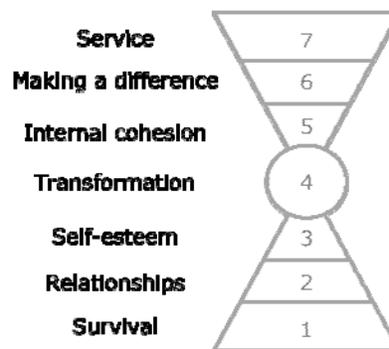


The Seven Levels of Societal Consciousness

By Richard Barrett

The level of growth and development of consciousness of a society¹ depends on the ability of the leaders and the government to create an economic and social climate that meets the needs of its citizens. The following table shows the seven stages in the development and growth of the consciousness of a society. The table describing the Seven Levels of Societal Consciousness should be read starting from bottom and working up.



¹ I am using the word “society” to denote a structured system of human organisation for community living either at a local, regional, national or global level.

Levels of Consciousness		Characteristics
7	Service	Global Sustainability: Working with other nations to build regional and global alliances that support humanity and the planet by focusing on human rights, social justice, future generations, the global environment and the Earth's ecology. Recognition of the interconnectedness of all life.
6	Making A Difference	Strategic Alliances and Partnerships: Building strategic alliances with neighboring nations for mutually beneficial outcomes. Willingness to relinquish certain aspects of sovereignty to regional alliances. A focus on quality of life, environmental awareness, and animal welfare
5	Internal Cohesion	Strong Cohesive Culture: Enhancing the nation's capacity for collective action by aligning citizens around a shared vision of the future, and a shared set of values based on trust that support fairness, openness, trust, and transparency. A willingness to experiment with new approaches to democracy.
4	Transformation	Adaptability and Continuous learning: Building a strong democracy based on freedom of speech, and an environment that encourages accountability, responsibility, innovation and entrepreneurial actions. Focus on equality, education and support and care for the disadvantaged
3	Self-esteem	High Performance: Developing high performance systems and process for the delivery of services and the enforcement of law and order. Embracing best practices that enhance productivity, and pride in performance of the nation. Focus on the reduction of elitism, bureaucracy, religious discrimination, capital punishment, and reliance on military to maintain internal order.
2	Relationship	Sense of Belonging: Developing a sense of belonging through the maintenance of local and regional ethnic traditions. Enabling respect for all citizens leading to inter-racial harmony. Focus on conflict resolution, and ethnic reconciliation. Focus on the reduction of victimization, manipulation, gender and ethnic discrimination.
1	Survival	Economic and Financial Stability: Building a vibrant economy that provides jobs for the masses and enables prosperity. The protection of territorial borders and boundaries. Focus on food security, and the health, safety and welfare of all citizens. Focus on the reduction of corruption, aggression, crime, violence, oppression, poverty, unemployment and environmental degradation.

The “lower” needs focus on the basic requirements of societies—protection, safety, and economic security; a sense of belonging, loyalty and harmonious internal group

relationships; and efficient and effective infrastructure, services and systems that create order and protect the rights of all citizens. These first three levels are the basic building blocks for establishing internal stability in a community or a nation, and creating a foundation for a democratic society. When the leaders of a nation are unable to fulfil these needs the nation will be inherently unstable.

The focus of the transformation level is on creating governance structures that give all citizens a voice, and guarantee personal freedom and equal opportunities for all. This stage of development involves a shift from social relationships based on ethnocentric cultures of blood and/or class, to social relationships based on cultures of meaning. This will only be possible if there is a shift from belief-based decision-making to values-based decision-making, and all citizens are able to meet their deficiency needs.

The “higher” needs focus on building the resilience of the community or nation and its long-term sustainability—developing a climate of trust and internal cohesion (shared vision and shared values); creating mutually beneficial regional alliances with other communities or nations; and collaborating with other communities or nations to improve the human condition, and build a sustainable future for upcoming generations.

The most successful communities or nations are those that have learned how to master their “deficiency” needs and their “growth” needs. They operate from full spectrum consciousness. They create a climate of trust, have the ability to manage complexity, and can respond or rapidly adapt to all situations.

Full Spectrum Consciousness

Full spectrum communities and nations display all the positive attributes of the Seven Levels of Societal Consciousness.

- They master survival consciousness by focusing on economic and financial stability, health services for all citizens, and the protection of borders.
- They master “relationship consciousness by focusing on respect for traditions, conflict resolution, and inter-racial harmony.
- They master self-esteem consciousness by focusing on the establishment of the rule of law and order, provision of infrastructure and services, continuous improvement, and efficient institutions of governance.
- They master transformation consciousness by focusing on democratic processes, accountability, equality, freedom of the press, supporting entrepreneurial activities, continuous learning and higher education.

