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## Lipoproblems: Developing a Strategy Omitting a Key Problem the systemic challenge of climate change and resource issues

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### Introduction

According to *Wikipedia*, a **lipogram** (from Greek *lipogrammatos* or *lipagrammatos*, "missing letter") is a form of **constrained writing** or **word game** consisting of writing texts in which a common letter or group of letters is omitted -- usually a common vowel. The challenge is trivial for uncommon letters; the greatest challenge in English is omitting the letter "e", especially when the text is grammatically correct and smooth-flowing.

This approach is one initiative of *Oulipo* (French abbreviation for: *Ouvroir de littérature potentielle*; roughly translated: "*workshop of potential literature*"). This is a group of writers, poets and mathematicians interested in the creation of literature using **constrained writing** techniques (see Harry Mathews and Alastair Brotchie, *The Oulipo Compendium*, 1998/2005 -- [contents](#)). One purpose of such constraints is to trigger new ideas and new thinking. The group is associated with [several others](#) (see also [Ou-X-Po](#)) having similar objectives with regard to other forms of representation.

The lipogram constitutes an interesting metaphor for the challenge of articulating a strategy in response to a complex of problems (a *problematique*) whilst omitting a single problem -- where problems might be understood as the "letters" of the strategic alphabet. Clearly the challenge is relatively trivial in the case of uncommon problems in any *problematique*.

It would then be appropriate to speak of such a constrained global strategy as a "lipostrategy" responding to the challenge of a "lipoproblem" (from Greek *lipoproblema*, "missing problem", where problem may also be understood as "question").

### Examples in literature

Notable examples of lipograms in literature include:

- [Georges Perec](#) (*A Void, La Disparition*, 1969), lacking the letter "e" except in the name of the author.
- Michel Thaler (*Le Train de Nulle Part, The Train from Nowhere*, 2004), a 233-page novel written without a single verb.
- [Ernest Vincent Wright](#) (*Gadsby: Champion of Youth*, 1939), a 50,000 word novel lacking the letter "e" except in the name of the author.

The process of omission, whether unintentional or deliberate, is more commonly recognized in **elision**. This is the omission of one or more sounds (such as a vowel, a consonant, or a whole syllable) in an isolated word or phrase, producing a result that is easier for the speaker to pronounce. Sounds may be elided for euphonic effect. A **musical variant** also exists. Also of some relevance are the

abbreviations (logograms) used in the widespread phenomenon of SMS *texting*, as described by linguist David Crystal (*Txtng: the Gr8 Db8*, 2008).

## Lipoproblematic strategies

Strategic documents may also be seen as offering the possibility of omitting otherwise obvious key elements, such as problems or any verb implying action. As with a lipogram novel, this is relatively easy when the problem is an uncommon one that figures rarely (if at all) in any problematique, or where there is no question of later determining whether any action resulted from the strategy.

The admiration for the skill required to write novels without the letter "e" must however be extended to the case of strategies formulated with the omission of such key problems. This is a major conceptual challenge for a systems analyst and the policy scientists who develop strategies based on such articulations -- and for those who promote such strategies through the media. The art is all the greater when the strategic document is not only grammatically correct and smooth-flowing (as with the lipogram) but may also be evaluated as having systemic coherence. In effect the strategy has to be designed "around" the omitted problem -- ignoring the feedback loops associated with that problem.

The skill of such systemic elision might be defined as "lipoanalysis" as practiced by "lipoanalysts". Of relevance is whether what is omitted is done consciously or is effectively associated with a systemic blindspot.

## Using a legal regime to frame a lipostrategy in relation to indigenous peoples

Perhaps one of the most obvious forms of lipostrategy, and yet the most insidious, is the manner in which engagement with *indigenous peoples* has been justified by expanding colonial empires. The process has been made obvious through hindsight, now that those who engaged in it can claim to have formalized such arrangements and "moved on". Its consequences continue to be a source of extreme distress for the descendants of those peoples who remain sensitive to the inherited injustice, especially when treaty obligations have been ignored or reframed to their disadvantage.

In that context the lipostrategy might be said to function by progressively rolling out a legal regime, like a carpet, over territory variously inhabited by others for centuries. The regime is deployed to legitimize occupation of that territory variously claimed as being unoccupied (*Terra Nullius*), by right of conquest, or through formulation of treaties (in accordance with the legal regime of the occupying party). The condition under which such legal devices, totally unfamiliar to the indigenous peoples, were proposed as a means of regulating differences is typically now viewed as extremely problematic and prejudicial for the peoples concerned.

The "lipo" dimension lies in the manner in which any rights of the indigenous peoples were ignored as essentially irrelevant. This attitude continues to be cultivated on the assumption that any rights they now have were effectively defined by the original treaties -- irrespective of how they may now have been reframed or set aside. In addition to the many such peoples now effectively marginalized or confined to "reservations", a striking example of the process in action is to be seen in the highly controversial development of settlements by Israel on lands long occupied by Palestinians -- often with legal title predating the establishment of Israel as a state in 1948. In this case such title is considered void in the light of historical precedence deriving from biblical rights to the land of Israel -- as claimed by the Jewish people.

The operation of the lipostrategy is usefully understood as a process of encroachment through which the encroaching party empowers itself to ignore any claims of others often such as to frame itself as an innocent party wronged by any resistance to its occupation of territory. New forms of lipostrategy are to be seen in operation in the acquisition of title to cultural and intellectual property, most notably in the case of traditional medicines (cf *Varieties of Encroachment*, 2004; *Errorism vs Terrorism? Encroachment, Complicity, Denial and Terratism*, 2004).

## Global financial mis-selling as a form of lipostrategy?

A major learning from the financial crisis of 2008, and its consequences, is the extent to which it was based on misrepresentation of assets and liabilities. As in other examples of lipostrategies, viability was achieved -- for as long as it lasted -- on falsely inflated expectations, treated as well-founded and serious by the financial and business community (*Credibility Crunch engendered by Hope-mongering: "credit crunch" focus as symptom of a dangerous mindset*, 2008).

Paul Krugman (Beliefs in Collision: how the bubble was missed, *International Herald Tribune*, 5 September 2009) argues that:

Some economists, notably Robert Shiller, did identify the bubble and warn of painful consequences if it were to burst. Yet key policy makers failed to see the obvious... How did they miss the bubble?... But there was something else going on: a general belief that bubbles just don't happen. What is striking, when you reread Mr Greenspan's assurances, is that they weren't based on evidence -- they were based on the a priori assertion that there simply could not be a bubble in housing. And the financial theorists were even more adamant on this point.

The missing (lipo) factor was the connection to the grounded reality of the economic system. From a lipo perspective, the elision of this consideration gave the "euphonic" impression that the financial system was "sound". The question for the future -- in efforts to return to "business-as-usual" -- is whether growth-based economies are dependent on some such "euphonic" illusion. Elsewhere the dependence on economic "bubbles" has been reframed and explored in terms of "ballooning" technology (*Globallooning -- Strategic Inflation of Expectations and Inconsequential Drift*, 2009).

Of course the distinguishing characteristic of both bubbles and balloons is their central "emptiness" -- suggesting another understanding

of lipostrategy.

## Overpopulation denial as a lipoexemplar

The prime example of this art form is in the many strategies concerned with the challenge of constrained resources -- or of those directly consequent upon human activity, such as degradation of the environment and climate change. Most remarkable as an example of this art form, in the light of the systems analysis in *The Limits to Growth* (1972), is the manner in which exploding population is factored out of current strategic development. Just as the letter "e" may only be present as a conceit in the name of the author of a lipogram, any reference to "population" is only ever mentioned in passing, if at all.

A possible example at the time of writing is the argument of Robert Engelman (*Population and Sustainability: can we avoid limiting the number of people?*, *Scientific American* 3.0, 19, 2, 2009) to the effect that: *Slowing the rise in human numbers is essential for the planet -- but it doesn't require population control*. Such a framing might be considered equivalent to many dietary regimes which offer a means of avoiding obesity without in any way constraining consumption. There are of course opportunities for more radically viable strategies (*Challenge of Nonviolent Population Decimation: reducing effects of overpopulation on resources and climate change by major reduction in the height of people*, 2007).

