

CULTURAL VISIONS

**A
Social Theory & Case Study
in Future Images of the
America-Canada-Quebec Triangle**

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CULTURAL IMAGES OF THE FUTURE

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Introduction

The fast moving events of the contemporary world have destroyed many traditions and disoriented most lives. When everything is in flux, the old reliable road markers disappear and time navigators are bereft to fend for themselves in their journey amidst an unkind and unknown sea. Consequently, people are looking for some reaffirmation of geographical stability and reassurance of historical continuity.

This is particularly so in North America, where the most rapid and radical changes are taking place. As the cauldron of social experiments and the melting pot of cultural mixtures, the New World is at the vanguard of global change. Our continent is thus in great need of developing some credible images of the future to guide people in their search for new directions and goals.

Of course, this is easier said than done. Hard as it is to realize where we stand now and remember from where we came from, it is much harder to predict where we might be heading. The difficulty is not only the alternative possibilities opening before us, but the conflicting desirability of various courses of action.

Our thesis here is that although the future cannot be known with any absolute certainty, it is possible, desirable, and unavoidable to discover its tendencies and probabilities in relative degrees of certitude. So just as there are significant differences between nature and culture, there are similar discrepancies between physiological, technological, and sociological forecasting. In spite of the obstacles, the enterprise is necessary, therefore it must be approached with all the intelligence and imagination we can muster.

Futurists of all kinds have tried for a long time to divine what's ahead for human culture in the midst of an evolving nature. Their predictions have ranged from optimistic to pessimistic or realistic to idealistic, but in any case they reflect the universal human drive for a preview of our destiny. It is to this irresistible urge that we succumb here by engaging into the murky waters of social forecasting.

This study then attempts to paint some possible and desirable images of the North American cultural horizon, particularly those of Canada and Quebec. This means that we are going to look for the foreseeable options of these cultures on this continent, without presuming what these cultures want to do nor propose where they should be going.

Rather, we try to discern the salient trends dominating the landscape and then analyze the policies which either promote or oppose them. In any case, our focus here is not so much on the substance of the forecasts as it is on the way in which they are arrived at. Consequently, we emphasize the social scientific approach, combining Sociophysics and General Systems Theory.

Our conceptual framework here consists of a three-dimensional model intersecting a thesis, process and method. The thesis is that future Images depend on a combination of Natural and Cultural factors. The process follows an Input-Transform-Output continuum, which corresponds to the three chapters of this study. And the method uses a Premise-Inference-Conclusion deduction from general principles to particular conditions, which is repeated in the three sections of each chapter. In this systematic manner, we investigate the Cultural Future Images of the America-Canada Quebec triangle which form the content of our study.

1. Social Structures

Before we are able to discuss the particulars of our subject, we have to construct the conceptual framework which contains it. This involves outlining the fundamental paradigm which encapsulates our view of reality, the structural parameters of our domain, and the sectoral aspects of our system. It is within this general reality check that the inputs will be determined and our thesis can be properly understood.

Seen in an overall perspective, this proposition breaks down according to the following taxonomic tree which will be elucidated in the three sections of this chapter:

1.1 SET	1.2. ESE	1.3. ESP
Space	Ecosphere	Economy
Existence	Sociosphere	Society
Time	Egosphere	Polity

1.1 SET Paradigm

The necessary and sufficient ingredients of our paradigm consist of the primordial space-existence-time triad. Although SET implicitly underlines all discussions, it is explicitly emphasized here, as the fundamental assumption of our reality.

Space envelops our physical existence and delimits its extent by the notions of distance and displacement. Space determines the scale of things and measures their size. More specifically, topology and geography provide important aspects of space and significant variables of position or location.

Geography divides the space on this planet into the five continental land masses and the oceanic water bodies surrounding them. For purposes of orientation the globe is dichotomized into eastern and western, intersecting northern and southern hemispheres. Each of these quarters has particular significance not so much for its configuration as for its population.

In this study, we focus on the American continent, situated in the north-western quarter of the globe. The continent may itself be divided into three geographical areas from the Canadian North, through the American middle, to the Mexican south. Due to the large size of this area and the short length of this study, we shall here concentrate on the province of Quebec, seen from this broad continental perspective.

The point here is that its geostrategic position determines to a large extent a society's way of life. The future images of the Quebecois are conditioned by the fact that they are settled in the Northeastern quadrant of the NA continent, in the lower-middle of Canada and border the US.

Along with the three dimensions of space, **time** completes our four dimensional reality. As space measures distance between points, time measures duration between

events. So as geography compares on concurrent positions, history follows succeeding periods. The main difference, of course, is that unlike three-dimensional space, time is unidimensional and its arrow always flies from the past through the present into the future.

Since time measures change, it affects things differently. The mutable material or temporal dynamic aspects of life change faster than the more permanent and static, for which time does not matter so much. In this study, we are interested in history as the subjective record of human activities in the world and the repository of the collective memory of humanity about its past. It is the interpretation of this historical past by each society that influences its consciousness of the present and its images of the future. In a sense, the future is a mirror to actuality and an epilogue to history.

The fact that France lost its NA colony to England in 1760 still looms large in the soul of the Quebecois. The province's mnemonic *Je me souviens*, much like America's "Remember the Alamo," keeps alive the remembrance of a lost historical battle long ago. This infamous defeat, fans the flames of revenge in the hearts of many nationalists who still dream of the day when they can restore their honor.

Deep and lasting memories serve as strong motives for human behavior. Historical change and future conduct can then be explained in terms of:

- Determinism: objective (material); regressive (cyclical); progressive (linear); necessity
- Randomism: stochastic (chaotic); complex (unknowable); mysterious (divine); chance
- Intentionism: subjective (mental); human (free-will); purpose (motive); volition.

These three causal types operate independently and concertively to effect whatever happens in chronological sequence. Since our interest here lies towards the **future**, we should discern what combination of causes responsible for it. So in order to find out what the future holds, we must know something about the past and present which bring it about.

