GREAT TRANSITION INITIATIVE
TOWARD A TRANSFORMATIVE VISION AND PRAXIS

What's Next for the Global Movement?

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The global "polycrisis" is spreading a zeitgeist of fear, despair, and reaction. But it also is sparking social energy for building a civilization centered around people, peace, and planet—a harbinger of a global citizens movement. The urgent task is to bring this critical social actor, now waiting in the wings, to the center of the global stage. But how? Our panel of strategists propose next steps toward crystallizing a movement for systemic change.

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How to De-Silo Movements

Jeremy Brecher

The principal problems of movement unity do not involve uniting the already like-minded, but drawing together those who are siloed or even antagonistic. But how do we move past such fragmentation? My observation as a historian of social movements is that a crucial reason for movements to de-silo, cooperate, and converge is from a perception of the possibility of gaining power to affect problems through greater cooperation and mutual support.

To show that such overcoming of divisions does actually happen, and that it is related to the aspiration for more effective power, let me briefly sketch four examples of de-siloing, growing cooperation, and partial convergence among movements.

Globalization from below, also known as the anti-globalization or global justice movement, brought together a highly diverse range of movements and organizations from all over the world. After gestating for years in response to "globalization from above," globalization from below burst into public view with the 1999 "Battle of Seattle" that shut down the attempt to establish the World Trade Organization as a neoliberal economic constitution for the world. As author and activist Vandana Shiva put it in the aftermath of the Battle of Seattle, "When labor joins hands with environmentalists, when farmers from the North and farmers from the South make a common commitment to say 'no' to genetically engineered crops, they are not acting as special interests. They are defending the common interests and common rights of all people, everywhere."[1] That process has continued in myriad forms, notably in the global gatherings of the World Social Forum.[2]

Occupy Wall Street began on September 17, 2011, in the aftermath of the Great Recession. An initial group of about 1,000 people set up camp in a park near Wall Street with slogans like "Banks

Got Bailed Out – We Got Sold Out" and "We Are the 99 Percent." They issued a list of grievances against the "corporate forces of the world" that ranged from illegal housing foreclosures to outsourcing and depravation of labor rights, and from excessive student debt to "domination and corruption of the political process." Over time, the Occupy movement became involved in direct action campaigns to support unions, fight evictions, cancel student debt, resist fossil fuel pipelines, provide relief to the victims of Hurricane Sandy, and many others. The movement went national, with occupations in more than 600 communities in the United States from Akron and Albany to Ypsilanti and Yuma. Then it went global, with a Global Day of Action with rallies in more than 1,000 cities in 82 countries by what Reuters called "anti-greed protesters" who were "galvanized by the Occupy Wall Street movement." While the encampments were eventually shut down by police evictions, the impact was lasting. Occupy Wall Street veterans played a significant role in supporting the Chicago teachers strike and the organizing of Walmart and fast food workers. Political pundits of right and left attributed Obama's victory in the 2012 presidential elections to his adopting a political narrative previously popularized by the Occupy movement.[3]

The movement against the Keystone XL pipeline began with indigenous First Nations in the Alberta region where the pipeline was to originate. Intertribal gatherings began constructing anti-KXL alliances with other indigenous groups around North America. In Nebraska, an organization called BOLD Nebraska brought together a coalition of conservative ranchers, urban progressives, environmentalists, and farm advocacy groups to oppose the pipeline. Then a new group, Tar Sands Action, was established, growing out of the climate organization 350.org. Over a two-week period, more than 1,200 people were arrested in civil disobedience at the White House. This transformed the struggle against the pipeline to the leading environmental issue of the subsequent years. In one week, hundreds of activists marched on an Obama fundraiser event; two people encased themselves in concrete at a pipeline construction site; hundreds protested the appearance of the Canadian prime minister in New York. Late in 2014, an improbable but highly photogenic coalition calling itself the "Cowboy Indian Alliance" of often-antagonistic farmers, ranchers, and tribal leaders held a five day "Reject and Protect" encampment in Washington, DC. After years of struggle, the movement achieved victory when on his first day in office President Joe Biden revoked the permit for the pipeline.[4]

The labor-climate movement in the US has attempted to overcome the false "environment vs. jobs" dichotomy that has been the primary frame for characterizing the relation between organized labor and climate protection. The organization with which I work, the Labor Network for Sustainability, is a "bridging organization" with the explicit goal of bringing together the generally siloed US labor, environmental, and climate justice movements.[5] Over the past dozen years, we have educated each movement about the issues and needs of the others, initiated mutual support on the concerns of each (such as a current campaign that has drawn in more than 70 environmental organizations to back the strike demands of the United Auto Workers union), and developed programs (like "just transition" plans that would cut greenhouse gas emissions in ways designed to promote good union jobs) to create integrated common objectives and varied forms of common action (such as demonstrations and legislative campaigns for policies that embody common objectives and interests.) We bring these often opposed constituencies together in a series of Convergences on Labor and Climate to better understand differences and to identify potential areas of common interest and common action.

These examples and others of movement de-siloing, cooperation, and convergence often embody a common pattern. Individuals and groups face problems that they do not have the power to solve. The recognition of inadequate power may lead to a search for new strategies. These may often involve a recognition that others face related problems. That poses the possibility of developing greater power to address the problems through cooperation. Exploring such possibilities may take various forms, such as efforts to understand each other's experience and perspective, lending support in concrete instances, testing mutual cooperation, building on initial tests to develop wider forms of cooperation, reorganization of preexisting understandings to partially incorporate the understandings of the other, and new forms of cooperative action based on that reorganized consciousness.[6]

This analysis suggests some the potential for what might be described as "grassroots listening projects":

- Collect and publish a series of accounts of how various movements attenuated divisions, escaped silos, and moved toward cooperation and convergence.

• Ask articulate people directly connected with grassroots movements (i.e., "organic intellectuals") to discuss what Great Transition principles and programs mean for their group—positive and negative—and how they see the process of convergence.

• Initiate joint dialogues among people from different movements about whether they perceive common interests and, if they do, what they envision as the steps for realizing them.

Endnotes

1. Jeremy Brecher, Tim Costello, and Brendan Smith, *Globalization from Below* (Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 2002), 15, fn 25.

2. For more on globalization from below, see Brecher, Costello, and Smith, *Globalization from Below*.

3. Jeremy Brecher, *Strike!: 50th Anniversary Edition* (Oakland, CA: PM Press), 372–373.

4. Jeremy Brecher, *Common Preservation in a Time of Mutual Destruction* (Oakland, CA: PM Press, 2021), 243–244.

5. For more, see https://www.labor4sustainability.org.

6. For multiple examples of this process, see Brecher, *Common Preservation*.

About the Author

Jeremy Brecher is a historian of social movements and a co-founder of the Labor Network for Sustainability. He is the author of the *Climate Insurgency Trilogy* and *Common Preservation in a Time of Mutual Destruction*.

Beyond Us vs Them

John Bunzl

What's missing from the movement landscape?

1. **There is no 99% vs a 1%**. There is only the 100%. What is missing, firstly I suggest, is to recognize that, by and large, our predicament is not a struggle between groups of humans, but a struggle between all humanity and a destructive *system* which has a life of its own. Since it was unleashed, this system now operates globally, beyond the control of *any* group while powerfully limiting and guiding the actions of all groups toward destructive outcomes. Akin to the dynamic of the "tragedy of the commons," this system is a vicious cycle: no government can move first or act alone to solve global problems because doing so would make its national economy uncompetitive, risking unemployment, capital flight, and economic decline. Whether we are talking about climate, nuclear weapons, AI, tax avoidance, wealth inequality, or other global problems, this destructive system remains in control. I refer to it as Destructive Global Competition (DGC).[1] It is not that governments don't *want* to solve global problems, but that they *can't*.

