

**From Competition to Co-creation:
The Game Board Shift Into A New Paradigm
Part 1
By Andrea Harding**

Co-creation as a model of existence and social relationship can completely revolutionise the way human beings live, work and operate. In this sense, co-creation is capable of addressing the majority of our planetary issues in one full paradigm-shifting swoop. While there are many initiatives underway providing insights into how we might be able to evolve from a rivalrous game ('Game A') to an anti-rivalrous game ('Game B'), most of them fail to strike at the heart of the problem that gives rise to most of our entropic and rivalrous behaviours – the way human beings collectively approach the production and distribution of resources.

Co-creation, as an emerging social phenomenon, was popularised through the last two decades most prominently by futurist Barbara Marx Hubbard and the many peers she developed the frameworks with over the years. In essence their work reflects a worldview that understands that all life and creation is interconnected. As evolutionaries, artists, scientists, politicians, etc have begun to translate co-creation as a worldview into forms of social design, innovation and technologies, it has become evident that a regenerative all-win system will only really take root once our model of economics is fully aligned. The implication of this insight is that co-creation does not just evolve the rules of Game A, but starts from the get-go as an entirely different *game board*.

The Competitive Game Board

For the purpose of this article, we can think of a game board as the initial context for a form of social interaction setting out the aim of the game, player rules and player environment. Our current capitalistic system's game board is a hostile environment where human beings must compete for resources to succeed in the game. Over time, this environment has become more and more sophisticated and justified through the powerful ideology of free market capitalism, but beneath the facade of social progress and the promise of freedom the basic principles of Darwinian evolution and competition remains. Looking to nature we see that the consequences of this kind of competitive mindset inevitably lead to power hierarchies, violence, manipulation and deprivation. Our actions, motivated by this mindset, are no longer only affecting human beings but are also affecting other species and the planet at large as the natural world is forced to

compete with humanity for what it requires to survive and thrive.

The Jump to A Co-creative Game Board is a Systemic Shift

As the idea of co-creation continues to evolve into the design of new systems we are witnessing the emergence of an entirely new game board where the aim is to no longer compete for resources but to co-create and share them in a way that services the wealth (well-being and health) and expansion of *all life*. This foundational shift completely changes the whole game and all its rules and behaviours, from the very reason for playing the game right through to the way the players organise and define success. This game board shift is why co-creation, as an alternative to the competitive status quo, can only become established through a whole systems shift and the ability to make a clean break from current models and systems of operating.

This quantum leap from one systemic foundation to another is what makes co-creation a mysterious and somewhat unfathomable proposition for most people curious about understanding its potential. Rather like the story of the 'invisible ships' in the time of Columbus, where native people purportedly did not see ships on the horizon because they were such an alien phenomena, what we are speaking of here is so radically different to what we currently experience that people can't quite yet see what it is. People want to put co-creation in a pitch deck or a business plan or find investment strategies and open source roll out initiatives to give it a frame of reference or make it viable. Of course all these ways of wishing to understand and support co-creation's development are logical in the world we are in, and may even need to be explored, but they ultimately are an ill-fated attempt to graft a new game board onto an old one.

Discerning how co-creation differs foundationally from the worldview of entropic forms of competition is key to understanding its applications, models and approaches as well as its phenomenal potential to bring about an utterly tectonic shift within society. When we speak of a move from competition to co-creation this is not the same as the more gentle, and somewhat conflicted manoeuvres humanity makes when it shifts to collaborative or cooperative modes of operating *within* a competitive context but, rather, refers to a distinct, bold and profound exit out of competition altogether. Co-creation is as radical a transformation from competition as the metamorphosis of a caterpillar into a butterfly. Collaboration within the severe constraints of a competitive system is a poor sister to the infinite possibilities of co-creation. Co-creation is equivalent to the discovery of [psycho-technologies](#) like language or mathematics, providing the basis upon which a new state of being can take flight and shape an entire new world, society and experience.

Visions of A Birthing A Superorganism:

Understanding the New Game Board Is Key To Understanding the Co-creation Game

Only when we truly grock the foundational basis of co-creation and the essence of its game theory can we really begin to enter the world of its new languages, values, processes and vision with full curiosity and a credulous mindset. Because co-creation reinvents the game board upon which everything else is based, it immediately brings forth an entire new universe that can only be fully understood through the filter of a new worldview, not existing beliefs and assumptions. Everything in co-creation gets reinvented: definitions of success, models of organisation, models of resource distribution and value sharing, modes of being and interacting, investment processes, project management approaches and even the way we relate to time. Entering a co-creative reality is like teleporting into an episode of Star Trek; it's an entirely new world.

