

Deeptime Leadership and the Power of a Cosmic Perspective

Stephan Martin, Director, Deeptime Leadership Program at the Deeptime Network

*I am the tip of the evolving universe.
I possess immense generative power and creativity.*
– 2022 Deeptime Leadership graduate Lisa Verni

One of the most exciting scientific discoveries of the modern era is that we live in an evolving universe, a universe driven by creativity, complexity, and interrelatedness on all scales. The results of modern suggest that this evolutionary journey has been happening for some 13.8 billion years, and so the world around us and ourselves are the leading edge of a cosmic evolutionary process that has been happening for a long, long time. Given that we are each beneficiaries and participants in such a rich and experienced lineage, might we draw some insights and wisdom from this cosmic perspective that can help us navigate the challenging times so many of us are experiencing right now? This was our perspective and motivation as we initiated our first 9-month Deeptime Leadership Program at the Deeptime Network (dtnetwork.org).

Our course organizers wondered, “could we create an effective leadership training that could be delivered in a global context in an online format?” The answer was a resounding “Yes!” as we gathered in September 2021 with 108 participants from 13 countries around the globe. Our driving question woven throughout the 9-month training was “How can Deeptime Leadership align itself with the organizing principles of the universe?” This common question and cosmic perspective brought together our diverse community, with participants joining our community from North and South America, Europe, Africa, Asia, and Australia and included teachers, scientists, artists, religious leaders, and many others from so many backgrounds and walks of life. Our global community came from many diverse cultures and yet we found common ground in our collective concern for the planet Earth and all its inhabitants, and this diversity reminded us that in this new form of global leadership, we need leadership and initiatives that are oriented towards the flourishing of the whole and inspired by relationality with the natural world and all life.

The Power of a Deeptime Perspective

The Deeptime Leadership Training (DTL) is designed as a 9-month cosmically oriented journey divided into three modules, which are roughly summarized below:

Module 1: Introducing the New Cosmology: In this module, we orient to and find our place with a cosmic evolutionary context. Learning the 13.8 cosmic story of the universe and discovering ourselves and everything around us as participants in a grand cosmic narrative changes everything and gives us a common ground, framework, and perspective for effective action as Deeptime leaders.

Module 2: Applying the New Cosmology: Here we explore how an expanded Deeptime view empowers personal and cultural transformation in daily life and creates a new ground for innovative leadership, community renewal, and decision making. In this module we also activate participants' personal interests and fields of application and connect their own personal and community transformative work to a larger perspective.

Module 3: Deeptime Leadership Practicum: In this final module we harvest the wisdom of the first two modules and apply it to personal and communal projects. Working with highly-skilled mentors and in peer supported pods, participants synergize and accelerate the creative process of implementing their projects and sharing their passion with the world. We also look at case studies and examples of effective action around the world where people are creating dynamic transformational and organizational change using this Deeptime perspective.

Three Components of a Transformative Community

Through developing and hosting our initial training we found three essential elements of the training that made it so powerful and transformative for participants.

Visions: We explore together how an expanded and radically inclusive perspective of seeing ourselves as participants and expressions of a 13.8 billion year old creative, generative, and evolving cosmic evolutionary process changes everything. We did this through presentations, lectures and discussions with leading-edge leaders from scientific, religious, indigenous, and cultural traditions around the world. These leaders shared their own perspectives and seeded our

participants with ideas and inspirations that we reflected on for many weeks and months later.

As one participant reflected on this cosmic vision that she had learned, “I am not IN the universe, I AM the universe!” Another shared that “Our planetary leadership is in the context of an evolving Universe. As leaders, we need to represent, in human form, the development of the planet and the Universe. We need to be a representation or a symbol of Cosmic and Earth evolution. What a magnificent role! It’s an amazing gift to have this destiny!”

Practices: We find that inspiring visions are not enough by themselves to create effective and transformative action. We need ways of bringing these visions into our lives and into our communities, ways to ground them in our bodies and in the often-turbulent circumstances of daily life. We incorporated many relational practices to create a conscious learning environment in our course space and interweave, illustrate, and evolve our ways of engagement with others, the natural world, and the larger perspective. These practices included training in various forms of cosmically oriented meditation and contemplation, emergent dialogue, intersubjective encounter, leading from challenge and difficulty with others, and many other ways of creative engagement and connection with each other and the natural world.

Participants shared this about the power of Deeptime practices: “Contributing to bringing forth the noosphere through my understanding of Deeptime, forming new language, and taking in new ideas, is not enough - it is only through applying these ideas in my interactions with our global community and non-human world that I can make the difference I dream of.”

Community: A transformative community is where Vision and Practice come together. Through sharing this 9-month leadership journey together we found that our diversity within a shared common perspective was a great strength in weaving differences and diversity together as parts of a shared whole. People were intensely interested in the perspectives and sharing of others and reflected that they learned as much from small group and personal interaction as they did from the lectures, presentations and readings throughout the course. We wove our community together through shared practices in large groups, smaller shared-interest pods, intensive practice triads, and other innovative social configurations.