Far from being anyone's fault, DGC is the result of evolution's tendency towards ever-larger geographical scales combined with the tendency for economic activity to run ahead of government regulation. Today, we have a global market but only national governance. Given this "governance gap," it is not surprising that DGC is running out of any control and continues to drive us all to destroy the planet on which we depend. So, in remaining identified with an "us vs. them" mindset (i.e., believing that the enemy is some other group of humans or some sub-system like capitalism or patriarchy), we only distract from what we should be focused on and thereby exacerbate the problems we profess to be solving.

2. **Hierarchies are natural and necessary**. The second thing we are missing is our need to grow beyond our predominantly postmodern worldview that rejects all hierarchies and all meta-narratives. This worldview champions decentralization, diversity, leaderless coalitions, horizontal networks, etc., etc. Meanwhile, set against this fragmented, horizontal, uncoordinated mass of global justice initiatives, we have the single, over-arching dynamic of DGC: a global, unified, all-pervading, top-down, destructive, out-of-control dynamic. Nothing that has a decentralized, non-hierarchical structure can possibly succeed against this. Without acknowledging the need for unity and some hierarchy, our movement, such as it is, stands absolutely no chance.

We need therefore to understand that hierarchies are natural and indispensable. The trick, however, is to distinguish between *actualizing* hierarchies (i.e., healthy ones) and *dominator* hierarchies (i.e., unhealthy ones). Being a global *dominator* hierarchy, DGC can only be overcome by a unified, global *actualizing* hierarchy—that is, by some form of globally coordinated, cooperative, citizen-driven global governance process that transcends and includes nation-states: an actualizing hierarchy that puts us, citizens, in the driving seat, rendering us capable of driving nations to cooperatively implement the necessary policies to solve global problems.[2]

3. **Subsidiarity builds movement unity**. Another thing we are missing is that actualizing hierarchies promote unity where it is needed and diversity where it is not. Every coherent entity in the world is held together by some form of governance, whether it be an atom, a cell, your body, or a nation. Governance structures are also multi-level because, as societies expand, existing governance structures eventually can't cope, thus necessitating the creation of new, higher-level governance structures. The operating principle between these levels is subsidiarity: what cannot be solved at the lowest possible level is taken up to the next-higher level. This promotes unity where it is needed, while leaving space for independence and diversity where it is not.

4. **Understanding our unique evolutionary moment**. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, we are missing the evolutionary meta-narrative in which all are involved but of which few are yet aware.[3]

How to Catalyze a GCM?

A "big tent" approach (i.e., get as many NGOs and global justice initiatives into the room as we can), which prioritizes *quantity*, is destined to fail. This is because it will be the postmodern, anti-hierarchical worldview of the vast majority that will hold sway. The net result will be exactly what we see in the movement today: fragmented chaos.

Thus, an approach based on quality will be needed: first seeking out those very few NGOs and initiatives already holding a higher, world-centric worldview. This will provide a powerful core group that can disseminate messaging designed to point out the shortcomings of the wider movement, so destabilizing their postmodern worldview and causing them to think deeper, nudging them gently but firmly towards a higher world-centric consciousness and mode of action.

As more NGOs start cooperating, an in-group/out-group dynamic will evolve whereby those NGOs still refusing to cooperate will start to feel themselves increasingly irrelevant.

Endnotes

1. As explained in *The Simpol Solution*, co-authored with Nick Duffell: https://simpol.org/who-we-are/simpol-the-book.

2. For more on this, see https://simpol.org.

3. See the GTI forum on Big History (https://greattransition.org/gti-forum/big-history-and-great-transition) as well as the work of John Stewart (e.g., https://www.evolutionarymanifesto.com/man.pdf).

About the Author

John Bunzl is a global political activist and businessman. In 2000, he founded the Simultaneous Policy (Simpol) campaign, a way for citizens to use their votes to drive politicians towards global cooperation. It has supporters in over 100 countries and enjoys the support of a growing number of Members of Parliament around the world. His authored and co-authored books include *The Simpol Solution*, *Monetary Reform – Making it Happen!*, *People-Centred Global Governance – Making it Happen!*, and *Global Domestic Politics*. He has published numerous articles on global governance in the Journal of Integral Theory & Practice. He has lectured widely, including to the Schumacher Society, the World Trade Organisation, the Lucis Trust, and various universities.

On Confederations and Councils

Helen Camakaris

The extraordinary number of associations pursuing closely related goals suggests that thousands, perhaps millions, of well-meaning people pursuing admirable goals isn't enough to solve the problems; furthermore, the effort is weakened by different groups working within their separate siloes. It is therefore of enormous importance that this exercise yields meaningful results that can be acted upon.

The Nature of the Problem

The world is still sleep-walking into a climate catastrophe, likely closely followed by further disasters, as we progressively transgress planetary and socio-economic boundaries. These are all so-called "wicked problems," as they require a broad response at the global level that goes against the perceived short-term interests of many.

Human nature is largely a product of evolution, and, as such, it follows the constraints of the evolutionary algorithm: reproduction, variation, and selection. The sad reality is that human nature is therefore largely self-interested and geared toward procreation, is focused on the present rather than the future, and is limited by our style of cognition, whereby our decisions are often intuitive and emotional rather than rational.[1] We frequently use heuristics that, while useful in past millennia, are now mismatched to our current situation, a phenomenon known as "evolutionary mismatch."[2] Intuition runs deep, even now with our evolved intelligence, and ability to communicate and learn.

Human behavior exists on a spectrum, with different attributes falling within a normal distribution. On measures that relate directly to working for a safe future, the engaged, educated, and altruistic sit at one end. At the other extreme, people don't understand the risks we face, or

regard pleasure and wealth as more important. Importantly, polls do show that a majority are in favor of climate action, but feel powerless.[3] The good will and hard work by the converted must be complemented by a carefully designed strategy that enables the silent majority to shift the balance. Here are some thoughts.

Speak with One Voice

I suggest creating a Confederation of all Organizations, featured in the Global Movement Landscape survey and beyond (perhaps a GIST, Global Institute for Strategic Transformation), concentrating on core values and ideas (the central overlapping propositions). It should start with a Secretariat and Working Group to draw up a Manifesto or Statement of Core Beliefs, with plans for determining possible future strategies. The Manifesto should be sent to relevant movement organizations, unions, research institutes, universities, and think tanks, seeking comment and support.

A unified voice would be more influential, both for individuals and for political parties, and would facilitate creation of a suitable strategy for solving the impasse we face.

The Role of Democracy

Currently, most democracies use party systems and are struggling to satisfactorily represent the people, with many people marginalized or disenfranchised, while others pursue wealth and power, a difference that can largely be put down to happenstance and the accident of birth, aided and abetted by neoliberalism.

Democracies where winner takes all, with adversarial politics and revolving-door policies when the ruling Party changes, lead to timidity in policymaking and appeals to the lowest common denominator, generally focusing on voters' immediate self-interest and desire to be treated fairly.

Small changes would help, like proportional representation, preferential voting, and parliamentary structures. However, even when problems are transparently obvious, we do not have readily accessible mechanisms for change.

We need a pathway to consilience, both in relation to climate and other planetary boundaries, and in relation to democracy. The world and climate systems are so complex that the public does not

know whom to trust; politicians generally lack the skills and training to understand complex issues, and regrettably, they are often driven by self-interest, seeking power and influence.

We need ways to improve decision-making in the higher echelons of power, coupled with a mechanism that satisfies the public that public policy is fair, and serves their self-interest.

Here are some contenders, but it would be the role of the suggested Confederation to choose, develop, and seek feedback on possible strategies. Selected policies could be presented to politicians, perhaps through a mechanism like Simpol's Simultaneous Policy Campaign, or could be included by a party as part of an electoral platform. The majority of the population wants solutions to climate change, but there has never been a pathway to achieve such a thing, so there should be electoral support.