The extent of the development of this art form has been analyzed in earlier papers (*Institutionalized Shunning of Overpopulation Challenge: incommunicability of fundamentally inconvenient truth*, 2008). It notably figures in the analysis of John L. Farrands (*Challenge of Overpopulation Now for some real problems -- Don't Panic, PANIC*, 1993).

The art form is central to consideration of responses to climate change, as explored previously (*United Nations Overpopulation Denial Conference: exploring the underside of climate change*, 2009). Rather than as "denial", a more creative way to understand the institutional deployment of the art form in strategic development -- designed as it is around an omission or a void -- is in terms of the old tale of the *seven blind men and the elephant*. Conveniently, the letter "e" then corresponds to the invisible "elephant" (*Climate Change and the Elephant in the Living Room*, 2008; *Strategic Challenge of Polysensorial Knowledge: bringing the "elephant" into "focus"*, 2008; John Feeney, *Population: the elephant in the room*, *BBC News*, 2 February 2009).

As an exercise in denial, the *United Nations Climate Change Conference* (Copenhagen, 2009) might even be described as a "lipoconference" -- given the absence of consideration of overpopulation in its preparation. The point is emphasized at the time of writing by Jairam Ramesh, the Indian environment minister (*Leave population out of climate talks, Indian minister says*, *The Guardian*, 28 August 2009). The Indian sub-continent is of course most commonly recognized as the source of the tale of the blind men and the elephant.

Where systemic elision is inadvertent, rather than a feature of conscious avoidance, it may be appropriately understood as a characteristic of an "unconscious" civilization, as documented by John Ralston Saul (*Unconscious Civilization*, 1995). It is a means of cultivating blithe innocence and ignorance, as noted by Karen A. Cerulo (*Never Saw It Coming: cultural challenges to envisioning the worst*, 2006).

A simple example is offered in response to a worthy campaign launched with the support of *The Guardian* in the UK by producers of the climate change documentary *The Age of Stupid* (Franny Armstrong, *10:10 - our chance to save the world*, 1 September 2009). What might indeed be said to be profoundly "stupid" is illustrated by a commentary on the enthusiastic reporting in support of the emissions reduction campaign, as a letter to *The Guardian*:

Two days' reporting on this excellent project, and not once is it mentioned that the primary way of reducing carbon emissions is to have smaller families. Each birth saved is a lifetime of emissions saved - more, in fact, when you consider the potential descendants of that child. (Roger Plenty, *Other ways to hit the 10:10 target*, 3 September 2009)

The systematic omission of any reference to overpopulation in international debate might be understood as consistent with the widely appreciated remark of Ludwig Wittgenstein: *Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must pass over in silence* (*Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, 1922).

## Lipostrategies as the hollowing and evisceration of values?

Global strategies are commonly defended in the name of fundamental human values -- necessarily beyond any reasonable challenge. As such they offer an "ideal" means of disguising the operation of lipostrategies which might be characterized as a process of "hollowing" out those values. Such progressive enfeeblement is well recognized in the process of "white-anting" -- subverting or undermining from within -- with an outcome recognized metaphorically as "worm-eaten".

Of particular interest is the progressive evisceration of values enshrined in the *Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen* (France, 1789), *United States Bill of Rights* (1791) and the *English Bill of Rights* (1689) as precursors of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (1948), notably those values associated:

- **Liberty:** Much is made of strategies to enable the freedom of peoples, explicitly framed as freedom of choice. As presented elsewhere (*Mirroring constraints on choice in a consumer society*, 2009), freedom of choice is increasingly problematic in a consumer society. This has been argued in detail by Neal Lawson (*All Consuming*, 2009; *Do we want to shop or to be free? We'd better choose fast*, *The Guardian*, 3 August 2009).
- **Equality:** The financial crisis of 2008 and its aftermath have highlighted the extent to which there is effectively a very heavy investment in inequality. Despite the crisis, and recognition of those deemed responsible for exacerbating the excesses that gave

rise to it, there is widespread astonishment at the manner in which the latter continue to be rewarded for contributing to the destruction of the livelihoods of millions as described by Julia Finch and Simon Bowers (*Executive pay keeps rising, Guardian survey finds, The Guardian*, Monday 14 September 2009). Their survey found that in the UK the top 25 FTSE100 directors received a remuneration 485 times that of the media national average wage.

- **Fraternity:** This value might be claimed as the central justification for the military intervention in Iraq and Afghanistan to liberate their peoples from dictatorship and oppression -- notably of women. At the time of writing, it has been estimated that the number of Iraqis killed in that process to be 1,339,771 (*Iraq Deaths, Just Foreign Policy*, 2009). Curiously the fraternal impulse to intervene in this way has not been triggered by the situation in other regions such as Dafur or the Eastern Congo where millions are reported raped and slaughtered. By 2008 the **Great War of Africa** and its aftermath had killed 5.4 million people, mostly from disease and starvation, it the deadliest conflict worldwide since World War II. Millions more were displaced from their homes or sought asylum in neighbouring countries. Curiously It is the Permanent Members of the UN Security Council who were the five largest military spenders in 2008: USA (\$607 billion), China (\$84.9 billion), France (\$65.7 billion), Britain (\$65.3 billion), and Russia (\$58.6 billion) (Thalif Deen, *Disarmament: No Slowdown for Weapons Industry*, 2009).

This process of evisceration of rights is not a focus of the "international community", typically complicit in a variety of ways in that process (notably through the sale of arms), whilst vigorously upholding the values in question -- and claiming to be the prime defender of them.

## Corruption as a classic lipoproblem

The phenomenon of corruption was for a long time avoided in conventional public discussion of development, whether by theoreticians, practitioners or administrators. It may well have been widely known to exist (by the experienced) but it was not appropriate to consider it as a factor necessitating active concern -- in some cases because of a context of secrecy, possibly reinforced by a code of *meta*. With the obvious failure of many development programmes and other scandals, it is now openly debated -- but more as an excuse after the fact than as worthy of careful study in its own right. **Transparency International** (founded in 1993) has provided valuable insight into the phenomenon (*Global Corruption Report*).

The assumption is still widely made that appropriately designed programmes will not be undermined by isolated or systemic corruption.

Corruption therefore constitutes a classic example of a lipoproblem to which no direct reference can be made, notably with respect to the processes and envisaged programmes of intergovernmental institutions, or the activities of commercial bodies "too large to fail".

## Geoengineering as the "mother of all lipostrategies"?

Various professional institutions are currently producing reports on geoengineering. That published by the UK **Royal Society** (*Geoengineering the climate: science, governance and uncertainty*, September 2009) concluded that the future of the Earth could rest on potentially dangerous and unproven geoengineering technologies unless emissions of carbon dioxide can be greatly reduced (*Stop emitting CO2 or geoengineering could be our only hope, Science News*, 28 August 2009). Comment has previously appeared on the research (Alok Jha, *Geo-engineering: the radical ideas to combat global warming, The Guardian*, 1 September 2008). The report itself identified major uncertainties regarding their effectiveness, costs and environmental impacts.

There have been immediate comments on the report (Catherine Brahic, *Top science body calls for geoengineering 'plan B' New Scientist*, 1 September 2009). Alok Jha (*Investment in geo-engineering needed immediately, says Royal Society, The Guardian*, 1 September 2009) notes its recommendation that experiments on giant sunshades for the Earth and vast forests of artificial trees must begin immediately to ensure such mega-engineering plans are available as a safety net in case global talks to combat climate change fail.

Doug Parr, chief scientist at Greenpeace UK, is reported as saying:

Geo-engineering is creeping onto the agenda because governments seem incapable of standing up to the vested interests of the fossil fuel lobby, who will use the idea to undermine the emissions reductions we can do safely....Intervening in our planet's systems carries huge risks, with winners and losers, and if we can't deliver political action on clean energy and efficiency then consensus on geo-engineering is a fantasy.

An editorial in the *Financial Times* (*Cool engineering*, 3 September 2009) points to the risk that too much momentum will build up behind geo-engineering -- being dangerous for two reasons:

- it would distract the world's attention and possibly draw resources from the overwhelming priority: to cut emissions of greenhouse gases.
- it could have disastrous side-effects. The danger is greatest for technologies with the most potential for cooling the world quickly, such as filling the upper atmosphere with microscopic particles in an 'aerosol' that mimics the effect of a giant volcanic eruption.

