

Living Economies Forum

THE ONLINE HOME OF DAVID KORTEN
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“The old economy of greed and dominion is dying. A new economy of life and partnership is struggling to be born. The outcome is ours to choose.”

Story Power

We humans live by stories that frame our understanding of ourselves, our world, and our human possibilities. Our shared stories create a [culture](#) of shared values, understanding, and expectations that is an essential foundation of coherent community life. (See Tom Atlee's discussion of [story fields](#).) Because we literally see the world through the lens of our cultural stories, we are strongly inclined to conform to the cultural norms of our tribe or community. For this reason, those who control the prevailing cultural stories, control the society.

Herein lays the key to understanding how the dominator hierarchy of Empire has maintained its hold on human societies for 5,000 years and why most people in contemporary societies have been inclined to accept and conform to the stories of economic values and relationships that legitimate rule by the institutions of Wall Street.



Ruled by Stories

Throughout history, imperial institutions have disrupted the relationships of community and the processes of cultural regeneration by which authentic communities continuously renew and affirm their shared values and understanding. The propagandists of Empire then replace cultural stories that affirmed values of mutual caring and accountability with stories that celebrate the special merit of those in power and the duty of each citizen to comply with the dictates of imperial authority. Empire maintain's its control in part through the coercive power of sword and gun, but its ultimate instrument of control is cultural power, the ability to control the defining stories of the public culture. The result is a [cultural trance](#), rather like a hypnotic state, in which Empire conditions us to accept submission as liberation.

Want to know whether you are engaging the world in an awakened state? This link will take you to a [simple test](#).

The Earth Community Advantage

Although Empire controls the mass media and the formal education system, Earth Community holds the natural advantage because most Empire stories are fabrications that deny:

- Reality and our daily experience, and
- The potentials of our higher human consciousness.

We humans are born to learn. Although suppressed by Empire, a natural drive to know and understand our world is inherent in our human nature This gives truth an inherent advantage. Although this advantage is

greatest with those who have awakened from the cultural trance, the thirst to know resides in all of us. The faster the awakening spreads the greater truth's advantage becomes. For a quick overview of the contrast between Empire stories and Earth Community stories see the [Story Change Matrix](#).

Change the Story, Change the Future

To change the human course, we must change the stories that frame our shared understanding of the nature and means of attaining [prosperity](#), [security](#), and [meaning](#) from:

- Fictional **Empire [prosperity stories](#)** of financial capital, economic growth, free trade, and consumerism to authentic **Earth Community prosperity stories** of living capital, equity, local self-reliance, and sufficiency.
- Fictional **Empire [security stories](#)** of global competition and military domination to authentic **Earth Community security stories** of global cooperation and demilitarization.
- Fictional **Empire [meaning stories](#)** of dead worlds, jealous patriarchs, and the meanness of human nature to authentic **Earth Community meaning stories** of integral spiritual intelligence and the potentials of a mature human consciousness. These are also known as our creation stories. They are foundational because they shape our understanding of the nature and purpose of reality and of



our human nature and possibility.

See the [The Matrix of Competing Stories](#) for an outline summation of the contrasting Empire and Earth Community prosperity, security, and meaning stories.

One key to liberating ourselves from Empire is learning to recognize Empire stories as fictions designed to hide truths that Empire finds inconvenient and to give voice to the truth embodied in the contrasting stories of Earth Community. Once we learn to recognize Empire stories for what they are, the trance is broken. Much of the work of the [Earth Community Navigator](#) involves facilitating processes by which people come to recognize Empire stories instinctively and file them away in a mental category labeled "fiction," as they call forth the corresponding Earth Community story. The Navigator's point of entry may be an Empire fiction of particular relevance to a given individual or group that eventually be exposed to the overarching meta-story of the [Great Turning](#) and the defining human choice between the [Empire](#) (dominator) and [Earth Community](#) (partnership) models for organizing human relationships.

If you want to engage the Great Work of reclaiming our power from Empire, don't attack its armies with physical force. Rather spread the awakening by exposing imperial fiction for what it is and sharing the good news of the possibilities of Earth Community.

Bring the good news into your conversations with friends and colleagues. Organize an [Earth Community Dialogue](#). If you have a leadership role with a progressive organization, consider defining the mission of your organization in terms of the cultural story that will be changed if you succeed in achieving your objective and then define a story change strategy. For examples from my own experience, see "[Change the Story, Change the World.](#)" See also a collection of examples from [other organizations](#) compiled by Earth Community Navigator Michael Greenman.