Advocating for National Councils for the Future

I envisage a campaign to persuade politicians or a political party to support a Council for the Future, whereby complex decisions to "wicked problems" are made by a broad body of experts and citizens, including climate and evolutionary scientists, economists, ecologists, social scientists, ethicists, political scientists, etc.[4] Research could determine the Model most acceptable to the public, perhaps including representatives of diverse groups in the community— including workers and unionists, a balance of females and males, indigenous and migrant communities, young and old.

The Council's decisions would be put to a conscience vote in Parliament and/or a Citizens' Assembly, guaranteeing expert, non-partisan policy, and continuity.

A Council for the Future could tackle all issues that present risk, including the encroachment on planetary boundaries, the dangers of nuclear war and artificial intelligence, and related issues like creation of a new economics, improved democracy, and equity for all members of the human population, now and in future generations.

The evolutionary paradigm of reproduction or sharing, variation or modification, and selection, in relation to ideas, can lead to the evolution of better solutions, just as the same paradigm resulted in our evolution. Let us hope that it will not disappoint.

Endnotes

1. Daniel Kahneman, *Thinking, Fast and Slow* (London: Penguin UK, 2011).

2. Norman P. Li., Mark van Vugt, M and Stephen Colarelli, "The Evolutionary Mismatch Hypothesis: Implications for Psychological Science," *Current Directions in Psychological Science* 27, no. 1 (2018): 38–44

3. Damian Carrington, "UN global climate poll: 'The people's voice is clear – they want action'," *The Guardian*, January 27, 2021, https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2021/jan/27/un-global-climate-poll-peoples-voice-is-clear-they-want-action.

4. Helen Camakaris, "Evolutionary Mismatch, Partisan Politics, and Climate Change: A Tragedy in Three Acts," *ProSocial World*, December 9, 2021, https://www.prosocial.world/posts/evolutionary-mismatch-partisan-politics-and-climate-change-a-tragedy-in-three-acts.

About the Author

Helen Camakaris is an Honorary Fellow in the School of Biosciences at the University of Melbourne and a writer on sustainability, climate change, evolutionary history, and psychology. She holds a PhD in microbiology from the University of Melbourne, where she continued as a Postdoctoral Fellow to study how bacteria regulate genes in response to their environment.

Envisioning the Movement

Guy Dauncey

How to foster a global citizens movement fit for the challenges of today is one of our most urgent questions. I thought it would be a difficult question to answer, but I find that I can visualize such a movement quite easily. It would have a strong name, a striking visual image in the form of a flag, an inspiring definition of "success," a clear set of achievable demands, determined support from millions of people, and mobilization across the planet that persists until we achieve success.

How would we define "success"? Personally, I define it as ending neoliberal capitalism and developing in its place a new ecological civilization with a new cooperative economy that will put us on the road to socially responsible corporate behavior, a safe climate, the restoration of nature, reduced inequality, and affordable housing for all.

The movement would need a global head office, national offices in most countries, and a host of chapters in each larger country. It would probably not be governed or managed by a democratically elected body: that would take years just to reach agreement on a constitution. It would be held together by a core group of activists from around the world, using a platform such as Polis to enable people to reach consensus on difficult issues.

My personal preference is that the movement would not distinguish between people from the colonizing North and the colonized South. The movement would acknowledge historical abuses and griefs, but it would also acknowledge that in most colonizing countries, powerful elites have exploited and abused their own people as well, and that in all countries, powerful elites still seek to dominate. The distinction that matters is between those who believe in kindness, cooperation, and democracy, and those who believe in selfishness, domination, and plutocracy.

The movement would be birthed in a particular place, where 300 people would gather for three weeks of deliberation in a spirit of friendship and collaborative problem-solving. Let us

call it Mount Ubuntu, referencing the South African Zulu philosophy, laying aside ego and self-importance for the benefit of all humanity, and nature. The event would become equal in global importance to those that took place at Bretton Woods (1944) and Mont Pelerin (1947). Three people would be invited to attend from each of 100 organizations, each of whom would be committed to building a new ecological civilization, or whatever was agreed to be the goal.

I would not invite representatives from political parties, because although many people in progressive parties also want a new ecological civilization, the peculiar dynamics of political parties quickly puts people who would otherwise be friends into conflict with each other. We need members of the Global Citizens Movement to be active inside every political party. Guest speakers could be invited, but their role would be to inspire and inform, not to organize.

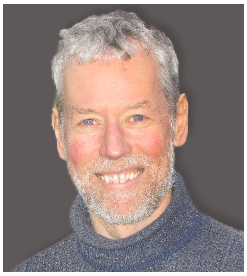
The gathering would produce a brief Charter, translated into many languages, which would be circulated widely, including to the members of like-minded non-profit organizations all over the world, seeking the first million members, with the ultimate goal of a billion members. The Charter would state key demands for global change, including climate action, biodiversity action, ending global tax avoidance, replacing abusive free trade with cooperative fair trade, a fossil fuel non-proliferation treaty, and so on.

The movement would need a global engagement strategy to reach the first million members quickly. Persuading celebrities and social media influencers to join would be important, since a growing number of people get all their news (alas) from TikTok, Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, or Twitch.

Following the gathering at Mount Ubuntu, those who attended would be invited to organize gatherings in their home countries, and to write national or regional Charters. A date would be set for the first global protest, and the movement would come alive, guided and supported from its head office in Rio, Capetown, Mumbai, or wherever. Whenever a date came up for a critical global or national meeting, the movement would fill the streets.

It will be difficult, but if we can avoid the Scylla of ideological dogmatism and the Charybdis of disorganized chaos, we can do it. The extreme urgency of the times and the dire needs of nature's creatures demand that we do.

About the Author



Guy Dauncey is an author and ecofuturist working to develop a positive vision of a sustainable future, and to translate that vision into action. He is the founder of the British Columbia Sustainable Energy Association and the author or co-author of ten books, including *The Climate Challenge: 101 Solutions to Global Warming* and *Journey to the Future: A Better World Is Possible*. He is an Honorary Member of the Planning Institute of British Columbia, a Fellow of the Findhorn Foundation in Scotland, and a Fellow of the Royal Society for the Arts.

A Unifying Framework

Riane Eisler

We are all working for the same goal: a more equitable and peaceful world where caring for people and nature is a top social and economic priority. But we are doing this in separate silos and with thinking and institutions that cannot solve the problems they created. On top of this, we face a backward push worldwide to authoritarianism, inequality, violence, and unsustainability.

If we closely look at this backward push, we see that it extends well beyond issues like climate change, race, immigration, or politics that most progressive people and organizations spotlight. Regressives put enormous time and energy into "social issues" that focus on family, gender, and sexuality to promote domination. They use tactics ranging from the deregulation of harmful business activities to idealizing strongman political rule to inciting violence and abuse against racial and ethnic outgroups. But their long-term strategy is to push us back to a time when domination in our foundational family, gender, and sexual relations was the accepted norm.

To understand this unified regressive agenda, let us consider the following:

(1) Neuroscience shows that children's early observations and experiences directly affect the structure of our brains, and with this, how we think, feel, and act—including how we vote.

(2) These observations and experiences are very different depending on the degree that our early environments orient to the partnership or domination end of the partnership-domination social scale.

For those not familiar with the partnership-domination scale, here is a quick summary of what decades of research reveal about the unified regressive frame—and how we can more

effectively move forward together.

Foundational Dynamics

(1) By transcending inherited social categories like religious/secular, right/left, East/West, North/South, capitalist/socialist, we see that a common goal of the consolidated regressive agenda is to restore authoritarian, top-down, punitive, in-group versus out-group systems in *both* the family and the state or tribe.