- They master internal cohesion consciousness by developing a unique cohesive culture based on a shared vision and shared values that create a capacity for collective action.
- They master external cohesion consciousness by building strategic regional alliances and partnerships with like-minded communities or nations, focusing on environmental sustainability, and enhancing the quality of life of all citizens.
- They master service consciousness by focusing on strategic global alliances and partnerships that focus on human rights, social justice, ecological sustainability, and the evolution of consciousness of humanity.

At the present moment in time, there are no full spectrum nations, and very few full spectrum communities. Each of the seven levels of societal consciousness is described in more detail below.

Level 1: Survival consciousness

The three main areas of concern in nations that are operating from this level of consciousness are: defence and the protection of borders; economic health and prosperity of the masses; and the health, nutrition, and welfare of all citizens.

The main focus on defence and protection of borders is on the establishment of a military force that can protect the territorial interests, and natural resources of the nation from incursions by other nations. The main focus of economic health is on the solvency of the nation and its communities, and the elimination of hunger, disease, and poverty. Of particular concern is the ability of the community or nation to create job opportunities for economically active citizens and provide economic safety nets for the poor through the taxation of the wealth. Dysfunction in this area leads to unemployment, corruption and environmental degradation, and large income disparities between the rich and poor. Crime and violence ensue as those who are closest to survival attempt to meet their needs in any way they can.

The main focus of health and nutrition is on the provision of clinics and hospitals and basic health care for all mothers and children; immunization against preventable diseases; and food security. Dysfunction in this area leads to persistent outbreaks of disease, a high infant mortality rate, and the general morbidity of the population.

Other signs of dysfunction at this level of societal consciousness include: the sanctioning of the military or police by decision-makers to oppress and brutalize citizens; the formation of secret police departments that spy on citizens; and the curtailment of the freedom of the press. These types of control are usually found in authoritarian regimes.

Communities and nations are dysfunctional at level 1, when a) anarchy and/or violence are endemic, b) there is no freedom of speech or right of protest, c) corruption is rife,

and d) health services are non-existent, poorly managed or not adequate to meet the needs of the population, and life expectancy is low.

The keys to success at survival consciousness are, a) adequate territorial protection—safety from external threats, b) employment opportunities for economically active citizens—guaranteeing a minimum wage and minimum level of prosperity for all citizens, c) economic safety nets established through taxation, and d) access to medical facilities for everyone—health care for all citizens.

Level 2: Relationship consciousness

There are three main areas of concern in communities and nations that are operating from this level of consciousness: the peaceful resolution of conflicts between individuals and groups; the creation of a sense of belonging that embraces all citizens; and, the loyalty of citizens to the government of the community or nation.

The main focus of conflict resolution is on the settlement of disputes between ethnic or other religious sub-groups, and the creation of inter-group harmony. Dysfunction in this area leads to inter-ethnic/inter-religious violence, and the victimization or unfair treatment of minorities or sub-groups based on gender, sexual preference, race, ethnicity, religion, etc. It also leads to the separation of towns and cities into ethnically defined areas. In the poorest of these areas law and order can become difficult to maintain if the survival needs of the population in these areas are not being met. In Level 2 nations, old racial, ethnocentric or religious wounds are healed in a spirit of reconciliation. Old fears are surfaced and publicly discussed.

Communities and nations create a sense of belonging through the establishment and respect of traditions and rituals that enhance ethnocentric bonds. Respect for the traditions and rituals of minorities, by the majority, is essential for inter-racial/religious harmony. When issues related to belonging are not dealt with, the sub groups discriminated against feel a sense of exclusion. When citizens feel vulnerable or inadequately protected, loyalty and harmony evaporate. Loyalty arises out of a sense of being cared for. Thus, when a community or nation fails to care for its citizens, particularly specific sub-groups, then the loyalty of those groups cannot be counted on in difficult circumstances. Pockets of insurgency can easily arise and civil war can erupt when victimization, exclusion and discrimination reach significant levels. When specific sub-groups feel like second-class citizens then there can be no internal stability in a community or nation.

Communities and nations that have mastered this level of consciousness create conditions where foreigners and strangers feel safe. Leaders must protect the safety and rights of all citizens if harmony and loyalty are to be maintained.

The keys to success at relationship consciousness are, a) establishing and maintaining internal harmony, b) developing procedures for resolving conflicts, and c) respecting and honouring the racial/religious traditions and rituals of all groups.

