

# Applying Social Artistry to Decentralized Governance for Human Development

Jean Houston, Ph. D.

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The aim of Social Artistry is to implement the current transition towards creative change and growth in many arenas and in ways that will encourage and prepare stakeholders to more effectively accomplish the goals of decentralization. Its goal is to provide significant shifts through a variety of trainings: crosscultural, human and cultural development, education in human and cultural development, education in human and cultural capacities and potentials and other activating factors aimed at directing both individual and social capital toward the creation of better societies and peoples. Social Artistry also aims at providing strategies that can work in an interconnected world, training effective leaders who can productively address interconnected public problems, given present day conditions of reduced fiscal resources, lack of consensus on options, and the necessary involvement of diverse, independent-minded stakeholders. The governing intention of this paper is to introduce these concepts of Social Artistry as a means of bringing training and application together in effective new ways. The goal is to assist, through leadership training models, in the fulfillment of plans for decentralized governance to achieve human development.

NOTE: The views in this paper are those of the authors and do not reflect the official views of UNDP. For further information or to provide feedback, please contact: Robertson.work@undp.org or JeanH@aol.com

## Executive Summary

In the present chaos of the world and its seemingly destructive turnings, there are yet complementary possibilities. Recognizing that chaos can be indicative of a rapid and widening exchange of information, as in the scientist Ilya Prigogine's theory of dissipative structures, it is possible to see that such vigorous challenge and change may be creating a whole system transition, in which everything shifts to a whole new form. Three forces are working in the world and choosing the evolutionary momentum (rather than the destructive possibilities) of these forces can lead to a new understanding of human and societal development within holistic and humane parameters.

The forces at work may be described as the Re-patterning of Human Nature, the Re-genesis of Human Society, and the Breakdown of the Membrane. The programme of intensive Training in Social Artistry, utilizes these three forces as guiding principles. The Social Artist

is one who brings the focus, attentiveness, skills and individual genius of the artist, exercising them all with the aplomb of a great artist, to serve human beings. The Social Artist's medium is thus human development, and his/her goal, that of providing an enhancement of life at every level of society, with particular attention to the citizens of the world living in developing countries whose access to such enhancement is at present sorely limited.

Social Artistry training can be especially useful as a support to meeting the Millennium Development Goals, within programmes of decentralized governance. One goal of Social Artistry is to introduce participants to the useful model of shared governance, and to work actively to create plans and projects that serve in the re-genesis of human society.

The Social Artist is trained to be aware of four levels of understanding and consciousness, and to consider each of them when approaching any situation or condition. These levels include: the physical/sensory realm, the psychological/historic realm, the mythic/symbolic realm, and the integral/unitive realm.

Embracing the work of Re-patterning Human Nature, the Social Artist learns to think like a planetary citizen; to appreciate cultures and cultural stories and myths, while searching for the emergence of a new story, a new myth; to offer new models and paradigms of organization; to exhibit the joy of being a lifelong learner; to bring laughter and delight to learning and change; to serve as a healer of people and societies; to balance her/his life so that contemplation and meditation informs each action, and so that inward life and outward expression are complementary.

To illustrate the force of the Breakdown of the Membrane, or old boundaries of separation, an Entry Level Model is provided from work in New Zealand. The boundary between government officials, and civil society individuals; that between peoples with disparate interests and agendas; that between indigenous people and Anglo-European citizens; between an island nation and the rest of the world was acknowledged as thinning and porous. And from their meeting, within a series of trainings in Social Artistry, countless new programmes and projects have evolved.

The work of Re-genesis of Human Society is outlined in a description of the creation of a culture of Politeia, in which an active, engaged and informed citizenry creates and maintains its community and mutually fulfills societal goals. What is needed is a Politeia of Participation for all members of any community; a Politeia of Rediscovery, to rekindle generosity and the powers of compassion and high service; a Politeia of Creativity, utilizing the artistic process to invigorate imagination and vision; a Politeia of Healing, to encourage cooperation and understanding, even among former enemies; a Politeia of Celebration, using the performance arts and ritual enactments to enhance the community; a Politeia of Hope, imbuing all citizens with belief in their own infinite creativity and power.

Also included is a brief account of the development of the Social Artistry programme, examples of work in several countries, and Social Artistry projects presently being fulfilled.

Appendices describe proposed training program for young leaders from around the world.

## **Applying Social Artistry to Decentralized Governance for Human Development**

### I. Introduction and Context

We are living in a time of whole system transition, a condition of interactive change that affects every aspect of life, as we know it. On the shadow side, this includes the many problems we currently face: global warming and other changes in climate, disastrous ups and downs in our interlinked financial markets, worldwide unemployment, more than a billion people living in deprivation, disappearing soils and forests, the angers and actions of the disenfranchised, oppressive governments and corporations, a stratified economic system that rewards the most greedy among us.

In spite of the negative factors that threaten to destroy us, there is occurring an emergence of patterns of possibility never before available to the Earth's people as a whole. It is true that virtually every known institution and way of being is currently in a state of deconstruction and breakdown. And yet, given the scientific, technological, cross-cultural, and social tools at hand, and given, too, that humanity is searching as never before to cooperate in so many areas, it seems feasible that we may be ready to integrate inner and outer dimensions of life in ways which infuse new depth into human development and new purpose and responsibility into social transformation.

Three powerful forces that have risen in this time are propelling the current state of collective potential growth. They work in parallel and fuel one another. These forces may be described as

- The re-patterning of human nature.
- The re-genesis of society.
- The breakdown of the membrane between peoples, cultures, nations.

Understanding, defining and working with these forces and their evolutionary potential provide the framework and foundation for the leadership training work of Social Artistry.

