

A Shift To Biosphere Consciousness

By Shawn Radcliffe

A new generation is rising and with it different views on how we define freedom, power, and community.

There is a basic change going on with the younger generation that is strange to older people. There is a change in the way you define “freedom”, the way you define “power”, and the way you define “community”, and these changes really suggest the real revolution.

For my generation and generations before me, freedom was very simple. To be free is to be an autonomous agent, to be self-sufficient, to be independent, to not be beholden to others, to be an island to oneself so that one can have freedom as exclusivity.

For the younger generation that grew up on the Internet, autonomy is death. Being “an island to oneself” is death. Because for your generation, you ask the question, “How can I flourish to the full extent of my possibilities here on the planet?” And it is clear that your answer to that is I flourish to the extent that I am embedded in community after community where I can share my talents and those talents can benefit the network and come back to benefit myself. I am free because I have access and for you, freedom is not exclusivity. It is inclusivity.

The younger generation has a different sensibility about power which makes the older generation very nervous. We essentially have believed that power always has to be a pyramid. It goes from the top down. That is power. There is no other way to define power. It's a pyramid.

But young people that grow up on the Internet - it's strange because you grew up thinking that power has to do with the networks you're engaged in. For you, power is not vertical, it's lateral. For you, power is being enmeshed in network after network where you benefit each other. Open source!

And finally - I think most importantly - we are seeing a change in the way our younger generation perceives identity to community. I grew up in a nation state - we were very clear on community - that is each individual is born to be an autonomous agent and we are each sovereign. And each of us compete with other sovereign individuals in the marketplace for scarce resources in a zero sum game. Our nations represent us because they are our sovereigns and they represent all the millions of individual citizens who are sovereigns

against other nations and each nation then competes with every other nation for scarce resources in the marketplace or the battlefield in a zero sum game.

Here's my question: Does anyone here believe that we are going to be able to address climate change and bring the human family together and take our responsibility for our fellow creatures and the Earth we live in with that worldview? Anybody?

What we're beginning to see with our younger generation, and I don't want to overstretch this but I am beginning to sense a shift from geopolitics to biosphere consciousness. The biosphere is that nineteen kilometers from the stratosphere to the ocean where all life and all the chemicals on the planet interact to maintain the ecosystems and the biology of the Earth.

These kids are learning ecological footprint. We actually have young people coming home and at dinner time they are asking their parents where the hamburger came from on the table. They are saying, "Did that hamburger come from a rainforest?" "Did they have to destroy the trees for four little inches of topsoil which only gives you three years of grazing so that cow could become my hamburger?" And when those trees are destroyed for the top soil to graze the cow for the hamburger, the kids are smart enough to understand that those trees harbor rare species of plant and animal life that only live in those canopies - they go extinct.

And then they connect the dots. If the trees disappear for the soil to graze the cow for the hamburger, those trees are not there to absorb carbon dioxide from industrial emissions and that means the temperature of the planet goes up. They are beginning to understand that everything each of us does intimately affects some other human being, some other creature and the planet we live in. We live in an indivisible, biosphere community. There is no escape. This isn't just academic. Our well-being depends on the well-being of the whole system and all the creatures in it.

We all have to really come together. We've got one generation to lay down this new biosphere consciousness. Pass on this legacy so when your grandchildren look back at you, they can say you did the right thing. You helped replenish the planet, got us off carbon, and helped show our proper respect to generations not yet here including our fellow creatures.

We must begin to think, organize, and act from a biosphere consciousness if life as we know it will continue to exist. We are in the midst of the greatest transition upon which humanity has ever embarked. How will you respond?

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