A Pattern Beginning to Appear

This week several apparently unrelated strands began to converge in a way that caught my attention.

The first concerned the ethical dilemmas now facing developers of advanced artificial intelligence. As these systems become more powerful, the organisations building them must decide how they will relate to governments — including military institutions. As is often the case with the development of new technologies, capabilities tend to outstrip the moral development of the human beings who will be using them. Sometimes these moral questions are brought into sharp relief by the public response to the choices companies make.

This may not necessarily be a bad thing. It keeps a living edge of debate where these questions become active interfaces for serious discussion. But it is also risky, because there is no guarantee that humanity will rise to the challenge. Historically there has almost always been a lag between technological capability and moral maturity. That, perhaps, is a larger question for another essay.

The dilemma in this case is that governments operate primarily through national interests, and those interests do not always align with the long-term wellbeing of humanity as a whole — or even with the deeper needs of their own citizens. AI developers therefore find themselves in a difficult position: how to cooperate responsibly with public institutions while recognising that geopolitical agendas may not always reflect the broader needs of people or of the planet.

While exploring this question, I came across a very different development within AI research itself.

Increasingly, researchers are experimenting with distributed "agent swarm" architectures, where many specialised systems interact with one another rather than relying on a single central model. Intelligence, in these designs, begins to emerge through coordination between multiple agents rather than from a single dominating system.

Early work suggests that broader and more inclusive perspectives can emerge through such distributed systems. If agents are designed to represent different dimensions of concern — resource allocation, environmental impact, long-term planetary stability, or the needs of the biosphere — the resulting conversation between them may generate insights that rarely appear in conventional national policy debates. The wider the range of perspectives included in the network, the more integrative the resulting intelligence may become.

This idea prompted another thought. If such distributed systems were to incorporate the many positive developments already occurring across multiple fields — advances in renewable energy, improvements in global health, innovations

in ecological restoration, and numerous other trends documented by publishing initiatives such as *Fix the News* — then an even richer picture of possibility might begin to emerge.

What struck me most, however, was the resonance with something I have been witnessing in a very different context.

In the high-attention relational groups I help to facilitate, we have been exploring what might be called distributed intelligence between human beings. As coherence within a group becomes established, insights seem to arise not from any individual participant but from the interaction itself — from the living space between us. The group becomes capable of sensing, responding and learning in ways that exceed what any individual mind could produce alone.

There is also a deeper capacity to hold diversity and difference without collapsing into compromise and consensus or fragmenting into confrontation.

More recently, almost weekly, we have been encountering more groups and initiatives exploring similar territory — not necessarily with the same goals, but with parallel approaches and similar language. Each uses slightly different methods — dialogue practice, collective sensing, collaborative governance — yet the underlying intuition feels remarkably similar: that intelligence may be fundamentally relational.

For some time, I have been viewing this work through the lens of a fracturing world, sensing it as new shoots emerging within the cracks of collapse. It is difficult to ignore the signs of strain across our global systems: climate disruption, political polarisation, ecological degradation. The possibility of civilisational instability is widely discussed.

Yet this week I encountered another perspective — one that felt both exciting and eye-opening.

Projects such as *Fix the News* document long-term positive trends across multiple domains: accelerating renewable energy adoption, declining global poverty and child mortality, expanding scientific collaboration, and numerous technological and social innovations that rarely enter public narratives or feature in the global competition for attention.

Taken individually, these developments can appear scattered and unconnected. But when viewed together, a different picture begins to emerge.

Many of the most promising responses to global challenges are not arising primarily through national governments. Instead, they appear through transnational networks: research collaborations, city alliances, open-source communities, civil society initiatives and distributed innovation ecosystems. These networks operate through shared intelligence and cooperation rather than through central authority.

Seen alongside developments in AI architecture and relational group practice, an intriguing pattern begins to appear.

Across several domains we seem to be witnessing a similar shift:

- from individual intelligence toward **relational intelligence**
- from centralised systems toward **distributed networks**
- from competitive domination toward **collaborative coordination**

This does not mean that existing structures such as the nation-state will suddenly disappear. But it raises the possibility that they may gradually become one layer within a larger ecology of coordination, where national priorities are balanced within a broader context that allows for a living debate about consequences and possibilities.

If intelligence truly emerges more effectively through relationship than through central control, then new forms of organisation may begin to arise that reflect this principle.

Perhaps the most interesting aspect of this moment is that these developments are appearing independently across many fields at the same time. When similar experiments begin to surface in different domains — a kind of convergent evolution — it can sometimes signal that a deeper shift is underway.

Even the act of noticing these convergences may itself be significant. The dominant mindset of recent centuries has often sought advantage through analysis, separation and control. What may now be emerging is a wider perspective that looks for resonance and relationship — one that seeks to integrate rather than dominate.

It is far too early to draw firm conclusions. The challenges facing humanity remain profound, and many of our institutions are struggling to adapt to the scale of change now underway. Yet it is possible that mechanisms of resonance may allow change to leap across gaps that other forms of exchange are too limited to catalyse.

Alongside the narratives of collapse and fragmentation, another possibility may also be quietly taking shape: the emergence of new forms of collective intelligence capable of responding to the complexity of our world.

For now, it appears only as a pattern beginning to emerge — but patterns are often how the future first announces itself.