**I. The Re-patterning of Human Nature.** This critical force pushes us to discover and utilize dormant or little used capacities and come to a more comprehensive understanding of our place and responsibilities in this world and time. Capacities that previously belonged to the elite few must become the province and requirement of the many if we are to survive the next hundred years. We must each learn to tap into the creative workshops of the mind to solve problems and to bring forth art, poetry, and invention. We must discover ways to feel at home with anyone, anywhere, at any time. Most people, given opportunity and training, can learn to think, feel, and know in new ways; function in their bodies with better use and awareness; become more creative, more imaginative, and aspire within realistic limits to a much larger awareness, one that is better equipped to deal with the complex challenges of life. It is true, as Albert Einstein reminded us, we cannot solve problems from the same level

of consciousness that created them. Therefore, the consciousness that can find solutions to such problems needs models of its own matured possibilities; visions of what the possible human can be and do that go beyond the limitations of academic excellence or dogged persistence to attain certain goals.

**2. The Re-genesis of Society.** As the self is repatterned, the ways we relate to one another are necessarily shifting as well, toward the discovery of new styles of interpersonal connection and new ways of being in community, within a global society. The movement seems to be from the egocentric and the ethnocentric to the worldcentric—a fundamental change in the nature of civilization, compelling a passage beyond the mindset and institutions of millennia. Critical to this reformation is a true partnership society, in which women join men in the full social agenda. Since women tend to emphasize process over product, to understand the power of being as well as doing, deepening rather than end-goaling, it is inevitable that as a result of this partnership, linear, sequential solutions will evolve to the knowing that comes from seeing things in whole constellations rather than as discrete facts. The consciousness engendered by this comprehensive vision is well adapted to orchestrating the multiple variables involved in living comfortable within the multicultural realities of the modern world. It raises hope for forgiveness and healing between and among nations and ethnic groups. Essential to this matured consciousness is moral and ethical growth toward empathy between individuals and nations that honors the golden rule of human interchange.

The re-genesis of social forms also asks that governments at every level begin to shift the emphasis on social engineering designed to fix specific problems and instead embrace the understanding of the world as an ecology, a complex adaptive system in which global awareness is applied to local concerns. Here again, we need models of a new order of relationships and their place in a possible society, one in which male and female, science and spirituality, economics and ecology, civic participation and personal growth come together in an integral and interdependent matrix for the benefit of all.

**3. The Breakdown of the Membrane.** In the places where our world truly operates interdependently, old barriers are slowly dissolving, along with the ancient fears that sustained them. Technologies of instant communication and exchange of information can enable people to join minds and hearts in mutual discovery and creation. In such a world, more and more people are invited to accept the benefits of cultural diversity and to adopt a more inclusive worldview, inspiring human nature with renewed hope and caring. What began in migrations and global economics is fast becoming a worldwide network of individuals and institutions quickened by the desire to create a new social paradigm, in which humanity and the Earth are each enhanced within the context of a collective destiny. As the membrane of old forms breaks down, a more complex and inclusive global organism comes into being. As living cells within this new organism, we are rescaled to earth-wide proportions in our responsiveness--and our responsibilities.

The state of knowledge, which can bring these working forces into realization, is very high, while the state of application still leaves much to be desired. The governing intention of this paper is to introduce these concepts of Social Artistry as a means of bringing knowledge, training and application together in effective new ways. The goal is to assist, through leadership training models, in the fulfillment of plans for decentralized governance to achieve human development.

## **II. Goals of Social Artistry in Alignment with UNDP Goals**

The aim of Social Artistry is to implement the current transition towards creative change and growth in many arenas and in ways that will encourage and prepare stakeholders to more effectively accomplish the goals of decentralization. Its goal is to provide significant shifts through a variety of trainings: cross-cultural, human and cultural development, education in human and cultural capacities and potentials, and other activating factors aimed at directing both individuals and social capital toward the creation of better societies and peoples. Social Artistry also aims at providing strategies that can work in an interconnected world, training effective leaders who can productively address interconnected public problems, given present-day conditions of reduced fiscal resources, lack of consensus on options, and the necessary involvement of diverse, independent-minded stakeholders.

Social Artistry can prove to be an effective tool in realizing the Millennium Development Goals, which are aimed at providing critical and sustainable solutions to be achieved by 2015 from their 1990 level. These include reducing poverty and hunger by half, under-five mortality by two-thirds and maternal mortality by three-quarters, reversing the spread of HIV/AIDS and halving the proportion of people without access to safe water. Critical to these goals is the aim of achieving universal education and gender equality.

In order to achieve such worthy goals, a new paradigm of sustainable human development is required. It should be one that supports human development in its most primary form: the development of capacities, skills and potentials that activate both individuals and groups in ways that enhance their societal choices and commitments, liberate their inventiveness and raise levels of esteem and cooperation essential to carrying out the goals. The United Nations Development Programme itself describes sustainable human development as “expanding the choices for all people in society. This means that men and women particularly the poor and vulnerable are at the center of the development process. It also means the protection of life opportunities for future generations and the natural systems on which life depends. This makes the central purpose of development the creation of an enabling environment in which all can enjoy long, healthy and creative lives. (UNDP 1997)”

## **III. Creating the Enabling Environment**

The key term here, the “central purpose of development” is “the enabling environ-

ment” which requires effective partnerships between the civil society, the government (both central and decentralized), and the private sector. Such an environment implies the need to enable individuals at all levels of society to gather the will, courage, initiative and energy, through training and skill development, to accomplish these goals. For too long and for too many, governance has been seen as residing in central authority with the result that many have become unavailable and/or uninterested in the governance of forms outside of their immediate control. Too many have lost or never developed the capacities for decentralized governance, itself a necessary part of achieving development initiatives. This sense of apathy and indifference, along with the loss of aptitude, has resulted in the continuance of top-down governance and its consequent failures.

Encouraging a culture of participatory democracy requires that the said participants be capable of complex and coherent decision-making. This requires greater use of their inherent potential in consonance with greater dedication to improving the social conditions of their communities. If this is true of citizens, how much truer still of leaders and other facilitators of social change.

