

On Governance as a Challenge to Reason: Shifting from an Exploitation to a Planetary Gardening Attitude

Mihaela Ulieru

Professor, Director Adaptive Risk Management Lab, UNB, Canada
President and Chief Scientist, IMPACT Institute for the Digital Economy
<http://www.cs.unb.ca/~ulieru/>
Ulieru@unb.ca

Abstract

Are our governance structures fit, and is our society ready to absorb the radical changes needed to bring us in synch with Gaia before is too late? A negative answer would be highly destabilizing and calling for a major reform in governance and the very values of our society.

A technological breakthrough that will provide an alternative to natural gas and oil is extremely probable by 2025. Most technologies avoiding carbon dioxide emission are already available on the shelf. Research may be useful to improve them, but the real question is the one of the governance necessary to put them in function, related more to social sciences than to hard science. Yet the transformation that has to happen is too radical to be painlessly assimilated by the population since it calls for a *radical shift* in consumption which cannot be easily accommodated as it requires humongous transformations and improvements in the infrastructure. One of the immediate surprises and unintended consequences is the inability to adapt to the required changes. Due to lack of adequate policy frameworks the obstacles are the limited capacity of social processes to manage rapid change in institutional design, planning and public services. This points fingers to the absence of initiative of public authorities (or their submission to lobby pressure). In the 'climate wars' the most challenging is the battle between the well intentioned individual and the large corporations lobbying and pressuring governments and preventing them from taking the necessary action.

We suggest that a way to cope with the reality of climate change with its overarching impact on our current values, way of life and wellbeing, is to move from risk governance to resilience governance. The big call for governance will be to carry society through the necessary shift from an exploitation attitude to a planetary gardening one with nature becoming a major concern for public safety. The talk will ponder on the following core issues:

- What is the magnitude of changes that can be targeted to not destabilize the system? Can we absorb these mandatory changes?
- What can we control and act upon before we infringe on people's liberties?
- What do we have to accept and brace ourselves for?
- Can we foresee any unintended consequences and side effects of the global world dynamics of interdependent crises to which technology adds to overdrive the high pace of change?

Biography

Professor Mihaela Ulieru is Director of the Canada Foundation for Innovation sponsored Adaptive Risk Management Lab at the University of New Brunswick and President of the IMPACT Institute for the Digital Economy, aiming to capitalize on her achievements as the Canada Research Chair in Adaptive Information Infrastructures for the eSociety which she held for five years starting July 1, 2005. She leads multi-million dollar projects for the management and engineering of complex situations, capitalizing on her achievements and expertise in distributed intelligent systems to make information communication technologies (ICT) an integrated component of policy making targeting a safe, sustainable and innovation-driven world. In 2007 she was appointed to the Science, Technology and Innovation Council of Canada by the Minister of Industry, to advise the government and provide foresight on innovation issues related to the ICT impact on Canada's economic development and social well-being against international standards of excellence. She has held and holds appointments on a plethora of international S&T advisory boards and review panels and founded as General Chair the Industrial Informatics and IT-Revolutions Forum.