As noted by Alok Jha, the Royal Society also pointed out that technical and scientific issues may not be the dominant ones when it came to the actual deployment of geo-engineering technology. Social, legal, ethical and political issues would be of equal significance and implementing global-scale projects would require a pre-existing international agreement. As a member of the reporting group Catherine Redgwell remarked from an international legal perspective:

When it comes to techniques that need to be field-tested, and where that will occur in places beyond national jurisdiction, such as sulphate aerosols, then inevitably we're looking at some kind of international governance framework.

From a lipostrategic perspective, the question is what dimensions were carefully (or inadvertently) omitted from the "research" undertaken by the Royal Society over a year -- notably in order to identify the focus of further research of geoengineering? There is even a case for doing as much research on the manner in which the research of the Royal Society was framed as on the research that it recommends. As with criticism of the original *Limits to Growth* methodology, where are the critical simulations of geoengineering strategies and their blindspots?

Given the historical unprecedented implications of implementation of technology that the report itself recognizes to be largely unproven and with many risks, are there equally unproven strategies which should also be on the table and subject to investigation? Is the emerging focus on geoengineering to be seen as the collective product of what might be compared with a committee of Dr Strangelove's -- as original caricatured in the cult movie of Stanley Kubrick (*Dr. Strangelove or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb*, 1964). Who is capable of proving otherwise?

How is it that the challenges of "climate change" have been so readily reduced to:

- Plan A: reduce carbon dioxide emissions
- Plan B: geoengineering

What other options might there be arising from the insights of other disciplines -- treated as irrelevant to the consideration of "Plan B"? Where are these options considered? What research has been undertaken to determine their viability? How dangerously narrow is the "technology-as-usual" focus of the proponents of geoengineering, as previously discussed (*Geo-engineering Oversight Agency for Thermal Stabilization (GOATS)*, 2008)?

The expectation of effective "international agreement" by the Royal Society for the implementation of technologies they recommend can only be described as naive in the extreme -- as it is proving in the case of the UN Climate Change event. One factor undermining such agreement, as an example, is the extent of influence of religion on governance -- inhibiting any reference to the overpopulation factor. A number of major religions are committed to an "end times" scenario well-served by overheating of the planet and other disasters. Cognitive closure to systemic consideration of such factors might be compared to the use of the burka as a metaphor by Richard Dawkins (*The God Delusion*, 2006) to describe the role of religion -- in a final chapter entitled *The Mother of All Burkas*. Dawkins is a Fellow of the Royal Society. He is also a Fellow of the [Royal Society of Literature](#) -- and, as such, is presumably aware of the nature of lipograms.

Using his metaphor, as argued elsewhere (*Burka as Metaphorical Mirror for Imperious Culture?* 2009), if the burka is indeed a mirror of cognitive imprisonment, Dawkins helps to clarify the extent to which his understanding of the cognitive role of science may indeed be just such a burka. The framing of geoengineering might then indeed be described as the "mother of all burkas" -- especially if the planet is to be covered with a veil of dust (obscuring the stars), as favoured by the Royal Society report (Jonathan Leake, *Man-made volcanoes may cool Earth*, *Times Online*, 30 August 2009).

Will the future recognize the lipostrategic characteristics of such limitations to understanding -- as the "mother of all lipostrategies"?

## Institutional engendering of lipostrategies

It might be asked whether there are characteristics of democratic institutions, national or international, which currently predispose them to generate lipostrategies. It remains completely unclear whether supposedly democratic institutions can respond effectively to massive electorates with a huge range of concerns, given the challenges of communication and information overload (*Considering All the Strategic Options: whilst ignoring alternatives and disclaiming cognitive protectionism*, 2009). Strategies must necessarily be crafted to omit as much as to include -- if only to be viable?

The challenge of using any form of [e-democracy](#) to enable such a process is illustrated by the *Citizen's Briefing Book* (2009) -- a compilation of recommendations for change in the USA, made electronically to Barack Obama in anticipation of his inauguration. Estimates variously indicated that 400,000 suggestions were proffered by over 100,000 respondents, with some 1.4 million votes on various proposals. The most popular proposal, ending marijuana prohibition, was dismissed out of hand by the recipient as not worthy of serious discussion (despite its current active consideration in other countries of the region). The contents of the exercise are no longer electronically accessible. This gives a strong sense of how meaningful such consultation is considered to be in practice. This is of a kind with rules for invited commentators on the website of the *New Scientist*, whereby any comment that is not esteemed to be based on fact is deleted (*New Scientist house rules on commenting*, 2009).

However, as argued elsewhere, politics in the eyes of many has become an exercise in breach of promise -- from those made in electoral manifestos, through inappropriate legislation, to failure of promised initiatives (*Abuse of Faith in Governance: mystery of the unasked question*, 2009; *G20 nations break 'no protectionism' vow*, *Financial Times*, 14 September 2009). There has long been anecdotal suspicion regarding the behaviour of Members of Parliament and the manner in which they (mis)represent the public. Most recently this has been evident in a major scandal -- threatening the credibility of the whole political process -- involving the systematic abuse of expenses by parliamentarians in the so-called "Mother of Parliaments" of the UK. This had been preceded by evidence regarding payments made to peers in the House of Lords to influence legislation in support of special interests. More generally criticisms had been made of the process by which MPs received "[cash for questions](#)" from interest groups.

At the European level, allegations have for example been made that no major policy decision is taken by the EU that is not influenced by appropriate "considerations" -- reflecting the culture of "commissions" that has notably been highlighted and condemned by the OECD. It is noteworthy that, following the scandal in the UK, there is little call for transparency regarding the expenses and perks of Members of the European Parliament -- despite their criticism of the excessive remuneration of directors in the corporate world. Is it to be expected

that such institutions, upheld as models, would be capable of articulating and implementing strategies that were not flawed by significant omissions, namely lipostrategies?

Quite remarkable, at the European level, is the volume of revenue and expenditure subject to audit by the European Court of Auditors, representing approximately 4-5% of the total budgets of all the Member States. About 5% of the entire EU budget, five billion dollars, is lost to straightforward fraud, while another 5% or so is misappropriated, and not spent on the programs for which it was designated. One-tenth of the Union's budget, which the European Court of Auditors accepts is misspent, amounts to almost 10 billion dollars a year. The significance of such amounts is compounded by the fact that for 12 years the European Union's auditors have refused to endorse the spending of large parts of the EU budget -- funded by citizen taxpayers (Stephen Mulvey, *Why the EU's audit is bad news*, BBC, 24 October 2006). The European Commission, under Jacques Santer, was forced to resign in 1999 following allegations of a pattern of corruption.

The challenge in the case of Europe is perhaps exemplified by the extraordinary costs of holding plenary sessions alternatively in Brussels and Strasbourg throughout the year -- quite possibly leading to a "schizophrenic" approach to policy articulation. No consideration is given to the substitution of cyber-assemblies (*The Challenge of Cyber-Parliaments and Statutory Virtual Assemblies*, 1998). Given their own flaws, it might be asked whether such institutions, of which the United Nations offers multiple examples, are sufficiently "self-reflexive" to engender global strategies of requisite coherence (*Consciously Self-reflexive Global Initiatives Renaissance zones, complex adaptive systems, and third order organizations*, 2007).

A recent report by an international group of environmental scientists and economists, coordinated by Brian Walker (*Looming Global-Scale Failures and Missing Institutions*. *Science*, 2009, 325), has indicated that the world faces a compounding series of crises driven by human activity, with which existing governments and institutions are increasingly powerless to cope with (see also *Human-made Crises 'Outrunning Our Ability To Deal With Them,' Scientists Warn*, *ScienceDaily*, 17 September 2009). Such warnings -- of a "crisis of crises" have long been made (cf John Platt, *What We Must Do*, *Science*, 166, November 1969). Is it simply in the nature of such institutions to elaborate lipostrategies -- or is such a report simply a means of framing the legitimacy of approaches such as geoengineering?