#### **IV. The Leadership Dilemma**

Thirty years of work throughout the world with leaders in the fields of industry and government, education and health has convinced me that too many of the problems in societies today stem from leadership that is ill prepared to deal with present complexity. This is not just a matter of inadequate training in the realities of global change, but even more tragically, a lack of human resourcefulness, leaders living out of a field of awareness that limits their abilities to deal with their world. Too many leaders have been educated for a different time, a different world. Few are prepared for the task of dealing with the complexity and chaos of today when the usual formulas and stopgap solutions of an earlier era will not help. What is worse is the frequency with which leaders avoid working co-creatively with their constituents, thus continuing models of dependency and social apathy.

Worldwide, societies are crying for assistance in the transformation of their citizens, organizations, and institutions. The UNDP’s present emphasis on the need to create a sense of shared governance through decentralization provides a major step in addressing the deficient and rapidly devolving old leadership models. New ways of looking at leadership are required, as well as new methods of developing human beings eager to serve the concept of decentralized governance and fulfill the vitally important millennium goals.

#### **V. The Need for Social Artists**

We must begin to help people, citizens and leaders alike, to bring new mind to bear upon social change. In this way it is hoped that we can rise to the challenge of our times and ferry ourselves across the dangerous abyss that separates a dying era from a ‘borning’ one.

The work of Social Artistry is evolving and open-ended, striving to provide a dynamic balance between inner understanding and outward expression. It addresses individual and group training in human capacities on four levels – physical/sensory, psychological/historic, symbolic/mythic and integral/unitive. Each issue, problem or goal is similarly addressed through all four levels allowing for greater depth and complexity.

### **Four Levels of the Social Artist's Awareness**

**Physical/Sensory:** The Social Artist takes note of information available through the senses, and through the physical body, for him/herself and for others, asking such questions as: What are our physical surroundings like and what do they tell me? How are people gathered and in what configurations? What is people's behavior in this situation? What is needed that can enhance physical/sensory well being? Training begins with awakening and assessing sensory/physical data, and extends to include honing the imagination and visionary capacities. Outcomes include vigorous increases in energy, commitment, focus and enjoyment.

**Psychological/Historic:** It is vital for Social Artists to understand their own psychological histories, to be aware of the ways their lives, responses, and emotions have been formed through cultural and familial environments, and to be capable of empathizing with other humans, also shaped by historic and psychological pressures. In training the Social Artist, psychological deepening is provided through exploration of one's personal and cultural history, explication of current brain and mind research, introduction to various patterns of psychological behavior, as well as recent theories of human origins and DNA studies.

**Mythic/Symbolic:** An adequately trained Social Artist possesses profound knowledge of the world's cultural stories, myths, religions and symbolic structures. He/She has traveled extensively in the realms described by Carl Gustav Jung as the collective unconscious, and is fascinated by, and deeply respectful of, other people's relation to their belief systems as well as their ability to transcend these cultural structures when they have become restrictive or damaging. The Social Artist is thus consistently seeking aspects of the new story, or a new understanding of old stories, that will encourage greater freedom, equality, health and flexibility for everyone.

**Integral/Unitive:** The Social Artist is trained to discern ways and means to integrate disparate elements of human life and society into meaningful wholeness, providing a sense of the reality of interconnectedness and renewed dedication to creative expression and sustenance of this web of connections.

Social Artistry's goal is to reveal people capable of working adroitly with the demands of shared governance, at personal, community, city, state, national and international levels.

The Social Artist is one who brings the focus, perspective, skill training, tireless dedication and fresh vision of the artist to the social arena. Thus the Social Artist's medium is the human community. She or he seeks innovative solutions to troubling conditions, is a lifelong learner ever hungry for insights, skills, imaginative ideas and deeper understanding of present-day issues.

## **VI. Qualities and Characteristics of the Social Artist**

What follows are other qualities and capacities that characterize the Social Artist and inform his or her training.

### **A Planetary Citizen; comfortable in many cultures.**

The Social Artist is trained to move comfortably between cultures, capable of understanding and honoring another's belief systems, cultural styles, tribal and national stories and rituals. Social Artists learn to be informed on world issues in the context of different cultures, and not just from the point of view of a particular nation or policy. In terms of human development this requires development of high sensory acuity and a polyphrenic nature, plus a willingness to keep plunging deeper in order to tease out the elements of the emerging story. She learns to see trends and the emergence of new patterns from apparent chaos. He learns to suspend particular and narrow-focused points of view. For example, Jan Sanders, a UNDP consultant spent many of her formative years in the Institute of Cultural Affairs. (She has also been my student in human development and Social Artistry.) Jan's particular focus has been the story and conditions of the aboriginal people of Eastern Canada whom she has empowered through many forms and sessions of local and provincial governance.

During Jan's recent assignments, working to control the spread of HIV/AIDS in war torn areas of Nepal, she uses her planetary understanding and her training in many cultural and mythic structures to guide discussion into areas that might prove extremely challenging to most Western women. Yet so fully has she immersed herself into that world that participants no longer see her as a representative of the West, but as one whom they can trust with their deepest pain and truths.

### **Provider of New Patterns**

The Social Artist acquires the tools to assist people to work in collaborative networks, moving beyond hierarchies and old power structures. She is committed to guiding others away from dominance by one economic group to the sense of everyone's equal investedness, sharing and partnership.

The Social Artist presents a model for a constantly learning society. Yet he is devoted to the preservation of vital elements in a people's culture, their shared genius, while consistently open to new ideas that can sustain and enrich an emerging planetary culture.