This takes us to the final variable of our triad: namely **existence**. The significance of space only becomes apparent when it is filled with something rather than nothing. In order to fill the context of available space, we infuse it with a content of substantive existence, thus distinguishing between being and void. As we shall see in the next section, the abstract concept of existence translates into the substantive life of this planet.

1.2. ESE Parameters

The contents of geography and history consist of material things and living beings of which ours is the most ubiquitous and ambitious species. Humanity is organized in open, dynamic social systems throughout the world, existing within the natural environment of the Earth. Natural resources and human societies then become the significant variables of our model.

A schema of this model may be illustrated as three concentric circles: the outermost representing the natural ecosphere, the middle one the cultural sociosphere, and the innermost one the human egospheres. These circles reflect the major realms and relations of our reality: i.e. extrapersonal, interpersonal, intrapersonal.

In that scheme, all-encompassing **nature** provides our inclusive, if not intrusive, environment. It is the realm of hard facts and natural laws which frame the universe and set the outer limits of our knowledge. Any supernatural realm therefore has to be an externality beyond our concerns here.

some claim. All we can say is that the natural inputs or stimuli of biology (race; age; sex), are shaped by the cultural throughputs or transformations of society (clan, class, sect), into the personal outputs or responses of each human being (images, ideas, actions). Of course, there are certain feedbacks in this process, primarily from humanity to society, and recently from culture to nature which complete the cycle of human concerns.

1.3 ESP Variables

Since this study is primarily interested in the social component of reality, we are going to perform an anatomy of social system to uncover its three principal sectors: economy, society, polity. A human **social system** may be defined as a reasonably autarchic, autarkic, and autochtonic group of people. That is to say a collective with a certain degree of political self-government, economic self-sufficiency, and cultural self-sustainability.

Accordingly, the strength of a social system depends on the degree of its sovereignty, integrity, and longevity. Similarly, a person's social position is determined by economic wealth, political power, and cultural prestige. Each of these aspects has its own structures and functions which constitute and operate the human condition. Thus they will continue to shape the future, as they did the past and still do the present.

The **economic** sector provides the infrastructure of the system and rests upon the natural environment from which it draws raw materials and converts them to social commodities. Its function is metabolic, by extracting, producing and exchanging goods or services.

In this sector, the heavy trends leading into the future derive from scientific discoveries and technologic innovations which are automating the means of transaction, transformation and transportation. Human economy has gone through the famous waves of Agricultural (ten millennia ago), Industrial (two centuries ago), and Technological (present) Revolutions, which have succeeded in changing the face of the Earth and will continue to do so for a long time.

The economy of NA leads the world in being the first to cross the threshold of the post-industrial era. Although, it has lost the dominant position it held during the past generation, its future potential is still awesome. If anything, the main problem with the US and Canada is that they suffer the ravages of premature post urbanism and precocious post industrialism. As the richest countries in the world, they face both crises and opportunities unique to pioneers, from whose mistakes others can learn.

Next, the **political** sector consists of the social superstructure, reflected in public policy making, executing, and interpreting institutions, such as parliaments, governments, and courts. Their main function is cybernetic, in that they legislate and regulate, tax and redistribute, as well as produce and provide the means and ends of social intercourse. The public sector of modern societies accounts between 25% and 75% of all social activities, depending on how socialistic the state is.

The heavy trends in this area derive from the geographic shrinkage of the planet into a Global Village where everything is becoming tightly interdependent. From the thousands of primitive communities since the dawn of history to the hundreds of nation-

states now, the social development of the world, has gone through many cycles of geopolitical expansion or contraction, as well as autocratic and democratic control.

Actually, the trends seem contradictory between the so-called globalization and localization of human activities. National governments must increasingly share their functions with transnational corporations and international organizations, while they must also devolve jurisdiction to ethnic groups and local communities. So, contemporary governments are pressured from above and below to cede power to both grassroots and cosmopolitan forces.

In this respect, NA federal governance is both developing and devolving new institutions and adaptations to changing circumstances. The recent inauguration of the tripartite NAFTA reflects the growing integration of continental commerce at the international level. At the same time, decreasing and decentralizing many government functions gives the lower levels increasing responsibility for local community welfare.

This centrifugal tendency is particularly acute in Canada where the federal government is pressured by its provinces for greater autonomy, while also succumbing to the centripetal tendency of continentalization and globalization. The case of the current Quebec government is unique in that it is sworn to break away from Canada and become a sovereign state. Although, its recent second attempt to do so in fifteen years has failed by a hair, the constitutional insecurity has become a chronic malaise which saps away the viability of the country and may even destabilize the entire continent.

Finally, the **societal** sector provides the clan and class structure of the social system and includes a wide range of institutions from schools to churches and families to forums. Its functions therefore span a variety of activities from education to evaluation and procreation to recreation. It is within this variety of structures and functions that we find the cultural sub-sector, which is of particular interest and will be described later on.

The diverse cultures of the world have evolved from the traditional ones which developed since prehistoric times, through the modern ones which arose since the Renaissance, until the present transition to a Post-modern era in the next century.

Different cultures relate to nature in one of three ways. They are either dominated by nature, antagonistic or harmonious with it. Traditional cultures were definitely of the first type, since they were entirely dependent on nature. Modern cultures fall into the second type, because they rebelled against nature and tried to dominate it. Although some succeeded to an extent, they are presently encountering stiffening resistance and diminishing, if not disappearing returns.

It is by now evident that of all the forces that will change the world, the most important are demography and technology. Fertility and mortality rates are a primordial determinant of social order and progress. The increasing mouths to feed, particularly those of poor, children, and elders, along with the population pressure for mass migrations will determine the intra and international relations of the next century.

The recent population explosion in many parts of the world creates terrible natural and cultural problems and will determine to a large extent not only what happens to our species, but to the rest of the ecosphere. If human reproduction gets out of control, it will change both the way we live and die for years to come.

In this respect NA is blessed with a comfortable margin between its relatively sparse population density and material plenitude. Canada has even topped the UN's total Quality of Life Index for some time now. But, although the carrying capacity of the continent as a whole has still not been reached, certain of its regions are overcrowded while others are empty. This demographic imbalance creates migration pressures from one region to another, as the Mexico-US border witnesses every day.

