

## Imagining Possible Futures 2030 When Driving Forces Interact



### LIMITED or REACTIVE

Limited, disjointed, shallow, gap-filling, Band-Aid approaches

**Driver 1: Approaches to pressing social issues**  
(education, health, retirement, employment, immigration, hunger, borders, justice)

## Scenario

**C** Limited, disjointed, shallow, gap-filling, Band-Aid approaches exist amidst tight limits, siloed approaches, where traditional approaches continue to dominate

**OPTIMAL or VIGOROUS**  
Robust opportunities, strong incentives for collaboration & networks, creative/innovative era



**Driver 2: Society's orientation to philanthropy** (institutions, networks, and incentives)

### OPTIMAL or VIGOROUS

Strong, integrated, deep, systemic, long-term responses



**LIMITED or REACTIVE**  
Tight limits, siloed approach, traditional approaches continue to dominate

# SCENARIO C STORY CONTRIBUTIONS BY CONVERSATION 2012 PARTICIPANTS



This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-NoDerivs 3.0 Unported License.

To view a copy of this license, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nd/3.0/>  
or send a letter to Creative Commons, 444 Castro Street, Suite 900, Mountain View, California, 94041, USA.



planning ▲ strategy ▲ philanthropy ▲ coaching

P.O. Box 510257 ▲ Milwaukee WI 53203 ▲ 414-962-6696 ▲ [www.garyhubbellconsulting.com](http://www.garyhubbellconsulting.com)

## **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

---

- Persevering With a Purpose *Gary J. Hubbell* . . . . . 1
- North American Philanthropy 2030 *Ken Hubbell* . . . . . 18
- The Year We Gave Back *Kay Edwards* . . . . . 31

# Gary Hubbell Consulting *Conversation* 2012



## PARTICIPANT BIO

### **Gary Hubbell**

Principal, Gary Hubbell Consulting

Gary is a strategist, providing high-level consulting and coaching to social sector organizations and private companies in the areas of planning, strategy development, and philanthropy. He is passionate about partnering with leaders to transform organizations - applying his research and experience to help define and achieve goals.

A voracious reader and student of history, he is constantly looking to understand the driving forces that shape organizational choices and create openings for change. This internal motivation led to his creating GHC Conversations as a desire to incubate and contribute to a community of learners/leaders who share his interest in meaningful reflection on the social sector.

With more than 30 years' professional experience, Gary has been counsel and coach to more than 135 clients throughout his career. He started Gary Hubbell Consulting in January 2006, following 15 years as a senior strategist with a national consulting firm. Earlier leadership roles include development and marketing responsibilities in hospital and museum settings, and consulting roles in resource development, public relations and opinion research.

Resilience 2030 | State of the Sector  
is a mixed bag | TECH NEWS

# TIME

## PERSEVERING WITH A PURPOSE

Our Person of the Year:  
Natalia R. Lynn

A social sector  
leader's mid-life  
retrospective

By Gary J. Hubbell

**Driver 1: Approaches to pressing public social issues, mandates (education, health, retirement, employment, immigration, hunger, borders, justice)**

**Driver 2: Society's orientation to philanthropy (institutions or informal networks and incentives or tight limits)**

*Limited, disjointed, shallow, gap-filling, Band-Aid approaches exist amidst tight limits, siloed approaches, where traditional approaches continue to dominate*

*January 5, 2031*

Natalia R. Lynn, 48, is the founder and executive director of Virtual Grass, an entrepreneurial national B Corporation<sup>1</sup>, headquartered in Seattle. Originally licensed as a medical marijuana dispensary in 2008, Virtual Grass evolved to become the leading national catalytic force for resource collaboration and societal problem solving in large cities and mega-regions.

A third generation Maltese-American and a first-wave millennial, Lynn is at the forefront of a powerful new—and recent—surge in North America toward what could arguably become a “golden age” of fairness, equality, access, and the long view. More on this later. In the meantime, her path to this recognition is the story of anything but a “golden” path.

The editorial board of Time Magazine has selected her as our “Person of the Year” because she represents generational resilience, a sense of duty and urgency, and commitment to the dignity of the many. Her mid-career, mid-life journey is testimony to her triumphant story and success. Inspired by earlier efforts of the Clinton Global Initiative, she became someone who enters North American communities to bring together the resources (intellectual, policy-making, financial, and grass-roots engagement) to solve big problems. In a career fraught with personal risk, professional isolation, and near financial ruin, hers is a story that mirrors that of the social sector in the United States, if not throughout North and Central American.



Lynn celebrates formation of Virtual Grass (2008)

We had the pleasure of catching up with Ms. Lynn during a recent quasi-vacation cruise she and eleven other women leaders took from Seattle to Mexico. They are attending the Global Mid-Century Conference on Authentic Leadership, taking place in Mexico City. As the keynote speaker, we asked Natalia to reflect back upon her career highlights and to share with us the lessons learned and implications for her work—and our world—in the decades to come.

---

<sup>1</sup> B Corporations emerged in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century in recognition of the inability of governments, nonprofits, and traditional business to produce the necessary social benefits. B Corporations’ legal structure expands corporate accountability so they are required to make decisions that are good for society, not just their shareholders. B Corporations’ performance standards enable consumers to support businesses that align with their values, investors to drive capital to higher impact investments, and governments and multinational corporations to implement sustainable procurement policies. <http://www.bcorporation.net/about>



**TIME: How would you describe the state of the social sector today in 2030?**

I'd say today we have rhythmic collaboration of an increasingly intentional and effective spectrum of people and organizations, collectively producing significant social balance and fairness in which most people are able to succeed. But let me tell you, it has only been in the last five or six years where I could actually say this. Recently we've emerged from a long period of struggle and isolation. Our political and organizational egotism and myopia has given way to a more realistic—and hopeful—sense of the commons. We have become a more pervasively explicit “community” of peoples and organizations.

Even the way we think, manage, and decide is better now. Especially over the past decade and a half, I have seen greater adoption of the model we at Virtual Grass have been espousing since we started in 2008. The emergence of collective intelligences for issues, businesses, and countries has led to forming new kinds of organizations able to address problems and opportunities without conventional management. Collective intelligence can be thought of as a continually emerging property that we create (hands on) from synergies among people, software, and information that continually learns from feedback to produce just-in-time knowledge for better decisions than any one of these elements acting alone.<sup>2</sup>

Again, until fairly recently, this description existed in modest proportion for the past two decades. Success was episodic and seemed to take place in disconnected but fertile pockets of endeavor. The past 20 years has been for us and for the sector a long march of survival and resolve amidst a paradoxical mixed bag of great technical breakthroughs but limited sector growth and evolution.

**TIME: What were the most pivotal events of the last 20 years that shaped the choices you and your organization made?**

I'd need the help of historians to catalogue them all, but a few that stick out for me as particularly meaningful for shaping sector response are the following. The decade of the 2010s produced some world leader moments that reverberated for years and became influential—and often limiting—for the sector.

The 2012 U.S. presidential election was a narrow victory re-election for America's first African American and gen X president, Barack Obama. A second term led to some advancements (in technology adoption, infrastructure, climate change adaptation, and federally funded education initiatives), but was largely hollow and failed to produce a long-desired economic and/or societal recovery. The worst economic crisis in half a century continued to hold us in its grip. In fact, with a bleak short-term outlook, public opinion (the most shrill of which was found in the U.S., but echoed both north and south of American borders) questioned the ability of political leaders and policymakers to find a way out.<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup> (Retrieved January 9, 2012 from: [http://www.millennium-project.org/millennium/Global\\_Challenges/chall-06.html](http://www.millennium-project.org/millennium/Global_Challenges/chall-06.html))

<sup>3</sup> OECD Observer



Then, memorable perhaps for me because it was so soon after our founding and so close to what was supposed to be the recovery after the Great Recession, was the 2013 assassination attempt on German Chancellor Angela Merkel that left her (and most of Europe) paralyzed. She had been the driving force behind the agonizing tight rope walk to keep the European Union together and solvent. Her removal from the scene resulted in continued economic anguish for a few years, just when the U.S. (especially, but not exclusively) was imagining a return to a more robust economic recovery. We gradually dropped the “new” from in front of “normal” because it came to feel not so new anymore and not something to be celebrated or embraced.<sup>4</sup>

Fueled by deep and widespread frustration and the increased clamor of the business class, the 2016 U.S. presidential election was a near landslide victory for Peter Landsdale, a white, 58 year old, GOP-backed candidate whose credentials as a U.S. based global solar technology company CEO led him to be seen as the business messiah who would take the country out of the doldrums. Despite great promise and fanfare, his first term in office produced few inroads in what seemed like an intractable malaise. Nevertheless, he was reelected in 2020 with the promise of economic breakthroughs that heretofore had been elusive. Once again, the hype of the campaign was not at all matched by the subsequent lived experience.

In 2024, Jasmine Barlow became the first woman elected as U.S. president. This became a pivotal year, as her election that November meant that she joined a decidedly strong cohort of women nation leaders. Earlier that year, Karin LaFrance became Canadian prime minister after a spirited national election. To the south, Mexico elected Agraciana Martinez – Cortez. This wave of women in global leadership was not a blip; rather it reflected decades of steady gains. Just more than a decade earlier than this notable election, women made up half of the U.S. workforce, with an unemployment rate 1% lower than men's; more women than men were gaining advanced college and bachelor's degrees, redefining the roles in the family. Nevertheless, although they then held 51.5% of management, professional, and related positions, women accounted for only 3% of the Fortune 500 chief executives. Women's representation in U.S. legislature was 16.9% in 2011, while Canada's was 25%.<sup>5</sup> By 2024, those percentages of women's representation went to 28% and 36% respectively.

---

4

<sup>5</sup> (Retrieved January 9, 2012 from: [http://www.millennium-project.org/millennium/Global\\_Challenges/chall-11.html](http://www.millennium-project.org/millennium/Global_Challenges/chall-11.html))

**TIME: In what ways has society changed and in what ways has it not? What's your view of the key social issues of the last two decades?**

From 2011 to 2017 there were scratching attempts to “get back to the way it was” – the “acceptance” of the new normal was mostly bluff and bluster by the majority. Only a minority really accepted that things would be forever different. Result: we tried to solve civic problems in a marketplace manner – s/he with the biggest and best idea “wins.” Therefore, collaboration was tough and uncommon.