## Potential for omission of other systemic "vowels"

The challenge of lipograms is with respect to vowels (a, e, i, o, u) as the most common feature of a language. It is then worth noting the critical problems, including population, which were central to the World3 simulation basic to the conclusions of *The Limits to Growth* -- effectively treated as the "vowels" of that systems language. They are:

- the food system (dealing with agriculture and food production),
- the industrial system,
- the population system,
- the non-renewable resources system,
- the pollution system

There are of course examples of strategies -- lipostrategies -- which omit consideration of systemic "vowels" other than population, with the greatest art being to omit several in one strategy. A valuable insight into the evaluation of the "5-vowel" World3 analysis is provided by Graham Turner (*A Comparison of the Limits to Growth with Thirty Years of Reality*, CSIRO 2007). He shows how the original study provoked many criticisms which falsely stated its conclusions in order to discredit it. Despite the repeated substantiation of its conclusions, including warnings of **overshoot** and collapse, recommendations of fundamental changes of policy and behaviour for sustainability have not been taken up. As noted, one of its principal areas of focus was population.

It may of course be argued that the set of "vowels" of World3 does not encompass the systemic challenge and that other systemic elements (of the "alphabet") should be seen in that light -- especially if their omission makes of *The Limits to Growth* a lipoanalysis in its own right. One speculative approach to this possibility used the World3 analysis as a metaphorical template (*World Dynamics and Psychodynamics*, 1971). An approach such as the latter has the merit of pointing to the factors that affect direct consideration of the burgeoning population -- scheduled to ensure that the ecological footprint of humanity increases whatever the approach to "climate change".

One approach to determining opportunity for even more subtly constrained strategies, as exemplars of the oulipian art form, is consideration of the **Viable System Model** (VSM). This is any system organized in such a way as to meet the demands of surviving in the changing environment, notably the requirement of adaptability. From an oulipian perspective, the challenge is to design a system that appears to fulfil such requirements -- whilst building in an elegant flaw to engender speculation and drama about how long it will last, despite enthusiastic investment in it. The scope for designing such systems is discussed separately (*Globallooning -- Strategic Inflation of Expectations and Inconsequential Drift*, 2009). An excellent example is provided through development of **genetic use restriction technology** as a means of ensuring the sterility of second generation crops, thereby creating worldwide dependence on suppliers of patented seeds.

Another approach to understanding the challenge is by using as a metaphor the set of vitamins critical to the viability of the human body. A range of lipostrategies could be developed, each omitting one or more such "vitamins" from the information processes in which the strategy is embedded (cf *Memetic and Information Diseases in a Knowledge Society*, 2008). The elegance of the outcome of such omission would only be evident in the longer-term to connoisseurs of the art form -- perhaps even undetectable by most. Such dietary experiments are typically conducted on laboratory animals for the advancement of human knowledge.

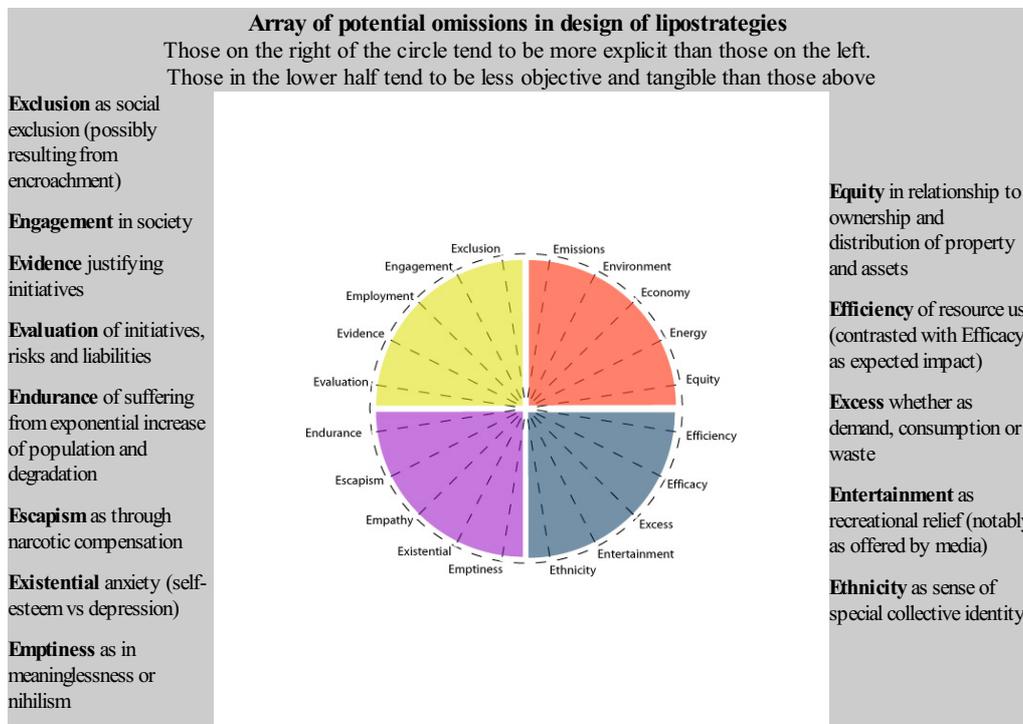
It is possible that another fruitful approach is to understand the "lipo" factor as a "missing link" vital to the viability and coherence of the system in cybernetic terms -- a missing feedback loop. It then becomes interesting as to whether the assertion to the United Nations of

the existence of "weapons of mass destruction" in Iraq should in some way be understood as a lipostrategy -- the high art of basing a strategy on the absence of proof. In this case of course, "e" stands conveniently for evidence.

## Recognized "E's" as indicative of lipostrategic possibilities

Various initiatives have identified four or five "E's" as a key to strategic concern, such as Economy, Environment, Equity and Education (cf James H. Huber (Ed). *The Five E's: Ethnicity, Education, Economy, Equity, and Environment*. Global Awareness Society International, 1994; Henrik O. Madsen. *Solutions for the crucial 4 E's: Energy Efficiency, Economy and Environment*, 2009; Herbert Girardet and Miguel Mendonça, *A Renewable World: Energy, Ecology, Equality - A Report for the World Future Council*, 2009).

Such a mnemonic approach might be extended as in the following figure. The question in each case is the nature of the strategy that might be designed by failing to take into account one or more of such factors.



Of interest in such a diagram is the extent to which conventional strategies normally associated with the upper right quadrant readily omit their exacerbation of problems (ie. lipoproblems) in the lower left quadrant. A notable example is the compensatory recourse to Escapism through narcotic drugs -- known to be equivalent in economic terms to the oil and arms trades.

## Relevance of other "lipo" associations

As noted above the lipogram focus of the *Oulipo* group of writers and mathematicians is associated with [several others](#) (see also [Ou-X-Po](#)) having loosely related objectives with regard to the potential of other forms of representation, notably [Ou'info](#) (information technology), [Ouca\(ta\)po](#) (catastrophe), [Oupolpot](#) (politics), [Oumathpo](#) (mathematics).

It might be assumed that those who craft strategies on a resource constrained planet could consider that they are effectively *de facto* members of another such loose group -- perhaps "Oustrat". Given the focus of these *ouvroirs* on potential, **the prefix "lipo" would appear to be mnemonically helpful** in the case of lipoproblematic strategies in that the two more widely recognized uses of "lipo" are in

- [liposuction](#), namely "suction-assisted fat removal" from the human body. Lipoproblematic strategies at the global level are then implicitly indicative of the non-renewable extraction of the "fat of the land" through population overshoot. They may also be a reminder of the manner in which the productive capacity of the future is effectively "drained" to pay for the ignorance of the present -- echoing the popular association of excessive taxation with [leeching](#).

The range of human sensitivities associated with fat and obesity, whether with respect to their possible pathological nature or the discrimination they may evoke, are also suggestive of the sensitivities associated with population in excess of what a healthy planetary society might be able to sustain. The manner and contexts in which "obesity" is treated as unmentionable provide a link to the notion of "lipo" discussed above. Its extensive use in cosmetic surgery is also a reminder of the degree to which global strategies are themselves increasingly undertaken for "cosmetic" purposes -- possibly even to be understood as providing an institution with a public relations "face-lift" or to ensure that they appear "less flabby".