More to the point, overpopulation fires the dreams of many poor people to move to rich countries to ensure their future and find their fortune. As an enviable continent of immigrants, America is still the final destination of first choice for people around the world, something which creates serious problems of absorptive capacity and cultural adjustment.

Technology may come here either to alleviate or accentuate this population problem. So far it is responsible for both, since it has enriched a small part of the world, while it has impoverished the rest. The trends show some improvement in the use of technology to solve rather than pose problems, but it is yet too early to tell whether this improvement is too little and too late.

Although it is the most technologically advanced continent in the world, NA still includes some of its most underdeveloped regions. In that sense, it mirrors the global condition where advanced and primitive societies coexist side by side. Whether it is possible, let alone desirable, such coexistence to last for very long is a crucial question to which we shall return below.

On the basis of these variables, the world may be considered a weak social system because of its loose political, economic and cultural structures and functions. Within this imperfect global system, there are hundreds of more or less strong social systems, with their sovereign governments, industrial economies, and distinct cultures. Many trends, however, indicate a definite strengthening of the planet's social fabric by political cooperation, economic interdependence, and cultural integration.*

NA leads the world in all these sectors due to a large extent to its strong central, if not strange, attractor. The powerful gravitational force of the US, keeps both Canada and Mexico revolving around its mass and following its leadership. Thus the continent enjoys relative peace and prosperity, in a violent and insecure world.

The three social sectors and their heavy trends form our basic variables in attempting to determine a continental perspective in a global perspective. We shall next try to project these general variables towards the future in the territorial specifics of North America as it affects the functional aspects of its cultural communities, particularly Quebec.

* P. J. Arnopoulos: "Ideological Analytics: A Study of Evolving World Values." World Futures, Vol. 30, 1991

2. American Cultures

In this particular study, we focus on one region of geographical space, situated in the western hemisphere of planet Earth. North America is a great continent of large proportions and strategic location. Along with the western European Union and the Far Eastern Pacific Oceania, NAFTA is one of the three power centers of the contemporary world. Therefore, it plays an important role in world affairs, both geopolitically and socioeconomically.

In this chapter, we look at culture as the intervening variable to the global natural and social factors described previously. In order to do so systematically, we first define the concept of culture in general, and then its particular continental aspects. Finally, we present a model of how cultures arise and evolve, thus preparing ourselves for the final chapter on future images.

2.1 LARK Variables

The social sub-sector which interests us here is **culture**. As mentioned in the previous section, it is one of the important sub-sectors of society. Defined as the combination of the uniquely human activities involving language, art, religion, and kinship (the famous LARK acronym); culture is a complex phenomenon taking place solely and in every human society.

As such, cultural variety is an artificial creature of humanity, in contradistinction to natural similarity which has created our single species. By way of feedback, different cultures eventually divided humanity into its various groups, so that now, humanity is more divided by culture than by nature.

Culture is a community of shared symbols (language) permitting communication, common values (religion) enabling exchange, and genealogical bonds (ethnicity) ensuring empathy. It contains three distinct elements: mental concepts, behavioral forms and moral values. Culture refers to the material (artifacts), societal (customs) and mental (notions), all of which are innate in human groups. Culture thus contains the acquired mental, material and behavioral traits found in all social systems.

Since the components of LARK refer to the ideologic, linguistic, artistic and ethnic aspects of culture, the essence of culture is some form or degree of expression, extension, evaluation and evolution of a group. We shall therefore use these variables as the parameters of our cultural model.

Cultures not only provide societies with a way of life, but a system of meaning which give people a sense of identity and purpose in the cosmic order. Individuals strive to belong to a sociocultural collectivity, whose membership provides them with psychological as well as biological security.

Culture depends on many things, including time and place. A culture may be described in terms of its collective memory of the past, common interests in the present, and shared images of the future. Cultures are slow evolving systems, with multi centenarian lifetimes. That is why, according to Toynbee, our modern civilization or urban culture, is only one of thirty the world has ever known over its entire history. Because of this evolutionary inertia, cultural revolutions are few and far between.

That is why the contemporary global revolution is so upsetting and disorienting. Generated by rapid technological breakthroughs, some aspects of society and regions of the world get out of step with the rest, thus creating the widening gaps between nations and classes. Since cultures thrive best in their native natural and social environments, they are dangerous and difficult to transplant to alien terrains.

The havoc created by the incursion of European cultures to North America is well known, so it does not need further elaboration. In the last five centuries, the new world has gradually developed a multicultural identity which is now undergoing another transition. So the question is the classical *quo vadis*, and some answers are hopefully sought in the future images of its various cultures.

Apart from natural (physiological and psychological) determinants; images, opinions and attitudes are usually conditioned by ethnic origins, social positions and cultural values. Ethnicity or nationality is a very important variable in future images. There seems to be something like a national character that shapes images. The nation then seems to be a salient conditioning factor both as to topological (peace and war), and chronological (development and planning) images.

In general, future images are not well-developed, the few that are tend to be technological, rather than social. The reason is that the future does not exist as a comprehensive dimension, but rather as a complex of potential and particular issues which become more remote and hazy with a receding time horizon. As is well-known, both time and space are discounted in proportion to their distance from the here and now.

Since cultural divisions cut both vertically (high or low) and horizontally (progressive-conservative), class status and party affiliation are both important factors in future images. Elites are usually the classes which are supposed to be concerned with the future. So people in higher social positions or dominant cultures tend to make hard predictions, whereas people in lower positions or weak cultures prefer normative evaluations and wishful thinking. Those who have the knowledge and power to shape their future are therefore more realistic in their forecasts.

It is estimated that only a third of the people think about the future at all, and those that do tend to be relatively ignorant and insecure. Paradoxically, future awareness does not correlate well with future knowledge. On the contrary, information about the future seems to turn people to more immediate concerns. That is why, future consciousness is more prevalent in Third and Second world, rather than the First.

