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The Closing Fortress Gates Contribution to GTI Forum [Which Future Are We Living In?](#)

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Which of the Global Scenario Group's [scenarios](#) you are living in depends on where you are. If you are living in Jackson, Mississippi, you are in [Breakdown](#). Flooding has left the city's residents without water since August 29. If you are unlucky enough to be a Ukrainian, [Barbarization](#) has a new meaning, one where former comrades are trying to kill you and wipe out your version of civilization. In Pakistan, where more than one-third of the country is [under water](#), you are in Breakdown as well. The same for parts of the Middle East where temperatures were so high this summer that neither plants, animals, nor human beings could survive without technological interventions that consume massive amounts of energy.

If, however, you live in a gated community for the elite, then [Market Forces](#) still looks like a relevant option for your world, even though you really live in [Fortress World](#). These gated communities are everywhere but are especially obvious in places where wealth inequality has reached obscene proportions like the US, South Africa, Kuwait, Kazakhstan, and Russia. Some of the gates to Fortress World are not physical—they are snob zoning provisions that require granite curbs and golden doorknobs in the suburbs of Boston, or rural areas so far from jobs that only people with big gasoline budgets can live there.

Some of the gated communities look like [Eco-communalism](#), but in fact the homes there are so expensive that only the elite can afford them. Take for example Cobb Hill, the ecologically oriented cohousing development in rural Vermont developed by none other than Donella Meadows herself, where family homes cost over \$500,000, well over the "affordable" threshold for Vermont, where the median household income is \$63,477 and the median home price is \$230,000. A two-room, 400-square-foot apartment in the common house at Cobb Hill, a unit

that was supposed to be affordable, sold recently for \$450,000.

The gates to Fortress World are increasingly invisible—when we isolate ourselves into enclaves, we become less attuned to what other people experience. Recent demographic studies in the US have shown what some of us notice during election years to be true: people are increasingly moving to places where there are others who share their political views, income, and skin color.

Some of the gates to Fortress World are immigration laws that prohibit people who are experiencing Breakdown from moving to places where they could thrive. Right now, there are 26.6 million refugees in the world, 50.9 million internally displaced people, and 4.4 million asylum seekers. Ask them where they live, and they won't talk about Market Forces or business-as-usual incrementalism. Neither will the 2 million people who are imprisoned in the US, the largest number in any country, a number that has increased 500% in the last forty years. More gates to the Fortress.

If we agree with the sentiment expressed so eloquently by Eugene V. Debs that “While there is a lower class, I am in it, while there is a criminal element, I am of it, and while there is a soul in prison, I am not free,” then if there are any people on Earth living in Breakdown and Fortress World, we all are living there on some level.

About the Author



Gwendolyn Hallsmith is founder and executive director of Global Community Initiatives. She is the author of six books on sustainable community development and has worked all over the world to foster local economies, good governance, and healthy ecosystems. She founded Vermonters for a New Economy to work on economic solutions at the state level, and the Headwaters Garden and Learning Center, an ecovillage in Cabot, VT. She has a master's degree in Public Policy from Brown University.

About the Publication

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