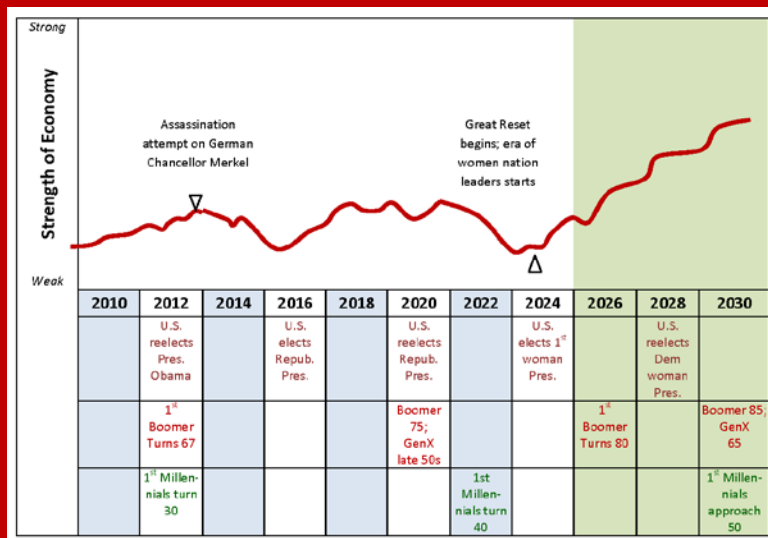
Health care organizations (especially the monied health care systems) competed tooth and nail for business. Their margins shrank every year during this period, so clinical and administrative staff reductions were *de rigueur*. Most of the larger hospitals rolled out their next wave of campaigns, only to find a still reticent constituency who had less and less personal affinity with those institutions and could barely tell them apart from one another.

Campaigns were everywhere and the dollars came mostly from the usual suspects.

Colleges and universities followed a similar track. The publics and the privates were both seeing their numbers shrink. They had clearly begun to price themselves out of business. Fundraising among even the most loyal alums was seldom sufficient to continue the program and campus growth that occurred during the boom years. Here again, campaigns were everywhere, seemingly for some barely discernible variation of the “global access, excellence, and distinctive” theme. Campaigns, which had grown to an average of 7 years long by 2010 were now averaging 10 years long by 2017.

Health care and higher education had the deepest pockets, so they were able to throw the most money at the talent pool, resulting in the best, brightest, and most experienced faculty, administrators, physicians, and development/advancement personnel going into these two categories of work. As a result, there was a solidification of what was clearly emerging even at the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century—more money flowed to the top tier institutions, leaving the mid-tier to settle for less. The lower tier organizations, already at risk before the Great

Snapshot of Social and Economic Milestones



Recession, were now dropping like flies. Community colleges and technical schools became the preferred approach for many and their enrollments skyrocketed throughout the 2010s. Even their fundraising efforts, which had previously been pretty tepid, began to flourish, as they now had an even longer track record and solid and direct relationships with legislators and corporate/foundation leaders, whose eyes were now open to the impact and return on investment arguments these schools were making.

Human and social service organizations proliferated in the decade of 2011 to 2020. The repeated aftershocks from the Recession made issues of poverty, early childhood education, crime, incarceration, drug and alcohol abuse and treatment constant on the news feeds. Because the entry barriers to forming nonprofit organizations remained low and pretty pedestrian during this time, their numbers seemed to explode. In this wave, coupled with the millennial generation persona of being insightful and impatient to find solutions, we all jumped into the pool and started to form nonprofits that we thought could make a difference. Because we were all more networked with one another than we were connected to existing institutions in our communities (like churches, community government, or the existing social serving organizations like United Way), we leveraged our technology fearlessness to bring attention and resources to the issues that we cared about.

This was, in many ways, a very heady start for those of us in our millennial rising adulthood years (our late 20's and early 30s), because we felt like we were contributing. But the bloom was off the rose in less than a decade as it seemed like our initial impact was still disconnected from other factors in the system that were contributing to the social ills we were trying to address. Alone, we didn't have much clout. Comparatively, we didn't have enough financial power to truly take ideas to scale; and, frankly, we (my millennial generation first wavers) were getting a bit bored. We'd sit around and beef about how pointless it seemed to be running to the same big corporations and foundations which were so intent on an insane amount of metrics and issues of "scale" and replicability that we'd spend our energies placating them rather than devoting the best of what we had to innovation and service. This led to a widely shared sense of lethargy for many millennials in the later years of the 2010s. Our younger boomer and older gen-X board members would view this as their prophesized millennial entitlement finally coming true, as they had lamented about 15 years earlier.

The social issues that were occupying our collective time and attention were many.

- *Immigration* – with federal money in such short supply, the U.S. gave up on this as the one time rallying cry for dollars. While Mexican immigration levels slowed from earlier decades, there were still sub-cultures and populations coming from former Soviet bloc countries, Afghanistan/Pakistan, China, Haiti, and central/south America. Services for non-English speaking peoples were in constant demand.
- *Literacy* – In the greatest of ironies, at a time when technology had made it possible to find any information sought in a manner of seconds, the literacy divide mirrored

the economic divide. The ranks of the poor continued to grow through the decades of 2010 and into the first half of the 2020s. Tied closely to poverty issues, literacy was seen as a huge issue and one that attracted significant public and private dollars. An innovative for-profit/nonprofit company collaboration, called Rising Star Studios and Rising Star Workshop respectively, exploded onto the early childhood education scene in 2013 and became first a U.S. phenomenon, quickly picked up by Canada, South America, China, India, Africa and, finally, central Europe.

- *Boomers Cling, Gen-X Ducks, Millennials Take Off* - In the 2010s it seemed like we were all a bunch of do-gooders on steroids. Nonprofit boomer CEOs were not retiring when previous generations had. Largely having outspent their retirement savings (and, let's be real, a widely shared egotism that feared that nobody else could provide the same necessary level of personal commitment and dedication as they themselves!), boomer leaders stayed put. As a result, much of the gen-X generation in their middle and later adult years were relegated to being number two's in their social sector organizations. millennials who wanted (and believed they could) lead, were all dressed up with nowhere to go. So, we left to form our own organizations. This was true for me in Virtual Grass. Because I saw it happening all around me, I figured it would be a breeze to get "my people" to collaborate. Boy was I in for a surprise. Looking back on it, I can see now that we all got trapped in the existing silos of thinking and funding. We became younger, newer versions of the very problems we'd complained about. We were so busy trying to get human and financial resources to fuel our own mission work that we had little inclination to partner or collaborate in any but the most superficial ways. We talked a good game, but few demonstrable successes were evident by 2020.
- *The Model is the Minority* - Social venture philanthropy and B corporations continued to be sexy to nearly everybody, yet they did little more than paint pictures of "cool things that were being done by 'those' people." National media, conferences, nonprofit associations, The Foundation Center, and consulting groups jumped on every bandwagon, seizing upon each new technology tool and vocabulary busting phrase as the "new it" thing. Individually, there were some real important things happening, but it didn't seem to bring leaders and organizations together to do anything more than TALK about doing things together. Largely absent was the collective willingness to work for a philosophy of "some"—looking for the needs and opportunities that would work—not for everyone, nor for only the few—but for some<sup>6</sup>; that heretofore silent majority of similarly disposed people who wanted a share of just satisfaction and were willing to compromise some personal interests to achieve it. It seemed like it wasn't really until the late 2020s that this idea really began to take hold and gain traction. Up to that point, we were like slot car racers—

---

<sup>6</sup> This philosophy of "the some" is addressed by James Ogilvy in Creating Better Futures.

moving ever more quickly forward without changing lanes or teaming up with others to seek our desired mission outcomes.

- *Cities Grew and the Rurals Strained* - City populations grew at the expense of rural areas. Transportation infrastructure dollars were tight throughout the years 2009 to about 2023, so it was a no-brainer for people to stay close to work options. This meant moving to the city. Multi-family housing grew, but not like the big “dorm” Cabrini Green complexes of 1970s. The Recession had made it much more likely that multiple generations of family were living together—in owned and rented homes. It became more common for non-married people to live together, in part fueled by the eventual loosening of legal restrictions on what constituted marriage. People stayed close to bus routes, train service and the high speed trains within the mega-regions. Rural communities shrank in size. Farming became an ever more corporate undertaking, as food safety liability issues, climate change irregularities, and limited access to cheap labor combined to make it all but impossible for the proud independent farmers of yesterday to continue in business.
- *Organized/Traditional Religion Wanes* - The mainline religions continued to lose members during the 2010s and 2020s. Spiritualism, and all its many splendorous permutations, continued to be prominent, largely due to an aging boomer generation who had historically seen everything differently. Despite there being some notably large mega-churches with onsite worship memberships of 50,000+, spiritualism and the experience industry seemed to coalesce into smaller, more deeply personal “encounters” and “explorations.” A previously unimagined consequence of this trend was that international and religious social ministries shrank considerably, due to the loss of a membership base to fuel them with gifts and people power. Rather than going away completely (although there was some measurable consolidation and reduction to 2020), many of these organizations went looking for other resource angels—thereby simply adding further bifurcation and competition in the resource-seeking disciplines.
- *Obesity*—Both child and adult obesity went from a worrisome forecast in 2000 to a full frontal crisis by 2020. Unleashed in this context was an alarming rate of suicide among, and hate crimes against, the morbidly obese. A small collection of like-minded obesity hate groups in the south/central U.S. began to be identified in 2017. The first fringe group was a radical advocacy group calling attention to the cost burden on society The Lards (aka, the obese, as their literature besmirched) had become. The worst among them began to mirror earlier hate groups by taking lethal violence against their obese victims. FBI and other sting operations were able to ferret out many of their leadership ranks by 2024, but the balance simply went further underground. Widely publicized (and secured) murder trials of these leaders (interestingly, all gen-X members) became a point of great public discourse and debate, especially in the U.S. and Canada. Issues of personal responsibility and



public implications were now being discussed openly, with obesity seen as the leading issue. For a growing minority, especially in Canada and the west and east coasts of the U.S.), this scenario contributed to the growing awareness of and mainstream “legitimization” of hybrid/integrative medicine (east/west/holistic) and “subsistence and personally sustainable farming.”