2.2. Continental Condition

We are now ready to look at the cultures of NA, as a prerequisite of the future images they create which will be discussed in the next and final chapter. These cultures are to be distinguished from their three geopolitical nation-states: Canada, Mexico, and USA, each of which may be said to contain many cultures. How many is a difficult question and may be answered in various ways, depending on what criteria of selection one chooses.

Beginning with the broadest classification which identifies three national cultures along geopolitical lines, we have the Hispanic, English, and French ethnic groups, corresponding to their respective languages. America's Anglo-Saxon origins, Canada's

traditional Franco-British biculture, and Mexico's Hispanic history make up the three dominant cultures and languages of NAFTA. When to these colonizing nations are added the indigenous peoples, the African metics and the more recent immigrants, the continent contains a veritable Babel of tongues, a mosaic of nations, and a melting pot of cultures.

By the nationality criterion, one can literally find descendants from every ethnic group in the world living in NA. In this sense, as Walt Whitman called America "the nation of nations," the continent may be considered a microcosm of the global condition, thus the new world's actuality may reflect the whole world's potentiality. Since the US is the locomotive of NAFTA, the future of NA depends on the USA.

Similarly, if religion is taken as a criterion, we have the dominant Christian denominations, followed by Jewish, and more recently by Islamic or Asiatic ones. Here again, NA is a microcosm of world religions and then some, with a plethora of new age sects appearing and disappearing all the time.

According to sociological criteria, economic classes may be considered as high or low cultures, thus trichotomizing the continent into upper, middle and lower class cultures, or simply into elites and masses. Intersecting these distinctions, we have another dichotomy between urban and rural cultures, which by now are about equal.

Turning to ideological criteria, we have a range from conservative through liberal to socialistic cultures. The progressive American "Life, liberty and the pursuit of Happiness" and the conservative Canadian "Peace, order and good government," set the range of NA political cultures; with Mexico being revolutionary in fiction, but traditional in action.

The map of political cultures involves three major segments: Socialist Quebec, conservative South, and moderate liberal rest of the continent. The major divide is the Mason-Dixon Line and the Quebec border. The anti-colonialist, nationalist *mestizo* culture of Mexico, of course, is another. Quebec and Old South share many attributes, based on their common political history as vanquished peoples and traditional conservative culture. Only until recently, with its Quiet Revolution in the Sixties, has Quebec been transformed from conservatism to socialism in a single generation.

It is recognized that America has a much stronger national consciousness than Canada. Regional differences are therefore more easily overridden in the US than in Canada. The major differences between the two countries are concentrated on the greater attachment of Canadians to religion and government. But attitudes towards business profits, social services, labor unions, gender equality, family values are quite similar. For that reason, many Canadian nationalists despair of the prospects of Canada's future chances of survival as a nation.

Canada's main problem however is not coming from outside but from inside. To the diffuse and ultimate American challenge of a global super culture, Canada's political integrity is immediately and directly threatened by its own province of Quebec. The strong parochial nationalism of the Quebecois makes the tepid and shallow nationalism of the Canadians pale into insignificance.

Since Quebec never had any question of national identity until now, it sees itself

as a distinct culture and not as a part of the Canadian mosaic. Having survived four centuries as a closed community in this open continent, the sheer collective will and high fertility of the Quebecois paid off high cultural dividends by keeping it as the only francophone island in the surrounding NA anglophone sea.

Since the Quiet Revolution however, Quebec's birth rate fell from the highest to the lowest level in NA. As a result the proportion of francophones went down and so did their economic and political clout. So in order to reverse this decline, immigration was the only option. But since immigrants naturally precipitated into the English language, strict laws had to be enacted to force them to learn French and assimilate into the French culture. Language therefore has become the mainstay of Quebec nationalism, to the point that only French signs are allowed in public.

Beyond language, NA is even more heterogeneous. Geoculturally speaking, the continent north of Mexico has been divided (Cf Garreau) into nine nations, each with its capital. In addition to Quebec, there are eight other nations: New England (Boston); Foundry (Detroit); Breadbasket (Kansas); Empty Quarter (Denver); Ecotopia (San Francisco); Mexamerica (Los Angeles); Dixie (Atlanta); the Islands (Miami). Each of these nations has a different past, present and future. They all have different ecology, geography, resources, climate, economy, polity, and last but not least culture.

According to this classification neither the US nor Canada are true nations. Rather they are cultural conglomerates, with Canada being merely a geopolitical strip of inhabited land along the northern border of the US, with which it shares its five other cultural identities: New England (Maritimes), Foundry (Ontario), Breadbasket (Prairies), Empty Quarter (Territories), Ecotopia (B.C). This territorial classification raises the number of NA nations to ten, and cross-cuts the political boundaries of their three sovereign member states of NAFTA.

This pattern of regional cultures of NA, excluding Mexico and Quebec, is not significantly affected or defined by the national border separating the two countries. Canadians and Americans residing in contiguous regions share many of the same beliefs and interests, based on geography, climate, economy, ethnicity, history. Regional culture therefore overrides official political separations. Structural models analyze eco-social variables to explain attitudinal and behavioral differences. Cultures are subject to a continual regional impact of events upon them.

Consequently, the thesis of only three national cultures may be rethought in favor of many distinct regional cultures. So could the utility of nation-states as units of empirical investigation. Canada & America are becoming increasingly similar, so in spite of being politically independent, there is little justification in studying them separately for cultural or economic purposes.

At the same time, while Quebec is becoming increasingly integrated in the NA economy, a significant part of it is growing psychologically more alienated, clinging to an exclusive linguistic nationalism. Thus, in spite of still being part of Canada, it must be considered separately at least for cultural purposes.

2.3 Causal Factors

With the above explanation and exposition of culture, we can now proceed to correlate it with our SET variables. Here we want to know what are the causes for cultural maintenance and alternance. To do so, we rely on a recent model (cf. Graber), which uses the variables of territory, population and society to infer a great deal about the condition and evolution of cultures. According to it, material (geographic, demographic and technologic) factors are the prime movers of sociocultural statics and dynamics. Culture is thus treated as an epiphenomenon of population and technology.

