure exposure to its many-layered complexity (integrating human psychology, behaviour, political choices, etc), only some of which can be explained (or represented in quantitative simulations), whereas other aspects can only be understood intuitively
  - the game was being developed in order to provide a way of exploring and understanding, "from a strategic and philosophical point of view what the function of Damanhur is and what might happen in political, economical and social contexts from now on in future decades and centuries"
  - the "use of the Risk game is a way of training future politicians, those who will have to understand the human, philosophical, psychological mechanisms based on observation of the environment, etc"

With respect to Damanhur, questions might be asked about:

- the apparent failure to recognize the merits of approaches distinct from those at Damanhur, despite its emphasis on syncretism (*Evaluating Synthesis Initiatives and their Sustaining Dialogues*, 2000)
- the apparent failure to recognize that Damanhur might only "work" for a particular range of personality types from a particular range of cultural backgrounds (cf *Systems of Categories Distinguishing Cultural Biases*, 1993)
- the unresolved issues of the status and role of aesthetic styles distinct from the dominant style favoured at Damanhur, including the aesthetic preferences for "filling" space rather than appreciating "empty" space (cf *Aesthetic Challenge of Interfaith Dialogue as Exemplified by Meditation*, 1997)
- the apparently missing dimension represented by taoist and sufí perspectives, namely a degree of existential paradox reframing the moment
- the apparent implication that truth can be captured in one place, effectively denying and demeaning the role of other places and modalities
- the manner in which, from a depth psychology perspective, the Damanhur community handles its collective "shadow"
- the extent to which mystification is a factor

The Wright brothers experiments were fraught with disaster -- as are many experiments involving new and poorly understood technologies. Curiously the disasters associated with "scientific research and development" are considered an acceptable risk of the experimental process -- even though they may involve fatal accidents (eg the space shuttles) or generate uncontrollable black holes [*more*; *more*]. Considerable resources are allocated to such highly experimental undertakings -- even if their inadequacies subsequently give rise to industrial disasters (eg Chernobyl, Three Mile Island) or prove to be a target of sabotage. In such cases it is entirely acceptable to engage in hazardous experiments with hazardous materials, provided apparently adequate safeguards are in place (sealed environments, insulation, gloveboxes, etc) -- or the subjects are expendable (eg prisoners, military, or disabled). No such possibilities are considered credible in the case of psycho-social experiments. Despite numerous fatalities (cf exposure to radioactivity, biochemical products, etc), the risk justifies the potential payoff in the first case, but it does not in the second.

Any disasters associated with experiments having a psycho-social dimension are considered completely unacceptable and justify the outlawing of any social experiment whatsoever -- especially if they have been subject to sabotage. No public resources are allocated to "experiments" other than of the most trivial kind. There is no concept of "fundamental research" involving radical and unusual experiments -- that are so typical of physics. The fact that learnings may be obtained from a disaster permitting parameters to be modified in further experiments -- as is done in many laboratories -- is totally obscured by the perceived threat of any such experiments to the social fabric. And yet it is from understandings of the natural sciences that insights into the challenges of governing an increasing complex society are expected to be derived -- with little outcome of benefit to the disadvantaged billions to demonstrate the validity of this assumption, other than improved surveillance and security systems, and other procedures common to management of factory farms.
Whereas religious considerations weigh heavily in ethical discussion on certain biological researches (stem cells, contraceptives, embryo research, etc.), they are considered even more relevant in the case of "magic" -- even though this has long been framed by science as mere superstition.

Examples of disastrous incidents ("social Chernobyls") that should not therefore be used to justify prohibition of all psycho-social experimentation:

- Heaven's Gate: group which committed collective suicide in March 1997 on the occasion of the passage of the Halley-Bop comet [more]:
- Aum Shinrikyo, used sarin gas in a terrorist attack in a Tokyo subway in March 1995
- Peoples Temple (Jonestown), 900 followers were murdered on their leader's instructions in November 1978 [more]
- Rajneesh Foundation International
- Ordre du Temple Solaire

One might ask whether the degree of "group think" associated with the justification of the attack of the USA on Iraq -- at the cost of some $100 billion and perhaps 10,000 lives -- was more or less dangerously irresponsible than all the above combined (cf. Groupthink: the Search for Archaeoraptor as a Metaphoric Tale, 2002).

Is it possible that, in successfully opening up the exploration of the time dimension according to their understanding, Damanhur might have trapped itself in an instrumental relationship to the realms opened up in this way? To what extent may they have projected the mainstream mindset they have successfully rejected as "space thinking" onto the "time" dimension? Put another way, is there a sense in which reality has been harassed [more] by the glorification of the urge to know and intervene and, in abandoning that attitude with respect to space they have replicated it with respect to time? Or, expressed differently, are there other pathways with respect to time that follow from aspects of the approach they have taken?