- [lithium polymer batteries](#) of which one of the common abbreviations is indeed lipo. These rechargeable batteries have become increasingly important in consumer electronics (PDAs, laptop computers and radio controlled devices) and are expected to power the next generation of electric vehicles. The web has many references to difficulties in charging them and the rate of loss of charge -- hence "lipo problem". This battery technology however offers an excellent metaphor with respect to any strategic concern given that it reflects the latest innovative thinking on creatively handling polarization -- valuable in addressing the primitive

polarization which currently undermines global strategies (*Being Positive Avoiding Negativity: management challenge of positive vs negative*, 2005).

It might for example be fruitful to consider that it is precisely through the manner of "ignoring" the pole of overpopulation that global strategies are unable to build up and sustain the charge necessary to their operation -- namely the challenge of sustaining the so-called "political will to change".

In the literary mode of Oulipo, great importance is attached to constraints from a mnemonic perspective. As noted by Peter Consenstein: *In essence an oulipian constraint is an act of memory as well as an assertive inscription of contemporary innovative artifice* (*Memory and Oulipian Constraints, Postmodern Culture*, 6, 1, September 1995). In this light the potential strategic relevance of aesthetics merits consideration (*Poetry-making and Policy-making: arranging a marriage between Beauty and the Beast*, 1993; *Strategic Jousting through Poetic Wrestling: aesthetic reframing of the clash of civilizations*, 2009; *Aesthetics of Governance in the Year 2490*, 1990). **Further mnemonic significance might therefore be associated with:**

- **Li Po** (or **Li Bai**), one of the most famous Chinese poets, part of the group of scholars immortalized as the "*Eight Immortals of the Wine Cup*", best known for his extravagant imagination and striking Taoist imagery (Arthur Waley, *The Poetry and Career of Li Po*, 1950). His 1,000 poems have significantly influenced poetry in the West.

Taoist metaphors are well-recognized for their articulation of the cognitive challenge of emptiness and absence, notably through **Chuang Tzu**, recognized as the prose-writing counterpart of Li Po. Of relevance to the challenge of lipostrategies is Chuang Tzu's insights that:

*Our life has a boundary but there is no boundary to knowledge. To use what has a boundary to pursue what is limitless is dangerous; with this knowledge, if we still go after knowledge, we will run into trouble.*

*Tao is obscured when men understand only one of a pair of opposites, or concentrate only on a partial aspect of being. Then clear expression also becomes muddled by mere wordplay, affirming this one aspect and denying the rest.... each denies what the other affirms, and affirms what the other denies. What use is this struggle to set up "No" against "Yes," and "Yes" against "No"?* (*The Pivot*)

Significant to the argument here is that a recent [commentary](#) on Chinese literature offers the insight that: one man's *bete noire* may very well be another's black swan.

- **Li Po** is also the name of a [people](#) and a language (Raymond G., Jr. *Lipo: a language of China*, 2005). The **Li people** (or Hlai) are a minority Chinese ethnic group. For the mnemonic purpose here, it is appropriate that the integrity of both the language and the people are currently threatened. It may in fact be useful to think of both a lipoproblem and a lipostrategy as having some of the characteristics of a "lost language" employed by a disappearing or forgotten people.
- **Lipovy** has the meaning in Russian of fake, artificial, counterfeit or forged, with related associations, including fraudulent and deceptive, in Czech (*lipovy*), Polish (*lipa*), Belarusian (*lipavy*) [*indications provided by Vladimir Nikolayevich Tretyakov*]. It is discussed by Constantine Muravnik (*Choosing the Hero: Nabokov's Short Story 'Recruiting' as an Introduction to His Aesthetics*, 2008) with respect to **Vladimir Nabokov's** understanding of the relationship of art to reality. This association is a reminder of the role of artifice, pretence and bluff in the presentation and implementation of a lipostrategy. It also points to what is omitted that ensures the success of a [confidence trick](#) which, at a strategic level, is often essential to the success of military and business strategy (see *Table of Confidence Ploys*, and *Table of Strategems*, based on Gao Yuan, *Lure the Tiger Out of the Mountains: the thirty-six strategems of Ancient China*, 1991). The Central Urals in Russia are a source of the Lipovy Log rare metal [pegmatite](#). The African variety is notably a source of pyrite, known there as "[fool's gold](#)", because of its seeming resemblance to gold ("*all that glitters is not gold*"). Pegmatites are a source of another rare mineral -- appropriately called [hiddenite](#).

These are reminders that the alluring golden sheen of some advocated strategies may merit their recognition as "fool's gold" -- especially when their real agendas are "hidden" by their assumed value. Which current global strategies should be tested to determine whether or not they are "fool's gold" -- the "glow" in "globallooning" (*Globallooning -- Strategic Inflation of Expectations and Inconsequential Drift*, 2009) -- if only from an African perspective?

- **Leap**", as one pronunciation of "lip", given the nature of the intercalary function of imaginative leaps (characteristic of Li Po), as in a "[leap year](#)", necessary to sustaining the impression of an orderly calendar, despite arguments for calendar reform to correct hidden errors. This offers a helpful reminder of the tendency to "leap over" any inconvenient truth (*An Inconvenient Truth -- about any inconvenient truth*, 2008). In French the name Oulipo might then even be understood as "mind the gap" -- a common message to passengers seeking to board a vehicle. Such a warning is even more relevant in the case of the political section of [Oulipo](#) -- which has the name [OuPolPot](#).

The associated global denial is perhaps neatly framed by the famous Shakespearean quote: *But here, upon this bank and shoal of time, We'd jump the life to come.* Or perhaps **John Dryden's**: *'tis worth the tempting, To o'erleap this gulph of fate, And leave our wandering destinies behind* (*All for Love; or the World Well Lost. A Tragedy*, 1678).

This suggests the possibility of identifying a person or a group engaging in such strategies as a "leapo'er" or "lipoer". In this respect, there is an irony to the fact that the financial bubble, prior to the crisis, might be said to have been enabled by "Li power".

It was [David Li](#) who pioneered the use of *Gaussian copula* models for the pricing of [collateralized debt obligations](#) fundamental to the repackaging of derivatives central to the instability of the system (Felix Salmon, *Recipe for Disaster The Formula That Killed Wall Street*, *Wired Magazine*, 17, March 2009). As Li had indicated in 2005 "Very few people understand the essence of the model" (Mark Whitehouse, *Slices of Risk*, *The Wall Street Journal*, 12 September 2005) -- perhaps a primary characteristic of any lipostrategy.

Whether in fact 9/11 was itself a lipostrategy (a [black operation](#)), as some [research continues to suggest](#), central to its strategic aftermath was [Donald Rumsfeld](#). He gave expression to this challenge of understanding the "unknown unknowns" in a notorious poem -- presented during a Department of Defense news briefing on 12 February 2002, as previously discussed (*Unknown Undoing: challenge of incomprehensibility of systemic neglect*, 2008).

- "**Lip**", given the nature of the "lip-service" paid to strategies and problems which are otherwise considered to be empty of significance -- possible even to be recognized as "empty promises". This might be seen in terms of the long tradition of deployment of "Potemkin strategies" -- effectively shells decorated by values as a sham to camouflage other an underlying strategic reality. This tendency has been helpfully highlighted by the Bush regime whose worldview has been usefully articulated regarding the distinction made by that regime between "faith-based" and "reality-based" decision-making at the highest level, as noted in a much-cited article by Ron Suskind (*Without a Doubt*, *The New York Times*, In The Magazine, 17 October 2004):

The aide said that guys like me were "in what we call the reality-based community," which he defined as people who "believe that solutions emerge from your judicious study of discernible reality." I nodded and murmured something about enlightenment principles and empiricism. He cut me off. "That's not the way the world really works anymore," he continued. "We're an empire now, and when we act, we create our own reality. And while you're studying that reality -- judiciously, as you will -- we'll act again, creating other new realities, which you can study too, and that's how things will sort out. We're history's actors . . . and you, all of you, will be left to just study what we do."