We find this kind of family system in religious domination-oriented cultures like the Taliban and fundamentalist Iran as well as in secular and Western ones like Orbán's Hungary, the rightist Nazis, and the leftist USSR. Why? Because neuroscience shows that our politics and economics are largely a function of our worldview and values, which are largely the result of children's genes' interaction with their cultural environment. And all this is primarily transmitted through families during our most formative years.

I want to add that there are hierarchies in partnership systems, starting in families, but they are empowering hierarchies of actualization rather than disempowering hierarchies of domination. Research shows that children who experience fear, pain, and anger in punitive, authoritarian, male-dominated families tend to go into denial, deflecting these feelings to different races, gays/trans people, and other outgroups they are taught are inferior, dangerous, or malevolent. This denial becomes habitual, as in denial of climate change, the COVID-19 pandemic, and election results.

Fortunately, not everyone raised in these kinds of families takes this route, but many people do—maintaining and even demanding punitive domination systems in times like ours of massive technological, economic, and environmental change.

(2) Regressives internalize rigid gender stereotypes, despite the evidence that both women and men are capable of caregiving (labeled "feminine" in domination thinking). They do not recognize that gender fluidity is part of human nature nor that there is massive evidence that prehistoric human cultures oriented more toward partnership than domination.

Again, we clearly see this focus on rigid gendered rankings in otherwise different domination regimes. Western secular regimes like Hitler's Germany, Stalin's USSR, Trump's MAGA movement, and

Putin's Russia all see men and "masculinity" as superior to women and "femininity." This subjugation of women and the "feminine" is even more overt in religious Iran and the Taliban, where it is a top government priority, as are binary gender stereotypes and the arrest and killing of anyone who deviates, like women who refuse to wear the chador and people in the LGBTQ+ community.

All of us to varying degrees were taught to rank men and "masculinity" over women and "femininity." Our religions teach that women are inferior and must be controlled by men, starting with Eve. The university canon has had little or nothing about girls and women, and even the new women's, men's, and gender studies are marginalized.

We have not been taught that the ranking of men over women, rigid gender stereotypes that allow no deviation, and ranking "masculinity" over "femininity" is a bulwark of domination systems. But how gender roles and relations are structured is not "just a women's issue": it is a central social and economic organizing principle.

(3) The economic operating systems we have inherited have been shaped by gendered values in which the economic contributions of the "women's work" of caring for people from birth as well as caring for our natural life support systems are devalued.

Both Smith and Marx (fathers of capitalism and socialism) perpetuated these values. For them, the work of caring for children, the elderly, and the sick and keeping a clean and healthy home environment was to be performed for free by a woman in a male-controlled household. There is nothing in their theories about caring for our natural life support systems.

Even metrics like GDP and GNP perpetuate this distorted system of values. These metrics include activities in the market (once an exclusive male preserve) that harm and even take life, like selling cigarettes and fast foods and the medical and funeral costs they result in. But they do not include the "women's" work of caring for people outside the market (a market where child care workers generally earn less than dog walkers). Nor do they include caring for our natural environment, so trees (which provide us oxygen) are only included when they are dead, as logs.

(4) To support domination systems, we also inherited false narratives, which are re-taught by regressives. Notable are those about an inherently flawed human nature like "original sin" and

"selfish genes"—which argue with each other, but both justify top-down control. To support the old rankings based on fear and force, we inherited stories like Eve's and Pandora's that blame women for all our ills. We inherited "classic" fairy tales like Cinderella and Sleeping Beauty that idealize royalty and promote women's helplessness and dependence. As we see revived in parts of the US where pushback to domination systems is strongest, we also inherited narratives that promote racial, religious, and ethnic prejudices.

Conclusion

Diverse movements such as the environmental, racial justice, LGBTQ+ rights, and women's empowerment movements require a unifying framework: a comprehensive partnership approach, recognizing our interconnection with one another and the natural world. This new frame encompasses family, childhood, gender, economic, and political relations, and is key to a successful whole-systems transformation and a better world.

About the Author

Riane Eisler is President of the Center for Partnership Systems and Editor-in-Chief of the *Interdisciplinary Journal of Partnership Studies*. Internationally known as a systems scientist, conference keynoter, consultant, and attorney working for the human rights of women and children, she is the author of groundbreaking books such as *The Chalice and the Blade: Our History, Our Future*, *The Real Wealth of Nations: Creating a Caring Economics*, and *Nurturing Our Humanity: How Domination and Partnership Shape Our Brains, Lives, and Future*. She holds a JD from the University of California, Los Angeles. In recognition of her work for a more equitable, peaceful, and sustainable future, she has received honorary PhDs and peace, humanitarian, and human rights awards.

Calling Out Capitalism

Peter Evans

Having spent some time a few years back trying to outline possibilities for what I called "counter-hegemomic globalization," I have been thoroughly impressed by the energy and analytic imagination embodied in the discussion.[1] For my contribution, I would like to focus on the forces that stand in the way of progressive global movements, arguing for the importance of incorporating an analysis of the strengths and potential weaknesses of the "opposing team" into our analysis.

Capitalism's "destructive global tapestry" is the focal point of the structures and actors that stand in opposition to expanding human flourishing and defending a sustainable environment. The alliance between capitalist power and regressive authoritarian national regimes deepens the threat. I would like to suggest that explicitly calling out this formidable destructive alliance might increase our chances of exploiting its weaknesses.

The destructive consequences of capitalism go beyond the rapacious destruction of the environment in the service of maximizing profits and the undermining of collective public efforts to provide individuals and communities with the collective services they need. Global neoliberal capitalism wipes out stable jobs that provide decent livelihoods, replacing them with transient, shifting employment that provides no foundation for communities that are the essential building blocks of progressive politics. Capitalism's cultural machinery focuses peoples' individual desires on the consumption of commodities and devalues the satisfactions of social and community ties. The social and cultural perversions constructed by capitalists pave the way for authoritarian solutions to the quest for better lives.

Established progressive movements (national as well as global) too often avoid explicitly laying blame on capitalism and the intertwined class action of capitalists. Failure to identify capitalism

as the enemy undermines the possibility of mobilizing a broad base of ordinary citizens in the political defense of human flourishing and sustainability. Building a progressive political culture also requires underlining that capitalist power is exercised not just by impersonal structures but by human agency, capitalists operating in concerted solidarity with other capitalists to preserve their power, regardless of their individual conflicts over the division of the spoils.

Failure to explicitly identify the power of capitalists as the root of personal and social problems makes it easier for reactionary ideologues to deflect the anger and resentment generated by the hard lives and discouraging future prospects that people face. Blame is deflected onto public institutions, would-be progressive politicians, and the less fortunate "others" who are labeled unfair competitors for a share of the diminishingly available "good life." When progressive movements fail to challenge myths like "capitalists are the key generators of good jobs" or "the profit motive offers a path to sustainable development," they are left offering an unconvincing analysis that doesn't make sense in terms of the reality of peoples' everyday lives and struggles. It is no wonder that people fall prey to authoritarian reactionary nationalist siren songs.

The rise of nationalist authoritarian solutions is a signal that conventional vehicles of progressive politics are failing. It also signals that capitalists are giving up on democratic politics as a means of preserving order and profits. Given global capitalism's imperialist subordination and exploitation of national communities around the world, there is a natural affinity between opposition to global capitalism and nationalism. Historically, nationalism has helped power progressive politics in the Global South. Today, however, nationalism has increasingly become a seedbed for authoritarian rule. Authoritarian nationalists offer a valued cultural and political identity to those they define as part of the national community. Defining "the other" as groups and communities outside their definition of the national community, these authoritarians justify the use of repressive, even murderous, force to counter the supposed threat. Reactionary nationalist authoritarians, North and South, are useful allies for capitalists. Repressing progressive movements, they provide the order that capitalists want.