- *Pharmaceuticals* - Pharmaceutical companies continued to pump trillions into research and development. Despite a slowly growing popularity of Eastern and Native American health remedies and personal philosophies in Canada and the U.S., acceptance (arguably reliance) on pharmaceutical solutions was in its heyday during this 20 year period. Several social factors intersected to bring this about. First, the continuing aftershocks of the 2009 Great Recession, felt for 15-18 years following, made U.S. comprehensive health insurance a singularly prized benefit and one enjoyed by fewer and fewer. As a result, self-medicating was common. Reimbursement changes—most dramatically in the U.S. but also in Canada to less draconian degrees—pushed every acute care provider (the few remaining independent hospitals and the ever larger, newly collaborating healthcare systems) to push for in-home patient monitoring and anything/everything that would forestall an emergency room visit or inpatient admission. Pharmaceuticals became a part of that solution.
- *Hospitals* - Hospital systems continued to churn. The for-profit companies continued to cut services for which margins were thin in order to protect shareholder investments. Their evolution during this period inevitably led to their reclassification from “hospital” to Selective Care Centers, where only self-pay and fully insured individuals were treated. Nonprofit hospitals in the U.S. picked up the balance of the population health service requirement. The health care reform initiative of the Obama administration in 2010 produced a tsunami of changes in every nonprofit health organization in order to remain financially viable. While those changes continued to broil debates in coffee shops and Congress, little more than slight rebalancing of services and cost burdens was accomplished until the mid 2020s due to political polarization, loud states rights advocacy, and the seemingly iron grip of medical and health care lobbying efforts. The 2010s and early 2020s in the U.S. could easily be remembered as the “period of power and promises,” rather than the “power of the people.” Only after being faced with national bankruptcy and a population fed up with fighting did citizens unite to simplify health care delivery and financing with widespread fairness in relation to a host of competing national interests and wants. As you know, this only happened a few years ago, solidified by the U.S. presidential election of 2024.
- *State Government* - State governments were largely struggling financially through the 2010s. A few states, especially in the deep south, were all but destitute, unable to underwrite any but a bare bones social fabric. In these cases, states willingly turned



to private business to take over (and pay for) services. Mail delivery, transportation, criminal registry and incarceration, and others were outsourced to private providers. This sparked a self-congratulatory zeal among state politicians, yet service quality was erratic, often without quality transparency or controls, and constant reshuffling among new price leaders. In short, this was a period of dwindling state government presence and reliability and a huge bifurcation of private businesses. With little surprise, many poor and underserved population segments fell victim to scams, neglect (benign and otherwise), and abuse, thereby merely exacerbating how disconnected the web of social services felt to many.

- *Information Technology* - GoogleChinaMobile, the world's largest telecommunications firm, produced the world's fastest computer, which can perform 250 petaflops per second, 100 times the fastest rate of 2011. This massively parallel processing computer is capable of reading an essentially unlimited number of documents, digesting the information, and answering questions posed in natural language. It has reliably proven to use vast amounts of data to accelerate improvements in health knowledge and decision making, transportation, and logistics management. The acceleration of science and technology continues to fundamentally change the prospects for civilization, and access to its knowledge has become universal—except to the poor, who lack the tech tools to gain access. The ability to learn this knowledge is also improving with “Web-based asynchronous highly motivational educational systems, adaptive learning models such as cellular automata, genetic algorithms, neural networks, and emerging capabilities of collective intelligence systems.”<sup>7</sup>

**TIME: But Virtual Grass wasn't nearly as ubiquitous nor as impactful as you've become lately. Why not?**

For multiple and interconnected reasons, but while you've got me thinking about the economy, let me remind you that money was tight for much of these last two decades. Only really since 2009 have we had a period of 20 quarters (5 years) of back-to-back economic growth. While the last five years has us all feeling bright and cheery again, let's not forget the zombie walk we were all on for the previous 20 years!

Early in the 2010s in the U.S. there seemed to be a rise of a new frugality “as people shift[ed] away from conspicuous consumption to simpler, more basic priorities, from a lifestyle where people thought they could purchase their way to happiness to something better and more real. Americans [had] certainly begun to save more and rely less on credit, at least partly because credit had become much harder to get.”<sup>8</sup>

---

<sup>7</sup> Retrieved January 9, 2012 from: [http://www.millennium-project.org/millennium/Global\\_Challenges/chall-14.html](http://www.millennium-project.org/millennium/Global_Challenges/chall-14.html)

<sup>8</sup> Richard Florida, *The Great Reset*, e-book page 105, location 1657

But this didn't turn out to be lasting. boomers have never been savers and what they had tucked away was used to maintain as much of their lifestyles as they could. gen-Xers, for the most part, just withdrew to their life of gadgets and gaming, just kind of holding on, content to let others figure out where the money would come from to fix what troubled the world most. Even we millennials got right back on the shopaholic bandwagon, frustrated with all the "hunkering down" going on around us and pretty well used to a sense of immediacy that we'd grown up with. This reaction was less true among our late wave millennial brothers and sisters (born 1997 to 2003), as they seemed a bit more risk averse, studious, and less likely to party and spend.<sup>9</sup> The next generation cohort group—the new silents (birth years of roughly 2004 to 2026) are an adaptive generation, dutiful, a bit self-contained and seemingly risk averse in their formative years. So, you can see that the Great Recession was like a perfect and lasting storm for us western democracies in North America simply because of the constellations of generational personalities and their respective age locations during this period. Much of the impetus for any resurgence, arguably, fell to us as first and second wave millennials.

Money seemed to be tight everywhere but China. Because my mom was born in Toronto, I thought Canada would be a great launching pad for Virtual Grass. Canada managed to avoid the humungous housing bubble and financial irresponsibility that plagued the U.S., so they remained financially strong and an attractive location (major cities) for talented business and finance professionals.<sup>10</sup> We tried in the early days to work with health care, human service, and tech players like Research in Motion (you remember...the Blackberry guys who struggled until going under in 2015). We felt Canada was ripe for breakthroughs because of their scientific competence, entrepreneurship, federal support, and natural resources but even their own government budget directors worried about a national complacency that meant Canada lagged behind other advanced economies in terms of innovation. When we met with national and provincial leaders in 2010, they acknowledged the connection between complacency and limited access to capital. One leader said, "National growth fuelled by an abundance of natural resource assets does not require us to be innovative leaders in a highly competitive global environment. Perhaps the need to innovate for survival and prosperity has not been a burning platform for Canadian businesses." One thing that fledgling businesses lack, she said, is venture capital. "The limited availability of risk capital at all stages of the growth cycle often impedes our ability

---

<sup>9</sup> Mary Beth Marklein, *USA Today*, January 26, 2012, Today's freshmen hit books harder, p. 3A

<sup>10</sup> Innovation: Opportunity Without Frontiers, *OECD Observer*, retrieved January 9, 2012 from: [http://www.oecdobserver.org/news/fullstory.php/aid/3524/Innovation: Opportunities without frontiers.html](http://www.oecdobserver.org/news/fullstory.php/aid/3524/Innovation:_Opportunities_without_frontiers.html)

to grow global companies from Canada.”<sup>11</sup> What we found was that this observation would hold true for more than a decade to follow.

Not only was money tight, but doubt was everywhere. I was reading a piece recently about American’s trust in elected officials. Two generations prior to my birth, which would have been in early/mid 1960s, three-quarters of the American people said yes when surveyed about whether they trust the government—especially in Washington D.C.—to do the right thing. By the late 2000s that figure had dropped to only a quarter to a third of the people expressing the same confidence in their federal government. “This dramatic erosion of confidence in the government constitutes a massive crisis of legitimacy in the public sector,” one observer noted in 2011.<sup>12</sup> At that time, none of us had any idea that this trend would continue and worsen, falling to a confidence level low of 18% by 2016.

China was clearly hitting its stride in the early 2010s. Its meteoric rise in this new century led to China’s economic output surpassing the U.S.’s in 2015. Shanghai—with its well-capitalized banks and government backing—eclipsed New York and London in 2020 as the world’s premier global financial center.<sup>13</sup> The long tail of the Great Recession of 2009 exacerbated the U.S. national debt problem. By the quarter-century mark, almost two trillion dollars was going just to pay the *interest* on the national debt. “There was no longer room for any meaningful programs; it seemed that the president’s job was just to keep the ship afloat. Initiating any great changes had become impossible. It was just too expensive.”<sup>14</sup>

All these factors seemed to coalesce and feed off one another. After the death of the iconic Apple founder, Steve Jobs, in 2011, it started a steady mood swing—especially in America—where we seemed to worship the business person and disdain anyone with a different view. It was like the nation drank the Kool-Aid that big business deals were our salvation and the way out of the Recession. While it initially sparked entrepreneurial zeal for partnerships like those Virtual Grass was proposing, it ultimately led to a series of events—promulgated by excessive corporate and individual greed—that continued to destabilize the whole economy.<sup>15</sup>

We now realize, from the perspective of 2030, that our longing for quick fixes and our willingness to gamble on the art of the deal simply and inevitably handcuffed us to a sustained economic crisis. Rather than being willing to admit we were contributing to our

---

<sup>11</sup> Innovation: Opportunity Without Frontiers, *OECD Observer*, retrieved January 9, 2012 from: [http://www.oecdobserver.org/news/fullstory.php/aid/3524/Innovation: Opportunities without frontiers.html](http://www.oecdobserver.org/news/fullstory.php/aid/3524/Innovation:_Opportunities_without_frontiers.html)

<sup>12</sup> James Ogilvy, *Creating Better Futures*, e-book location 538

<sup>13</sup> James Ogilvy, *Creating Better Futures*, e-book location 593

<sup>14</sup> Albert Brooks, *2030: The Real Story of What Happens to America*, e-book page 19, location 412)

<sup>15</sup> James Ogilvy, *Creating Better Futures*, e-book location 593

own malaise, we simply fell into what you've heard me refer to as zombie mode. This "new normal" became the not-so-new "normal," which meant that we lived in economic crisis (or at least weakness) for about 18 years. In retrospect, we can now recognize this historical pattern of history, where "economic crises inevitably give rise to critical periods in which an economy is remade in ways that allow it to recover and begin growing again."<sup>16</sup> Two decades ago, one author referred to these periods as Great Resets.

