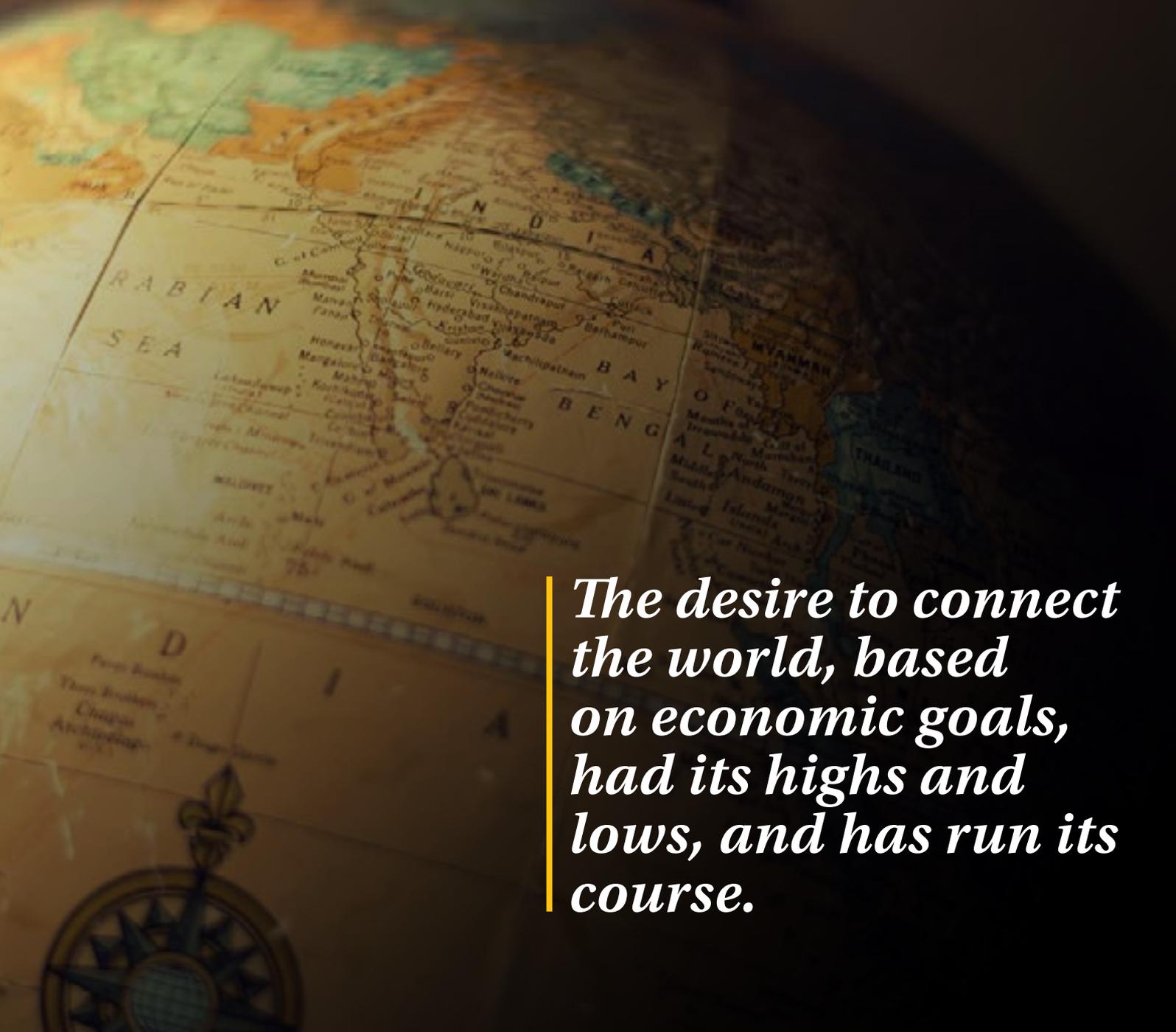




The Age of

Affinity



The desire to connect the world, based on economic goals, had its highs and lows, and has run its course.

Remember when globalisation was the word on everyone's lips, promising cheaper trade and inexorable good? Well, it did bring bounty with it for a time. But after the GFC, the idea fell out of favour with economists and it began to falter on the back of a slackening world economy, and the rise of protectionist policies.¹ For the last decade some of the more negative political and social affects have emerged.