This means that a sparsely populated territory of many small societies is bound to have a nomadic-foraging or hunter-gatherer culture, because such primitive groups require a large area within which to roam in search of food. On the other hand, a densely inhabited area of a well-integrated society must be a sedentary civilization, because only an advanced culture can sustain its large population in a small area.

Stated formally, culture is a function of density and society: $C=f(D,S)$, or the state of culture (C) is proportional to the product of its population density (D) and the integration of its society (S): $C=kDS$. This means that a culture tends to maintain its given state, despite population growth, only as long as neither territorial expansion nor societal proliferation are inhibited: i.e. if there is free expansion and proliferation of both; otherwise, if $\Delta D=\Delta S=0$, then $\Delta C=0$.

Conversely, the rate of cultural change C is proportional to the sum of the rates of change in D and S: $\Delta C=\Delta D+\Delta S$ or more accurately: $d\ln C/dt=d\ln D/dt+d\ln S/dt$. Put another way, cultural evolution is found to be proportional to the square of population density and inversely proportional to its social fragmentation: $C=kP^2/AN=PD/N$.

The cultural evolution from nomadic to agricultural and then industrial societies is due to density increases in a global scale. Crowding rates (lag between population growth and territorial expansion) are then the principal triggers of sociocultural evolution. Cultural change, i.e. technological innovation, behavioral civilization and energetic augmentation, are all social responses to crowding. People change their way of life as social density and therefore pressure changes. Without such incentive, a natural tendency of culture, as of all things, is to conserve its inertia for the status quo.

Time and space do not permit us to go into a detailed exemplification of this theory in NA, but many points should be evident from the above description. Most recently and particularly, as mentioned above, the threat of depopulation, caused by technological factors, forced the government of Quebec to take extraordinary, even unconstitutional, measures in order to preserve its French culture.

In more general terms, the relationship between population, space and culture is confirmed by Lotka's law which suggests that the ultimate imperative of biological, as of cultural, evolution is the utilization of increasing quantities of energy. Since the ability to consume energy safely, presupposes a certain level of systemic complexity or technology; there is a direct correlation between a society's energetic economy and its cybernetic polity. Energy is thus deterministically related to society and complexity; hence making sociocultural evolution directly proportional to energy consumption and perhaps information communication.

As different cultures come into contact with each other, they react initially by

hostility or toleration, then rejection or absorption, but finally selection or synthesis. Eventually, they seem to succumb to the temptations of the global Western model. All local cultures are assaulted by a barrage of powerful homogenizing forces which dilute and relegate them to the ornamental or vestigial margins of the increasingly standardized mainstream paradigm. This cultural disintegration or voluntary ethnocide also means the decline of distinct values or identities and the rise of their lowest common denominator as the global image of the future.

NA contains all these intercultural conflicts: native against colonist or old against new immigrant and one race or language versus another. Issues of inequitable intercultural distribution of wealth and power vie with debates about the meaning of distinct cultural identities within a multicultural environment. These activities of identity politics set the public policy agenda of all three NA countries.

The main strength of NA is its innovative and individualistic, tolerant and multi-ethnic culture, which puts it in the forefront of social development. But when carried to extremes, these strengths become weaknesses by overachievement, along with crime, waste, license and moral decay. Multiculturalism is a great generator of new ideas, but it is also very costly to run, because of the conflicts among cultural values.

Although Canada is officially bilingual and multicultural, both these policies are anathema to Quebec nationalism, because they are considered as the beginning of its end. Viewed as a receding trait, French has to be artificially protected, lest it is completely expunged from NA, by the overwhelming aggressiveness of English. On this point alone, Quebec is the one and only exception to continental multiculturalism.

Cultural or ethno-development is contradictory because it strives to retain hoary traditions and at the same time acquire modern innovations. Many of these values, freedom and fraternity or equity and equality, are incompatible and cannot be maximized at the same time and place. Choosing priorities between these cultural values then becomes the most important political activity in multicultural societies.

Given the above discussion, it is evident that future images arise from cultural values, inculcated by:

- Ideology: religion, politics, ethics
- Sociology: class, language, custom, ethnicity, wealth, power
- Biology: race, physique, mentality, intelligence
- Geography: region, locality, residence
- Chronology: age, generation, history,

Consequently, culture becomes the input, and image the output of this process. On that basis, one could construct an input-output matrix to show the specific results of such one-to-one intersection between cultural values and future images. From such imaginary matrix, we are going to extract the most salient features which are exposed in the next chapter.*

* P. J. Arnopoulos: "Ideal-Real Links: A Study of the Act-Fact Interface." Kybernetes. Vol 22, No. 3. (1993).

3. Imagined Futures

Humans are time travelers who chart their life course on the basis of their accumulated experience of the past, the available tools of the present, and an imaginary map of the future. As a result, they form mental **images** of these diachronic voyages on various factors ranging from the known to the unknown.

Along with natural constants and historic trends, cultural images form the mental triad which shape our visions. Continuing constants, projecting trends and imagining plans combine to form a picture of the future. As condensed anticipations or crystallized aspirations, these images may be possible, probable or desirable states.

Put another way, images of the future depend on memory of past history (time, place, being) and perceived present conditions (personal, social, natural). Studying the future therefore involves remembering past experiences, conceptualizing present expectations and imagining future possibilities.

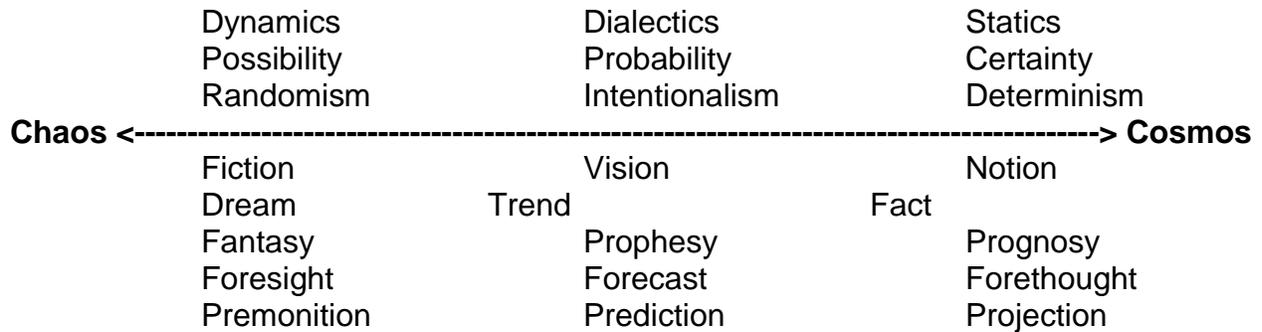
Past images from memory or history and present ones from perceptions or impressions are relatively easy to acquire and acquaint. But, future images, in which we are interested here, are much more difficult to imagine and impart. Consequently, they are more contradictory or controversial and apt to fall into the moot domain of prophets, oracles or dreamers.