- "**Li po**", as with the widespread use in French academia of "*sciences po*" to refer to political science. Such an association might then be used to encompass the current widespread concern with the level of lying in politics and consequently in the strategies formulated by politicians. "Li po" then provides a hitherto missing acronym to refer to both lying politicians and the lies of politicians. This offers a powerful framing of what might be understood as underlying a lipostrategy, namely some form of lie of omission (Dom Stasi, *Lies Of Omission*; William Bowles, *Lies by Omission*). This is to remain silent and thereby withhold vital information, simultaneously providing a false impression to those so deprived. This is a means of subverting the truth as a way of manipulating others into altering their behaviour, thereby depriving them of their right of self-determination.

Historically much analysis has focused on the use by the Nazi regime of the "[Big Lie](#)" as articulated by Hitler and Goebbels, with the latter offering the insight: *The English follow the principle that when one lies, one should lie big, and stick to it. They keep up their lies, even at the risk of looking ridiculous* (1941). This suggests that any future global dictatorship would in all probability make extensive use of a lipostrategy. Goebbels also offered: *If you tell a lie big enough and keep repeating it, people will eventually come to believe it*. And Goering famously observed: *The people can always be brought to the bidding of the leaders...tell them they are being attacked, and denounce the peacemakers for lack of patriotism and exposing the country to danger*. This might be appropriately named as a "Big Lie Power".

- "**Lie power**" is a mathematical concept associated with the fundamental insights of [Lie algebras](#) used in studying [Lie groups](#). These groups represent the best-developed theory of continuous symmetry of mathematical objects and structures, making them indispensable tools for many parts of contemporary mathematics, as well as for modern theoretical physics (cf Andreas Viklund, *Lie groups, Lie algebras, and representations*, *The Unapologetic Mathematician*, 2007). Unfortunately the power of Lie group theory is intimately related to its generality, notably with respect to complex symmetry groups. This is a primary constraint on its comprehensibility and hence on its application to the psycho-social and strategic challenges of a global society (*Dynamics of Symmetry Group Theorizing: comprehension of psycho-social implication*, 2008; *And When the Bombing Stops? Territorial conflict as a challenge to mathematicians*, 2000).

It is of a kind with the "Li power" that sustained the financial bubble (without being understood), although no effort appears to have been made to benefit from its potential strategic relevance. Its potential power is perhaps best indicated by the importance attached by mathematicians to the recent "mapping of the genome" of the 248-dimensional [E8 Lie group](#), as described by Clifford Johnson (*E8, Asymptotia*, March 2007). "Lie power" might then be said to be the capacity to frame and relate complex structures with variously missing dimensions, structures exemplifying the elegance for which global strategies and organization now call (see [illustration](#)).

This elegance extends to the consequences of subunderstanding their complexity, as exemplified by the occasional emergence of "black swans" of higher dimensionality (Nassim Nicholas Taleb, *The Black Swan: the impact of the highly improbable*, 2005; Magoroh Maruyama, *Peripheral Vision: polyocular vision or subunderstanding*, *Organization Studies*, 2004). Subunderstanding then offers the illusion of perfect understanding, while missing the most important insights as valued by others. It is precisely such subunderstanding of multidimensionality which leads to strategic models caricatured by the title of a book by Taleb's colleague Pablo Triana (*Lecturing Birds on Flying: can mathematical theories destroy the financial markets?* 2009). However there is also the possibility that dimensional "omissions" effectively constitute strange attractors significant to psycho-social systems (*Human Values as Strange Attractors: coevolution of classes of governance principles*, 1993). The dynamics of

communication and comprehension in relation to an unrecognized central feature of higher dimensionality have been usefully described by mathematician Ron Atkin (*Multidimensional Man; can man live in 3-dimensional space?*, 1981).

- **Lipoic acid:** This substance is widely used as a dietary supplement, recognized for its value as an anti-oxidant. As such **lipoic acid** offers a reminder of the need in a knowledge-based society for vigilance regarding the emergence of dysfunctionalities analogous to cancer (*Memetic and Information Diseases in a Knowledge Society: speculations towards the development of cures and preventive measures*, 2008).
- **Li + Po:** Separately these point to rich associations that might well be fruitfully combined in relation to the argument here, echoing some of the associations above:
  - **Li:** This is a classical Chinese word most extensively used in Confucian and post-Confucian Chinese philosophy. *Li* encompasses not a definitive object but rather a somewhat abstract idea. It is often translated using some form of the word 'ritual', but it has also been translated as 'customs', 'etiquette', 'morals', and norms of proper social behavior. It embodies the entire spectrum of interaction with humans, nature, and even material objects. The influence of *li* guided public expectations, such as the loyalty to superiors and respect for elders in the community. In **Neo-Confucian use of *li*** refers to the underlying intelligence and order of nature as reflected in its organic forms, translated as rational principle or law. As such it was central to the integration of Buddhism into Confucianism, notably in the light of the Buddhist notion of *li*, which also means principle.
  - **PO:** As developed by **Edward de Bono**, a "po" is an idea (a "procreative operation") which moves thinking forward to a new place from where new ideas or solutions may be found (*PO: Beyond Yes and No*, 1973; *Categorical Straightjackets -- PO: a suggestion for a de-patterning device for international organization descriptions*, 1974). The term was created by de Bono as part of a **lateral thinking** technique to suggest forward movement. He derived it from words such as hypothesis, suppose, possible and poetry, all of which indicate forward movement and contain the syllable "po." Also, in ancient Polynesian and the Maori, the word "po" refers to the original chaotic state of formlessness, from which evolution occurred. Edward de Bono argues that this context as well applies to the term.

Potentially there is then a further fruitful association from the original relationship (together with the other Oulipo initiatives) both with the **Collège de 'Pataphysique** and with the insight driving the *Ouvroir de littérature potentielle*. The innovative mathematical preoccupations of the latter with regard to constraints suggest their potential relevance to strategy development under constraint. This is most notably the case with regard to insight into the processing of "text" in its most generic (semiotic) sense, presumably fundamental to the organization of a knowledge-based society faced with memetic and mnemonic challenges (cf **Union of Imaginable Associations**).

As an example, the group devises new techniques, often based on fundamental mathematical problems such as the **Knight's Tour** of the chess-board (as discussed in *Navigating the psychological forces of "communication space"*, 2003). The latter's significance is recognized in its use in the USA as an official symbol of **psychological operations** (PsyOps), namely the ability to influence all types of warfare. Such capacities are potentially relevant to the new understanding of the nature of an appropriate global social project in an open society as an "oeuvre" (in its more fundamental sense, as a **magnum opus** implying **henosis**) -- a further possible interpretation of "ouvroir".

## Threadbare coherence: lipostrategies in caricature

The term "**thread**" is applied to the manner in which messages succeed each other on a topic in exchanges over the internet. There is however little emphasis on the manner in which such threads may be woven together to constitute a knowledge analogue to a piece of "cloth" or a "carpet" -- especially when the threads are very short. Nor is there any reference to the design of such a carpet to which significance is attached in distinguishing between different designs. There is little sense of how to recognize emergent patterns of connectivity and make them evident to enhance subsequent discussion.

In knowledge terms, the coherence of a set of threads is therefore typically absent and there is little attention to the software that might correct this tendency -- one exception being the efforts of the **Global SenseMaking** network in identifying "tools for dialogue and deliberation on wicked problems". This suggests that such internet messages, perhaps exemplified by "tweets", point to the "existence" of an underlying lipostrategy essentially lacking in conventional forms of coherence -- and perhaps appropriate to the preoccupation of **John Ralston Saul** (*The Unconscious Civilization*, 1995).

The metaphor is also useful in relation to the classic tale *The Emperor's New Clothes* (1837) by Danish poet and author **Hans Christian Andersen**. His gullible emperor unknowingly hires two con artists to design a new suit of clothes for him, successfully persuading him of the subtle elegance of the invisible cloth of which it was purportedly made -- and in which he duly paraded to the appreciation of all convinced by his authority of that elegance -- all except for one little boy who loudly remarked on his nudity (cf *Entangled Tales of Memetic Disaster: mutual implication of the Emperor and the Little Boy*, 2009). This tale offers a caricature of a lipostrategy pointing to the value of questioning the claims of current "emperors" in relation to the appropriateness of the strategies they claim to be pursuing -- elegantly designed for them by an array of consultants.