Great emphasis is placed at Damanhur on the need to respond to the conditions of the planet. The concern is of course shared by many worldwide. Particular challenges in this process are:

- how to articulate a collective vision which is not simply a "lowest possible denominator" but is rather than the "highest common multiple"?
- how to ensure the appropriateness of the action of those who claim the skills to act appropriately (Qui custodiet custodies?)
- how to ensure that the benefits of innovation are actually of benefit to the many rather than to the few?

"Renaissance Zones" vs "Technopoles"?

Science parks: The world of science and technology has engendered a strong rationale for "science and technology parks", "technopoles" and "business incubators" in which government and industry have extensively invested because of the recognized competitive economic advantage. They may be otherwise known as: research parks, science centers, business innovation centers, or centers for advanced technology. They have multiplied rapidly since their first appearance in the mid-1960s. During the latter half of the 1980s their number increased by 500 per cent in North America and 800 per cent in the Asia Pacific region [Europe]. Many are grouped within the Association of University Research Parks. The International Association of Science Parks has 251 members. It defines such entities as:

a property-based initiative which has formal and operational links with one or more universities, research centres, or other institutes of higher education; which is designed to encourage the formation and growth of knowledge-based industries and other organisations normally resident on site; which has a management function actively engaged in the transfer of technology and business skills to tenant organisations.

Examples of such nodes might include:

- Akademgorodok (Russia)
- Cambridge Science Park (UK)
- Plassey Technological Park (Ireland)
- Silicon Valley (USA)
- Sophia Antipolis (France)

They are envisioned as a space where creativity and innovation are nourished and cherished -- under the "incubator" metaphor. They are key nodes in "networks of excellence" as conceived, for example, by the European Commission. But, as noted above, they are "property-based initiatives" -- where the focus is on generating intellectual property for the sponsors who expect to benefit preferentially, if not exclusively, from them. Whilst such environments may include what are otherwise known as "think tanks", such bodies do not constitute science parks in their own right. The constraints of "think tank conceptualization" are explored elsewhere (paper Constraints of "Think-tank" Conceptualisation on Global Governance: unexplored implications of the "tank" metaphor, 2003).

Free zones: In recent decades "free zones" have been the tools by which many countries overcame their economic crises. Many have free trade zones, free industrial zones, free industrial parks, customs free zones (bonded areas), free transhipment zones and other types of free economic zones. Using such free zones for trade and industry, they were able to create new employment and to reduce poverty, without waiting many years for the whole economy to be reformed.

The concept of the free zone goes back more than two thousand years, when the Phoenicians in the cities of Carthage and Tyre, gave fiscal benefits to the goods that had not been sold in the market, or were returned to their points of origin. In the Middle Ages, Livorno
and Marseilles, were declared free ports. As a free port, Hamburg was a key influence in the Hanseatic League, and Trieste performed a vital function in the Austro-Hungarian empire. Such tax-privileged and regulation-lite zones are currently grouped within the World Federation of Free Zones.

"Agricultural zones": Special agricultural initiatives have been associated with the major social experiments, namely the communes of the USSR and of China, as well as the kibbutzim of Israel. China has more recently taken a strong initiative in sustainable experimental communities [more]. These initiatives were of course also experiments in social organization. As such they are now considered problematic and there is little call to replicate them.

Eco-villages and ecosteries: In recent decades there has been a focus on eco-villages [more]. Of particular interest is the effort to create te and cluster ecosteries as "loved places where ecological values, knowledge and wisdom are learned, practiced and shared" as sacred, respected and honored dwelling places. "Ecostery" is from "ecos," the ancient Greek word for household extended here to include home, neighborhood and ecological community. "Story" comes from "monastery," a place where people live by rules of devotion and respect. Its members share the same values, and work together to live a complete, sacred life here and now. Ecostery principles and values are oriented toward harmony with nature [more]. A much older tradition ensured the construction of sacred gardens in association with temples (notably in India and Japan), with an estimated 25,000 sacred groves and other sanctified ecosystems in Rajasthan alone [more; more]. In landscapes ravaged by humans, such zones are proving to be vital the preservation and renaissance of biodiversity.

"Renaissance zones": There is much concern about the social fabric and enhancement of local community -- faced with the many obvious indications that all is not well. But there are no analogous efforts to create "community parks" or "sociopoies" -- or any equivalent "free zones" to act as "incubators" for social innovation. Indeed there is not even a term to describe such a zone where the cross-fertilization of ideas might engender concrete new possibilities in the psycho-social sphere. Hence the proposed term "Renaissance Zones". This holds the complementary notions of social and cultural innovation, spiritual and ethical dimensions, as well as aesthetic dimensions -- combining a sense of historical coherence with an emergent future resonant with conceptual innovation and "paradigm shifts".