In spite or because of that, the recent study of melontology is trying to rehabilitate futurism by infusing it with a systematic methodology. Since it is a part of human nature and a need of social culture to worry and wonder about the future, we cannot avoid expectations and speculations of what lies ahead. It is therefore better to do so by using all the tools that combine both reason and imagination.

In this spirit, we summarize the dual approaches of image generation:

- Quantitative extension: Descriptive-cognitive; anticipation-expectation; Forecast
- Qualitative orientation: Normative-evaluative; aspiration-idealization; Plan-Program.

The first approach is that of descriptive forecasting, and follows a range spanning various degrees of doubt about future images from the completely set to the absolutely vague, depending on whether the subject in question falls near the deterministic order of things or its randomistic opposite. The following range classifies these future options in three relative groups on the basis of their relation to the criteria of chaos and cosmos.



Accordingly, a future image combines various elements along this continuum from

various fundamentalist sects and radical movements, whose ideals are nothing more than nostalgia for a bygone golden age. From the biblical Garden of Eden to Plato's Republic, from Moore's to Marx's Utopia, and from fascist to feminist idealism, visionary images have flourished throughout history.

Although ideal visions color much of future thinking, post-modernism has dumped much of utopian thought. Since the derisory demise of Marxism, radical social ideals are harder to come by, thus leaving the utopian field entirely to extreme religions and counter-cultures, as the net-heads who want to merge into a global brain, much like the 17th century Ranters sought to become one with God.

As a result, future ideals may now be grouped around two opposite poles. The first is the traditionalist thesis of idealism, ranging from the fundamentalist fanatic to classical romantic. It is represented by such philosophers as Rousseau or Nietzsche, and is reflected in neo-primitivism and millennialism.

The second is its modernist antithesis of materialism, ranging from the liberal democratic to totalitarian technocratic. It is represented by neo-Platonic and Comtean thought, and is reflected in structuralism and functionalism.

These diametrical opposites are struggling for supremacy in the future field, but most likely, the result will be a dialectical synthesis, ranging from realism to socialism or naturalism to humanism. Such synthesis will most likely be the result of diplomatic negotiation and political compromise among various cultures seeking mutual accommodation and peaceful coexistence.

A good example of this process embodying the global aspirations of our generation are to be found in UNESCO's Declaration of the Principles of International Cultural Cooperation adopted in 1966. Their ideals may be considered as the formal consensual multicultural image of the preferred world of the future in which cooperation between all cultures will become the norm, rather than the exception. Now, thirty years later, some progress has been made; but as is normal in most cases, a lot still remains to be done.

Another global ideal is reflected in the UN Declaration for New International Economic Order promulgated in the early seventies. It also may be considered as another image of the future demanding a more equitable redistribution of wealth among all countries. Here too, if there has been any progress, it is not what was intended, so the ideal still remains largely unfulfilled.

The standard NA vision still favors a liberal, egalitarian, federal, multicultural, conserver society. Within it, of course can be found a plethora of different ideals which vary in their details. The broad Canadian ideal emphasizes universal health care and social welfare from the cradle to the grave. After a generation however, this extravagant vision may be coming to an end because recent realities have found it too costly.

In spite or because of that, many Quebecois hope for a sovereign Quebec, outside the Canadian federation. This kind of political separatism recognizes the necessities of economic associationism but is adamant in its emphasis of cultural or linguistic protectionism. In this sense, it seeks the best of both worlds: political independence with economic interdependence.

Of course, it is at best very doubtful, if this ideal can produce more than a temporary euphoria. As many new nation-states have found out, even if successful,

encapsulating a local culture in this world of increasing integration risks marginalizing it from the mainstream of global history. Increasingly therefore, apart from their details most future images range somewhere between wishful thinking of cultural revival or multicultural assimilation, that is to say foreseeing some continuity with some change.

The nationalist dream that a culture must also be a state in order to prevail and prosper has been realized in many instances around the world, raising the number of states from fifty to two hundred in the last fifty years. So this hopeful future image of Quebec might yet succeed by the turn of the century.

One nation's hope, however, is another nation's hate, so the ideal of Quebec nationalism is the fear of the rest of Canada. Canada's national identity cannot survive without Quebec, because it is primarily its French heritage that distinguishes Canada from the rest of America. So here we have a perfect example of the dilemma inherent in two mutually exclusive ideals which only a political compromise or dialectical synthesis can resolve.

3.2 Pessimistic Hates

The preceding example shows that in opposition to hopeful dreams, there are also fearful nightmares ranging from the traumatic to the catastrophic. Prophecies of impending doom have figured large in Western history, especially in millennial or depressing times, such as the Middle Ages or now.

People always search for prophets to reveal the future. For that reason, classic texts of millennial tradition, such as the Biblical Revelation and Book of Daniel, Cassandra's calamities or Pandora's pandemics and from Sibyl to Nostradamus, dark warnings abound through the ages. Equally popular are doomsayers, like Savonarola in 15th century Florence, who organized the original "bonfire of the vanities" to prepare people for the second coming, and modern nihilists who want to drop-out or blow-up a corrupt world.

Since the successes of the Industrial Revolution in the North-Western countries, there has risen a popular myth that science and technology could solve all social problems and make many things possible. On that assumption, a lot of exaggerated expectations exploded around the world. Recently, however, this mythical bubble has burst in many ways and people have become much more pessimistic.