While people may think it too far out to hold the ambition to migrate to an entirely new game board, advocates of co-creation not only believe that there is no choice other than to make a courageous leap into a new way of being in the face of planetary extinction possibilities, but that co-creation is humanity's natural evolution into thriveability and a more syntropic and natural state of being.

Co-creation is inspired by studying the patterns of nature, self, and consciousness, and developing social systems that support the development of a healthy self-actualised human organism that is capable of interacting harmoniously with (and as) the whole. The name of the game becomes *being the best, unique, and healthy expression of yourself within the orchestra of life* and supporting the world around you to do the same so that the music we create together supports all. As the human being is supported to become a healthy, self-regenerative agent (meaning he or she is physically healthy, emotionally stable, living a balanced life and able to contribute creatively and productively in a way that is meaningful) he or she is able to cluster with other humans functioning similarly. Together these 'supercoherent' clusters of healthy agents become capable of sharing and circulating resources in a toroidal way – mirroring the way in which the human body itself distributes resources – rather than transacting with them in a linear and competitive fashion. This gives rise to social operating structures that are organism-like which thrive through personal and collective fitness, ultimately making way for the vision of an Earth 3.0 as a type of 'superorganism'. Thus the systemic approach to resources can be described as 'organomic' vs 'economic' and success becomes about 'coherence' (health and harmony) rather than material security alone.

From this vista, co-creation is not a utopian ideal, but an expansion of who we are when we are at our most healthy in mind, body and spirit.

Co-creation's Social and Systemic Emergence Is Underway

While co-creation as a new model of social relationships currently remains a niche interest, offering seemingly marginal possibility for change, there are groups, individuals and communities all over the world researching, embodying and reaching for its ideals and applications in one form or another. The natural patterns that characterise the co-creative worldview are palpable in many conversations and contexts, whether the goal is to explore an all-win scenario, learn how to relate interpersonally in a harmonious and integral (masculine/feminine, inner and outer) way, shift to a form of success based on integral wealth or understand how to operate more as an organism than a business. This is an organic realisation blossoming from the grass roots up through a multitude of lenses, whether or not people are naming their overall goal as “co-creation.”

How all these different expressions merge into a systemic alternative that can be taken to scale has been my personal focus for some time now. As a former systems specialist in the field of multi-stakeholder collaboration, I have spent eight years in research and development along with other co-creators as part of a number of projects (most recently the ‘Together’ partnership) researching how all the different pieces being examined can unify into a whole systems innovation. Through a systems theory lens we understand that co-creation cannot offer a scalable alternative until its goals, processes and organisational methods can be defined from a systematic point of view. Only from that basis can we seriously talk about something capable of change on a world level.

The [Together Life System \(TLS\)](#) is offering a vision and blueprint of what a whole systems platform for co-creation can look like based upon Together's investigations. The blueprint is not a prescriptive specification, but rather a skeletal outline of the core applications, both ‘in life’ and online, required to support co-creation to be embodied through an integral system. Together offers this blueprint as a framework that can support all the different agents of co-creation to begin weaving their pieces of the jigsaw together in a way that gives rise to a coherent, unified system.

Allied to the creation of a skeleton infrastructure for the TLS, agents of Together have also developed their own tools to support its co-creative emergence. Many of these tools are in place to address ‘game board tension’ issues explored in this article, such as catalytic investment models for co-creation (‘The Mother Fund’ and ‘Spiritual

Philanthropy') and transitional asset sharing protocols between different paradigms of operator ('Holosourcing').

While the TLS may take several years to flower into supporting a form of new organisation at scale, it is the vision of current agents of 'Together', that it can be realised immediately by small groups of people operating co-creatively to develop the TLS itself. The concept of 'fractals' is one of the core geometries used to organise co-creation, where a principle that can be embodied at a minute scale can repeat and repeat until the same patterns are experienced macrocosmically. Consequently, once co-creation is realised by a micro society or body, there is nothing stopping it being realised as a planet. Thus, while co-creation may seem like a whole Star Trek generation away, the quantum leap is now way closer and more realisable than what we might suspect or think.

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