**TIME: Arguably, we've all seen evidence over the past couple years that a Reset or Resurgence is happening in the North American and global economies. How would you characterize the economic realities of the 2010s and the 2020s?**

Well, I've touched on some of that already, but there are other signals we should note. Much of the last two decades—until very recently—has felt like running in deep, loose sand: we knew terra firma was beneath our feet, but shifts were constant and it was tough to get traction. The Great Recession of 2009 was a new phenomenon for all of us. Even after economists told us we were technically not in a "recession" the unemployment rate was 9% in the U.S. in April 2011 and 7.6% in Canada. The U.S. national debt was above the \$14.3 trillion cap, and in 2010 over 43.9 million people (one in seven Americans) were enrolled in the food stamps program. Meanwhile, at that time the top 0.1% of Americans controlled 10% of the nation's wealth, the U.S. had the most billionaires, and CEO pay rose 24%. The six largest U.S. banks controlled 63% of U.S. GDP. The year 2011 became one of vocal dissent, with the Arab Spring in the Middle East and the fledgling Occupy Movement that got its start that Fall.<sup>17</sup>

**TIME: Yes, it certainly was an interesting period for all of us. Both economists and historians are now concluding that the Great Recession of 2009 fit the pattern of the U.S. Crash of 1873 and the Great Depression of the 1930s in that each was followed by a long depression lasting 2-3 decades.<sup>18</sup>**

I certainly was guilty of being hopeful—and a bit impatient—at the outset of the Great Recession. It just seemed in the early 2010s that every day I logged onto my computer, my RSS news feeds were giving me conflicting stories about economic signals. One day doom and gloom; the next day upbeat; followed by some release of new stats that bodes ill for the nation. We all just got a bit worn down and lethargic about the whole context.

That was really my internal motivation to shift the direction of the business. That's when I decided that Virtual Grass was going to have to adopt a new posture. We had to a) move forward in community without physical form—hence the emphasis on "virtual"; b) we had

---

<sup>16</sup> Richard Florida, Great Reset, e-book page 4, location 106

<sup>17</sup> (Retrieved January 9, 2012 from: [http://www.millennium-project.org/millennium/Global\\_Challenges/chall-07.html](http://www.millennium-project.org/millennium/Global_Challenges/chall-07.html))

<sup>18</sup> Richard Florida, The Great Reset, e-book page 106, location 1673

to go viral—making our presence felt as a lever for change everywhere, beginning first with the largest cities with the most seemingly intractable problems; and c) we had to go to the street—aka, the grass roots—people like me who had a fire in their bellies for change. No offense, but I must confess that as first wave millennials, we got sick and tired of listening to people like you—middle aged and early elder boomers—who seemed to sound smart but frankly did little more than talk about solutions, never able to really cobble together the kinds of alliances that we found essential to success.

**TIME: How has your view of philanthropy changed as a result of your experience and is there anything that is largely unchanged?**

In many ways, North American philanthropy practices changed little in the last 20 years. Sure, as always, there have been people and organizations in the vanguard practicing new approaches and getting the spotlight, but the sector as a whole changed little. We just seemed to hunker down and stick to our knitting as a sector during the 2010s and 2020s. As I said earlier, the big organizations sucked up the best talent. They were, therefore, most able to attract the mega-gifts and to afford the technology and marketing platforms to have a constant presence in their constituencies. The big colleges and universities, big health systems, and nationally recognized “franchise” human service organizations continued to attract the most money and attention. The small, local serving organizations—despite often having great mission integrity—struggled mightily for professional staff, governing board talent, and money.

Nonprofit organizations had a tough time breaking their addiction to copy cat practices and zeal for metrics and performance measurement. During the 2010s, time and attention on quantifying everything created a sector-wide immersion in the “science” of fundraising practices. This continuous drumbeat by professional staffs during this period had the unintended consequence of numbing and boring the best board members and supporters who found no escape from metrics mania at work and in community service. We’ve come to believe that this was a contributing factor during the 2020s where it became increasingly difficult for nonprofit organizations to attract quality board members. Prospective leaders wanted something to uplift them and to feel a compelling pull toward community service. Instead, they were being offered board seats to play roles as business analysts, production overlords, and efficiency experts. Aging boomers wanted something with more heart; mid-life gen-Xers were willing to provide the technocrat perspective but basically weren’t very interested in volunteering; and the oldest millennials were tired of “the old way” of doing things and wanted to be more expressive.

Direct mail fundraising all but ceased to exist during this period. The cost of postage and the comparatively slow delivery rates made this method untenable. The more sophisticated nonprofits moved their resources into technology-assisted methods. Passive online giving portals persisted, but the sector seemed most enamored with the push technology of text and image messaging to the ever growing array of personal communication devices. While

these technology tools were fun, efficient, and effective, they were pursued separately by organizations and, after a while, all organizations started to look like all others in the eyes of stakeholders.

Collaborative philanthropy was episodic and fragile throughout much of this time. Within the context of this societal, demographic, and economic environment, only the vanguard was willing to transform their organization-centric messages to whole system/whole community messages of win/win.

But Virtual Grass kept at it. We started to see the sector barriers thaw and egos be set aside more often and by more leaders. Perhaps reflective of, or resulting from, the era of the strong women as leaders (reference the Canadian, Mexican, and U.S. national elections bringing women to power in 2024), we finally began to see sector-wide responses on a large scale. During this upward progress, we saw the previous separateness of private philanthropy evolve into more organic and, certainly, wholesome alliance with service providers across the spectrum—education, literacy, shelter, poverty reduction, safety, health care, and many, many others. Large scale co-located and virtual planning discussions took place in World Café-like fashion, creating not just breakthrough ideas, but genuine ownership and commitment throughout. Each organization—government, corporate, and social sector—became accustomed to bringing to the common good the best resources and assets they possessed. Virtual Grass invited in the previously private companies like FedEx and UPS who leveraged decades of logistics expertise to become über-project managers of some of these mega-region solutions. Private and community foundations were asked to take a long view and to make long term commitments toward these integrated solutions. Solutions were elegant (and sometimes not so elegant) expressions of commerce, pure volunteerism, private philanthropy, and a groundswell of civic engagement and shared responsibility.

So....after decades of struggle and disappointment, I now feel that the social sector has established momentum. I can now see that philanthropy—long seen as the purview of the rich or idealistic—is now being taught, practiced, and integrated NOT for its own purposes but for the sense of whole solutions, taken with a long view.

Check back with me in 2050 to see what two more decades has taught us.

###



# Gary Hubbell Consulting *Conversation* 2012



## PARTICIPANT BIO

### **Ken Hubbell**

Principal, Ken Hubbell & Associates

---

Ken is the principal of a boutique consulting firm (established 1993), providing strategy, planning and communication services for independent sector (especially regional foundations) and selected private firms. In 2009, he completed a design for a regional center on change in the Mississippi Delta for the W. K. Kellogg Foundation and co-authored "Guiding Sustainable Community Change: An Introduction to Coaching."

Lately, Ken and his team designed visual-rich learning experiences for workforce agencies and for three organizations started by Arkansas Gov. Rockefeller to collaborate on accelerating growth and innovation in the state. Ken is managing an initiative to engage rural communities in the Mississippi Delta in rethinking approaches to reducing systemic poverty.

Prior to establishing his consulting practice, Ken developed regional cultural centers, nonprofit community corporations, and public markets, and facilitated downtown redevelopment in rural areas. He secured two highly competitive public humanities grants from the National Endowment to collect and preserve community and cultural history. This work evolved into a University of Arkansas Press book, "The Arkansas Delta: Land of Paradox" (1993).

This is Ken's fourth *GHC Conversation*.

## N. American Philanthropy 2030

By Ken Hubbell

### Precarious

This is a future of converging disparity, fatigue, and relief as a few positive signs of change emerge from a long period of discouragement in the early decades of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. The 2030 Issue of the *Economist-North American Edition* features a recap of two decades of choppy economic productivity and sovereign fiscal performance alongside a worrisome failure of leadership courage to effectively confront ecological turbulence and generational polarization. The final story in the multimedia report that the *Economist* broadcast over its worldwide silicon network was titled, “A Coming Inflection? The Top Ten Stories of Hope.” The list of hopeful signs captured the state of thaw and reawakening, but the article was buried on page 119:

1. “Beyond the Grid:” Young entrepreneurs launch practical ecological sustainability for rural areas
2. The future of clean energy displayed on Wal-Mart shelves
3. Fiscal fitness regimen finally overtakes fear in U. S. markets
4. Water “wars” in arid regions shift to World Court
5. In the Shadows of the Conglomerate: small farms speeding fresh food direct to the table
6. Beyond plug and play—safe IT software applications reshape corporate data systems
7. Hemisphere Philanthropists Increase Gifts tied to Poverty Reduction Indicators
8. Borderlines: New solutions speed the flow of food, fuel, merchandise and people
9. Youngsters thrive in multi-cultural schools
10. A kaleidoscope of spirituality might reshape the world of faith

The list, alone, should have been enough to galvanize the trustees of the PhilanthropistAmericana, the network of progressive donors and social sector stewards that meets quarterly in Toronto, Miami, Havana, and Monterrey, Mexico to shape the philanthropic agenda in North America, but there was too much continued cynicism. The group’s chair merely attached the list to the elevator panel and uploaded it to the satellite channel under the label “future think.” The group’s latest discussions focused instead on issuing a call for papers on the impact of the tailing off of generational wealth transfers and the replacement risks in the social sector from the wave of “fifty-somethings” who are seen as crusading ecologists.

