

From Egofest to Co-creation

We are seeing a shift in the spirit of the age. After 30 years of intense focus on personal potential, we are now turning to the purpose of personal life. Where our personal self-development was once the priority, it is now about making a difference and engaging in the service of the whole. Welcome to “The Great Age of Collective Creation.”

By Emilia van Hauen

What world do you want to be part of? And what will you do to experience it? We will be expected to answer these two questions in the future – at a skilled level and in a context in which “the whole” is a defining point. After the Yuppie period of the 1980s, when personal challenges and goal-setting were the priorities, and the self-realization of the 1990s, and the oos’ quest for personal potential, we are now starting to feel “identity nausea.” Therefore, we are seeking new ways to use ourselves. While the statement “I want to go out and find myself” defined the period from which we are emerging, “I just want to make a difference” seems to describe the period we are entering.

We see signs everywhere. Long waiting lists for those who want to volunteer for the Red Cross and other relief organizations. Ads using this as a justification for selling products. People making a professional change in the middle of an otherwise successful career. The reaction is a natural and expected result of the many coaching courses, therapy sessions, development talks, self-training and other similar experiences much of the workforce has been through. Besides releasing a great deal of original and creative energy in people, it has sparked a longing to use this newly-found identity and its newly discovered potential in connection with other people or in close contact with an organization. So it is still about self-realization. But instead of mainly looking in, it is now about looking out and putting oneself in a wider context that makes sense for many people, not just oneself.

The trend is also about being aware of what development we will take responsibility for. Where will humanity move to? What values shall we live according to? What tasks shall we carry out? Put simply, we must take active responsibility for our own evolution and that of the planet – and that obligates both the individual and our many organizations.

The creative element

Man has always swung between autonomy and community, so the horizontal axis in the model (see the sidebar) is the historic anchorage. What makes the model relevant is the reproduction-production axis. Today, our ideals are creativity and creative people, and the word *innovation* appears in everything from business plans to kindergarten action plans. The idea of contributing something original and independent to the world is very important to us, and so is, to a great degree, a part of our self-understanding. To create something has always been “finer” than being able to use the item created. Artists, business magnates and people who can create something of value for humanity have always had more status than those who followed along with everyone else.

Basically, society’s elite have always been the leading and creative elements of society. Today, our new infrastructures and our far more open social structures let everyone, in principal, be productive. As a society, we live to a great degree from good ideas because of an almost extreme turnover rate, and that has let far more of us share our ideas with the world: publish your film, book, photograph or clothes on the Internet and offer them to anyone – and wait and see if your creation catches the attention of others. However, it is important to be ready to have all four skills in the model to develop into a whole person or well-functioning organization. That is why heart is at the center of the model.

How do the forces manifest themselves? We could say that the original comes from autonomy, but without community, it cannot be implemented. Stability in society comes from reproduction, but without vision in production, our society cannot develop.

The four life forms

ExistenceMatrix© consists of four life forms that I have named *egofest*, *guruism*, *adult culture* and *co-creation* with reference to the primary value that is cultivated in each. For the past 30 years, with our focus on self-realization and our propensity for a mixed palette of experts, we have largely lived in the *egofest* and *guruism* areas. The key values of *egofest* are independence, self-responsibility, social status, personal development, desire, interest and needs. *Guruism*, on the other hand, has produced a culture that is open to its own shortcomings and mistakes, and that sees a value in personal guidance in the community setting. *Guruism*’s values are dedication, self-insight, desire for improvement, perfectionism, longing for essence, dependence, subservience, critical stance, truth, coherence and simultaneous standardization and diversity. Standardization lies in being able to devote oneself to a single counselor, especially if a group uses a single idea to navigate with, while diversity is an expression of seeking diverse advice and inputs when solving problems. Overall, the main value is probably *salvation*, because that is what most skeptical people seek, even though we rarely use the term. We know these two life forms in detail, because we have lived with them for a generation. Adult culture and co-creation, however, are the future.

Adult culture

Adult culture implies that one wants to take responsibility for others by using one’s autonomy to improve the world – in one way or another. What is essential here is being open to new conditions and relations, flexibility with regard to one’s own truths and applicable structures, and being dynamic, innovative, dutiful, self-disciplined

and, not least, independent. *Adult culture* also cultivates experience and perspective as buffer against the inertia of development, and it cultivates one's own creativity and ability to think in new structures that better match the applicable terms and purpose. In this way, *adult culture* is very closely linked to daring to take a leadership responsibility – not just formally, because it need not be formal, but that you consciously see yourself as one who leads in wanting to create a new (and better) world and so feel obliged to act as a model. Thus, *adult culture* recognizes that a natural hierarchy exists that is worth cultivating. Included here is a recognition that you must sometimes compromise your own needs, but that you must never abandon, and must always fight for, your fundamental values and beliefs. Therefore, the desire for success or even outright victory is also characteristic of *adult culture*.

Adults can look forward to a demographic jackpot, since this group will grow rapidly for the next many years. At the same time, they will have a much more active lifestyle than earlier adults. Therefore, they are expected to demand a more attractive status. "New adults" could be a term for these adults who retain youthful flexibility, openness, innovation, enthusiasm and dynamism, and combine it with experience, personal power, long-term sense, overview - and (alas!) – an easier stiffness in the limbs.