Level 3: Self-esteem consciousness

There are three main areas of concern in communities and nations that are operating from this level of consciousness: establishment and enforcement of law and order; creation of institutions of governance based on efficient systems and processes; and provision of public infrastructure and services that enhance the productivity of the nation, and the well-being and prosperity of the people.

The main focus of the establishment of law and order is on a) drafting and implementation of codes, rules, regulations and laws that maintain order and protect the ownership, rights and civil liberties of all citizens of all religious denominations, b) adequate local enforcement of codes, rules, regulations and laws, c) appropriate levels of punishment for the transgression of the codes, rules, regulations and laws by individuals or organisations, and d) the right of appeal against public judgments to ensure fairness and social justice. Dysfunction in this area leads to a higher incidence of criminal activity and a lack of public protection from unscrupulous businesses.

This is where the creation of efficient institutions of governance becomes important. Without adequate enforcement, the codes, rules, regulations and laws that are designed to protect citizens fall apart or fail to do their job. Efficient institutions are also important for the delivery of public services and the collection of taxes. Dysfunction in this area is generally caused by bureaucracy, resulting in inefficiency that leads to issues of productivity or lack of delivery of services and benefits. In poor nations, corruption can also be a severe handicap to institutional efficiency and productivity. The impact of these dysfunctions is particularly noticeable in the provision of public services such as shelter, transport, electricity, telecommunications, health and education. Poor institutional performance decreases the competitiveness of a nation and undermines its resilience.

Other signs of dysfunction at this level of consciousness are the restriction of religious freedoms, excessive use of power to maintain control; highly centralized decision-making, hierarchical structures of governance; the use of military to maintain order; governance by non-sanctioned elites, despots or dictators; and excessive bureaucracy. Communities and nations that have mastered this level of consciousness usually have secular governance structures; compete effectively with other nations; and deliver prosperity to the majority of their citizens thereby establishing an upwardly mobile lower and middle class. When these conditions are met citizens develop a sense of pride in the achievements and success of their nation.

The keys to success at self-esteem consciousness are a) establishing laws, regulations and rules that establish order, b) enforcing these laws, regulations and rules, and c) ensuring efficient and effective taxation and the delivery of public services to all groups.

Level 4: Transformation consciousness

The focus of the fourth level of societal consciousness is on the consolidation of internal stability by creating a multi-cultural, non-discriminatory, egalitarian society that respects the rights of all citizens.

Level 4 communities and nations establish and protect personal freedoms, and seek to create equal opportunities for all citizens. They are democratically governed in multi-party political systems where every adult individual has a voice in electing local, regional and national representatives. Individuals are free to travel and have the right to a national passport. In nations that have achieved Level 4 consciousness, boundaries between classes become diffuse. Elitism is frowned upon, and the influence of elites in governance is either eliminated or minimized. Decisions are made by consensus and compromise.

There is a strong focus on freedom: freedom of movement, freedom of thought, freedom of speech, freedom to grow, freedom to learn, freedom to become anything you want to become. At the same time, the freedom of one individual or group of individuals must not inhibit the freedom of another individual or group of individuals. Citizens must act responsibly giving due consideration to the good of the whole. The leadership must be accountable for the results they achieve. They must have the readiness, willingness and ability to change. Leaders will not be able deliver Level 4 needs if they cling to rigid, bureaucratic, hierarchical, or authoritarian institutions of governance.

Level 4 nations view survival through the lens of adaptability and resilience building. They celebrate and embrace diversity. They focus on continuous improvement and continuous renewal—constantly learning, researching and modernizing. In a climate of freedom and equal opportunity, people are responsible and accountable for their own futures. Consequently, education and research are high priorities. Primary and secondary education is compulsory for every child. University and college education is available to all those who want it. By focusing on education Level 4 nations enhance their ability to compete in the global market place. Recreation facilities are recognized as important for the well-being of citizens. Personal growth, personal development and self-actualization are encouraged.

At this level of consciousness the physically and economically disadvantaged as well as the elderly are adequately cared for through social safety nets. There is a natural structuring of society based on intelligence and merit. Wealth is redistributed through

taxation. Those who make the most money pay the most taxes. Taxes are used not only to provide infrastructure and services, but also to provide safety nets for the poor. Level 4 nations protect themselves but they never start wars. They practice tolerance. They abolish the death penalty.

The keys to the success at transformation consciousness are, a) creating a culture of responsible freedom, b) creating opportunities for all citizens to learn and grow and share in the prosperity of the nation, and c) giving emphasis to the continual renewal and improvement of the societal infrastructure, and social services.

Level 5: Internal Cohesion consciousness

The focus of the fifth level of societal consciousness is on the deepening the internal resilience of a community or nation by focusing on fairness, openness, transparency and trust. Above all there must be trust.