This relational community extended not only among the course participants, but in their engagement with the rest of the world. As one participant reflected, “We are not only part of the web of life but of the creative and dynamic cosmos. As such, we are subjects, in communion with each other, who participate in The Great Work.”

Interweaving the Personal and the Universal

In the DTL program, we are constantly bridging connections between the cosmic and the particular, between the universal and the personal. One reason we emphasize this connectedness is to attempt to reorient the widespread modern cultural belief that humans are somehow separate or above the natural world. We see this perceived separation and disconnection between humans and nature, between the personal and the cosmic, and between the material and the spiritual as the root of so much of the dysfunction and destructiveness of modern culture. We’re not alone in this view, with entire fields of modern practice and theory such as ecopsychology, transpersonal theory, green economics, permaculture and many others dedicated to restoring this split and healing the perceived divide between humans and the activity of nature.

We draw on all these fields and perspectives in our course and expand them to include Earth’s embeddedness and participation in a cosmic context, connecting the story of each of us as part of the Earth’s living story, and the Earth’s story as the continuation of a larger cosmic story of the stars and galaxies going back to the beginning of the universe. Interweaving the personal, cultural, ecological, planetary and cosmological together is part of the transition of humanity from an anthropocentric and human-dominant worldview to a new era where humans are an integral and seamless part of the entire living Earth community. Thomas Berry, one of the seed thinkers of this training, termed this the Ecozoic era (*eco-zoic* meaning “house of life”).

This cosmic perspective weaves together modern cosmology, ecological sustainability, and social justice as expressions of a sense of togetherness, belonging, and relatedness in a larger framework. Thomas Berry expresses this when he writes, “the universe is a communion of subjects, not a collection of objects,” echoing indigenous, integral, and traditional perspectives from around the world that have expressed a similar view for thousands of years. Many people

in our courses have shared that they had a deep belief that they were an inseparable part of everything but had difficulty finding words for it in a modern cultural context. Jenny Bowler, an Australian writer and counselor and one of our Certificate program graduates expresses her experience this way, "I feel I belong to the world more fully, not an outsider rather a participant in this cosmic process. This program has helped me make sense of things I have felt and given context and validation to deeptime processes and realities. It has given me a more richer cosmic story and helps to place local issues on a collective scale." Rev. Dr. Gail Ransom, Creation Spirituality minister and another course graduate, shares, "I had been under the impression that evolution was something that happened to me, that it had its own plan that would sweep me along or cast me aside. But now I understand that evolution is something I help create. What I do matters far beyond my small circles of preoccupation. I affect the evolution of the universe every minute. This gives much more meaning and consequence to everything I do."

Making a Contribution

Our shared perspectives and collective practices help ground this Deeptime cosmic view in people's lives and experience, but what really brings it all together for participants is their work on a personal project as part of the course experience. By choosing a personally meaningful project and working on it over time in the course community, DTL program participants gain experience in bringing leadership into their communities through bringing a vision into concrete reality. The course framework guides students through each part of the process, connecting their work in each stage with how it relates to their community and a larger perspective so that they begin to see their struggles and their triumphs as part of a contribution to something larger than themselves.

Haseena Patel, one of our course graduates and a transformational coach from South Africa shares, "Contributing to bringing forth the noosphere through my understanding of Deeptime, forming new language, and taking in new ideas, is not enough - it is only through applying these ideas in my interactions with our global community and non-human world that I can make the difference I dream of."

79-year old lifelong activist and religious sister Jeanne Clark from Long Island, NY wrote to us to share “I have grown in the belief that I have all that is needed to help create the ecozoic world that Thomas Berry envisioned and even obstacles give me the opportunity to find the way. Through working on a "project" while participating in this program I have been empowered to continue to use my gifts knowing that all my relationships are helping me along the way.”

Bringing it All Together

My definition of leadership has expanded substantially. I am able to interact in our human and non-human world in a more dynamic way. I've found myself and my tribe, and I have a much deeper understanding of how to give to the world from who I AM. Even my coaching business and teaching is evolving because I know who I AM and what I came to do at this time in our world. I feel a deeper sense of self, and the courage and confidence that goes with that feeling.

- DTL Program graduate and transformational coach Haseena Patel

Through this program we have just begun to see the power of a Deeptime perspective to inspire, transform, and empower positive change in our lives, communities and ecosystems. In this program we collectively realized that this is how global change happens, not only from the shifting of large institutions and cultural frameworks towards greater sustainability and inclusivity, but from the planting of new seeds of creativity, empowerment, and self-leadership around the globe. These new seeds are sprouting even now everywhere around us, creating new networks of creativity and influence, and helping each one of us see that we each have a unique role to play in the creation of something new and of benefit for our communities and the larger world from which we come.

Please consider joining us in the next round of the Deeptime Leadership Program, starting in September 2022. For more information please visit us at:

<https://dtnetwork.org/product/deeptime-leadership-personal-empowerment-2022-2023/>