

Video Globe

We are entering the earth's largest changes in albedo since the last ice age, and the most abrupt in known geologic history, with very rapid shifts in climate, and the human community has yet to see the need to build the tools we need to survive coming changes. We're entering an age of transition into fire and then into ice. During this transition there will be a period of extreme temperature contrasts that will substantially decrease the amount of land and sea conducive to agriculture and aquaculture. We need to ascertain the timing and dimensions of this transition and get to work, but it needs to be work chosen wisely.

We have the ability to deal with much of what climate change throws at us if we pay attention and get to work, but it just buys time to adapt. In the midst of our frenzied addiction to fossil fuels on the one hand and desperate poverty and starvation on the other, the vast majority of humanity won't be distracted from their immediate material pursuits long enough to see past next Tuesday, so any major preparations will be made at the last moment and mostly far too late, but the sooner more people gain awareness, the more community effort will be available and the better our chances of maintaining a coherent civilization as we enter an age of great turmoil.

In order to understand and deal with this and other challenges we face, we must, as a global culture, gain a much more comprehensive view of this little ball we live on. To accomplish this we need new research tools and new educational tools. While, as individuals and organizations, we have gained a vast wealth of data, we are greatly handicapped by the fragmentation of knowledge and perspective. While, intellectually, most of us know that the earth is round; with the exception of a few astronauts, we see it all our lives as flat with little lumps and bumps and mountains, and we plan our lives accordingly. Even when we look at pictures from the satellites, we see it on a flat screen. We have, within the realm of our current technological expertise and cheap enough for most of humanity to have, the ability to build a live video globe of the earth capable of cohesively portraying the vast wealth of data that is currently fragmented. This will greatly expand our perspective of where and when and how and why we are and what we can do to make it better.

The exploration of space should soon be sidetracked by other priorities. While we still have the energy, there's something of great importance that we need to finish. As more people and cameras go into orbit, our perspective changes and we learn more and more about where we live. The next evolution of this endeavor can be an internet linked video globe capable of a vast array of data translation. A globe of the earth in live video would be a major step toward the human community being aware of its condition. Basic systems are already in place and a few choice carrots would attract the talent to put together a spherical screen, a few more satellites, and the electronics to mesh the systems.

If we had a video globe of the earth upon which we could see the full spectrum of energy absorption and reflection, we could watch the great winds of the earth swirl plumes of moisture off the oceans and plumes of hot air and rivers of cold air off the land together into the turbulent complexities of our weather.

If you look at the earth at night when we glow in the dark, we could see where most human pollution is emitted. If we overlay that with a view of the complex air flows caused by the varying albedos, transpirations, stratifications, and topography of the

surface, we can see the atmospheric rivers of a multitude of different emissions flowing from power plants, industrial centers, cities, roads, and fires, and see how they affect local weather in the midst of a rapidly changing climate.

We could watch the ocean currents as the sun warms the water and it rises and stratifies, carrying energy toward the poles, gradually releasing it into the atmosphere. We could watch the Antarctic sea ice gradually disappear. We could watch the Arctic ice cap continue to recede from the shoreline as the northern-most pulses of the Pacific El Nino currents flow thru the Bering Straight until the last of the rotten ice disappears. We could watch the water that evaporates from the world's new ocean turn the northernmost temperate land masses into pulsing bands of white that begin to grow the new glaciers of the next ice age while the rest of the world continues to warm. We could see the human species as a complex organism flourishing on the decay of the carboniferous age. We could see ourselves glow in the dark till the feeding frenzy runs its course. We could begin to see ourselves from the perspective of the rest of the universe and beyond.

The potential tangible, serendipitous, and synergistic benefits of a three-dimensional perspective of the earth are widespread throughout the realm of human endeavor. Civilization is a team sport. Time is short, and there's a lot of work to be done. The higher the percentage of humanity aware of the necessary changes in cultural endeavor that it will take to mitigate our entry into the next age, the better our chances of pulling it off. It may seem a subtle change in perspective, but the difference between seeing the bits and pieces and far away pictures on a flat screen and seeing the earth as a whole in all its complexity and diversity is a fundamental change in consciousness.

In conversation, I find that, once people can visualize a live video globe of the earth sitting on the coffee table, everybody wants one.