

An important part of what drove me to write this paper was because I couldn't identify anything that was likely to halt the slide that I could see being caused by strong global trends. I still can't and, worse, I found that the dominant trends are both self-reinforcing and mutually accelerating. I was, as well, wanting to collect together the things I've been thinking about since reading *Sovereign Individual*, all those years ago.

There are several interconnected problems.

The world has been organised since human history began, based on location. Almost all the structures and institutions, border systems, tax and regulatory regimes and communities are geographical systems: People Near Me.

There are a few supra-national institutions: UN, WHO, EU and so on, but they trend towards being toothless talking shops when opinionated individuals opt their geography out of co-operating.

Running alongside this are some powerful supra-national organisations and groupings that are operating horizontally, irrespective of national "borders". Some are not really in tension with geographical structures - People Like Me: social interest groups, clubs are one type even, perhaps, Taylor Swift. Many are in greater or lesser tension: largely sovereign corporations: Blackrock, Apple, Meta, and so on, although the tensions with geographical "authorities" are increasing all the time. Organised crime would be one type that is openly in tension.

There are many global issues that affect individuals, that can't be resolved without supra-national effort, and Climate/Water is one of the big ones. As we know, efforts to resolve these through the supra-national institutions we have got are undermined by geographically orientated interest groups: the strong men, the emerging nations saying that the industrialised nations should stump up more than they, etc. Migration is another of these problems.

All around, you can see the tensions and incompatibility between the vertically orientated (geographical) institutions that are trying to grapple with horizontal (supra-national) forces and groupings.

Tax is a classic. Taxes have to be raised somehow to pay for things that benefit places: street lights, police, etc. Yet this is notoriously hard to raise from corporations that can move themselves around the globe to frustrate geographically structured laws. There is a measure of international cooperation, but this is rapidly falling apart as Trump blames others, like the EU, for tax rules that affect corporations based in the US. Of course he really wants more taxes from those corporations to be collected by him.

It's hard, too, to convince digital nomads and others with little geographical loyalty or resonance, to pay taxes to a location.

So the big flip change that's underway right now is from a world organised by location, to a world of mixed vertical and horizontal systems. The whole of human history has been geographically organised until now. This is one seriously big change, and it's not surprising that it's a hard, painful struggle.

The humdinger in all of this is that the system we call "democracy" is based on geographically organised consensus between a diverse population. The vertical to horizontal shift means that democracy cannot survive as it is. It's the wrong system for today's world. If you look at the places where we perceive it to be threatened, it's either where tensions being caused by supra-national forces that transcend borders, or where a "democratic" (political) structure has been imposed over strongly local (tribal) communities: Middle East, Eastern Europe, Spain, the UK, you name it.

So all this is why I believe very strongly that we will move quite quickly to a mixed world with horizontal and vertical components. Some geographical systems will resist, and you can see the EU doing just that. There are good reasons for the UK having more vertical organisations than elsewhere, since it's an island. Singapore is another example of where the two forces co-exist, albeit with some strong encouragement.

We have a clear example of an emerging sovereign corporation: Apple. Its citizens live with much of their lives organised by it and living by its rules – individuals choose to join and live within the system and obey its rules, or they don't. Those that do join pay taxes to it (although geographical entities do what they can to frustrate this at the margins). They are largely able to operate supra-nationally as they wish.

This is the future. We can see what needs to be done. It's only difficult because many don't see it and want to hang on to what was, lots see it and are determined to resist and frustrate it, some see it and can do little about it as individuals. It's going to happen, though, because the forces are too strong.

If you look at the four scenarios I posited for 2045, they are organised from most likely (greatest tensions and least consensus) to least likely (greatest cooperation). That's human nature: blindness, resistance to change, and selfish opportunism.

Peter Osborn

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