

“MANIFESTO FOR A NEW MILLENNIUM” BY BARRY RODRIGUE

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“Manifesto for a New Millennium. A Working Agenda for the Anthropocene”.**

The Future is a dimension to which all life aspires.

In the rapid change of modern society, technological innovation is especially fast-paced, moving in many cases at exponential speed. This innovation has potential for both good and bad outcomes. Some innovations provide better quality of life – from medical cures to improvement in food and shelter. Other technologies provide mere amusement. Some result in imbalance and inequity in the world – from the exclusion of entire human groups from global decision-making to degradation of the planetary biome. Still others, such as massive weapons development, have produced decisively negative consequences.

These problems are generally unintended. Few people overtly seek to harm others. Major tragedies like the chemical spill at Bhopal, the nuclear meltdown at Chernobyl, and the oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico were accidents. Even war is not sought as an end result, but is seen as a method to obtain security. Nonetheless, all of these problems are an expression of the values, concerns and priorities of our present-day global civilization.

Monetary reward and what it can buy has become a common standard in today’s world. Large-scale consumerism exists side by side with degrading poverty. Even the poorest segments of society aspire to banal forms of consumption. This is a result of monopoly marketing and pervasive media outreach. It also represents a lack of value ascribed to the basic necessities of life, from water to trees – until they are commoditized and marketed as bottles of Perrier or Ikea cabinets.

Much of the world’s natural resources and technological creativity go into wasteful pursuits. For example, seeking short-term profits, society uses dirty and out-dated energy systems. A result is smog-clogged cities, as petroleum reserves decline. This threatens future generations with the conundrum of health problems and environmental decay, as well as an increasing lack of energy resources to correct them. Such contradictions appear wherever we look in the world today. Indeed, the world threatens to devolve into islands of educated and wealthy elites surrounded by wastelands of death and decay.

In addition, the eradication of species and ecosystems around the world is happening at such a rapid pace that the planet's collective biome is threatened.# Given the interconnected nature of these crises, the rational management of technological innovation, production and marketing is at the heart of not only our prosperity but of our very survival as a species on Earth.

How can innovation address these issues of values and priorities?

The majority of the world's population does not have access to high-technology, although they are affected by it. Up to 30% of the global community has access to information and computer technology. While this seems significant, it is not: It is only 2 billion out of 7 billion people. In addition, this majority of "unconnected" citizens also do not have access to clean water, nutritious food, adequate healthcare, proper shelter, or basic education. This situation represents an enormous loss of people who could help to advance global innovation, if they were included in the process.

While innovation is often presented as a technological process, it also needs to be applied everywhere and to everything. We need innovation in human affairs, from family relations to business affairs. Innovation has to address both ecological balance of species and destruction of inorganic habitats. Alternatives must be found for warfare and the arms industry. In short, innovation is a process that applies to all existence.

There needs to be global mechanisms for review and regulation. A significant danger lies in "wildcat" and irresponsible implementation of technology and other forms of innovation without understanding the consequences...or the ignoring of those consequences in order to obtain higher financial profits. This is especially true given the potentially devastating and rapid nature of genetic engineering and nano-technology. Therefore, in tandem with technological innovation, we need innovation of social mechanisms to manage them.

Today, innovation takes place like a patchwork quilt. In some cases, it is done by individuals or teams, in others as research centers and institutes or agencies, and in still others as national or international programs. Sometimes it comes from military or theoretical adaptation, at other times as community needs or corporate agendas. It trickles up and trickles down and trickles side to side. Internet activities – from twitter to e-mail – have made profound impact on society throughout the world. Nonetheless, while innovation is shared to a greater or lesser degree through journals, conferences and private communication, much of its dissemination is erratic, uncoordinated, and often goes unnoticed.

A large, well coordinated paradigm shift is needed on a global scale.

The adversarial, anti-intellectual, and money-oriented nature of the world's political and corporate milieu today hinders rapid beneficial change from happening. One of my fears is that technological innovation will become an excuse for destroying the Earth. Hidden in the belief that "technology will save us" is the idea that technology therefore gives us the license to totally consume the natural world, a modern form of deus ex machine, with technology replacing the gods.

Although there are progressive movements inside of capitalism, government, religion and education, this change is too little and too late. In addition, these social structures themselves prevent adequate change from taking place. State capitalism and corporate capitalism are two sides of a debased coin that cannot purchase our future survival. The constant growth and profits that capitalism requires cannot be sustained, especially under the conditions of today's overpopulated and stratified world. However, we need the incentive and rewards of hard work and useful innovation that free market systems provide.

This leaves the only chance for such a paradigm shift in the hands of those who can assemble ideas for renovation and effectively disseminate them on a global scale most quickly and most deeply. It requires global cooperation of scholars and scientists, business and civic leaders, citizens and workers, the poorest outcasts and the wealthiest elites, philosophers and spiritual leaders, community activists and many others. Therefore, a new partnership is required.

How do we make this happen? What is the process we must follow?

We have had many brilliant ideas and innovations presented at the Global Future 2045 Congress, held in Moscow. These innovations are very exciting and very important, but the BIG QUESTION is how do we link them, how do we promote them, how do we popularize them – in such a fashion that we create a new world consciousness, a new world civilization – in what my friend, David Hookes, calls "Global Enlightenment".

Barry Rodrigue