What weaknesses in the "opposing team" might enable a global progressive movement (and its allies at the national and community levels) to move the world in the direction of transformative change? The most fundamental weakness is capitalism's inability to satisfy people's immediate

need for dignified livelihoods and healthy environments. Identifying capitalism as the enemy would better enable progressive movements to counter the deflection of this discontent. It would support the militant workplace resistance to capitalists as bosses, which continues, despite capitalism's cultural machinery and the collusion of moderate politicians.

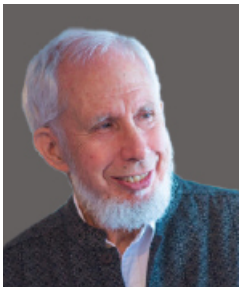
Nationalist authoritarian regimes are also weakened by capitalism's inability to deliver the lives for which ordinary people yearn, but active resistance is more politically complicated. Nonetheless, the very existence of a "global tapestry" of movements helps delegitimate the scapegoating of the excluded "other." At the same time, building a more genuinely progressive politics in places where democratic contestation is still possible should help check the complicity of these regimes with repressive authoritarian nationalist regimes.

Identifying capitalism and capitalists as "the enemy" is not a panacea, but it is a key element in making sure that the analysis offered by global movements reflects the reality of people's lives around the world. An analysis that rings true on the ground is only a beginning, but it is a *sine qua non* of successful mobilization.

Endnotes

1. Peter Evans, "Is it Labor's Turn to Globalize? Twenty-first Century Opportunities and Strategic Responses," *Global Labour Journal* 1, no. 3 (2010), https://mulpress.mcmaster.ca/globallabour/article/view/1082; Peter Evans, "National Labor Movements and Transnational Connections: Global Labor's Evolving Architecture Under Neoliberalism," *Global Labour Journal* 5, no. 3 (2014), https://mulpress.mcmaster.ca/globallabour/article/view/2283; Peter Evans and César Rodríguez-Garavito, eds., *Transnational Advocacy Networks: Twenty Years of Evolving Theory and Practice* (Bogotá: Dejusticia, 2018).

About the Author



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Building a Bigger Boat

Joseph Fiksel

In Gus Speth's eloquent response, he offers the metaphor of a flotilla of small boats forging through turbulent seas, linked only by a vague sense of shared purpose. So the question arises, as he suggests: how can we meld these siloed progressive energies into an unprecedented fusion of forces?

A first step, which is daunting but doable, might be to create a synthesis of principles and goals developed by various global movements. There is much in common among the small boats, although they utilize different vocabularies and focus on a variety of different challenges. Speaking with a unified voice would greatly strengthen the emerging movements, without necessarily compromising their individuality.

Our effort should not simply replicate existing constructs such as the UN Sustainable Development Goals or the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction. Rather, we should build upon these important ideas to create a roadmap that provides a common direction, showing how the scattered forces of good intentions can be aligned toward actual progress in policy development and strategic decision-making. In this process, we must be alert to the many interactions among our movements, including both synergies and conflicts. For example, thinking realistically about supply chain management, the need for resilience in the face of turbulent geopolitical forces may conflict with the need for long-term transformation toward a regenerative, net-positive economy.

As a next step, armed with this emerging consensus, we could draw upon the expertise of our comrades-in-arms to develop an over-arching plan for effective communication, collaboration, and perhaps consolidation of these flourishing movements into a global confederacy. Can we

imagine a large flagship leading the flotilla, carving through the challenging waters with a clarion call that awakens worldwide attention? It is not clear what path we might take toward this vision, whether a particular organization can step up to lead the flotilla, or whether a brand new entity should be created. But it is clear to me that we need a bigger boat.

To have real impact, we should identify and enlist some pragmatic partners, not just from academia but also from industry and government, who are wrestling with these challenges on a daily basis. There are many existing organizations in the private and public sectors that share our ultimate goals, and are working in parallel on their own trajectories. Can we blend these disparate voices into a unified message that mobilizes broad commitment? I can't think of a more worthwhile and urgent mission.

About the Author

Joseph Fiksel is Professor Emeritus at The Ohio State University, where he co-founded the Center for Resilience and championed the Sustainability Institute, and a Visiting Scholar at George Washington University. His applied research has advanced the science and practice of sustainability and resilience. Previously, he was a Vice President at Battelle, working with international organizations and leading corporations, and served as Special Assistant for Sustainability at the US EPA. He holds a PhD from Stanford University.

Beyond Campaigns

Dorothy Guerrero

"I began to realise that mobilising workers was not enough—there is a big difference between being mobilised and being organised."

- Moses Mayekiso, first Secretary General of the National Union of South Africa (NUMSA) and elected MP in the first South African democratic elections of 1994

Social movements and progressives worldwide today can learn a great deal from what Moses Mayekiso said in 1984 when, in a short period of time, 25,000 South African metalworkers had come out on strike during the apartheid period, which, together with others, he followed through by building the NUMSA as an enduring national organization.[1] Organizing such a show of resistance landed him and four others in jail for treason under South Africa's then draconian Internal Security Act. In the current polycrisis, we are seeing our democratic space increasingly narrowing, globally.

Unity is important because we know that we are weak. Many new movements in both the Global North and South rightly understand the need for equity and solidarity. However, many do not see that to achieve our desired outcomes, tilting the balance of forces in society on both national and global levels is essential. The resolution of conflicts will be greatly determined by wider power structures within the world economy and systems. For that, we need unity, and there is still a lot of work to be done. How do we address the global imperative of building a strong and enduring global resistance against very powerful forces that are wrecking our lives and the planet and at the same time constituting another world if we are divided?

On the positive side, climate change is the galvanizing issue of this generation and rightly so, as we have a generational and existential crisis. This is important, as we have had a very polarized

atmosphere in recent years as a result of Trump's presidency in the US and the Brexit referendum in the UK, which let incompetent, cruel, and racist people in and outside governments out of the woodwork. Russia's occupation of Ukraine paralyzed and seriously divided the Left and progressive social movements globally to a certain extent, too, as many failed to respond to a complicated and nuanced situation wherein it is important to criticize Putin's imperialist move and at the same time denounce the expansion of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).

On the other hand, however, successive global conferences repeatedly ask the same questions, and the answers continue to elude us: Why is it very difficult to build global social movement unity and go beyond issue-based campaigns? We have a good analysis of the problems, so why can't we simply go behind common positions to solve our problems? Is the NGOization of our movements to blame for this, with too many competing issues?

Building Unity and Going Beyond Campaigns

There is now a global consensus that climate change is a global problem requiring global solutions based on justice and solidarity. After battling climate change denialism funded by big corporate money for decades, many are now seeing climate change as the biggest challenge of our time and demanding that governments address the climate emergency. There is also an increasing sense of frustration that the UN and our governments are not getting us any closer to reducing climate-changing greenhouse gases in the atmosphere.

In all decision-making summits, wealthier nations are successful at producing inaction, obstructions, and delay tactics to avoid actions commensurate to the challenges we are facing. Transnational corporations and their lobbyists are increasingly writing the rules and are operating with impunity as all important needs for living (food, energy, transportation, health care and medicines, technology and information) are more and more controlled by monopolists, leading to speculation and inflation.[2]

We criticize "new forms of colonialism," where countries in the Global South are forced to invest in fossil fuel projects to repay debts. There is a technology gap due to domination of the field by Global North countries, which needs to be addressed for technologies to be accessible to

developing countries. We are facing nuclear annihilation with increasing possibility of a third world war. These easily overwhelm the victories won by social movements and campaigners.

To build unities strong enough to build alternatives, let us identify social movement strengths and areas for improvement:

1. Many movements and campaigners are good at analysis or at diagnosing problems and who benefits in the crises, but are losing sight of geopolitics and could not broaden beyond mobilizing around specific sectors or issues.