Trust is the oil that lubricates commerce and creates goodwill among citizens. Fairness ensures that everyone is treated equally, and openness and transparency ensure that corruption and underhand dealings are minimized. Trust can only occur when people operate with a shared set of values. There must be a willingness on the part of the community or national leaders to hold new conversations with its citizens about the values that are currently present in the community or nation, and the values that citizens would like to see given more prominence. Everyone must be included in the conversation.

The strongest communities or nations on the planet are those with the highest levels of trust, a shared vision of the future, and a shared set of values. The discussions on vision and values must occur at both the national and community level. There must be commitment, enthusiasm and passion behind the vision. The vision must have an internal dimension—what the community or nation will look like five to ten years hence, and an external dimension—the role the community or nation will play in the world. Citizens must feel that they are able to play a role in building the community or nation and supporting it as it seeks to build a better world.

Level 5 communities and nations experiment with new forms of democracy. Citizens are more involved in decision making through dialogue, referendums or internet polling. Experts play a more decisive role in societal affairs by handling topics that all agree should not be subject to political agendas. Children are listened to and given a voice in the affairs of the nation.

The key to success at Level 5 societal consciousness is enhance the community's or nation's capacity for collective action by building a shared vision of the future, and adopting a set of shared values that build internal and external trust. Level 5 communities and nations are cohesive, viable and independent. The nation's shared

value system influences its foreign policies, its attitude to human rights, and its willingness to provide aid to the underprivileged nation of the world.

Level 6: Making A Difference consciousness

The focus of the sixth level of societal consciousness is on building mutually beneficial strategic alliances with other communities or nations that share the same values, and a similar vision of the future. Level 6 communities and nations also focus on deepening the sense of internal cohesion that began at Level 4 with materializing the values of freedom and equality, and continued at level 5 with the practice of fairness, openness and transparency.

Level 6 communities and nations form strategic alliances with like-minded nations to enhance their economic, social and environmental resilience, build sustainability, and have a stronger voice in dealing with global issues. Level 6 communities and nations see the big picture. They see the systemic causes behind the problems of existence, and they take steps to promote strategies that support the common good of the region or the world. They practice responsibility for the whole. They share information with other communities or nations; they cooperate and collaborate with each other on solving common problems; and they are willing to give up aspects of their own sovereignty for the well-being of the whole. There is a strong focus on the quality of life.

Internally, level 6 communities and nations focus on the beautification of the built environment, creating environmental awareness among the population, and caring about the wildlife and the nation's natural heritage. Citizens are encouraged to care for the non-human species and promote animal welfare. Level 6 nations make sure that no community gets left behind.

The keys to success at Level 6 societal consciousness are a) to give up certain aspects of national sovereignty to a regional decision-making entity so that the collective resilience, and sustainability of the region is increased, b) to make sure no community within the nation, and no nation in the regional alliance gets left behind, and c) to care for and protect the natural environment of the community or nation.

Stage 7: Service Consciousness

The seventh level of societal consciousness builds on sixth level by expanding the depth and breadth of international cooperation with regard to solving the problems of humanity, and at the same time deepening the sense of internal cohesion in the nation by supporting the self-actualization of the masses and expanding the focus on environmental sustainability to include ecological sustainability. There is recognition that it is not just humans that are interconnected, but all life forms. And, the survival and well-being all life forms, including the human species are dependent on the health

of planet. There is compassion for all life. This recognition of the interconnectedness of all things impacts the nation's perspective on globalization.

Level 7 communities and nations do not subscribe to the notion of separation. They see every aspect of life through the lens of interconnectedness. There is a deep understanding that the problems of global existence cannot be fully dealt with by either a national or regional decision-making authority. A new and more integrated global system of governance is promoted that supports our collective humanity and the Earth as humanity's common life-support system.

Nations relinquish aspects of their national sovereignty to regional authorities and the regional authorities in turn relinquish aspects of their sovereignty to a system of global governance that focus on creating the conditions that guarantee the sustainability of humanity and of the planet. Nations and regions are willing to give up the aspects of their sovereignty that deal with external equilibrium because they recognize their inability to control issues of global survival and resilience from a national or regional level. They understand that they can only create the conditions that promote the survival, safety and success of their citizens if all citizens in every nation can do the same, and that the human species can only survive if a significant proportion of the masses of humanity live in conditions that allow self-actualization. We all win or no one wins.

The keys to success at Level 7 societal consciousness are: a) putting community or national self-interest aside, and working together with other communities or nations for the good of humanity, and b) creating the conditions that allow the self-actualization of the masses.