### **Seeker of the New Cultural Story**

The Social Artist thus learns to help members of the culture or organization to pre-

serve the genius of their culture even as they help move it into the new story. In countries with huge immigrations coming in to upset the given cultural styles, the new story has to do with appreciating the diversity and complexity of the 'new brew.' This means deep appreciation and cross cultural understanding of the stories of the representative cultures. Together they make for a whole new story. Often the larger picture or story will help the movement out of a static or embattled reality. This is where the consideration of an overarching story or new myth is of great importance. The Social Artist has the ability to hear all the stories and divine all the elements of the old story that will be needed to help create the new. The Social Artist understands the fact that the membrane is breaking down between cultures, between worlds, between old and new ways of being. In the past, migrations and diffusions allowed for gradual changes and exchanges between cultures and identities. Now nothing is gradual; in certain regions of the world we are watching a rapidly unfolding scene of strange multi-cultural mitosis and its even stranger spawn. Cultures and people living thousands of miles apart, gestating in the womb of preparatory time for thousands of years, are suddenly cheek by jowl, attending the same schools, working in the same businesses, sharing the same space and, inevitably, bleeding into each other, sometimes in fury, sometimes in friendship. In the force of the meeting, a new genesis is occurring, occasionally a melding of genes, but more often, a mingling of previously divided worlds which, thrown together, undergo a sea change into something rich and strange.

What results is not merely a hyphenated amalgam, Afro-Asian rock music or Chicano-cyberpunk art, but rather hybrid sounds for hybrid selves, a malleable, syncretic fusion that is generating its own cultural matrix. For human beings, the complexity of this not-yet-definable culture is providing sufficient stimulus to call forth latencies in the human brain-mind system that were never needed before, like ancient bacteria learned to cope with the culture of deadly oxygen by finding a new way to breathe or, closer to home, the ways in which children absorb the mysteries of computer wizardry with ease while their parents struggle to master the basics. This 'breakdown of the membrane' being described is not merely cultural fusion; it is the joining together of geographies of the mind and body that have never touched before, weaving synapses and sensibilities to create people who are fused into the world mind with its unlimited treasures, its empowering capacities. The Social Artist is able to relate to this quickening charge of cultural mitosis and stays abreast of the ways in which it is occurring in food, in music, in literature and theater—in the very lineaments of culture where consciousness is remaking itself.

Several years ago, while working in New Zealand to help empower a more cohesive and coherent national sense within the society in the wake of the government's abdication as the godfather of all social programs (more about this visit later is in this paper) I found the country's situation both static and chaotic. One evening a group of Maori social activists recreated the story of the creation itself, as Maoris knew it, and also the awakening from

dormant flesh of the human female. Most of the Pakehas, the Anglos, had never heard it, and had certainly never seen it. It stirred something vivid and deep within each person present. An essence of Maori legend reveals the power of desire, focus, and the potent precise intense laser-like expenditure of energy required in order to bring something worthwhile to life. It was an immense teaching and ignited a pilot light within the participants yearning to create their new society. It wasn't the details of the myth that mattered; it was the emotional energy of creation that the Maoris were willing to tap into and reveal that both taught and inspired us. Suddenly we Anglos got a glimpse of the Mana, the Spiritual Power that is available to the Maoris in the rocks, soil, sea and air of their country, especially, in this case, as it informs the need for the feminine as an expression of its energy. Witnessing that story immediately enhanced the feeling of profound respect for the Maori and set up fervent commitments to help in preserving their culture. A new story became possible, with the potential for enhancing gender understanding: even the non-Maori women felt themselves changed because they saw a different origin story than the one most Westerners are accustomed to hearing. It also facilitated the creation of partnership programs between culturally diverse individuals and groups, and ensured greater mutual cooperation.

### **A Paradigm Pioneer**

As a paradigm pioneer, the Social Artist is able to see trends and the emergence of new patterns out of apparent chaos. He or she demonstrates that different times require a revolution in management styles. He or she is one who helps cultures and organizations move from patriarchy to partnership. The Social Artist shows even the most hierarchical and bureaucratically based organization that the inevitable movement in a world as complex as ours is to circular, truly democratic organizations. The successful new or renewed organizations will resemble a series of healthy, interconnected villages with shared leadership and all participants engaged in accomplishing goals that fulfill their lives as individuals and as members of a fully functioning community.

Often the most potent training for this partnership pattern comes from indigenous societies wherein members work together in a webbed network to find creative solutions. The understanding is that while each person is trained to know how to work a problem, he or she nevertheless seeks wiser answers with others through many means. This results in solutions that are not only consensual but also rich and playful.

### **Sharing the Joys of Lifelong Learning**

The Social Artist presents a model for a constantly learning society, consistently open to new ideas that can sustain and enrich an emerging planetary culture. He or she helps to create, wherever possible, new models of education. In offering this work around the world my associates and I have found it effective to work both intraculturally as well as transculturally. In our transcultural work we try to speak to that which is potential in every human being, regardless of local and cultural conditioning. We speak to the yearning that we find

in everyone, whether the one who yearns is peddling a rickshaw in Delhi or running an oil company in Dallas. Thus we try to offer liberating thought ways that launch understanding, motivation, and problem solving beyond constricting cultural or even instinctual preconditioning. In the Platonic dialogue, “The Meno,” Socrates demonstrates how an uneducated slave understands implicitly the nature of geometry and mathematics. Social Artists work from a similar point of view. Using story, art, metaphor to frame a complex array of processes and techniques designed to bring forth potentials latent in most people, the Social Artist proves that most humans have a natural access to such capacities as being able to think with many different frames of mind--visual, verbal, kinesthetic, interpersonal, subjective, intuitive, logical-mathematical. Other inherent capacities evoked by the Social Artist include improved physical use of the body, enhanced memory skills, easier writing, greater creative expression, wiser problem solving.

Given education and opportunity, most people are able to make remarkable improvements in their functioning and learn new ways of being in a relatively short period of time. If anything, this seems truer in developing countries where people are closer to their innate potentials because they have not been shuttered by constrictive educational methods and social objectives that inhibit and coerce their natural capacities into “approved” tracks and templates. The Social Artist recognizes that the possible human, fully developed and fully alive, is just beneath the surface crust of local culture, and with that awareness it is easy to envision the “possible society” as not far behind.