2. Some movements understand that there are conflicts, with two fundamental dimensions:

> (a) **The danger of inter-state conflicts and rising tensions**: Rich countries that continue to dominate economically are also continuing to prevent the poor countries from meeting their aspirations to live well and prosper.
>
> (b) **Inter-class conflicts**: In these conflicts, the interests and aspirations of the poor majority, the marginalized, women, etc., are not in the top priority.

Some see class without geopolitics while others see geopolitics without class tensions.

Broadening unity and outreach

At the time of this writing, the Yasunidos just won the referendum in Ecuador to stop oil extraction in the Yasuni National Park in the Amazon by 59% to 41%.[3] The people of Ecuador also voted to stop mining in Choco Andino. These are two significant and historic votes to protect the environment not just for Ecuador but also for the planet. The indigenous communities in Ecuador have tirelessly campaigned for more than a decade, and that effort built the widespread support across the country that delivered the vote. It makes Ecuador a global trailblazer. In recent history, South Africans also put, through a constitutional referendum that there is a right to say "no" to destructive extractivism and other big (mal)development projects.

The key elements from these experiences are tireless campaigning, educating, and organizing to build unity. Influencers from social movements and progressive groups may get thousands of likes and tweets, some with tens of thousands of followers even. However, this alone does not ensure the hard, daily demand of organizing. In the end, votes are still won by organized people

and coalitions that go to polls despite threats to their lives to get good leaders or their issues in key policies. Let us remember that the UN and multilateralism are in a bad shape now because of the leaders that get elected in the North and South.

There is also a specific sector that remains invisible to many movements, especially in the Global North—migrants. Most conferences and peoples' assemblies still exclude organized migrants by design, neglect, or simple lack of connection. We cannot talk about social justice without taking care that we go beyond "citizens" and include non-citizens, namely migrants. Migrants are not just concerned about migrant issues. After all, they were squeezed out from their place of origin by the current global economic order, war, persecutions, and increasingly climate change.

Endnotes

1. Terry Bell, *Comrade Moss: A Political Journey* (London: National Union of Journalist Book Branch, 1990).

2. Niall Glynn and Nick Dearden, *Monopoly Capitalism: What Is It and How Do We Fight It?* (London: Global Justice Now, 2023), https://www.globaljustice.org.uk/resource/monopoly-capitalism-what-is-it-and-how-do-we-fight-it/.

3. See the election results at https://resultados.cne.gob.ec/.

About the Author

Dorothy Guerrero is Head of Policy and Advocacy at Global Justice Now, an organization that mobilizes people in the UK to act in solidarity with social justice groups in the Global South. Prior to Global Justice Now, she worked at the Transnational Institute, African Women Unite Against Destructive Resource Extraction, Focus on the Global South, Asienhaus, and the Institute for Popular Democracy in Manila, focusing on corporate accountability, climate justice, migration, and trade and investment. She holds an MA in Development Studies from the Institute of Social Studies in The Hague.

Creating Practical Alternatives[1]

Don Hall

In March 2020, just as the coronavirus lockdowns were starting here in the US, Transition Movement founder Rob Hopkins published a new post to his blog titled "What Did Sisyphus Dream of?"[2] In it, he retells the Greek myth of a man condemned to push a boulder uphill forever and connects it to how many activists feel about working for a better world. We push and push, only to have our hopes tumble back down to the bottom and be forced to begin again. However, Hopkins doesn't stop there:

> How would it feel to be on the other side of the hill, doing the work we do in a context where gravity is our friend? In a context where policy-making, and finance, and cultural norms are behind what we do, not in opposition to it? It would feel like a very different world, where policy and funding come to be in service of the rapid transition, where culture and stories of what's 'normal' rapidly change, where the social permission for flying and other high carbon behaviours rapidly shift. From our position on this uphill side of the slope, it's hard to imagine it, but imagine it we must.

Although we clearly have not reached the other side yet, something eventually has to give. It is said that all revolutions seem impossible until they happen. From 9/11 to the Great Recession to the election of Donald Trump to the COVID-19 pandemic, major world events continue to confound our expectations.

I am convinced that historic change will occur within my lifetime, but exactly how soon it will come and whether it will be positive or negative on the whole, I am less certain. What we do in the coming years and decades will have a significant impact on its trajectory. As the Great Unraveling continues apace, the need for radical change will become more apparent, causing

more and more people to seek out alternatives. At that point, the winds of change will be blowing at our backs. Our job as evolutionary leaders is not primarily to create this wind, but to be ready to harness it when it comes.

So what are the most important things we can do to steer humanity towards a regenerative future? In times of turmoil, which path is chosen depends on two main factors. I call them "The Two Imperatives."

1. We need to make the regenerative vision universally known: To accomplish this, we need to do everything in our power to familiarize as many people as possible as soon as possible with concepts like the limits to growth, energy descent, relocalization, permaculture, and Transition Towns. The more people have an accurate understanding of the root causes of the Great Unraveling and are aware of regenerative solutions, the less likely we will be to demonize and scapegoat each other when times get even tougher than they are right now.

At the moment, these ideas are mostly unknown beyond a relatively small subculture of activists and other cultural creatives, but they need to be front and center in every discussion about our collective future. People need to be having conversations about them at coffee shops, churches, workplaces, and kitchen tables. The mainstream media needs to spend a lot more time covering the regenerative communities movement, and politicians need to be pressed about their plans for the Great Transition on debate stages.

Humanity always needs a guiding story, a better future to reach for. We can't help it. We tell ourselves stories to make sense of our lives and our world. They provide us with reference points and a sense of direction, offering us meaning and purpose.

For the past century, humanity's dominant story has been the "American Dream" of upward mobility and middle-class prosperity for everyone, two-and-a-half kids, and a white picket fence. While this isn't necessarily a bad vision, it has always been a lie. It is fundamentally unsustainable and has always been built on the backs of someone else: slaves, immigrants, nature, and future generations. Although it originated here in the US, the American Dream has since been exported around the world, both by persuasion and by force.

Thomas Kuhn wrote that paradigm shifts occur when a previously established model is found to no longer adequately explain new realities.[3] In that space of uncertainty, new theories can be proposed and experimented with. Those that fit best with the totality of our knowledge and most accurately predict the future are adopted, while those that don't are eventually cast aside.

As a candidate for the next American Dream, the regenerative vision has a lot going for it. It is compelling not only because of how it joins optimism with practicality, but also because of how it honors who we fundamentally are as people. The overwhelming speed, complexity, abstraction, and isolation of modern life has not been making us happier. It has been making us sick. The regenerative vision points to a familiar but largely forgotten way of life that could be slower, simpler, and more satisfying, lived in closer connection with self, family, community, and nature.

2. We need to develop successful practical alternatives to the status quo in as many places as possible: Since regeneration runs so counter to the logic of the Industrial Growth Society, we also need to prototype living examples of the future we want. Practical projects enable people to experience for themselves how abstract concepts like degrowth, mutual aid, and community resilience manifest in the real world and help them trust that they are nothing to be afraid of.

We need to recognize how big an ask Transition actually is. If you have kept all of your eggs in the basket of the Industrial Growth Society your entire life without any of them breaking, it is reasonable to be skeptical when a stranger walks up to you and says: "Why don't you take all your eggs out of that basket and put them in ours?" You might want to take a long, hard look at that basket first.

To convince people that our basket is big and sturdy enough, we need to prove that our ideas can work, not just a little in a few places, but a lot everywhere. We need to prove that regenerative solutions can put money in people's pockets, food on their tables, and roofs over their heads. We also need to prove that people will be happier living this way.

However, if this movement of movements can start changing things for the better at scale, people will notice. Eventually, we might even be able to show a clear contrast between communities that are actively transitioning and thriving as a result and those that are failing to hang on to the past.