The topic for the network’s next year will start with the biggest uncertainty: How did countries and municipalities restore trust in government’s ability to effectively respond to

quality, equal education, opportunities for vulnerable people, widespread human and community well-being and climate and natural resource disturbances?

These uncertainties mask serious discord around the social sector tables at the start of the century's fourth decade. Despite the hype that technology could transform the sector, continuing "Band-Aid" approaches to big social issues exist amidst tight limits to philanthropy. No amount of well-intentioned innovation in the field had been sufficient to replace the loss of government funding for social challenges. Generational wealth transfers of higher net worth older donors enhanced the largest and most sophisticated institutions and the community foundation sector but "mass philanthropy" didn't erase systemic societal problems. The prevailing plot in social sector is have vs. have less—a "me-first" mentality in a polarized, yet collaborative society. Generally, elected leaders are still "kicking the can down the road" on solving the sustainability of effective social safety nets. Graying boomers and families of color with children are reshaping the developed world<sup>19</sup> but class, political, and ecological frictions are common tensions. New approaches to philanthropy are on the horizon. The elite and richest donors are living longer and partnering with institutions for decades. But the majority seniors have less wealth and little retirement income at 70 years of age, so they reduced their donations. Coupled with corporate retrenching after the 2025 downturn and the continuing economic pressures on working families to save for health, education and later life supports, philanthropy and the larger social sector are still navigating the new era of precarious paradoxes and tantalizing promise.

### **Surmounting the Strain: 2020-2030**

The *Precarious* scenario was influenced by a long turbulent phase that strained people and systems at nearly every level. A nasty convergence in 2025 led to another prolonged economic and societal downturn. It was triggered by a crisis in natural resources depletion caused rising concerns about society's ability to balance economic growth and consumption levels with protection of water systems. This magnified long-standing pressures among governments across North America to bring more economic opportunity and workers to support the strained middle classes. In the winter of 2025, nagging assaults in major cities from underground cells created a wave of fear and increased US Special Forces strikes in countries across the Tropic of Cancer. The resulting new Pentagon and Homeland Security allocations in America rekindled concerns about balancing a federal budget that was just barely in the "black" as a result of vigorous cutbacks required to restore social security and maintain a lean national health care program. The economic slowdown amplified an unfolding shift in the hemisphere to an emphasis on regional commerce networks in a tightly interdependent global economy. The stronger and more highly integrated North American region was a piece of a multi-polar economic world where several dominant

---

<sup>19</sup> "State of Metropolitan America," Brookings Institution, page 7; retrieved 12-30-11 from <http://brookings.edu/metro/StateOfMetroAmerica.aspx>

countries and regions competed globally yet shared commerce, workers, energy supplies, and communications within the region. Simultaneous doubling in global shipping volume reshaped hemispheric port and intermodal systems plus expanded Panama Canal shipping. Increased inter-hemispheric trade pacts.<sup>20</sup> (a sustained NAFTA and new regional trade pacts) that produced economic benefits for firms and jobs. At the same time, this contributed to the loss of some prized national sense of pride and identity and heightened a growing sense of protectiveness in the Americas.

The decade represented the wide range of push and pull that illustrated the “new normal” for the first third of the century. In the economic arena, Communities, firms, and people most adaptive to knowledge work remain viable and resilient. Energy intensive global food production of specialized crops, organics, rare spices, etc. is lucrative but escalates water depletion and competition for resources. This is creating new jobs in Mexico. The intensifying globalism seems to spur more frequent public health challenges from food contamination, airborne viruses and contagions. Effective responses are stymied by a lack of coordination among key institutions in the health and homeland security systems. In many communities, they are increasingly focused on shaping a more closely-knit and specialized local flavor. Buying local is the most popular reaction to the continued escalating costs for food and household goods.

All three of North America’s largest countries were facing growing aged populations and fewer younger workers to support the larger group of aging elders.<sup>21</sup> The large cities were multi-cultural places with a majority of equally large cultures and ethnicities. The cities were home to Increasing numbers of aging seniors; many of the Active elders are entrepreneurs, living Life 3.0. Many are quite active--consuming continuous education and travel and producing stories, art, and communicating with dense social networks and families. These are people who are taking every advantage of the “longevity bonus<sup>22</sup>.” At the same time, larger numbers of other sick and disabled seniors will fall through the gaps, straining health and service systems. “Pay as you go” retirement and Government supported care systems in the U.S. and Canada are limiting treatments and special services for this sizeable “economic underclass.” Social Security funding gaps are mounting, escalating a call in capitals for deeper cuts and shared sacrifices. There is an escalating Income and educational polarization that reinforces a “me-first” society.

The strain in the public sector extended into the infrastructure realm. The aging infrastructure, original to the 1960s-1980s, was now outmoded. Cities were facing enormous

---

<sup>20</sup> “Impact of Panama Canal Expansion on the U. S. Intermodal System,” U.S. Department of Agriculture, January 2010, page 7.

<sup>21</sup> “Outlook for Labor Mobility,” B. Lindsay Lowell; *Future of North America 2025: Outlook and Recommendations*; Center for Strategic and International Studies, Washington, DC, 2008; page 145.

<sup>22</sup> “How Baby Boomers Will Change Retirement:” retrieved on 12-30-11 from <http://seniorliving.about.com/od/retirement/a/newboomerretire.htm?p=1>

costs to adapt waste, infrastructure, emergency systems for greater usage, more stringent regulation and general system inefficiencies. Natural resource challenges were increasing in this same timeframe; more extreme levels of rains, flood, and disasters placed added pressure on strained systems. Fresh water for a wide set of public and commercial use was a mounting priority.<sup>23</sup> Ecological priorities in this decade continued to focus intensely on loss of wetlands, land losses in some coastal areas of the Gulf and Atlantic. Environmental supporters raised habitat loss and the implications of reduced biodiversity to major status. Meanwhile, numerous landscapes in the West were greatly altered by the sheer number of wind turbines, pipelines, and solar reflector farms. There was mounting evidence that it was imperative to moving public attitudes about nature in the hemisphere from a culture of abundance (esp. in Canada and US) to a culture of stewardship of nature/resources.<sup>24</sup> In keeping with the discordant soundtrack of the decade, there were plenty of encouraging responses to environmental and natural resource issues. Clean technologies were now mainstream in urban areas, though many rural and under-developed places were way behind the curve. Alternative fuel sources for improved transportation, and power generation were widely dispersed and more affordable. Businesses were more environmentally conscious; in fact, lack of attention to the environment and recklessness with water, energy, and by-products routinely triggered severe fines.

Technology was a primary driver throughout the decade; it had reshaped commerce, travel, entertainment, and the delivery of most critical services. While integrated technological integration was required for competitive advantage in every industry and place, the dispersion of it also had leveled the playing field for many smaller and rural places in the region. Small organizations, underdeveloped or underfinanced groups/locales were connected the world but at least a Generation of technology behind the more competitive areas.

People depended upon fully customized and optimized mobile and fully integrated information across their daily lives. Each person could now fully shape and direct an individual information channels. Fully customized, location-specific augmented reality tools had linked home, vehicles, offices, and schools. This created new options for education, health information-records, enterprise, and political activism, and instant philanthropy. Organizations hosted their own multi-tiered info channels (using advanced versions of the old You-tube). High-grade technology resources were important differentiators in a have/have-not view that mirrored in the social sector the “me-first” mentality that undergirded popular life. Key work in independent sector was online and virtual. The many benefits could not mask the downsides of mass collaboration and

---

<sup>23</sup> “North American Environmental Outlook to 2030;” Commission for Environmental Cooperation, Montreal, 2010, pages 8-9.

<sup>24</sup> “Outlook for the Environment,” Jaisel Vadgama; *The Future of North America 2025: Outlook and Recommendations*; Washington, DC, Center for Strategic and International Studies, pages 37-38



immediate information-sharing which generated serious privacy concerns and a creeping paranoia about any individual being constantly searchable and findable. New luxuries emerged alongside new technologies for escaping the grid<sup>25</sup>. IT technology was still the viral backbone for crime, terror, and mass information theft.<sup>26</sup>

The consistent level of tension and polarity that was commonplace manifested in a continued lower turnout in elections. This exaggerated the excessive influence of lobbyists and elite corporations and produced dismay in civic spheres. There were mounting protests among powerful coalitions composed of young people, hackers, poor, undereducated or unemployed people, rural and indigenous peoples. Often, ecological and energy activists played important roles. A similar friction was evident among political parties and governing bodies (World Banks, monetary funds, climate and economic alliances). A lack of effectiveness of large bodies like the U.N. reinforced the perceptions that institutions had failed society on many fronts. The lack of support for global agencies reduced individual governmental investment. By 2030, there were new pressures for effective global problem solvers. The lack of stability was visible in the northern hemisphere, particularly in Haiti, Cuba, and Nicaragua. The *Economist* referred to these countries as “kingdoms of inequality.”<sup>27</sup>

The resulting societal pulse was fluctuating and spasmodic. High levels of information overload, anxiety, and economic uncertainty reinforce a gestalt of instability. This produced a palpable sense of protectiveness, reinforcing the “me” first behaviors. Those with the means indulged this worldview through overt commercialism and emphasis on exotic travel to the remaining “last” frontiers of nature. They invested heavily in personal longevity and lifestyle enhancements. For the majority, they sustained a nostalgic dependence on tradition. On many levels, people returned to the importance of religion even in a post denomination era. Revivals or new religions were increasingly popular.<sup>28</sup>

The cultural response echoed these fluctuating currents. Special cultural zones emerged in cities in response to incredible diversity of people and traditions. Computers and communication tools provide instantaneous language translation. America was retrofitted with Spanish language signage as it was now the world’s second largest Spanish speaking country. The incredible diversity supported hundreds of communication channels and entertainment portals. This created a large body of influential spokespeople, and abundant advertising firms and creativity outlets.

---

<sup>25</sup> “The World in 2036,” in **The World in 2011**; *The Economist*, pages 111-114.