Bodies such as the Fellowship for Intentional Community constitute an association of such intentional communities, but this does not recognize the physical juxtaposition of disparate (but complementary) activities that is the characteristic of "science parks". The same might be said of the Global Eco-village Network [more].

The same might also be said of communities of artists. The Alliance of Artists Communities (in the US) -- a nation-wide consortium and professional organization for the field, advances the role artists’ communities play in the evolution of new ideas and art [more]. They have a long history throughout Europe as an art-historical and historico-cultural phenomenon. On the model of the rural hamlet of Barbizon, southeast of the art capital of Paris, artists’ communities emerged in country districts throughout Europe during the second half of the 19th century, which went on to become the birthplaces of important artistic movements.

These artists’ colonies, far removed from metropolitan centers yet closely bound to them, were "settled" by painters, writers, composers and utopians. Intensely preoccupied with the landscape of their surroundings and with the rural society they encountered there, these artists devoted themselves to pictorial themes which produced similar artistic results in various artistic communities all over Europe. The approximately 300 works and numerous documents some being shown in Germany for the first time are presented in the exhibition in twelve thematic segments. They reveal remarkable artistic accomplishments and equally remarkable international parallelisms [more].

It might prove helpful to distinguish different kinds of Renaissance Zones as follows:

- **"Court"**: Over past centuries there exist a number of examples of cities where considerable effort was successfully applied, under the patronage of a monarch or aristocrat, to cultivate what might be termed a renaissance quality with a diverse mix of musicians, scientists, geographers, philosophers, and the like. In such cities, whether or legendary and not so legendary, the dynamic supported "high learning" and creativity -- fruitfully blending the arts and the sciences. Of special significance are the examples of "enlightened courts", whether primarily legendary (e.g. Arthur’s Camelot) or reasonably well documented (e.g. Jacobean Heidelberg, Sagres of Henry the Navigator, Prague of Emperor Rudolf II, Fatefulpur Sikri of Akbar the Great, Florence of Lorenzo the Magnificent, Samarkand of Ulus Beg). The *UTNE Reader* has recently engaged in a project to identity the most "enlightened towns" in North America. This suggests the need for a distinction between "enlightened" as a finished process and "renaissance" as a continuing process.

- **Assemblage**: As with the zone created at Crestone (Colorado) by the Manitou Foundation through land grants to a great variety of unrelated spiritually-oriented groups. Here the hope was that physical juxtaposition would ensure fruitful patterns of interrelationship. The degree of diversity at Crestone, and the manner of its development by the Manitou Foundation through land grants, suggests that it is better characterized as an "assemblage" than as a functioning ecosystem of disparate communities.

- **Seeding**: As with the case of the Findhorn Foundation, which was encouraged by circumstances to participate in a network of associated activities in the same area, some of which were spin offs from the Foundation community and others deliberated sited in relation to it. It is this cluster which constitutes a "Renaissance zone" of which Findhorn might be understood as the seed.

- **Integrated**: Perhaps to a higher degree than Crestone, Damanhur is unique in that it could be considered a "Renaissance Zone" in its own right as a residential "Federation of Communities and Regions", numbering 44. Like other such intentional communities, Damanhur consciously cultivates its own development as a realm of possibility and potential. The community process goes far beyond the passive juxtaposition of projects and activities -- like unrelated plants arrayed thoughtlessly in a garden -- rather it works to enhance the creative potential of the garden as a whole.

The prevailing dynamics inhibiting the emergence of any such "sociopoies" are unfortunately caricatured by "anti-sect hysteries" vs "cult
apologists”. For those opposing such initiatives -- the psycho-social equivalent to luddites -- the social system they have is totally satisfactory and only worldwide acceptance their own models of development is really appropriate.

Despite widespread concerns about substance abuse and alienation, and appeals for "new thinking" and "paradigm shifts", there is no widespread sense that alternative models may be appropriate for some, under some conditions, at some stage of their lives. And there is no interest in determining what those conditions are and for whom they might be appropriate. (see also Sustainable Occupation beyond the Economic Rationale: Reframing employment, non-profit-making and voluntary, 1998; Sustaining a pattern of alternative community initiatives: based on their differences from the conventional economic rationale, 1998; Being Employed by the Future: reframing the immediate challenge of sustainable community, 1996; Sustainable lifestyles and the future of work, 1996)

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