These are the two big things I believe we need to do to give ourselves a chance of winning the future, for ourselves and all life. While it is almost inconceivable right now that regeneration could become the dominant paradigm guiding the future of humanity, if we can fulfill these Two Imperatives far enough in advance of global systems collapse, we can shift the Overton window. Unfamiliar and unproven ideas often appear radical at first, but can gradually become perceived as more and more acceptable, sensible, and popular over time. Some previously unthinkable ideas may even end up becoming our new normal.

Endnotes

1. This is a lightly edited excerpt from the forthcoming book, *The Regeneration Handbook: Transform Yourself to Transform the World* by Don Hall, which will be released in June 2024 by New Society Publishers.

2. Rob Hopkins, "What did Sisyphus dream of?" *Imagination Taking Power*, March 4, 2020, https://www.robhopkins.net/2020/03/04/what-did-sisyphus-dream-of/.

3. Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962).

About the Author

Don Hall is the Executive Director of Transition US and the Training Coordinator for the international Transition Network. He has served in a variety of capacities throughout the international Transition Towns Movement over the past fifteen years, including Education & Outreach Coordinator for Transition Colorado and Founder and Executive Director of Transition Sarasota (Florida). He is the author of the forthcoming book *The Regeneration Handbook: Transform Yourself to Transform Your World*. He holds a Master's in Environmental Leadership from Naropa University and a certification in Permaculture Design from the Central Rocky Mountain Permaculture Institute.

Academics of the World Unite

Jeffrey Halper

As many contributors have noted, there is a surfeit of analysis regarding major global issues and what needs to be done to resolve them, but a paucity of operational programs capable of actually bringing about purposeful global transformation. Before assessing the state-of-play of the global struggle for a just and sustainable world order, we need to determine the form of that struggle. Is it a broadly focused "movement," "alliance," "tapestry," "network," or "coalition" of loosely connected, generally single-issue groups and organizations, most preoccupied with local expressions of global problems? Or are we in need of a purposeful, structured struggle capable of incorporating particular issues and the wide range of groups, more or less organized, into a coherent force yet also able to achieve systemic change in the direction of global justice, sustainability, and diversity? And does that force not need a clear political end-game?

Addressing these issues highlights the political nature of the global struggle around which we must mobilize; it also helps us prioritize. The vast majority of groups and organizations engaged in social change focus, understandably, on local or national issues. A few attempt to address oppressive structures in the world-system: fighting environmental practices destroying the planet, opposing the global arms trade, campaigning to restructure global institutions of governing so as to include the Global South, protesting globalization, advocating for marginalized or oppressed peoples or genders. Fewer still, however, engage in critical systemic change upon which genuine global transformation actually depends, in particular replacing the capitalist world order with something more just and sustainable, coping with constantly emerging technologies whose impact on our lives few understand, and defending ourselves from "wars against the people" and an ever-repressive neoliberalism utilizing high-tech technologies of surveillance and control.

This imbalance is understandable since engaging in structural and systemic change requires awareness, analyses, and political programs on a higher level than immediately perceived local issues. But despite concepts such as outscaling, the sum total of collaboration among localized groups does not equate with transformative change; structural and systemic changes are qualitatively different, requiring their own analyses, programs, forms of organization, and strategies. Unless we differentiate among issues with more or less transformational potential, we are left with a long agenda of (truly) equally urgent agendas, but, as is the case today, we end up neglecting those that, by "fixing" the entire system, would resolve many lower-order dysfunctions.

In terms of "what is missing from the movement landscape," I would like to focus on a structural weakness in the struggle where a major contribution is possible and necessary: the debilitating disconnect between university-based academics seeking through their writings to inform and influence social change on the one side, and academically trained militant scholars engaged in political struggle outside the university, on the other. Located as they are between the world of theory and their engagement with agents of change, these militant professionals play a key role in the struggle for justice and transformational change—and are equipped by their academic training to address precisely those issues of structural change and systemic transformation that escape more localized activists.

The very structure of academia excludes non-university practitioners, all the more if their professional agendas are overtly political. This is not, however, an appeal to "open up" the academic world to colleagues engaged in political struggle. That is not the business of academia, the value of their work being the production of knowledge and analyses that others, such as politically engaged scholars, may then integrate into analyses and programs relevant to popular struggles, based on their ability to select from the theoretical literature what is appropriate to the struggles in which they are involved, as well as their political placement.

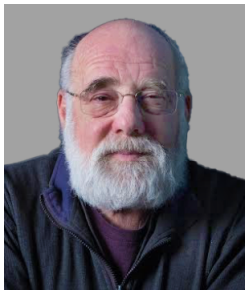
The question that arises here is how do theorists and analysts "plug into" the ongoing struggles, especially as we move into the realms of structure and systemic change that are often beyond the ken of grassroots activists and their communities. Indeed, it is precisely on the structural and systemic levels of transformational change that academic intervention is most needed—and their partnership with engaged militant scholars most strategic. Academics actually have "answers" to

higher-level global issues, cogent and often detailed analyses without which transnational struggles cannot be waged. Since academics cannot be expected to devote disproportionate time to actual engagement with militants, establishing channels of communication with militant scholars would multiply the crucial input of both. The role of militant scholars in transformational change only grows more central, as they represent the medium through which academic analysis enters popular struggles.

Understanding that academic analysis is crucial for global transformation but suffers from structural disconnects with people-in-struggle leads us to consider opening channels operating reciprocally. In one direction, we need structured communication channels to enable militant scholars to solicit the analytical input they need for working with agents of change in formulating effective programs. In the other direction, academics must meaningfully engage with their colleagues in academia so that they can influence the direction of research and theory so that it more directly serves the struggle for transformational change, while also empowering militant scholars as independent change agents by bringing them into ongoing theoretical discussions.

What is called for, then, is an institutionalized framework through which university-based academics, university-trained militants, and people-in-struggle themselves can "find each other" and establish meaningful channels of communication and collaboration. A global network of Institutes of Strategic Transformational Change would enable just the flows of analysis, strategic dialogue, and empowerment we have been discussing—a key element missing from the movement landscape. These institutes would be a kind of interlocking system of "university to street" venues offering joint trainings, conferences, publications, brainstorming, activities, campaigning, and a sharing of analyses and materials, bringing university-based academics into transformational struggles by strategically calling on them—and drawing from their analyses. They would be community-based and forthrightly political in their quest for transformational structural and systemic change.

About the Author



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The Power of Possibility

Tim Hollo

I would like to focus my comments primarily on one element of transition or transformation which seems to me to be largely missing from the movement: belief in the possibility of, and even the necessity of, deep transformation.

It is striking to me that, despite almost all of us agreeing that plurality and diversity is key to the more ecological world we want to help birth and wean, and that such a world must be emergent, arising from this plurality of approaches, most of our discussions return to proposing and seeking agreement around particular aspects of that world, arguing for our favorite patch to be seen as primary, or at least to be taken into greater consideration

If we are seeking greater movement unity to help birth this emergent world, rather than seeking unity around what it will be, or exactly how it should be created, should we not take a big step back and consider how we can unify our movement around creating the circumstances under which it can emerge?

In my book Living Democracy, I seek to articulate an ecological understanding of transformation which draws heavily on panarchy, recognizing how transformation emerges from cycles of growth and conservation and reorganization at different scales and sites all lining up at the same time. Central to this is the understanding that transformation can only occur in the context of a pre-existing order collapsing or being actively dismantled. And that is the piece which, in my observation, is largely missing.

My formulation suggests that socio-political transformation involves a diverse array of groups and communities (1) sowing the seeds of change by living into being the alternative ways, (2) cultivating healthy soils by supporting others to learn from our alternatives and replicate them

in new and interesting and mutually reinforcing ways, (3) weeding the ground by withdrawing our consent from the old, destructive ways of being, and (4) repeating the cycle as we watch the new system emerge from the wreckage of the old.