Of particular interest to any such caricature is the "**international community**" which has no tangible or visible form. It does not "exist" -- allowing all who might be considered to be associated with it to both accede to that perception and to deny their involvement, according to circumstances. It might even be described as a "lipocommunity".

However this example also raises the possibility that a lipostrategy may not be defined and articulated conventionally and is rather an effect of the dynamics between its identifiable elements -- as might be argued with respect to the international community. The

appropriate contrast is that between static genetics (as assumptions regarding the determining role of gene sequences) and the dynamics of [epigenetics](#).

There is a further striking image of lipostrategies offered by the uncanny functional resemblance between sacred message trees or rock cairns (of many indigenous peoples) and the websites on which messages are now lodged in cyberspace. Whether the messages are isolated or on threads, the visual impression of such a message tree or cairn might be said (in many cases) to offer a degree of coherence analogous to that of an institutional website. In both cases the messages might be usefully seen as wishful thinking, resolutions, pleas, etc. addressed to some invisible higher authority. "Travellers" add to the collection on their pilgrimages or as they pass by. But, as with the static/dynamic distinction, the coherence in the case of the message trees and cairns derives in large part from the fact that they are blown by the wind, carrying the significance "elsewhere". The static visible pattern is not the key to the coherence which is essentially invisible. There is a degree of similar dependence on the carrying capacity of the "winds of change" in the case of institutional websites.

Such arrays of messages in the wind may also be associated with the invisible problems they address -- perhaps appropriately to be understood as lipoproblems in this context. In the case of sacred trees and cairns the messages may be notably lodged there to ward off suspected evil in some form, but often deliberately nameless. It is intriguing therefore the increasing tendency for the "international community" to be preoccupied by problems that are insubstantial as a whole, irrespective of specific evidence that is cited for their existence and for the need for urgent action. Whether they are indeed all lipoproblems, case studies might usefully include the threats of Y2K, terrorism, climate change, epidemics, and the like (*Review of the Range of Virtual Wars: a strategic comparison with the global war against terrorism*, 2005). The threat of such invisible problems now offers a means of providing a degree of coherence to global governance -- as with the evil against which sacred sites offer protection (*Promoting a Singular Global Threat -- Terrorism: strategy of choice for world governance*, 2002). They do however recall the danger highlighted by the tale of *The Boy Who Cried Wolf*.

## Conclusion

**"Lipostrategic vowels"**: The notion of omitting "vowels" in a systemic language to enable the design of dysfunctionally "constrained strategies" might encourage recognition of such lipostrategies as follows:

- **"a"**: actionability, naming strategies that are inherently dissociated from action in practice or the possibility of their activation
- **"e"**: excluding systemic consideration of a problem essential to the viability of the strategy (a lipoproblematic strategy)
- **"i"**: strategies agreed on paper without any intention to implement them (however actionable they may be) or to integrate them into other strategic initiatives, as with the many resolutions and commitments of international meetings,
- **"o"**: strategies, although implemented with optimism, lacking appropriate resources for operacy, namely the organizational skills of action, of getting things done and of making things happen (irrespective of repeated cost overruns)
- **"u"**: strategies designed such as to be unprepared for the unknown or unexpected ("**Black Swans**"), or for **unintended consequences**, or possibly with unstated agendas to undermine other initiatives.

Potentially catastrophic "tipping points" in complex dynamical systems, ranging from ecosystems to financial markets and the climate, are typically recognized after the fact (cf Marten Scheffer, et al., *Early-warning signals for critical transitions*, *Nature*, Vol 461, 3 September 2009). The question is whether the cognitive and institutional tendencies to recognize them only after the fact could in some way be usefully clustered as such distinct "lipostrategic vowels". In other words does the manner in which a tipping point is unforeseen distinguish different styles of lipostrategy? It is interesting that the Scheffer study makes no reference to the cognitive implications of [catastrophe theory](#) (now deprecated?), especially given the possibility that the forms of catastrophe may be associated with the nature of the question -- if asked -- through which they might be foreseen (cf *Conformality of 7 WH-questions to 7 Elementary Catastrophes: an exploration of potential psychosocial implications*, 2006).

The focus on the [vowels](#) of European languages makes an important point regarding what is considered essential in a multicultural global environment using other languages and scripts. Clearly designed omissions of one set of languages are liable to be of less significance for another. In this sense cultures compensate for each others omissions and blindspots -- as do disciplines and other modes of knowing.

The danger, as noted by by Noam Chomsky (*Chomsky: What America's 'Crisis' Means to the Rest of the World*, *Boston Review*. 10 September 2009), in understanding "the crisis", as he remarks with respect to a symposium of specialists (*The Crisis and How to Deal with It*, *New York Review of Books*, 56, 10, 11 June 2009):

It is very much worth reading, but with attention to the definite article. For the West the phrase 'the crisis' has a clear enough meaning: the financial crisis that hit the rich countries with great impact, and is therefore of supreme importance. But even for the rich and privileged that is by no means the only crisis, nor even the most severe. And others see the world quite differently.

**Vital role of omission?** Given the Club of Rome's early association with the systems analysis of *The Limits to Growth*, its consideration of the population-resource challenge, and its subsequent promotion of the terms [problematique](#) and [resolutique](#), perhaps there is now a case for promoting understanding of:

- **"lipoproblematique"**: as the study of a complex of problems, with all the skills of systems analysis, such as to represent a semblance of a coherent system whilst avoiding reference to a particular central problem affecting that system. A common example is ignoring the implication of corruption; systematic discounting of overpopulation is another.
- **"liporesolutique"**: as a complex of strategies centered on an unmentionable strategy -- designed such as to appear coherent whilst ignoring a systemic consideration which might otherwise be considered necessary to ensure its viability. The avoidance might be that of a key feature of the problematique or of an effective strategic resource (whether human, financial or

infrastructure). The art is then to design in failure (undetected), as with the philosophy and skills required for [planned obsolescence](#).

It is even possible that, as with the well-recognized "empty hand" strategies of martial arts, that creative omission may offer new kinds of strategic leverage where "comprehensive" strategies are beyond current ability to organize complex systems. For example, omitting a key systemic element in one strategy may then evoke allocation of resources to that element through a complementary strategy governed by a complementary mindset, as argued elsewhere (*Liberating Provocations: use of negative and paradoxical strategies*, 2005). The challenge then is the comprehension and stewardship of the ecosystem of such essentially incommensurable strategies (cf *Using Disagreements for Superordinate Frame Configuration*, 1992; *Strategic ecosystem: Beyond "The Plan"*, 1995; *Comprehensible Policy-making: guiding metaphors and configuring choices*, 1991).

If the global resolutique is currently to be understood as characterized by a number of competing lipostrategies, each might be fruitfully understood in Richard Dawkins' terms as the "Mother of All Burkas". This implies an archetypal global competition "between the Mothers" and their "motherings": that of religion (as claimed by Dawkins), that of science (as exemplified by geoengineering), that of economics (as evident in the financial bubble), that of global security systems (as exemplified by the arrogant assumptions of military strategy in Afghanistan), that of overpopulation, and that of the environment (vaguely evident as the stresses of Gaia). Each operates beneath the cognitive radar and is readily denied. Together they provide a context for the global misleadership that is increasingly evident (*Emergence of a Global Misleadership Council: misleading as vital to governance of the future?* 2007).

Of particular interest is the intense global focus on the potential threat of [development of nuclear weapons by Iran](#) (notably at the [G20 Summit, Pittsburgh, 2009](#)) compared to the total silence in such debates regarding the undeclared [threat of the existing nuclear weapons of Israel](#). Such silence may be appropriately understood as indicative of a lipostrategy. There would appear to be a complicity of silence - - characteristic of a lipostrategy -- with respect to both the concealment of Israeli nuclear weapons development over decades and to the refusal to allow the IAEA to inspect its nuclear plants (George Jahn, *Nuclear conference criticizes Israeli nukes*, Associated Press, 18 September 2009; Yasmin Alibhai-Brown, *Don't Israel's nuclear weapons count? The Independent*, 28 September 2009). This is accompanied by vociferous rhetoric regarding the dangers to global security of nuclear proliferation in other named countries, notably in resolutions of the UN Security Council.