Now, under the influence of months of Covid 19, it's been suggested that globalisation is on its deathbed. Economists such as Mike O'Sullivan² believe 2020 was the nail in its coffin, as the year highlighted wealth inequality, world record levels of debt, and on global issues such as how to deal with pandemic. We're economically at the end of end of an era³, he says, that began with the fall of communism and is ending with the shutting down of democracy in Hong Kong and the consequences of a global disease contagion. The desire to connect the world, based on economic goals, had its highs and lows, and has run its course.

The New World Order

A new way of thinking has begun to emerge and is showing that countries are more willing to collaborate with each other based on shared values. O’Sullivan likens the change going on in the world right now, to great sheets of ice breaking apart, drifting away, and reforming. He uses the example of how countries now regard the Internet from a values-based point of view, yet differently. The United Kingdom’s and Europe’s concerns and interests in the Internet are related to data and privacy. China on the other hand, sees it as a political tool that it needs to contain. Whereas America looks to the Internet for technological innovation and financial rewards.

This values-based thinking is being echoed in smaller countries as well. There is a new trend among geopolitical micro-powers that puts values first. NZ, Iceland, and Scotland, who are self-labelling as Wellbeing Economy Governments, are prioritizing ecological and human wellbeing over, or as well as, financial growth. And O’Sullivan believes that that the exit of globalisation could be making way for something better.

Values Over Money

So how do we operate in a new world that is no longer motivated entirely by financial gain? And how did we get here?

Let’s start by exploring the second question through a social and spiritual lens that might bring a sharp focus to our current values. There are thought leaders⁴ in this space, who view the current human situation as marked by collective trauma – that is, trauma we are born into. We are living in a unique moment in time because of the technologies that have given us wide access to information. We’re connected in way that the world has never been before. And while that connectedness has brought many positives, it has also given wings to greater polarities and divisions of belief.

This has produced an overload of trauma that we’re dealing with by dissociating or fragmenting ourselves. Author Thomas Huebl says, we’re living in an illusion that we’re informed, when really, we’re just becoming more indifferent. Without physical, spiritual, emotional, and relational unification, we are looking at world through broken glass. And what we see is not necessarily out there.³

Similarly, Indigenous wisdom author, Dr Tyson Yunkaporta⁵, describes us as being custodians of the past. Everyone who is alive, holds all of what came before. Every time a soul is born, we receive the coded information of our time. And most importantly, we stay in trauma until we make meaning of it. Yunkaporta talks about the need to rediscover high context reasoning that affords us a deeper, more nuanced but less explicit understanding of our culture. We are so patterned to perform certain behaviours in our systems, it’s like we’re on factory settings.

Emerging from Collective Trauma into Affinity

The current dialogue surrounding the collective trauma we are carrying due to our technological, economic, and social contexts, may be one explanation of our swing to more values-based decision making. The world has transitioned through the Agricultural, Industrial Age, and Information Ages, all characterised by the desire for financial wealth and growth. And globalisation has fed the same hungry mouth.

The best response to the collective trauma of these legacies, Huebl suggests, is to better integrate our inside self with our outside self. In pursuing this self-integration, we are likely to be much more connected to what drives us and who we want to be in the world.

A well-integrated person will then seek out businesses whose purpose aligns with theirs. At the organisational level this can translate into developing an affinity to companies with purpose, values, and goals we can relate to.



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Leading in the Age of Affinity

In this new Age of Affinity, leaders are striving to find a true alignment between their well-integrated, personal core values and the values defined within their organisation.

Some of the principles⁶ that can help guide us to realise this whole picture include:



Self-reflection

A key learning tool for values-based leaders who seek to constantly re-evaluate their purpose and their goals.



Living in their truth

Is essential to the values-based leader who practices steady integrity. Their self-integration makes them effective, self-confident leaders



Genuine Humility

Humility lends perspective and inspires respectful behaviour



Balance

The intention and desire to consider different viewpoints

Values-based leadership takes Huebl's idea of self-integration and extends it into a self-and-system integration. It recognises our place within the greater context, and how our movement and actions within it, and across other organisations, are interdependent.

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