

Stop Sociocide! Stop the Wearing Down of Our Sociosphere!

Evelin Lindner's contribution
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Creating Courage Through Action in the Age of Cogitocide, Sociocide, and Ecocide
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Honoring Linda Hartling and Victoria Fontan

I would like to begin with honoring our dear Linda Hartling. Not only is she hosting this dignilogue, she makes this entire workshop possible. She has worked day and night for weeks and months, nurturing this workshop into being. I have no words to thank you, dear Linda!



Just now, we heard our brave Victoria Fontan, our more than brave Victoria, Vice President of Academic Affairs at the American University of Afghanistan, now in exile. Linda and I are in awe of what our dear Victoria Fontan has achieved in her amazing career! We are so proud to have Victoria in our dignity family all the way back since 2002!

Victoria defended her Afghan students and faculty who succeeded to come out of Kabul from being separated and managed to keep them together. Many good-intentioned academic institutions wanted to help, however, they wanted to pick only a few students and faculty members. If Victoria had given in, the group would have been dismantled. Victoria had the courage and farsightedness to fight for solutions that would keep the group together. We are in awe, dear Victoria, at your courage and moral and ethical steadfastness!



Now, let me turn to the topic of sociocide. The big question of our time is, “How do we create the courage to come out from cogitocide, sociocide, and ecocide?”

Linda has this answer, “The way out of sociocide is to create a ‘garden of ideas.’ We can no longer live in a ‘thought desert,’ no longer can we accept the desertification of our eco- and sociospheres.”

Indeed, this is precisely what we do in our dignity community, the way out is through mutual solidarity.

Sociocide

(The full references are to be found in my book
From Humiliation to Dignity: For a Future of Global Solidarity)

What is sociocide?

Ecocide is the killing of our *ecosphere*, of our ecological world, of which we only are a small part, despite our belief to be its masters. *Sociocide* is the killing of our *sociosphere*, of the cohesion in our human communities, local and global. In other words, while ecocide is the wearing down and destruction of the ecological fabric of our planet, sociocide is the wearing down and destruction of the quality of our human relations on Earth, of the social fabric of our societies and communities. Just now, at the present juncture in history, we experience increasingly aggressive polarizations, fired up by the conspiracy theories that Becky Tabaczynski has researched and spoken about earlier in this Dignilogue.

We, as humankind, have dug ourselves into this calamity both despite and because of what we call progress, progress achieved by millennia of competition for domination. Throughout history, the mindset of competition for domination has often been successful, at least to a certain degree, even though it always had many limits to its usefulness. By now, it fully outlives this usefulness. This mindset, and the social and societal order built on it, drives systemic cogitocide and sociocide, it divides the global community just when it needs to come together, and by doing so, it hastens global ecocide. It manifests systemic humiliation.

Sociocide and ecocide together are thus the consequence of humiliation that has been congealed into systems. We all remember South Africa as it was in the grip of humiliation congealed into a system called apartheid. Present-day military-corporate-political systems that drive global races for arms and resources are the most recent expression of this. Sociocide and ecocide together, as they afflict an entire planet, drive systemic humiliation to hitherto unattained levels.

Where does this systemic sociocidal humiliation come from? Linda and I have worked on this question for the past decades, and I have just finalized a book of 450 pages on this topic: *From Humiliation to Dignity: For a Future of Global Solidarity* (Lake Oswego, OR: World Dignity University Press of Dignity Press, 2022).

Where does this systemic sociocidal humiliation come from?

Linda’s short answer is, “Humiliation, and fear of humiliation, are emotional incubators for all forms of sociocide, and this includes the present epidemic of misinformation and conspiracy theories.”

Dignism

It saddens me when this humiliation, rather than being healed, is made worse by cycles of humiliation driven by hate-speech. What worries me most is hate-speech surrounding the capitalism-versus-socialism debate, a debate driven by enraged people who do not even know what these catchwords mean. My aim is to turn away from fighting over backward-looking mindsets, I wish to point at positive future-oriented goals that can unite us all.

What are your thoughts? How can we sideline hot button -ism words such as “socialism,” “communism,” “capitalism”...?

How can we sideline hot button -isms? Perhaps we should not want more -isms, perhaps we do not need new -isms. But if we need them, I have coined the phrase dignism (dignity + ism) as a compass for the de-construction of competition for domination and the co-construction of new global governance arrangements.