Co-creation

Humans have always cooperated. In many ways, cooperation has been our means of surviving and developing as a species. In the classic context, cooperation has been borne by a leader who is able to set an agenda and carry it out with the help of others. Most organizations are carried by this idea of a single responsible leader. In the future, however, we will encounter a new form of organization. Instead of cooperating, we will work together to *co-create*. The *co-creation* life form is about gathering original forces to create new things, be they new structures, new products or new social relationships. *Co-creation* is a way we can create a new world that includes as many of us as possible, but that keeps out the elements that are not creative and life-giving. *Co-creation* is therefore the enemy of the authoritarian and fundamentalist, and will eventually set a new world order, although the prospect is still distant. The values of *co-creation* are holism, inclusion, creativity, dynamism, openness, natural hierarchy, authority, anti-authoritarian (both concepts are included because adult culture celebrates superior knowledge and is repelled by genuflection to power that only form and not content), evolution, tolerance, respect, courage, vision and, above all, commitment to

the community. *Co-creation* is thus social in its origin and innovative in its outcome.

Co-creation is the organizational and creative platform of the future. Denmark is well-placed to become the global market leader in *co-creation* because of 1) its tradition of independent and critical education, 2) a widespread democratic tradition of associations, 3) great personal freedom, 4) a social climate of trust and 5) a well-functioning welfare state. People who would lead in Denmark and abroad would do well to train their consciousness so that it reaches a level where the integral perspective can be used. This awareness is based on the whole and inclusion. There is no doubt that it is from this point that we can best equip ourselves to solve the problems the world faces and to create the reality that serves as many people as possible – and that leads humanity further in its evolution.

Want to create evolution?

For the first time, we have real opportunities to meet across gender, profession, nationality, religion, social class and race and in many other different fora. We can meet at every level, from national to personal, so we can democratically exchange life stories, values, purpose, skills and original creative power - and, not least, we can meet to carry out the tasks the world faces and that can only be solved globally.

It is important to note that we all embody all four life forms – thank goodness! Without *egofest*, we would not have the great personal drive to create something unique and original. Without *guruism*, we would not be able to learn from others and engage in communities. Without *adult culture*, we would not want to take responsibility for others than ourselves and what we could contribute. And without *co-creation*, we could not move humanity forward and unleash a mass of collective creativity.

The future offers new social structures that can release and gather a lot of creative energy. Our responsibility as individuals and organizations is to ask and answer this question: will you release potential - or will you create evolution?

The book *Farvel egofest. Og goddag til formål og fællesskaber*, by Emilia van Hauen, was published on March 31, by Akademisk Forlag.

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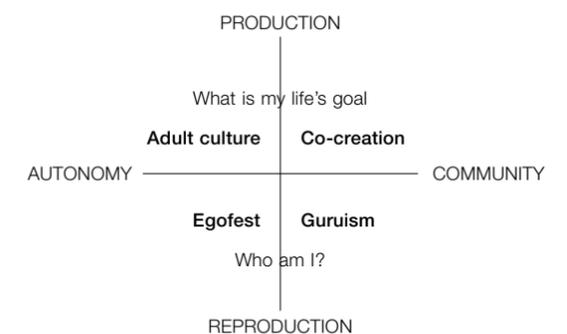
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EXISTENCE MATRIX©

To provide an overview of the conditions and values we come from and will practice in the future, I have developed the Existence Matrix© model. It consists of two axes. One axis runs between autonomy and community; the other runs between reproduction and production. Together, these are the elements of human existence; thus the Existence Matrix© is an intersection of the social and the creative. The model is constructed as a coordinate system in which the X-axis is runs between our need for *autonomy* and our need for *community*. We can call the X-axis the *social axis*, because it speaks of our membership and our self-esteem. Autonomy is our ability to think and act independently and to seek a healthy degree of independence. In other words, autonomy is the original contribution to humanity, while community is about implementing the original contributions in a wider context. Thus, community challenges our autonomy and reminds us that, if we want a social life, we must sometimes compromise our own needs and wishes.

The Y-axis is about what we use ourselves for. Here, we are stretched between wanting to *reproduce* the existing and creating or *producing* something new. When we are good citizens who pay taxes, go to work and start a family, we reproduce the reality we are born into, and we help create stability in society. When we find new versions of something that already exists, or when we invent something new, we are producing and so setting new standards for what humanity can achieve. The value that is production includes vision, creative force and integral responsibility for the project's sustainability. The Y-axis can also be called the axis of driving force.

THE AXES OF EXISTENCE



[LUKE 22:5.] AT ILLI DIXERUNT UBI VIS PAREMUS. Translation: But they said: Where wilt thou that we prepare? [LUKE 22:16.] ET DIXIT AD EOS ECCE INTROE-UNTIBUS VOBIS IN CIVITATEM OCCURRET VOBIS HOMO AMPHORAM AQUAE PORTANS SEQUIMINI EUM IN DOMUM IN QUA INTRAT. Translation: And he said to them: Behold, as you go into the city, there shall meet you a man carrying a pitcher of water: follow him into the house where he entereth in.

