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## Seeds of Eco-Communalism

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

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In the [Great Transition: The Promise and Lure of the Times Ahead](#) (2002), Paul Raskin and his co-authors theorize three distinct types of [scenarios](#) for the twenty-first century as essentially more of the same (Conventional Worlds), socio-political and economic collapse (Barbarization), or just and sustainable social transformation (Great Transitions). [Eco-communalism](#) and a [New Paradigm](#) characterize the transformational route. The question, twenty years later, is whether we as a planetary species are clearly moving beyond market societies supported by capitalist states where production for trade and growth economies breach the limits of Earth's and people's regenerative capacities. In fact, in 2022, rather than fading, we see a deepening struggle between these three forces of continuity, despair, and a resistance pregnant with possibilities.

I have staked my life on the path of hope.<sup>1</sup> I see Eco-communalism as the underlying, if not explicit, thrust of a range of socio-ecological movements such as degrowth, eco-socialism, eco-feminism, food sovereignty, ecovillages, the social and solidarity movement, eco-anarchism, bioregionalism, decolonization, ecological justice, and commoning. I see activists and advocates in these substantially grassroots movements unifying around socio-political justice, the right for every single person's basic needs to be met (no more, no less) while respecting Earth as the source of life for the living planet, its limits, and our responsibilities to regenerate Earth as part of our own healing as a collective species. This is the content of the burgeoning green wedge in Raskin's most optimistic rendering of the world in 2042 in Figure 4 of his 2022 provocation ["Which Future Are We Living in?"](#)

However, the social and ecological values and activities of these movements are continuously eroded by market forces. For a couple of centuries, these powerful forces have been identified as “capital” and “commodification” and, most recently, as “neoliberalism” and “financialization.” Yet minority sub-movements have been emerging within the social and environmental movements mentioned, sub-movements identifying “money,” i.e., monetary relations and activities, as the primary barrier to our great transformation to postcapitalism. Where transitions (such as the socialist experiments of the twentieth century) include markets and continue to use money as a tool in decision-making over production, social and ecological values—as well as direct forms of democratic decision-making—are subordinated, jeopardized, or marginalized.

Moving beyond monetary relations and activities is a necessary but not sufficient step in releasing ourselves from the bonds of capital(ists), markets, and the states that support them. In my recent book [\*Beyond Money: A Postcapitalist Strategy\*](#), I outline why and how going beyond money will enable us to make the transformation necessary.<sup>2</sup> We know how to be sustainable by living modestly, using convivial tools and techniques, sharing and caring, and commoning, but the building blocks of making money as in private property and production for trade stymy us.

Production for trade and private property are key and entwined capitalist processes. Both can be replaced by processes structuring production on demand to directly fulfill basic needs, collective sharing, and commoning in a glocal future based on real social and ecological values.<sup>3</sup> This implies a globe covered by small, relatively collectively sufficient, bioregional communities, not closed communities but rather open and interconnected communities, freely sharing their knowledge, skills, and cultures.<sup>4</sup>

In fact, the movements mentioned earlier have tended to grow and coalesce as globally networked nodes and communities of place, identifying bioregionally with their neighborhood in social-ecological ways, respecting Earth as their source of life. At the same time, breaching Earth’s limits has led to increasing “natural” disasters, including fires, floods, and pandemics, resilience to which centers on strengthening communities with their local landscapes as sources of life.<sup>5</sup> In these ways there are push-and-pull forces hastening Eco-communalist transformation.

## Endnotes

1. John Holloway, *Hope in Hopeless Times* (London: Pluto Press, 2022).
2. Anitra Nelson, *Beyond Money: A Postcapitalist Strategy* (London, Pluto Press, 2022).
3. *Beyond Money: Yenomon*, directed by Anitra Nelson (2022), 8 minutes.
4. See more at [www.localfutures.org/](http://www.localfutures.org/).
5. Anitra Nelson, "Covid-19: Capitalist and Postcapitalist Perspectives," *Human Geography* 13(3): 305–309.

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## About the Author



Anitra Nelson is Honorary Principal Fellow at University of Melbourne, author of *Beyond Money: A Postcapitalist Strategy* and *Small is Necessary: Shared Living on a Shared Planet*, and co-author of *Exploring Degrowth*. She was the co-editor of *Housing for Degrowth: Principles, Models, Challenges and Opportunities* and *Food for Degrowth: Perspectives and Practices*. Her research focuses on affordability and sustainability in housing policy, and design of possible non-monetary economies. She holds a PhD from LaTrobe University.

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