Bangladesh offers an example of this approach. Early in 1993, we responded to an invitation from UNICEF to work with over a thousand leaders in Bangladesh. In the world’s eyes, this is considered to be one of the most tragic of countries, a nation relentlessly afflicted by flooding, poverty, illness, and a sense of futility. But Bangladesh is also a world of metaphor, of high and low theater, of great poetry and music, and of a people deeply engaged by each of these activities. Talk to a rice farmer, and you find a poet. Get to know a sweeper of streets, and you discover a remarkable singer.

In the various meetings and seminars given in Bangladesh, we found that participants were remarkably responsive to these methods of learning new ways of being. Indeed, many seemed to have this knowledge as a kind of second nature and spoke of being affirmed in what they had long sensed that they already knew. It was as if the “imported” culture from the West (mainly England) had dropped a curtain over their more natural artistic thought process and modes of expression. One man said he often felt in his studies that he had been made to operate as if his hands were tied and his lips taped shut. Now he felt free for the first time, and his capacity for thought and ideas was blooming. Certainly the participants were filled with plans for how they could apply this kind of work in human capacities to their various endeavors in health, education, and social welfare and, with the regular help of a team of Social Artists, began setting up new curricula and training in methods calculated to celebrate

both the human potential and their culture rather than further calcify it.

To date, these innovations have affected tens of thousands of schools in Bangladesh, with special emphasis on educating and raising the status of women. I think of the Hindu women singing to us at the sweeper colony and especially of one young woman there with shining eyes. When asked what she wanted most in the world, she replied, “I want an education! I want to learn so many things and I want my children to learn. I want to spend my life learning.” In many other cultures this young woman would be highly educated and able to pursue a career in life-long learning. Why not in Bangladesh as well?

### **Explorer of the Cultural Story**

In multi-cultural and educational work we search to discover the main stories, myths, legends, and teaching tales that underlie the culture in which we are working. Then we utilize these myths and stories as the backdrop upon which to weave our work in human development. We find that people go farther, as well as faster and deeper, if their learning is keyed to an important story, especially if that story involves a key myth or mythic figure of their culture. Thus in India we have worked with “The Ramayana,” as well as the life of Gandhi; in Australia, Aboriginal creation myths (even with Anglo participants, because the stories are in the landscape of Australia and have been so for countless generations); in England with stories of Percival, Gawain and the Search for the Grail; in Taiwan, with the Tale of Monkey and the Way West. In Bangladesh we used the poetry of Tagore and other Bengali poets.

But myth, which in most cultures serves as support and matrix of a culture’s life, is itself always in transition. For example, the old myths and legends of Bangladesh tell of old Bengal and describe a land of prosperity and abundance, a river culture of countless helping sprites and forces. But in modern times, floods and drought have wrecked the sureties spoken of in the old stories. Immense population growth has destroyed the delicate ecology necessary to support a population predominantly dependent on nature. One feels instinctively that a new story is needed, for the old stories no longer speak to the current reality. And yet the old stories seem to rise again and again in fractal waves to give power and portent to the culture. What is needed, then, is for the stories to be re-mythologized and rewoven in the light of today’s necessities. This has always been the job of culture, to discover again and on a deeper level the meaning and relevancy of the once and future story, for without story, a culture becomes denatured and demoralized.

In Bangladesh, as in other countries, it may well be that the culture holds the key to the future. We met the culture everywhere we went in Bangladesh. It was always brimming to the surface and spilling over: the rector of the government training college chanting verse and quoting Tagore; women under the direction of Mrs. Monsur, a musician of the old style, singing ecstatic songs about the seasons, the countryside, and the Beloved; the theater that goes all the time and in many places.

Working with Myth Reveals:

- a people's grounding belief structures
- different patterns for living
- many teaching stories
- appropriate and possible actions to take
- points of interruption of the old story, and
- places to open to the new story

### **Evoker of Laughter and Life-advancement**

The Social Artist knows when to be a humorist, fool, a comedian. He or she can break out of the usual projections and expectations and present a world of the absurd. It is useful to know several jokes native to the society, as well as those comic stories that are universal. Encouraging a variety of exuberant expression, the Social Artist thus invites people to celebrate the new possibilities in creativity and all manner of life-affirming, life-advancing actions: music, songs, humor, dances, rituals, and myths of possibility to be played out, performed, and celebrated. Building community in the new millennium requires the creation of social theater to tell the New Story of a world in transition. A Social Artist in a small town in rural Georgia, where life had grown static and in a state of decline, with deep polarities and resentments between the black and white residents, took the disparate and dissenting stories of her area's local history and created a pageant called "Swamp Gravy" in which everyone in the community participated. This led to much more cooperation and friendliness between the various groups within the community, an increase in tourism, and an invitation to perform at the Lincoln Center in Washington, DC. This idea of community story/theatre has been replicated in inner-city Detroit and Chicago.

### **A New Kind of Healer**

Healing involves the mystery of change, of transformation, and of the incredibly fluid nature of our body, minds and psyches, and by extension, of our societies and cultures. We live in a world that is ripe for healing, and this is ultimately what motivates the Social Artist to take initiatives. What the Social Artist knows is that we are built for healing. The nature and process of healing, the varieties of the healing experience for both persons and societies seem to be the very condition of our humanity, the training ground for our social unfoldment. The critical issue here, and the one that distinguishes the great and inspired Social Artist, compared to the ordinary one, is the mystery of whether they regard healing as redemptive or creative, salvational or evolutionary. All manner of fundamentalisms are generally redemptive in their philosophies and liturgies. One is always trying to fix the old Adam. Or, if one cannot, then one assures one's followers of ultimate fixing on another plane after death. In our traditional medical technology and healing practice, the emphasis is almost entirely on the redemptive. This redemptive mode is carried over for jihad and defense, or even, pre-emptive strikes. One has to take on all manner of extreme measures to fix the fallen state.

