

STORYTELLING IN THE 21ST CENTURY

Part 2

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The problem isn't so much with the new-and-improved stories or the modern ways in which we choose to tell them. Most of the root causes of the present-day situation have their humble beginnings in our recent past, beginning roughly about 90-100 years ago. I'm not sure if I can barely touch on many of the complexities of the world politics and economics either emerging or already evolving in the 1920's without having to write a fairly lengthy account of these past events and their implications leading to the emergence of the two competing empires with vastly different viewpoints, agendas and supporting economic and social models of their societies. Bottom line is, some of us experienced this as the horrors of the WWII or the many potential dangers and fears stemming from the decades of the Cold War which followed. Most of the tense and fearful moments along with the anti-communist propaganda in the West helped maintain the illusion and the fairy-tale of the protective and supportive capitalist economy and its associated political system that was supposed to have been fully democratic, designed for the greater good of all. Many citizens living behind the Iron Curtain of the Eastern Block were quickly realizing that their system somehow allowed for a co-existence of working masses who were supposedly all equal with their responsibilities to the state and their privileges that came with their citizenship on one hand and a relatively small group of elite leaders and politicians who enjoyed higher living standards and access to freedoms which were restricted for everyone else. Most of the Western world was still essentially in economic Wonderland at that time. The potential for much bigger social and economic changes that emerged during the 60's decade turned out to be relatively short-lived and was successfully integrated into the mainstream culture. The political and economic power elites in the Western world also went to some considerable lengths in their efforts to convince the working classes that life in the capitalist West was much better with great opportunities for social advancement, for education, for the pursuit of happiness which essentially boiled down to chasing after our own wealth and riches while enjoying the apparent freedoms and conveniences of modern technologies and lifestyles. The slow but inevitable crumbling down of the Soviet Union and the subsequent dissolution of the Eastern Block into many independent countries was welcomed in the West as an ultimate proof that capitalism and democracy have won while communism has been finally defeated once and for all.

Slowly at first but with the gradually increasing speed, capitalism and its active agents have spread into other corners of the world, creating new, previously untapped markets while generating massive new sales and soaring profits. Perhaps, this should have been our first warning sign based on the fact that human greed knows no boundaries and this expansion trend will not only continue but it will increase dramatically over the next 2-3 decades. As the vision and the potential of a global economy became a very real possibility, a lot of aspects of our life and our daily activities were turned into a money-making opportunity. The end justified the means. There was no need to ask or to question whether a new product or service was actually adding any real value or was being created in a response to a real need amongst people. An opportunity to make huge amounts of money from all of these new add-ons was good enough of a reason for big businesses and profit-hungry corporations. Manufacturing of consumer goods has increased dramatically due mainly to higher demands from these newly created markets in Russia and also in China. Rapidly increasing world population has also contributed to increasing demands for more products and more services. The global economy with its insatiable appetite for more contributed to more international travel, for business and for pleasure. Almost everything was now "for

sale” including some items and activities which were previously offered for free or for a very low fee. The world and its nations became a tightly woven and highly interdependent entity. Beginning with the access and the availability of highly desired and essential natural resources through their sale and distribution, adding to this the cost of transportation and availability of local processing and manufacturing plants to turn these resources and raw materials into marketable goods or supplies for other industries. Changing weather patterns, natural disasters and temporary disruptions caused by factory fires, terrorist activities and other unforeseen circumstances became a key factor in the final delivery of products and consumer goods affecting their availability.

Human ingenuity, powerful influences, and tight control of this new world of never-ending commerce and global economy which never sleeps turned out to be insufficient or often at the mercy of these powerful and unpredictable changes that could easily disrupt the usual supply chains as they have done so over the last 2 years. Human lives and our changing tastes, moods, needs and wants lost a lot of their weight as a key factor in the game of supply and demand which have contributed over the past decades to periods of economic boosts and stagnations. Temporary setbacks or even losses of jobs and income in many areas of the world could be easily offset now by increasing local demands and by rising prosperity in other corners of the world. As masses of consumers we have lost our collective ability to influence and to dictate to the market and the manufacturing sector what goes and what doesn't. As nations and as lively communities of human beings we have lost our biggest bargaining chip in this global game. We have become insignificant, easily replaceable, and essentially disposable as even the local job markets are no longer protected by national boundaries and preferential treatments to hire someone from your own tribe or community. As the world of politics, economy, big business, banks, financial institutions, and everything else that can be considered as a strong and necessary foundation of a modern state and its citizens have been undergoing this massive transformation there is a growing concern and a need for all of us to pool our local resources together. We need to reconnect with our local neighbours and local vendors. We need to rebuild the social links of local communities and modern tribes of people working together in a collaborative efforts to help each other weather this storm. The growing tide of conspiracy theories combined with extreme polarization of opinions and beliefs isn't helping at all. It is actually widening the existing divide and pushing us further apart.