Ironically, the higher the level of technological development, the higher the doubts about science. Americans began to show a deep skepticism about their nation's capacity for unlimited economic growth, as well as the benefits of such growth. Thus they are moving from trying to increase their standard of living to at least improve their quality of life. The optimistic producer-consumer society is now evolving into the more realistic service-conserver community.

Pessimistic visions are better developed than optimistic ones because happy people do not bother so much with the future. Ironically, the higher the development level the lower the optimism and the more widespread the general feeling of hopelessness and helplessness. The higher cultural development is, the more unemployment, pathology, and criminality figure in its future images. So, many people in developed nations feel that they have reached the ceiling and will not get better. Even the young show a more

pessimistic, while the old exhibit a more skeptic attitude. The general thinking is that that they have exhausted their social programs and have nowhere to go. Thus the First World not only suffers from future shock but also future fatigue and development disillusionment.

It seems that mankind made for itself a world where the most threatening events are beyond the individual's capability to influence, let alone control. Capabilities and motivations often contradict each other. Even powerful people expect change, but are not hopeful or helpful about it. Contrariwise, powerless people hope for change, but do not initiate or expect much of it.

Needless to say, certain images of the future are more improbable than others. The visions of nomadic cultures, for example, presuppose sparsely populated and extensive land areas which are hard to come by in this age of increasing density and depleting resources. Romantic visions of a bygone era when many small bands roamed the pristine NA plains are as unrealistic as science fiction utopias of interplanetary civilizations.

Unfortunately, most future images bifurcate in two opposite directions: either progressing towards a planetary supracultural homogenization or regressing to a lapidary infracultural conservation. Carried to extremes, this alternative results in cultural schizophrenia in the former case and cultural isolation in the latter. Some beleaguered cultures therefore fall into one trap in order to avoid the other.

A good illustration of such unenviable choice is that of Quebec. Although the Quebecois may not be much more than francophone Americans, many perceive themselves belonging to a distinct society threatened with extinction. It is quite true that decreasing natality has declined the proportion of francophones in Canada, while increasing travel and communication have spread American culture into their homes. As a result, Quebec is seen as a shrinking outpost of European civilization engulfed by the barbaric English language and aggressive American culture.

Similarly, many Canadians and Mexicans feel the same about their position *vis a vis* the US. The dominant American culture overwhelms the smaller and weaker ones, not only in this continent but throughout the world. Even though the US is considered as a decadent society, it is still feared as a culture exporter. So the worst case scenario for many people is losing their proper roots and becoming Americanized. So, like endangered species or recessive memes, threatened cultures react defensively and often paranoically to protect and preserve their customs and traditions.

Such pessimistic mentality and nationalistic insecurity force small and weak societies into a retrogressive cultural isolationism and populist unilateralism. Many local cultures and vocal counter-cultures, thus react and retreat, fighting a rearguard action in the face of the inexorable onslaught of an emerging global super culture which is unfortunately identified with Americanism.

But all is not doom and gloom, the overall picture is one of concern, not despair. Given that the world is a better place having many cultures flourishing rather than a single one, as well as the everlasting human love for local exclusivity and particularity; the fears of multiculturalism are grossly exaggerated. So although some future visions can only imagine the new world arising out of the ashes of the old, while others see it only as an isolated utopia, alone and apart from global development; it is more than likely that the

future will evolve somewhere between these extremes.

3.3. Realistic Copes

The inevitable but inscrutable paradigm shift to post-modernity has thrown many people and cultures into a future shock. As the gap between man's mental and moral development widens, we risk being overtaken by the old demons of hoary habits and the new realities of revolutionary technology. Only in this decade, for instance, the world political system has flip-flopped from high to low risk and stability. This revolution alone has outdated our old institutions which can no longer cope.

In between the extreme hopes and hates of some people lies the most likely outcome under normal circumstances. Unless we win a lottery or suffer a catastrophe, reality will probably be a changed continuation or punctuated equilibrium. In that case, the most realistic scenario lies between the best and worst, keeping in mind that short-run pessimism does not negate long-run optimism or vice versa.

Usually, public institutions try to keep that realistic balance. Since they are supposed to promote economic prosperity and protect cultural identity, governments must find an optimal policy among many opposing interests and images. Consequently, realism is the most responsible public policy, which we are going to adopt in painting our alternative images.

Below are briefly traced the most realistic main-line schemata or surprise-free scenarios which anticipate the probable eventualities by projecting present trends into the future. These are all conditional forecasts, assuming the continuation of established trends for the next generation, if no significant unforeseen alteration or intervention forces them to alter their course.

Beginning with demographic projections, according to the US Census Bureau, by mid 21st century, Caucasians will decline from 75% in 1990 to 55%, while Hispanics will double from 10% to 20%, Asians will triple from 3% to 10%, Africans from 10% to 15%, with Natives remaining around 1%. These cultural shifts will make the US and Canada much more multicultural.

We cannot here go into details, but the various cultures of NA will be obviously affected from all these developments in different degrees. Yet, cultural differences of the future are in the details, not in their general interest and concern, because people think that their well-being depends more on their region or country than the world as a whole.

Furthermore, NA is becoming an even more divided society in terms of wealth, health, and strength, as nation-states lose power to infranational, transnational and supranational bodies. Not only will the global divide sharpen in the next century, but the third world will intermingle with the first in the same NA continent. So although the continent will become more integrated, it will also become more mosaic and diverse with great gaps between rich and poor.

Focusing more on Canada and its Quebec problem, the next decade will witness the realization of one of three alternative scenarios:

- Continued normal multicultural evolution, without formal political change;
- Negotiated reconstitution of Canada as a looser more decentralized confederation;

-Premeditated unilateral declaration of independence by Quebec leaving Canada.

The first two most likely options will not affect local cultures immediately or directly, thus allowing normal long-range cultural evolution take its course. The most dangerous and dramatic situation will arise if the third possibility does happen, because such eventuality is fraught with political conflict and even military violence.