The evolutional state works on an entirely different basis for life and for healing. There is somewhere to go, there is something to become. Even illness contains within itself the notion of deconstruction leading to a higher reconstruction, chaos leading to cosmos. Healing is wholing, the move from a limited condition felt in a most painful way through a process leading to the creation on a new level of a higher order of mind, emotions and physical being. Something changes; the wounds in the body or of the society are experienced as doorways to higher consciousness and more evolved forms.

The Social Artist respects the uniqueness of each person and/or society with whom she works. The Social Artist as healer is the one who helps people to ignite their deepest, and does not take the credit for the ignition, or otherwise people continue in old dependency models, willing to be led like sheep. The really good Social Artist/Healer is an evocateur who shows people how to access their inner wisdom and knowledge. It is a form of healing that moves beyond the polarities of left versus right, or us against them, and promotes cooperation, understanding, and networks of mutual aid. It involves above all the art of compassionate listening, a major training for the Social Artist.

Here are the words of a Social Artist, Cheravon West, who is an evolutionary healer deeply involved in Head Start and other education for minority peoples in inner city Chicago. She is a powerful African-American woman, knowing not only the genius of her own roots, but also willing to expand to other cultures for mythic allies and wisdom.

“There are those who are going to be with you, there are those who are not going to be with you. And if they are not with you, it’s not because they hate you, it’s not because of anything, any malice. It’s just because it’s what they’re going through, and you have to go on. And so you reach deeper. You reach deeper into yourself, and you touch that place that God has put there for you, that center. And you call upon your allies. And you have a realization that there is a healing that needs to happen. And the healing is an ancient healing...it comes from the center of the Earth. And it’s necessary, when you’ve been put in this position, to then facilitate that healing. It’s the healing of you, and it’s the healing of this planet, and it’s the healing of the universe. And it’s why we’re here. It’s why we’re on this planet.”

Storying is essential to the healing process. It allows the best of what we are to come together--reason and intuition, empathy and understanding. In work that I have done in mediation and reconciliation in Northern Ireland, in India, and between European and indigenous groups in other parts of the world, I find that despite elaborate process procedures created by the best think tanks, or the most lofty and deliberate political and academic councils, old fears and distrust remain. Signatures may be affixed to agreements, but hearts have not been changed. Without storying, contending parties may agree to abstract principles, but there is no real meeting, no genuine human exchange. My technique is to persuade people to tell their most significant and heartfelt stories to each other, to meet at the level of deep listening before they get down to the “business at hand.” When lives are shared, everything else

follows.

Once, in central India, under the auspices of the Institute of Cultural Affairs, I arranged a meeting between executives of the Tata Corporation, a large international Indian firm, and a group of people from a village who needed better jobs. The high caste executives could not believe that these low caste villagers had the capacity to move into more challenging work and would not even consider giving them a chance to try. “They are ignorant, superstitious people,” one formidable executive declared. “They are fit only to clean bathrooms and offices.” The villagers held a few preconceptions of their own: “Those Brahmins do not even think we’re human. How can we ever talk to them?” Here was not only prejudice, but also prejudice that had been rooted in the caste system for thousands of years. However, they agreed to a meeting in a temple complex.

After they had prayed together before a statue of Lakshmi, goddess of abundance, and the elephant-headed Ganesh, who removes obstacles, we began our conversation. It became a day of stories--often about the simple things in their lives, a favorite calf, a much-loved grandfather, what it is like to see the first greening shoots from the seeds one has planted, how difficult it is to learn to recite in Sanskrit. Somehow I managed to draw a parallel between the villager’s greening shoots and the seed syllables of the executive’s Sanskrit, and we all had a good laugh. One villager brought in his seven-year-old boy who was a genius on the drum known as the tabla and who beat out the most intricate rhythm, astonishing and delighting the executives. The little boy told us that he wanted to grow up to be like India’s greatest percussionist. Then I asked both villagers and executives, “When you were his age, what did you want to grow up to be? Not just in your profession but your dreams of how life could be?” As executives and villagers shared their childhood dreams, differences blurred and similarities became apparent. Certain things are universal--love, children, yearning. And as they spoke together of these things, they began to lose their sense of “otherness,” and only then could they begin to speak of how both groups valued work in keeping with human aspirations. The result was that the corporation set up a training facility so that these men and women could learn the skills to enable their getting the jobs they desired. But, just as important, they forged new understandings across caste, across differences. Certainly, when we see each other through the distorted lens of labels and stereotypes, we are in relationship with our expectations and not with life itself. Story opens the window of direct perception and lets the clear light of human connection stream through.

### **A Contemplative Creator**

The Social Artist is one who participates in the art of new creation. Herein, we are called to explore the mystery of the interface between engagement with external realities and embrace of the inner journey. Creative Social Artistry, is contemplative, a vital synergy between inner and outer realities necessary to transform organizations, institutions, paths of possibility, as well as visionary endeavors, and, in so doing, unleashing the human spirit of

both those who compose the endeavor and those who are served by it. It is an activity of extraordinary balance, a tension in repose. It is a space of exquisite silence and of extraordinary service. In such a state one has access to remarkable creative ideas, world-making patterns.

## **VII. Entry Level Consideration: A Possible Model from New Zealand**

The first comprehensive program in Social Artistry was developed and shared in five locations throughout New Zealand. The participants were self-selected leaders, coming from all levels of society, seeking to devise programs for their individual townships and areas. They fell into several discrete groupings: government officials at both local and national levels finding ways of moving from a welfare state to a more cohesive system of shared governance; people from the civil society seeking to address inequities in education and health care; business leaders wishing to find means of increasing and supporting the well-being and ongoing learning of their stakeholders; Maori elders and spokespersons striving to awaken deeper understanding of their conditions from their European neighbors, while preserving and sharing the profound richness of their culture.