I ask us, humanity as a whole, all citizens of *Earthland*, to forge a global citizens movement under the banner of a new connective narrative, so we can make a decent world come true:

Dignism describes a world where every newborn finds space and is nurtured to unfold their highest and best, embedded in a social context of loving appreciation and connection, where the carrying capacity of the planet guides the ways in which basic needs are met. It is a world where unity in diversity reigns, where we unite in respecting human dignity and celebrating diversity, where we prevent unity from devolving into oppressive uniformity, and where we keep diversity from sliding into hostile division. It is a world where we protect diversity from being levelled out through uniformity and prevent unity from being broken down through division. Dignism means avoiding “uniformity without diversity” as much as “division without unity.” It means transforming everything into loving global unity in diversity.

Dignism means ending the cycles of humiliation that emerge when human rights are promised but not delivered, dignism appeals to the enormous power of hope for equal dignity that was created by what we call modernity, only to be left unfulfilled. Dignism means loving care for the common good of all of humanity as co-inhabitants of a single finite habitat. Dignism means establishing governance structures that dignify globalisation and manifest what I call co-globegalisation. Dignism realizes unity in diversity through subsidiarity, through weaving together all dignifying aspects of all of the world’s cultures into one decent global village.

Solidarity

Philosopher Howard Richards wrote the Foreword for the book on solidarity that I just finalized. It is wonderful that Howard accepted to be this year’s recipient of the Lifetime Commitment Award of our Human Dignity and Humiliation Studies community. Congratulations, dear Howard!

I would like to share his defense of the term solidarity, not least to show his brilliance, both his intellectual and ethical brilliance.

The phrase and concept of solidarity can lead very much astray. Only if certain conditions are fulfilled can this term set us on a path towards building cultural mindsets that support the well-being of all people across all differences. The first condition is that it must be *global* solidarity rather than *local* in-group solidarity for the sake of out-group enmity, and, second, it must be *global common* solidarity rather than simply the solidarity among “the rentiers, the plutocracy, and globalized finance,” as economist Guy Standing would say. Philosopher Howard Richards acknowledges that for some people, the word solidarity brings back nightmare memories of the Gulag — this word, solidarity, “has been the rhetoric of unworkable schemes that existed only on paper, while the reality has been inefficient bureaucracies, corruption, the silencing of dissent, and terror.”

Howard Richards published three books with the phrase solidarity in the title, *Solidarity for Full Employment*, *Solidarity to Raise Wages*, and *Solidarity for Forgiveness of Debts*. Richards defends the use of the word solidarity as follows:

The word began its career as a player in the discourse of modernity as *solidarité*. It was a watchword and an ideal of the French working class in the mid nineteenth century. The French delegation brought it into the first socialist international, the International Workingman’s Association, founded in London in 1861, and through it into the world’s main languages. Its main meanings were two: Stand Together United, and Mutual Aid. In the early days, it was used especially to raise funds for international aid sent to comrades in distress in other countries.

Howard Richards is in favor of the term solidarity because it was historically associated with questioning the system, both from a socialist point of view, and from a pre-modern religious traditionalist point of view. What motivates both Howard Richards and me to use this word is that it “puts structural change on the agenda by proposing — and often the proposals are made by people who practice what they preach — living by the rules of a different basic social structure.”

Indeed, together with Howard Richards, I am embedded in global networks of people who attempt to walk their talk, who attempt to practice what they preach, not just in their work but also in their personal lives — and who work for deep systemic change.

No more ecocide: Introducing Femke Wijdekop, Polly Higgins, and Jojo Mehta

I am so happy that Femke Wijdekop is with us in this Dignilogue! Just like me, she was inspired by Polly Higgins and her advocacy of a *law of ecocide*. I was in touch with late Polly Higgins when she held the Arne Næss Professorial Chair in Global Justice and the Environment at the University of Oslo from 2012 – 2014.

Inga Bostad had invited Polly. Inga Bostad is a philosopher and professor at the University of Oslo and she was then the Pro-Rector of the University. Inga Bostad has also hosted the launch of our World Dignity University initiative at the University of Oslo in 2011, and despite being extremely busy, she kindly sent us a video greeting for this workshop. Thank you, dear Inga!

Polly Higgins held the Arne Næss Chair — Arne Næss was one of the most renowned Norwegian philosophers, known to be the *father of deep ecology*. He and his wife attended one of our two foundational conferences for the HumanDHS movement, namely, our conference in 2003 in Paris. Victoria Fontan was with us in this conference, too!



Linda and I are so proud of the large web of loving dignity connections that grow through our work over such long time spans! Our work is a labor of love that will enrich the rest of our lives and will hopefully be carried forward by the generations after us.

I would now like to warmly welcome Femke Wijdekop!