<sup>26</sup> “The Evolving Internet: Driving Forces, Uncertainties and Scenarios to 2025,” Global Business Network; retrieved 12-21-11 from [http://gbn.com/consulting/article\\_details.php?id=103&breadcrumb=ideas](http://gbn.com/consulting/article_details.php?id=103&breadcrumb=ideas)

<sup>27</sup> “Latin American Scenarios 2030,” page 87; retrieved 12-22-11 from <http://www.prweb.com/releases/2011/11/prweb8942427.htm>

<sup>28</sup> “The World in 2036,” op cit.



Not everyone moved comfortably in this polyglot climate. There was some resistance from older mainstream Anglos to the multicultural nature of metropolitan life in U. S. and Canada which increased the availability of separate segregated enclaves. The evolving multicultural fabric was highlighted by the shifting complexion of leaders in key professions: medicine, law, education, health, philanthropy, politics who were often leaders of color—and increasingly female. Female elders increasingly added second and third careers and deepened their education and community leadership roles.<sup>29</sup> Unfortunately, too many young males of all races lagged behind in levels of education, work, and civic leadership opportunities.

Across the hemisphere, there were interracial societies, but there was an uneven peace among racial and ethnic groups. The dynamics of the economic, climate, and energy shifts created mounting pressures on indigenous people and their practices (foods, fish, markets, materials). No community was safe from the disturbances of life in such a precarious future.

The field of philanthropy was in a state of flux. The number of active foundations had dropped dramatically, especially the smaller, independent foundations that had grown so dramatically in the earlier decades. A new appreciation for cross-sector partnerships to support an authentic voice for a love of people in partnership with the planet was bubbling up. New visionary social change leaders (millennials) were moving into leadership positions in philanthropy. There was a new passion for re-inventing the field, a feeling widely supported by a vocal minority of very senior trustees who had been the mission caretakers during the recent decades of austerity and cultural turmoil.

### **Treading Water: 2010-2020**

The *Precarious* scenario emerged from a time where institutions, firms, communities and families were forced to face the results of earlier actions. It wasn't any comfort when "all the pigeons came home to roost." The early teen years of the century were marked by disappointment in official institutions and a reluctance among people at all levels to change. The side effects of the globalizing world and decades of rapid technological change and ideological frictions had produced a sluggish era. In America, the decade was framed by a sobering confrontation on income inequality and the costs of securing the American Dream. The polarization had been magnified by earlier bailouts to the financial system and the resulting popular fallout in the hard working classes and on "main streets" was represented by too many lost jobs, too many robots replacing trained, technical workers, and rising cost pressures for food, housing, education, transportation, and health care.

By 2020, the years of fiscal austerity and wage stagnation had reduced the hopefulness for two generations: boomers and gen X. The process of producing temporary solutions to

---

<sup>29</sup> "How Baby Boomers Will Change Retirement," op cit.

rents in the social safety net created widespread distrust among many middle and working class people. In response, many turned toward ever shrinking human social circles and protected these viscerally from any disturbance whenever possible. The most adventurous, still extended themselves virtually in careless confidence that technological gadgets would replace the sense of malaise and critical judgments they harbored—and to which they felt entitled. Of course, there were a small number of winners in this decade. This group included large corporations with a widening global reach, hundreds of privileged institutions with sustainable endowments, and lobbyists and wealth management firms.

The growing polarization of the “ninety-nine percent” of regular folk from the perceived “one percent” of the wealthier elite cast a long shadow of the decade where sacrifice and frugal behavior was the new norm for most. Generational conflicts over end of life health care pitted aging boomers against institutions and ever-restrictive bureaucratic agencies. There were new and serious regional struggles over water, fisheries, and energy access to the new “grid.” The seeds of a more practical civic leadership and prudent management style took root in the face of almost insurmountable challenge and risks. Too many people extended their employment years in the face of withering benefits and savings. Though income levels sagged for many during the decade of belt tightening, there was an incremental return to employment that lifted the edge of despair and reduced the unemployment levels somewhat. Unfortunately, the U. S. unemployment levels stayed above 5.5% over the decade—an indicator of an economy still sorting out the deep structural changes that were a consequence of the Great Recession of 2007-10).

Meanwhile, for those with strong financial portfolios--wealthy individuals, large institutions, and foundations--this decade looked an awful lot like business as usual. There were harbingers of disconcerting changes on the horizon, but too few leaders happened to be listening. In philanthropy, social marketing, widening civic “voice” enabled by technology, and a focus on impact investment along with narrowing funding targets, and program specialization were the most common response in philanthropy. There was a rise in social innovation in the early part of the decade. There were still more than 75,000 charitable foundations in North America.<sup>30</sup>

Despite a general malaise, the decade produced new consensus on immigration and health care changes. As a result, by 2020, several pieces of important federal legislation and policy had increased access to opportunity and participation in the economy.

---

<sup>30</sup> Katherine Fulton and Andrew Blau, *Looking Out for the Future: An Orientation for Twenty-first Century Philanthropists*; Monitor Company, 2005, page 8

## Testing Assumptions: North American Philanthropy 2030

### *How Secondary Forces Interact in Relation to the Quadrant Dynamics of Driving Forces*

This work table represents a set of possible indicators for 2030 that follow from the dynamics of each of the key forces. It includes some basic assumptions about the trends for each force in this “limited/limited” scenario and the probably causal relationship between the drivers and each secondary force. Some of the possibilities listed here are derived from current publications; these are referenced in the footnotes. Generally, these are used as “jumping off points for development of the scenario narrative.

Forces	Scenario C
Key Dynamics of the Driving Forces	<i>Limited, disjointed, shallow, gap-filling, Band-Aid approaches to big social issues exist amidst tight limits to philanthropy; siloed traditional approaches continue to dominate. Prevailing plot in social sector is have-have less, “me-first” mentality in a polarized, yet collaborative society. Leaders still “kicking the can down the road” on solving the sustainability of modern life with its effective safety nets. Graying boomers and families of color with children are reshaping developed world<sup>31</sup> and class and political and ecological frictions in less developed areas. Generational wealth transfers of higher net worth older donors enhanced the largest and most sophisticated institutions and the community foundation sector but did not replace the loss of government funding for social challenges.<sup>32</sup> New approaches are on the horizon. More donors living longer and partnering with institutions for decades. Many other seniors have less wealth and little retirement income at 70 years of age, so they reduce their donations.</i>
Local responses to global economy	<p>TREND: INDEPENDENT FORCE</p> <p>CAUSALITY: WOULD MIRROR FRAGMENTED TRENDS</p> <p>Communities, firms, and people most adaptive to knowledge work remain viable and resilient. Buying local amid escalating costs for goods worldwide is shifting some jobs in country. Energy intensive global food production of specialized crops, organics, rare spices, etc. adding to water depletion and competition for resources while creating new jobs in Mexico.<sup>33</sup> Simultaneous doubling in global shipping volume reshaped hemispheric port and intermodal systems plus expanded Panama Canal shipping. Increased inter-hemispheric trade pacts.<sup>34</sup> NAFTA and regional trade pacts</p>

<sup>31</sup> “State of Metropolitan America,” Brookings Institution, page 7; retrieved 12-30-11 from <http://brookings.edu/metro/StateOfMetroAmerica.aspx>

<sup>32</sup> “Minnesota Generational Transfer of Wealth Study,,” retrieved on 12/22/11 from <http://www.mcf.org/resources/transfer>

<sup>33</sup> “Organic Agriculture May be Outgrowing its Ideals,” Elizabeth Rosenthal; New York Times; retrieved 12-31-11 from <http://nytimes.com/2011/12/31/science/earth/questions-about-organic-produce-and-sustainability.html?nl=todaysheadlines&emc=tha2>

<sup>34</sup> “Impact of Panama Canal Expansion on the U. S. Intermodal System,” U.S. Department of Agriculture, January 2010, page 7.

	<p>produce economic benefits and jobs but contributed to loss of some prized national sense of pride and identity. Late in this phase an economic slowdown creates shifts to regional networks in a tightly interdependent global economy. A more multi-polar economic world with several dominant countries and regions competing and sharing commerce and communications.</p> <p>More frequent public health challenges from food contamination, airborne viruses or contagions are magnified by increasing population in gigantic metropolitan centers, widespread global travel, and lack of coordination among key institutions in the health and homeland security systems.</p>
Responses to environmental challenges	<p>TREND: INDEPENDENT FORCE</p> <p>CAUSALITY: WOULD MIRROR FRAGMENTED TRENDS</p> <p>Clean technologies are mainstream in urban areas but rural and under-developed places way behind the curve. Alternative fuels sources are widely dispersed and more affordable. Businesses are more environmentally conscious. Public sector facing enormous costs to adapt waste, infrastructure, emergency systems in response to more extreme levels of rains, flood, disasters. Fresh water and safe fresh foods are priorities. <sup>35</sup>Habitat wetland, coastal losses. Landscapes altered by turbines, pipelines, and reflector farms. Moving from a culture of abundance (esp. in Canada and US) to a culture of stewardship of nature/resources.<sup>36</sup></p>
Rate and dispersion of technology	<p>TREND: INDEPENDENT FORCE</p> <p>CAUSALITY: WOULD MIRROR FRAGMENTED TRENDS</p> <p>Mobile and fully integrated information, commerce quite common. Each person shapes individual channels. Fully customized, location-specific augmented reality. Brings new options for education, health information-records, enterprise, and political activism and instant philanthropy. Mass collaboration and information sharing generates serious privacy concerns and concerns about being constantly searchable and findable. New luxuries: escaping the grid<sup>37</sup>. Wireless has leveled playing field across rural and less developed countries and people. Small organizations, underdeveloped or underfinanced groups/locales at least a generation behind. IT technology is still the viral backbone for crime, terror, and mass activism.<sup>38</sup> Key work in independent sector is online and virtual. Organizations host their own info channels (advanced U-tube); tech resources are differentiator in a have-have-not mentality that is commonplace (tension). Super tankers, advanced intermodal freight,</p>

<sup>35</sup> "North American Environmental Outlook to 2030;" Commission for Environmental Cooperation, Montreal, 2010, pages 8-9.