As people spoke together, both in shared interest circles, and in circles across lines of interest, their first hurdle was to surpass the initial goal of getting a huge government or corporate grant in order to do the work they wanted. Facing the realization that neither the government nor the corporate society was capable of funding their work, participants soon realized that they needed on-going communities of teaching and learning in order to achieve both greater simplicity and greater effectiveness in their projects.

Many participants realized that this series of meetings marked the first occasion of their learning what others were doing, often in the same field, though in a different city or community. In many cases this streamlined their efforts, as a group interested in education was able to assist the health and healing sector with educational modes, while the discoveries of those working in health helped the educators see how essential good health is to education. Therefore offering opportunities to share information about individual and group projects, goals and discoveries across many interest lines becomes a primary necessity for sharing ethical responsibility and working toward solutions that will achieve the millennium goals and others that stretch beyond 2015.

After that initial meeting, it becomes a matter of training in the capacities to move across cultural lines; to become comfortable developing and implementing innovative strategies; to focus on larger, more inclusive, evolving patterns; to generate continuing enthusiasm for the group's endeavors; and to continue working, unfailingly, on one's own physical, psychological, cultural and spiritual condition.

Ongoing meetings with the avowed goal of learning and teaching more intensively are similarly required if burnout is to be prevented and new skills developed.

## **VIII. The Development of Social Artistry: A Personal Account**

Since the 1970's I have been engaged in researching, writing and teaching the need for the development of the Possible Human in order to create the Possible Society. My earliest focus was on the development of human capacities: physical, mental, emotional, cultural and spiritual, as I sought to enhance our beliefs about what humans could be. I realized early that we humans as social beings rely on others to model our possibilities, and to help grow these malleable enormous human brains. I wanted what so many colleagues working in similar fields wanted, a roadmap to a world that works for everyone.

In my schools and workshops I used everything to help train and enhance human capacities: history, mythology, philosophy, science, religion, biography. It was in my work with the life of Thomas Jefferson that I began to see the need for what I later came to call Social Artistry. Jefferson's capacious mind was able to turn itself to a multitude of interests: agronomy, philosophy, statecraft, music, and architecture. All these and more he thought about and wrote about and shared with his numerous correspondents. From them he learned more, as they also learned from him. He was also astute enough to learn from observation the workings of true democracy practiced by indigenous Americans.

While I was engaged in my Jefferson studies, and marveling at his high skills in both the fine arts and social change and development, many colleagues and students working in Organizational Development began reporting on the increasing failure of older paradigms of leadership and competition. This led me to begin applying some of Jefferson's practices to the work of human individuals and human organizations. These include his Committees of Correspondence, his leisurely observations of the seasons and the crops, his masterful inventiveness, his ability to see a need and devise a means to fill it, his insatiable curiosity and hunger for learning. Above all, I saw that his skills as an artist were essential to the successful application of his skills as a societal pioneer.

I began to notice that Jefferson had many successors in today's world, people engaged in wrestling with some of the same problems with which he wrestled, and some with problems he may never have dreamed of. These considerations included the great questions of creating a social order that serves life instead of economics, of evolving a world that we would want our children and grandchildren to inherit.

The work these new Jeffersonian pioneers were doing deserved to be recognized as a vital social movement. Indeed, the economist David Korten described them in his book, *The Post-Corporate World*:

"These determined pioneers are creating new political parties and movements, strengthening their communities, deepening their spiritual practice, discovering the joyous liberation of voluntary simplicity, building networks of locally rooted businesses, certifying socially and environmentally responsible products, restoring forests and watersheds, promoting

public transportation and defining urban growth boundaries, serving as peacemakers between hostile groups, advancing organic agriculture, practicing holistic health, directing their investments to socially responsible businesses, organizing recycling campaigns, and demanding that trade agreements protect the rights of people and the environment.”

This ebullient movement forward has been in part slowed, if not blocked, by certain forces operating out of fear, control and violent intervention in the aftermath of September 2001. Nevertheless, signs of its healthy re-emergence are palpable, perhaps driven by the dismay of many citizens at their governments’ actions and reactions. Present-day conditions continue to demand new modes of thinking and application, as the stakes get higher.

## **IX. A Training Strategy for Decentralized Governance**

By fits and starts, and many additions from interested allies, the preliminary ideas of Social Artistry have evolved into a training strategy that embraces a form of decentralized governance that the ancient Greeks called *Politeia* in which an active, engaged and informed citizenry creates and maintains its community, and mutually fulfills its societal goals. The primary entry levels of the Practice of *Politeia* are individual neighborhoods, communities, organizations, though many such practices have spawned others to create the sense of *Politeia* at broader, more populous levels.

In our time, *Politeia* describes a kind of culture; one that futurist Paul Ray and others have called the integral culture. In their *Global Paradigm Report*, social scientists Duane Elgin and Colleen LeDrew describe such a culture as one that . . . seeks to integrate all the parts of our lives: inner and outer, masculine and feminine, personal and global, intuitive and rational, and many more. The hallmark of this integral culture is an intention to integrate—to consciously bridge differences, connect people, celebrate diversity, harmonize efforts, and discover higher common ground. With its inclusive and reconciling nature, an integral culture takes a whole-systems approach and offers hope in a world facing deep ecological, social, and spiritual crisis.”

Social Artists working in decentralized governance are trained to provide the model for a *Politeia* of Participation, offering means by which all members of a community are invited to enjoy the opportunity to influence the political and economic institutions that affect their lives, while simultaneously growing a sense of personal responsibility for fulfilling their needs and wants.

**A *Politeia* of Rediscovery** seeks to rekindle spontaneous generosity with special emphasis on honoring the capacities of others. Here the Social Artist is invited to notice the life patterns of things too often taken for granted and to pay attention to those concerns, which call her to high service. She seeks to encourage awareness of the human life stream, finding ways of equalize access to the best possibilities in: gestation, birth and parenting practices; nutrition, health and fitness; community life, education, arts, and sciences; as well as our ways of

growing old and dying well.