The possible extent of the illusory world of present global governance has recently been argued by [Doug Page](#) (*Our Gigantic Delusion: can we overcome it in time?* *Dissident Voice*, 21 September 2009):

We live in a culture wide, all embracing fantasy world. It has become our total 'reality.' It is our Conventional Wisdom. [Paul Ehrlich](#) called this intellectual fog 'wonderland.' In 1973 [Jonah Raskin](#) called it 'mythology.' .... [With others] [John Bellamy Foster](#) (*Capitalism in Wonderland, Monthly Review*, May 2009) ... shows that all of our mainstream economists, policy makers, media owners, editors, journalists, and politicians conform to the dictates of this falsified view of reality.... Even when presented with facts that challenge this gigantic delusion, being frightened, hypnotized, addicted, and brainwashed, we reject them.... Our reigning economic falsehood is that our market economy whose principal goal is short term private profit, is the best that humans can create, is the best for everybody, and is in every respect unchallengeable. Moreover, THERE IS NO ALTERNATIVE.... Then there is the deepest secret of all, so well hidden in our gigantic delusion, that almost nobody is aware of it. It is the secret Ponzi-like scheme of our private bankers that produces an almost unimaginable annual private profit for them at our expense.

This would be consistent with other challenges of the unsaid in modern society (*Global Strategic Implications of the "Unsaid": from myth-making towards a "wisdom society"* 2003; *Abuse of Faith in Governance: mystery of the unasked question*, 2009). The latter is consistent with etymological association of "problem" with a "question proposed for solution". It might then be appropriate to recognize the existence of a "lipoquestion" around which a society or culture could be configured. Failure to recognize such a question might even be understood as associated with a form of [emptiness](#) -- whether as a human condition of generalized boredom, social alienation and apathy, or in the sense of *Sunyata* essential to Buddhist insight in contrast to [nihilism](#) (cf *Import of Nothingness and Emptiness through Happening and Mattering*, 2008). In the latter case the question triggering appropriate intuition may take the form of a *koan* and recognition of the case for "unsaying" or [apophatic discourse](#) (*Being What You Want: problematic kataphatic identity vs. potential of apophatic identity?* 2008).

**Global inaction:** Curiously the ultimate lipostrategy -- the ultimate strategy of omission -- would logically be that of doing nothing, or of ensuring that nothing is effectively done (beyond tokenism). Such an act of supreme mastery would be in accordance with the highest philosophies of the martial arts (*Doing by Not-doing*). More curiously that might be said to be the primary strategy of the "international community" in play at this time. For example, for the first time in history, more than one billion people, or nearly one in every 6 inhabitants of the planet, are going hungry this year (World Food Programme, *Number Of World's Hungry Tops A Billion*, 19 June 2009).

The art of governance might then be understood as disguising the fact that nothing effective is being done -- as might otherwise be claimed and assumed (*The Art of Non-Decision-Making -- and the manipulation of categories*, 1997). The challenge is then to distinguish between that art and the "art of not-doing". Both may be understood as lipostrategies appropriate to extreme forms of lipogovernance. The cognitive challenge for governance of such "emptiness" might be understood to be symbolized by the flat jade disk with a circular hole -- the *bi* -- dating from ancient China and still held in the highest esteem, to the point of figuring on the Olympic awards of 2008. The central hole might also be fruitfully understood as a reminder of the many empty stomachs in global society.

Non-decision-making could be clearly interpreted as evidence of a lipostrategy addressing the challenge of overpopulation -- whether effectively or not remains to be seen. The current effective inaction on a wide variety of issues might be creatively framed in this light (*Celebrating the Value of Deadly Problems Worldwide: planetary salvation in an era of inept global governance?* 2008). The planet is

fortunate to be able to rely on the lipostrategy of Gaia as silent "governor of last resort".

**Learning from failure:** If priority is to be given to collective learning, it is not clear whether to deplore or celebrate lipostrategies -- as a primary source of such learning through the disasters they engender. As noted by Donald N. Michael (*Learning to Plan - And Planning to Learn*, 1973) there is a "**requirement to embrace error**":

More bluntly, future-responsive societal learning makes it necessary for individuals and organizations to embrace error. It is the only way to ensure a shared self-consciousness about limited theory to the nature of social dynamics, about limited data for testing theory, and hence about our limited ability to control our situation well enough to be successful more often than not

As noted by Peter Consenstein (*Memory and Oulipian Constraints*, *Postmodern Culture*, 6, 1, September 1995):

An oulipian constraint is a constraint that must have a **clinamen**, a constraint that must be fallible, a constraint that guarantees an enormous flexibility of meaning, and finally it is a constraint that, if well construed, will always "disappear." The foundation of the constraint is that it is an act of memory.

The issue would appear to be whether to endeavour to design more appropriate strategies (bypassing recognizable strategic traps) or whether to design "failure" into strategies -- as art forms serving as a source of cultural learning (cf *Reframing Global Initiatives for the Future: in the light of past experiments*, 2009; *Aesthetics of Governance in the Year 2490*, 1990). The Oulipo focus on usefully imposed constraint in articulation and representation might then be seen in relation to the role of constraint in learning networks, as articulated by John Platt (*Constraint methods for neural networks and computer graphics*, 2007; *Learning to Learn with the Informative Vector Machine*, 2004).

There is the delightful irony that that "constraint" might even be interpreted as the cognitive challenge of "marrying" the acknowledged beauty of the simpler **E8 Group** with the horrendous complexity of the **Monster Group** -- a challenge perhaps only to be comprehended through aesthetic resonances (*Poetry-making and Policy-making: arranging a marriage between Beauty and the Beast*, 1993; *Potential Psychosocial Significance of Monstrous Moonshine: an exceptional form of symmetry as a Rosetta stone for cognitive frameworks*, 2007; *Theories of Correspondences -- and potential equivalences between them in correlative thinking*, 2007).

In a similar vein, the **Mandelbrot set** is recognized as the most complex object in mathematics -- as well as being much admired for its **aesthetic appeal**. A question for exploration is therefore whether visual representation of the Mandelbrot set as a fractal offers a way of looking at the Monster group, or thinking about that group, and any understanding of the requisite conditions for a "marriage" -- if only as an approximation. This approach would then hopefully integrate some of the possibilities explored with regard to the psychosocial implications of the Mandelbrot set (*Sustainability through the Dynamics of Strategic Dilemmas -- in the light of the coherence and visual form of the Mandelbrot set*, 2005; *Psycho-social Significance of the Mandelbrot Set: a sustainable boundary between chaos and order*, 2005).

The involvement of poets with mathematicians in the Oulipo initiative also suggests that a global strategy designed with a central flaw -- a lipostrategy -- could be incorporated thematically into a tragic poetic epic, a civilizational magnum opus, as a commemorative mnemonic for the future (cf *A Singable Earth Charter, EU Constitution or Global Ethic?* 2006; *Strategic Jousting through Poetic Wrestling: aesthetic reframing of the clash of civilizations*, 2009). This might offer a framing corresponding to that of the mysterious wound of the Fisher King in the epic poem *Parzival* (cf Richard Sanderson, *Wounded Masculinity: Parsifal and The Fisher King Wound*) which inspired the opera *Parisfal* by Richard Wagner.

#### Learnings from the employment opportunities of a simple lipostrategy?

Best man Ryuichi Ichinokawa took his place before the assembled wedding guests, cleared his throat and for the next few minutes spoke movingly about the bride and groom. But his speech omitted one crucial fact: that he knew the beaming couple only marginally better than the waiters and waitresses serving their wedding breakfast. From the moment the guests sat down until they belted out the final karaoke song of the evening, Ichinokawa was part of a grand, though well-intentioned, deception. He is a professional stand-in, part of a growing service sector that rents out fake spouses, best men, relatives, friends, colleagues, boyfriends and girlfriends to spare their clients' blushes at social functions such as weddings and funerals. (Justin McCurry, *Lonely Japanese find solace in 'rent a friend' agencies*, *The Guardian*, 20 September 2009)



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