<sup>36</sup> "Outlook for the Environment," Jaisel Vadgama; *The Future of North America 2025: Outlook and Recommendations*; Washington, DC, Center for Strategic and International Studies, pages 37-38

<sup>37</sup> "The World in 2036," in **The World in 2011**; *The Economist*, pages 111-114.

<sup>38</sup> "The Evolving Internet: Driving Forces, Uncertainties and Scenarios to 2025," Global Business Network; retrieved 12-21-11 from [http://gbn.com/consulting/article\\_details.php?id=103&breadcrumb=ideas](http://gbn.com/consulting/article_details.php?id=103&breadcrumb=ideas)

	gigantic airplanes shape travel and commerce across the globe requiring global networks of goods, foods, fuels, machinery, and vehicles led to increasing infrastructure investments in Mexican, Panama Canal, coastal ports, deep water oil facilities and refineries. <sup>39</sup>
Response to demographic trends and generational change	<p>TREND: INDEPENDENT FORCE</p> <p>CAUSALITY: WOULD EXAGGERATE FRAGMENTED TRENDS</p> <p>3 largest NA countries with growing aged populations and fewer younger workers to support aging elders.<sup>40</sup> Majority non-white large cities with aging seniors. 20% of most Active elders are entrepreneurs, living Life 3.0. Active in continuous education, travel, storytelling, communicating with social networks and families, taking every advantage of the “longevity bonus<sup>41</sup>.” At the same time, larger numbers of sick and disabled seniors will fall through the gaps, straining health and service systems. “Pay as you go” retirement and Govt. supported care systems are limiting treatments and special services for the sizeable “economic underclass.” Social Security funding gaps are mounting, escalating a call for deeper cuts and shared sacrifices. Income and educational polarization impact care and access to information, work, and social networks.</p> <p>Social sector organizations and groups depend on seniors as wise and independent workers who work for less but have leadership privileges.<sup>42</sup> There is no shortage of urgent causes, which escalates the piecemeal and fragmentary response of philanthropy and the social sector.<sup>43</sup></p> <p>US immigration policies bring more tolerance and integration for Mexican-Latin American immigrants. N-S US Border corridors reflect diversity, cultural and economic vitality/tensions. Generational conflicts over end of life health care; regional struggles over water, fisheries, and energy access to the new “grid” will require practical civic leadership and prudent management.</p>
Response to socio-cultural values, roles, traditions	<p>TREND: ADAPTIVE FORCE</p> <p>CAUSALITY: WOULD MIRROR FRAGMENTED TRENDS</p> <p>Special cultural zones respond to diverse people, traditions (hundreds of</p>

<sup>39</sup> Impact of Panama Canal Expansion on the U. S. Intermodal System”

<sup>40</sup> “Outlook for Labor Mobility,” B. Lindsay Lowell; *Future of North America 2025: Outlook and Recommendations*; Center for Strategic and International Studies, Washington, DC, 2008; page 145.

<sup>41</sup> “How Baby Boomers Will Change Retirement,,” retrieved on 12-30-11 from <http://seniorliving.about.com/od/retirement/a/newboomerretire.htm?p=1>

<sup>42</sup> “The Future of Nonprofits—A Look Back from 2030,” Kenneth W. Harris, transcript from a speech, June 14, 2005; retrieved 12-22-11 from <http://www.theconsiliencegroup.com/media/other-presentations/The%20Future%20of%20Non%20Profits--A%20Look%20Back%20from%202030.pdf>

<sup>43</sup> “Global Challenges for Humanity” (excerpt from *2011 State of the Future*); The Millennium Project; retrieved 12-21-11 from <http://www.millennium-proiect.org/millennium/challenges.html>

	<p>communication channels, portals creating influential spokesmen, myriad of advertising outlets). Computers and communication tools provide instantaneous language translation. Resistance from older mainstream Anglos to the multicultural nature of metropolitan life in US, Canada. Shifting complexion of people to people of color in key professions: medicine, law, education, health, philanthropy, and politics. Rising gender equality in these sectors. Female elders increasingly taking on second and third careers and deepening their education and community leadership roles.<sup>44</sup> Young males are lagging behind in levels of education, work, and civic leadership. Increasing interracial society but uneven peace among racial and ethnic groups. Pressures on indigenous people and practices (foods, fish, markets, materials) from energy exploration in America and Mexico, receding snowcaps and tundra in Canadian and Alaskan north. America retrofitted with Spanish language signage as second largest Spanish speaking country.</p>
Levels of trust in public institutions, incl. governments	<p>TREND: DEPENDENT FORCE</p> <p>CAUSALITY: WOULD FOLLOW FRAGMENTED TRENDS</p> <p>Continued lower turnout in elections produced excessive influence for lobbyists, elite corporations and dismay in civic spheres—mounting protests among powerful coalitions of young, hackers, poor, undereducated or unemployed, rural and indigenous peoples or among ecological and energy activists. Global inequities, polarization and friction between the haves and have-nots, and among political parties and governing bodies (World Banks, monetary funds, climate and economic alliances) continued the negative trust levels for most large institutions and governments. Inability to protect borders and transportation routes produced widespread breakdowns, delays. Upgrading outmoded technology (air, rail, intelligence), and infrastructure improvements necessitated escalation in debts; persistent government corruption in small countries; lack of effectiveness of UN reduced governmental investment and lack of stability in many Latin American countries including Haiti, Cuba, Nicaragua become “kingdoms of inequality.”<sup>45</sup></p>
Response to societal threats	<p>TREND: ADAPTIVE FORCE</p> <p>CAUSALITY: WOULD FOLLOW FRAGMENTED TRENDS</p> <p>Exaggerated polarization in hemisphere between developed and underdeveloped—rich-poor gap widens; pockets of chronic and persistent poverty. Potent threats from rogue states, terrorist or crime networks, cartels, or pirates. Virulent and adaptive diseases, and identity-data viruses or penetration of mobile and wireless computing systems. Rising numbers and disruptions from natural calamities (droughts, storms-floods-tornados, typhoons, hurricanes, quakes, or toxic spills and threats to water systems or unexpected meltdowns of power reactors, fuel rods, spent, but radioactive fuel waters. Stresses around different values (property ownership on coast, proximity</p>

<sup>44</sup> “How Baby Boomers Will Change Retirement,” op cit.

<sup>45</sup> “Latin American Scenarios 2030,” page 87; retrieved 12-22-11 from <http://www.prweb.com/releases/2011/11/prweb8942427.htm>



	to waste storage sites, electrical or gas energy sites), abortion, religious practices (especially non Christian).
Levels of hope, happiness, optimism	<p>TREND: ADAPTIVE FORCE</p> <p>CAUSALITY: WOULD FOLLOW FRAGMENTED TRENDS</p> <p>High levels of information overload, anxiety, and economic uncertainty reinforce a gestalt of instability. This produces a palpable sense of protectiveness, reinforcing the “me” first behaviors. Those with the means might indulge this worldview through overt commercialism and emphasis on exotic travel to the remaining “last” frontiers of nature and personal longevity and health investments. For the majority, they may be turning or returning to religion (even in a post denomination era) and nostalgia for tradition. Revivals or new religions might be popular.<sup>46</sup></p>

---

<sup>46</sup> “The World in 2036,” op cit.

# Gary Hubbell Consulting *Conversation* 2012



## PARTICIPANT BIO

### **Kay Edwards**

President and CEO, Vesper Service Network

Kay Edwards is founder and CEO of the Vesper Service Network, an innovative social enterprise that connects not-for-profit organizations to the resources they need to thrive and grow, and brings people together around the common values of faith and service.

For more than 20 years, Kay has provided counsel in marketing research, planning, and organizational development to some of the largest not-for-profit organizations in the United States. She is a national leader in research among faith-based and denominational institutions, and has developed research models which enable organizations to learn and plan while respecting their unique culture and relationships with their constituents. Her work has been funded by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, the Lilly Endowment, and the Buffett Early Childhood Fund, among others.

Known by her clients and colleagues as “The Question Lady,” not-for-profit organizations call on Kay and the Vesper Service Network for her ability to ask important questions, bring clarity to complex situations, and create solutions that are both practical and impactful.

Prior to founding the Vesper Service Network, she founded and was managing partner of a unique, national consulting model that helped clients access new thinking resources, simplify consulting engagements, and manage costs. Under her leadership, the firm created four spin-off companies in partnership with its clients; led the design and launch of an innovative knowledge sharing and management information portal for an international association of foundations; and created new models for engaging donors with not-for-profit organizations.

Kay began her career as a communications specialist for a national cookware manufacturer, producing corporate training films and other communications vehicles. She has also worked as a research specialist and account executive for a regional advertising firm. She spent 14 years with Growth Design Corporation, a resource development consulting firm, as head of its research services, and 2 years as a member of its Executive Team, responsible for the firm’s service and team development and quality assurance.

She has served on the board of New Beginnings are Possible, an education and mentoring organization serving youth in Milwaukee’s inner city, is active in her church, and hosts HowToGiveBack.info, a blog on the meaning of grace in our lives.

Kay holds a music degree from Wheaton College in Wheaton, Illinois, an MBA from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, and has done graduate work in English/Creative Writing at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee.

This is Kay’s first *GHC Conversation*.

## The Year We Gave Back

By Kay Edwards

The year hadn't been such a bad one after all. Not like the year before when they had lost her father.

He was 91. He should never have lived that long. He was too big to be that old, too important for what was left of his body. Her mother liked to call him a freak of nature, "In a good way," she would say, because for so long he had defied the age that would make him smaller.

But in the end, even he had dried up, like the leaf on the bush outside her office window, the last one, that hung on when all of its brothers had fallen. But what good was that, really, just twisting there.

He was so old that the nurse at the hospital had asked his birthdate twice. People didn't live that long anymore. Even her mother, at 70, was beginning to be one of the older ones. Everyone had hope, everyone knew that the cures were just around the corner, just like they had been for as long as Noelle could remember, but somehow people died younger and from the same things they had died of when she was a girl.