**A Politeia of Creativity** activates the artistic process as a means of recharging imagination and expressing communal dreams.

**A Politeia of Healing** seeks to move beyond polarities, competitiveness and confrontation into modes of cooperation and understanding, providing networks of mutual assistance through compassionate listening and dialogues of fairness to address critical issues and move beyond wounding and hatred.

**A Politeia of Celebration** encourages music, songs, humor, dances, ritual and mythic enactment to be played, performed and celebrated. Building community today requires a social theater to demonstrate the New Story of the world in transition.

**A Politeia of Hope** encourages the ever-refreshing attitudes of wonder and gratitude, recognizing the power of even devastating problems to reveal depths of compassion and connection that can astonish us into remembering what is possible. Within the Politeia of Hope, the Social Artist is trained to never give up, to maintain belief in the infinite creativity of the human being, and to persist in taking positive action no matter what the forces of entropy and negation may proclaim.

In all of these ways and more the world server as Social Artist becomes servant, friend, and co-participant in the great game of life, turning followers into world servers and creating the field in which one can abandon oneself to the strength of others. The Social Artist helps remove the obstacles that prevent people from being all they can be, thereby enabling them to realize their potential. The world-server as Social Artist is a listener and listens to the ideas, needs, aspirations and wishes of others and then helps them achieve it. To this end, participants of the present Social Artistry program, now in its second year, are invited to create and fulfill a specific project, one that will focus their human development while enabling social change.

While these participants have thus far been drawn from developed countries, their desire to work as world servers, with projects designed with such service in mind, provide models that can speak to the Millennium Development Goals, particularly those related to new forms of education, ecological sustainability, women's issues, and gender equality especially as it addresses poverty. Here are a few examples of such projects:

A woman in Hawaii, formerly highly successful in the business world, now heads an International Women's Information Network, "to support, educate, inform and offer assistance where needed through referrals to partnering agencies and service-oriented groups... Our primary goal is to empower women to empower themselves thus enabling them to not only take control of their own lives, but to become more active and effective partners as well as positive role models for their sons and daughters while playing a greater role in reshaping the future of our planet."

A woman seeking to address the needs of the disadvantaged in her poverty-ridden area

south of Los Angeles first invites person-to-person discussions with the family members of her constituency to discover their needs and desires. Then she creates a networking system to find people interested in mentoring and supporting family members to reach their goals.

A practicing attorney is weaving special skills in human development and civil rights activities together to engage in healing work in a developing country, representing people in negligence and civil rights actions.

A forest ranger, responsible for many acres of government wooded areas, begins a book on the sustaining power of the forests, even as she leads a shared governance group of professional forest managers, dedicated environmentalists and concerned citizens into a new understanding of one another's points of view, but also a willingness to educate themselves and to take action together to protect and preserve these areas.

An educator at Jamaica's Institute of Technology offers a campus program of training and experience in the arts for impoverished children from Kingston's inner city.

Others seek to create organizations to invite and educate young people into more active engagement in national and global as well as local policy. Another devises and begins a Mythic Theatre of the Global Mind. Another plans to create a documentary about water in the History of the World. Another sets about creating an intentional ecological community. Another plans a means, via the Internet where possible, of sharing women's stories. And yet another invites elders into neo-natal units to hold and cuddle at-risk infants.

## **X. Social Artistry Training for UNDP Staff**

It is my belief that Social Artistry can provide a new source of training and development for the staff and constituents of the UNDP. Some of this training has already begun, but in Appendix A and Appendix B, I offer for consideration a suggested roadmap for short and long-term training projects.

Social Artistry is a way for UNDP to equip its staff and country counterparts in a new style of leadership that could integrate and operationalize the human development, capacity development and results-based paradigms. It is distinguished from social engineering in a number of critical ways.

A schematic way to appreciate some of the distinctions in a Social Artistry approach is to contrast it with a social engineering approach, as in the following table:

Social Engineering	Social Artistry
- Mechanistic	- Organic
- Sectoral	- Integral
- Modernist	- Indigenous, traditional and modern
- Verbal-mathematical learning (visual, kinesthetic, verbal, interpersonal, subjective, intuitive, logical-mathematical)	- Multi-modal learning
- Outer reality	- Inner and outer reality

- High tech
- Linear
- Expert
- Socio-economic
- Statistical
- Technical inputs
- Top down
- Lecturing
- High touch
- Holistic
- Evocateur and facilitator
- Cultural  
(myth, rite, symbols, norms)
- Anecdotal
- Human capacities development
- Bottom up, participatory
- Creative listening

Social Artistry complements, encompasses and goes beyond social engineering for the sake of greater effectiveness and sustainability of results.

Ultimately, it is about all of us together co-creating the ever-unfolding reality, as stated so powerfully by Teilhard de Chardin:

“The outcome of the world, the gates of the future, the entry into the super-human, these are not thrown open to a few of the privileged nor to one chosen people to the exclusion of all others. They will open to an advance of all together, in a direction in which all together can join and find completion in a spiritual renovation of the earth.”

We are at that stage where the real work of humanity begins. This is the time and place where we partner Creation in the recreation of ourselves, in the restoration of the biosphere, and in assuming a new kind of culture--what we might term a culture of kindness, where we live daily life in such a way as to be re-connected, charged and intelligenced by the source of our reality in ways which liberate our inventiveness, and invite deep and realistic engagement in our world and in our tasks.

Now there is a quickening, an almost desperate sense of need for this possible human in us all to help create the possible society and the possible world if we are to survive our own personal and planetary odyssey. Today, community participation and the empowering of grass roots development are essential to transforming the quality of life in societies everywhere. It is through work at these local levels that hope is generated for new and effective ways of shared governance. As Kofi A. Annan has said, “Good governance is perhaps the single most important factor in eradicating poverty and promoting development.” It has been my experience that working in Social Artistry at both local and individual levels lays the foundation for good governance.

Annexes A and B (provided on request)