This eventuality is particularly acute with the ensuing border dispute between Canada and Quebec. There are rumblings that the province itself will be sub-divided if it separates. Many non-francophone Montrealers and native peoples threaten the partition of the territory in case of Quebec's separation. In that case, both Canada and Quebec will split up in various regions and factions.

Separated by Quebec in the middle, Canada cannot last as a single country. Once they are cut-off from the rest of Canada, the four Maritime provinces will eventually and inevitable fall into the arms of the US in order to survive economically. Since, they are already part of New England culture, such development will not affect the way of life of most people in the Eastern seaboard.

Similarly, the West coast at the other side of the continent has more North-South cultural similarities and economic interests that their political East-West ties. So the stump of the Rest-of-Canada will eventually disintegrate into its natural components whose viability depends on the US much more than on each other.

This scenario not only spells the demise of Canada, but eventually of Quebec. As the only remaining independent country in the midst of an enlarged US, Quebec could be sovereign in name only. The best it can expect is the satellite status of a banana, or more accurately a hydro-republic, existing by the grace of its US patron.

Under the circumstances, the French culture and language in NA will either be reduced to a folkloric status as in Louisiana or continue its besieged mentality and garrison state subsistence. The heavy economic and social costs of cultural survival can then be estimated, and it will be up to the people of Quebec whether they will want to continue paying them against all odds.

Whether this particular scenario will come to pass or not is not for us to say here. Social forecasting is a risky business and should not be undertaken lightly. But, being a necessary and unavoidable exercise, it must be done as best we can.*

For that we need future images as much as past memories, a few of which were provided in this chapter. More important however was their systematic distinction and description which shows the range and consequences of available choices. In as much as cultures can choose their future images, this classification and clarification should have been usefull. Consequently, we now close this last task of our study with the following conclusion.

* P. J. Arnopoulos: "Toward a Model Procedure for Social Forecasting."
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Conclusion

In this study, we have tried to accomplish more than merely present some images of the future from the point of view of a NA culture. Although such images are important, especially to their beholders, they are not enough for those who want to understand them in a deeper sense. To do so, it is necessary to dig for their roots and taste their fruits. This we have done here by investigating their antecedents and consequents, as well as analyzing their content and context.

Without repeating the discussions throughout the paper, we demonstrated that as a creature of nature and culture, humanity is also the creator of cultural images, some of which describe or prescribe the future. Visions of the future then are products of individual and collective imagination, emerging out of the remembrance of things past and their continuance to events present.

In that sense, the future itself is a cultural image incorporating the values, traditions, desires, expectations and ambitions of humans in their social and natural environment. These images serve as self-fulfilling or denying prophecies and are thus incentives for people to seek or avoid certain things, thereby planning their course of action.

Of course, men are not altogether masters of their fate, so their dreams are often smashed in the shoals of hard reality. Human intentions count for little in this world of fate and chance. For this reason, it is important to hold a steady course between the Scylla of unbounded optimism and the Charybdis of unmitigated pessimism.

From the above discussion, it seems that there is no generally acceptable image of the future by any culture in NA or anywhere else for that matter. Natural constraints and cultural specifics, along with limited human intelligence and a circumscribed egocentric outlook, make most future images less than inspiring.

Mental and moral weaknesses lead people to misinterpret the lessons of history, misjudge current affairs and hence misimagine the future. Since many social problems are inherent in human cupidity and stupidity, selfishness or laziness, their imagined solutions are often only self-serving daydreams or utopian wishful thoughts.

These problems of the human condition reflect the basic contradiction between the various visions represented by the global common evolution of nature and our local distinct development of culture. Consequently, the values of natural human rights do not coincide with those of national membership privileges. Thus we have conflicting future images of both inclusive societies and exclusive communities, presenting us with dilemmas which we cannot resolve.

Our images of the future then need to be revisited, reviewed, and reformed. They should not only be better formulated but accompanied by political will and social policy. Valid visions not only include their contextual perspective but also the strategy for their implementation. Only then will these future images be effective in getting people to mend their ways and not merely change their minds.

Neither reason, nor fantasy alone is enough to imagine the future. Scientific forecasting assumes that *prevoir est pouvoir*, an overconfidence into which many futurists fall. The trouble is that when we look for patterns and projections, we find them where they do not necessarily exist. Such pattern paranoia may afflict the best of future images, so this task should be undertaken with great care and humility.

Moreover, explaining something does not mean controlling it. Although humanity is somewhat responsible for sociocultural evolution, that does not mean it either understands or controls it. Social institutions try to manage public affairs and direct cultural change, but are quite limited in doing so. In spite of things changing rapidly and dramatically, the most governments can do is marginally affect the direction of change.

Since the technology-pull is complementary to population-push for social change, our future options come down to either fewer and richer or more and poorer people. So if demography and technology could be strictly controlled, so could the rate of cultural evolution. Such control, however, can only be sporadic and chaotic.

Nevertheless, our greatest challenge still remains to try and influence even a bit the transition to a post-industrial economy and multiracial culture. This requires both innovation and originality, with due consideration of cultural identity and particularity. Balancing individual creativity and collective responsibility is the key to social success, and a dialogue among cultures is the best way to find a new vision of the future.*

Supplementing if not supplanting the traditional quantitative capital, human, and natural resources, the modern qualitative organization, motivation, innovation and education, have now become the principal generators of social progress. So it is not merely economic efficiency and political effectiveness that make for development, but general cultural health and social wealth.

Resistance to change, although natural, has proven to be evolutionarily maladaptive. In the process of intersocietal selection fitness, only few rigid systems have survived to the present. So the more flexible and nimble societies are, the better they fare in an ever changing world.

If global culture in general and American culture in particular, prove malleable enough, they may adequately and rapidly adapt in these revolutionary times. Under the circumstances, the right images can play an important role in shaping the future closer to human desires, without forgetting inescapable necessities. Hopefully, this study contributed to that realism.

10,000 Words

* P. J. Arnopoulos: "Cosmopolitan Universalism: Prolegomena to a Future Ideology." Dialogue & Humanism. No. 2-3 (1994).

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