Too old to treat, too old to waste the bed space, the antibiotics, the nurses' time, the things they needed for other patients, according to their rules. Except, maybe, they suggested, for a large donation, like a house, or a retirement savings, or a future share of wages, it couldn't be done, and sick as he was, as old as he was, her father reared up on the gurney and shouted, "No," in his deepest drill sergeant voice, or maybe he had just called her name, but he had startled the nurses, and they told her mother to take him home.

So they had managed to hold on to the house. Even that would not have bought more than a few more years for her father, and he never would have wanted that anyway. In the end, there was nothing they could do, nothing to be exchanged for something so dear as that.

She had worried about her mother in the weeks after her father died, worried that she would give up. On the day they buried him, she had watched her shrink as they had lowered his body, as if she were breathing him out, and the space left behind was collapsing in on itself. It was what her mother's family did, died together. Every generation added to the story, with one spouse dying when the other was gone, sometimes for no other reason than the effort to wake up without the other was too much work. It was why her mother cared so much that Noelle had never married, that there would be no opportunity to throw herself on the imaginary pyre of family tradition. She wondered, too, if her mother was annoyed at having to stay around to take care of her.

Her mother used to talk about the game she had played with her sister, when they were young, guessing what they would be doing in the year 2000, how old it seemed like they would be, like anything over 30 was something ancient, something to be slightly pitied. Now 2030 must seem like the end of the world to her.

She didn't quite know how circles had started, or where. She had read about it happening years before, of whole families sharing meals—nothing weird or cult-like—just a small group of neighbors who were tired of cooking every night and decided to cook once a week instead, for everyone.

Her mother had heard about one near them, and they had gone out of curiosity mostly, and the idea that they could help somehow, and her mother's distant memories of how things had been growing up on the farm, of always being sure that even if the worst happened you could take care of your own. No one took care of themselves anymore. Why would you?

When the circles first started people tried exchanging expensive things like jewelry or dishes. She had even looked once or twice at the yellow diamond that had belonged to her father's grandfather, the one passed down to her by her grandmother, passing over all of the older grandchildren, passing over all of the boys. But they could never quite figure out what to do with things like that, and before long no one would trade for them. She would get far more for her mother's fur coat, if it ever came to that, than she would for the ring.

They didn't need to belong, really, not like the ones who had lost their jobs, or gotten sick, or had exchanged their pensions for something they once thought they had needed, but they stayed because her mother made beautiful bread. Someone always wanted her pretty decorated cakes, or sweet jams, or the hand-knit socks made from llama wool, so warm and light. Noelle wished she had learned the things her mother had. All of the things she had thought there would be no time for, no place for in her bright world. Her name was Noelle, like the song of the angels, her mother had always told her, and it made her feel special, feel responsible for something, something she was forever looking for.

The organizations hated circles.

There were only about two dozen or so of them left, what people used to call nonprofits. No one knew that. No one cared. As long as the latest causes felt new. They made up names, they hired actors, sometimes even the disasters were just stories that had sounded good around some conference table. They raised hundreds of millions, much more than they had when anyone still worried about whether things were true or not.

They played a make-believe game of competition. Even the schools played it, played their parents against each other, for students, for donations, for pressure to be the best. No one knew they were all the same school, the same education, the same results. No one wanted

to know that, only to belong, and to have something different to rally around every week. Speed was the most important thing, and being first to know everything.

She remembered when she was growing up, when people thought technology would give everyone a voice. Instead it had given everyone the same voice, a chaotic, attention-starved, din of a voice that everyone followed, afraid to be left behind because they had nothing else to believe in but the sound of it and the desire to belong.

Everything changed so quickly. And everyone just went along with things, like a school of fish flashing from one side to another, never minding the things it was swimming around. There was no chance to think, no chance to consider, to wonder what had happened to the ideas they had the week before.

Without really meaning to, they had traded freedom for belonging, and after the freedom was gone, no one seemed to notice, or think that it had ever been something they might have wanted. They carried their thoughts and feelings with them on their devices, or more likely, not theirs at all, but only the things their devices told them to think and feel.

She of all people knew better, that the quickness and the brightness were just make-believe, something that she programmed for people to see and believe but never look behind, to see the sameness.

Once upon a time everyone had worried about the government taking over too much of their lives, but they had avoided that, and the tax revolt in 2015 had ended everything but the things only a government could do. Most of the governments had given up pretending, some more easily than others, that they cared what happened to the people, cared about anything other than comfort. But it was the Emotron that had finally proven it, finally put their thoughts and feelings out for everyone to see, and the only thing left to believe in was the organizations.

When she had first suggested it, she had been sure someone else was already working on it. It was what everyone wanted to know, what moved, what motivated, not just reading a mind, but reading a soul. It had been at least 20 years since those kids in the Valley had discovered a way to predict what people were going to do, really predict it, so well that they used the algorithm on parolees, knowing exactly what set of movements were taking them headlong to another crime, and intercepting them before they could get there.

Surely someone else had tried already to combine actions with some kind of biofeedback, but she suggested it anyway, and it was her team's algorithm, her idea of capturing everything around the device, the music playing on it, the background noise, the eye movements, the pauses between touches, that finally took. The music part had been her mother's idea, "the secret language of God," she had always called it. And it had worked. Eventually, when the last of the desktop machines and the land lines were gone, and

everyone carried their work and their life around on their devices, there was nothing left between the organizations who owned the magic and the people who fell under it. It wasn't so much that they controlled you, more like you couldn't wait to be controlled, to do everything you could to belong, so enticing had they made everything seem, so accurately could they predict what you were going to believe.

Now some of the really big businesses, and most of the small ones, were disappearing, as more and more, people only wanted to buy from the organizations. No one had understood that what seemed like a good solution might actually have been something they should have also feared.

The smart ones, the rich ones, caught on first, and bought what they needed, bought their freedom, even as they pretended to support the causes. For everyone else, the first flooded basement, the first college tuition, anything more complicated than a broken leg, meant choosing between comfort and control. Sure, you get what you needed most of the time, but you gave up the opportunity to take care of yourself, the opportunity to fail. Was it better to be owned by the government or Catholic Social Services? She didn't know.

Eventually there were only two kinds of people, the ones who knew they had lost everything to the organizations, and the ones who didn't.

In the early days working for the organizations had seemed like the right thing to do, the thing she had been meant to do. She told herself she would quit when her mother died, when she no longer had to take care of her, but she knew that when her mother died there would just be more fear, more reasons than ever to keep working for them.

She had begun to worry, when she was out, especially when she was driving, that things would just fly apart, and she held on hard to the steering wheel, catching glimpses of broken pieces out of the corner of her eye, and wondered how it could be that she was the only one who looked at the road and saw the horror flying past.

She knew a few people who had left, just gone away. She had been afraid to ask them to write, wondering if there was anyplace anymore where that could happen, where someone could craft thoughts of their own.

A few people in her circle had dared to stop using their devices completely, although she couldn't quite imagine how that would work for her. For months after her father died, she had carefully chosen the moments when she used her device, careful not to let her mind wander, not slip into the rage that would bring any attention.

Their circle had grown, but not so much that it attracted attention. There were some, even, who lived almost entirely off what they could trade or sell in the circle, and after her mother had convinced the woman with the llamas to join, and then a few other farmers came once



in a while, it got easier. That was the key, to have enough people in the circle who had things you could use, and enough people who still had money to pay for them.

She heard rumors that in some parts of the country, even doctors had begun to join, and do simple things, in exchange for something they wanted, but it was hard for her to imagine them wanting anything they couldn't already buy, and she never heard of any doctors in circles around here, so she thought it must not be true.

So every Thursday they went, not because they needed anything, but because her mother would have a fresh batch of cookies to trade, and Noelle would sit behind her, watching, thinking all the while, "If only they knew."

It was no big thing to work for the organizations. Everyone did, or would eventually. Her mother always said it would have happened anyway, that anything she had done was just something someone else would have figured out. Still, she never really told them what she did. And every time someone new joined the circle, every time someone gave more than they could afford to an organization, or bought too much, and especially when they gave up things they had really wanted to keep, it was like the first time she had understood that instead of being special, she was just responsible.

Finally it was only him who kept her coming back to the circle, the idea of his perfect calmness.

He was the only one who carried his device all the time, even to the circle, like it was something that didn't really matter to him. He was the only one who didn't seem to care what anyone thought, like he couldn't be owned, and when he shook back his long hair, it was like he was shaking off the world. He looked untouchable, like she imagined her father would have looked, if he had been that young at just the right time, when there was nothing left to do but push your way into an odd kind of freedom.

He put things together, as if from nothing sometimes. Everything he made was strong and clean, and beautiful, things that didn't need anything else to make them work. His circle worked that way too, the deals coming together so that everyone had what they needed, not too much, not too little. It was why he led the circle, why they trusted him, why he held his head differently than any of the rest of them. Even her breathing seemed slower when she was near him. Once, she had seen him quietly give a whole week's worth of food, something he had just traded for, to a family who had come to the circle with nothing to give.

Who knows why he did it that night? Who knows what started it? Who knows what he was feeling, except he seemed to be looking straight at her, hiding in the back row, while he held his device over his head. And then he started quietly, absently dismantling it, as if his hands were working by themselves, peeling the pieces apart, the screen protector, the

battery, the buttons, which seemed to come off too easily, giving up with so little effort. Even the Emotron recorded only calm, right up until he pulled it out of the back of the device. She watched it come out, fall on the floor, wondered how long it would try to keep going, as if by some magical power it could record the fear, the joy, the hope that hung around them, as if she could see it beating.

Giving it up meant disappearing from the crowd. Maybe someone, sometime would wonder where you had gone. Destroying it meant someone, somewhere would know you were gone, and hunt for ways to get you back. In that simple act, she realized, he had plunged them down the road to rebellion, the road to love, the real kind, not the stuff based on what people cared about. Love greater than fear.

She jumped into the circle and smashed the Emotron under her heel. She didn't know why. She stood and looked around her, surprised at what she had done. And then she knew it was over, knew she would wake up the next morning and use her device one more time to tell her boss she was leaving, and then there would be no more fear, no more driving down the road imagining that things were flying apart, no more hiding, only redemption and love.