We have shared on this network some extraordinary and inspiring examples of the first two steps—sowing the seeds and cultivating the soils. But, through these discussions, and through conversations I have had with so many people in and around these alternatives and across broader society, there is a sense that these alternatives will and must remain at the margins, and a deep-seated reluctance to acknowledge that they can form the basis of transformation. There is a fear, it seems to me, of embracing the creative destruction of truly withdrawing consent from the old system, of actively and deliberately dismantling destructive systems. And, whenever we do not believe ourselves that it is possible, we guarantee that it is not.

If there is one catalyst that is desperately needed, in my opinion, it is the recognition that deep, structural transformation is possible, is warranted, and indeed is unavoidable and imminent.

We need to focus more on how we build understanding of the reality of transformation. Can we share across this network, and in our own work elsewhere, stories of the process of transformation being successful? Can we learn from times and places where it has happened? Can we convince ourselves, and then go out and share with others our newfound conviction, that a better world is not just a dream, but that we can live it into being ourselves?

Perhaps the movement unity we need is to be found not in agreement around the world we want to build, not in agreement on a specific process, but in cultivating a widespread recognition that deep transformation is vital, possible, and coming whether we want it or not.

About the Author

Tim Hollo is executive director of the Green Institute, where he focuses on eco-political philosophy, practice, and policy related to the rights of nature, universal basic income, and participatory democracy. He is a Visiting Fellow at the Sydney Environment Institute at the University of Sydney and author of *Living Democracy: An Ecological Manifesto for the End of the World as We know It*. He previously served as Communications Director for Australian Greens Leader Christine Milne and has been both a board member and campaigner at Greenpeace Australia Pacific. As both environmentalist and musician, Tim founded Green Music Australia to reduce the environmental impact of the music sector and drive social and cultural change.

How Movements Learn

Michael Karlberg

As we reflect on the state of the global citizens movement, we can draw insights from the field of social movement learning. Social movements have been learning from one another throughout the modern era. In recent decades, this learning has become increasingly global, through a proliferation of activist gatherings, media, and networks for sharing insights across movements, and through the emergence of an academic field that is systematizing this learning process.

Successful movements operate in a learning mode—learning not only from other movements but also through the generation of new knowledge. Much of this knowledge is localized and context-dependent. Yet, from the growing body of contextualized knowledge being generated across movements, we can discern patterns and principles with universal relevance.

One of these is that successful movements tend to advance through the steady multiplication and diversification of actions within a unified and coherent framework. Such frameworks tend to embody a perspective on history that imbues collective action with meaning and hope; a theory of change that guides action; forms of consciousness raising and training that foster the capacity to initiate creative, context-appropriate actions that are consistent with the framework; and the practice of reflecting on action to learn from it. Many movement activists and scholars also believe that to be effective and enduring, a movement's framework must include moral or spiritual principles that motivate, inspire, and sustain actions that are principled, sacrificial, and focused on a greater good. Indeed, some movements view moral or spiritual transformation as the foundational imperative of this age—a prerequisite for the construction of a more peaceful, just, and sustainable form of civilization that values, and is enriched by, human diversity.

In light of what is being learned about the elements of effective frameworks for movement

action, an important contribution to the global movement of movements would be the articulation and diffusion of a coherent, meaningful, hope-inspiring, and action-informing historical perspective on the great transition itself.

A growing number of movements today appear to see the need for civilization-level transformation, even if some movements focus more on urgent short-term imperatives, while others focus more on long-term imperatives. If we are to foster greater levels of coherence and efficacy among a wide diversity of such movements, it may be helpful to view the great transition as something that will need to unfold through two broad phases, each with its own imperatives.

A sober reading of our historical moment suggests that the initial phase will need to involve the construction of some minimal architecture of global stability and survival, in the context of increasingly cataclysmic threats such as climate change, war, pandemics, economic instability, and other existential challenges. We currently lack the basic political architecture to respond to any of these challenges in a globally coordinated manner. Constructing such systems is arguably the most urgent imperative of this historical moment. The enlightened self-interests of every nation and class will prove a motivating force in this regard. Effective movements, operating in a learning mode, should be able to appeal to this motivation and mobilize growing numbers of individuals, communities, and institutions around the construction of a minimal architecture for collective security and survival.

However, even if minimalist systems of global self-preservation are constructed, they will not be able to address the much more deeply rooted social and spiritual problems that have, for millennia, been the cause of violence and exploitation, of suffering and trauma. These problems arise perennially because of harmful susceptibilities deeply woven into human nature through our long evolutionary struggle to survive. Foremost among these are egoistic and self-interested instincts, tendencies to construct in-groups and out-groups through processes of othering, and the competitive or conflictual behaviors that arise from the combination of these.

Of course, humans are also endowed with remarkable capacities for cooperation, selflessness, inclusivity, and altruism. But humanity has not yet learned how to systematically and universally cultivate these capacities—these powers of the human spirit—which can subordinate our susceptibilities toward egoism, othering, competition, and conflict. Thus, if the first phase of the

great transition must be focused primarily on constructing the minimal architecture of global self-preservation, the second phase will arguably need to encompass these much broader and deeper transformational imperatives. Otherwise, any global architecture of human survival will just become a global architecture of exploitation and oppression.

If this historical perspective is valid, it has implications for the second element of effective frameworks for movement action, alluded to above: their theory of change.

Theories of change that derive from modernity's hegemonic culture of contest tend to promote counterhegemonic forms of political contestation. In other words, they tend to divide populations into good and evil, left and right, or other in-groups and out-groups—and they suggest the need to prevail over "the other" in contests of political power. Paradoxically, such theories of change reinforce the culture of contest that gives rise to most of the problems that motivate struggles for change. Nonetheless, when viewed in the light of a great transition that proceeds through two phases, it is reasonable to assume that contentious theories of change might play a role in advancing the immediate minimal imperatives of the first phase. But contentious theories of change are incommensurate with the imperatives of the second phase.

Implicit recognition of this latter problem has given rise to a discourse, stretching back many decades, on the ends and means of change. Within this discourse, those who recognize the long-term imperative to move beyond the prevailing culture of contest tend to conclude that our means of social change need to be coherent with our ultimate ends. Such a recognition leads away from protest, resistance, and other contentious modes of action, and toward radical forms of constructive agency—or toward struggles to proactively construct the world we want, rather than simply protest or disrupt the world we no longer want.

The first phase of the great transition may require some combination of contentious and constructive means—if only because humanity has been so slow to adopt the radically constructive means needed to supplant the current world system. Radical constructive agency is more difficult and more complex than political contestation. With that said, the more movements learn how to develop capacities for radical constructive agency during the first phase, the more fully and universally this capacity can be exercised during the second phase.

About the Author

Michael Karlberg is Professor of Communication Studies at Western Washington University. His interdisciplinary scholarship examines prevailing conceptions of human nature, power, social organization, and social change—and their implications for the pursuit of peace and justice. He authored the books *Beyond the Culture of Contest* and *Constructing Social Reality: An Inquiry into the Normative Foundations of Social Change* along with numerous articles and book chapters on related themes. His most recent community-engaged research focuses on the role of radical constructive agency in the creation of more peaceful and just social forms.

Collaborating on Shared Goals

Steven Klees

Perhaps a way of getting much greater global attention to whatever we do is to link it explicitly to making the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) really happen.[1] The SDGs are part of a history of broken promises by the international community. There have been endless global goals established by UN agencies since the 1960s, reaching an apex with the Millennium Development Goals in the year 2000. None of the MDGs were achieved by the end date of 2015 (some advocates argue that we did cut extreme poverty in half, but that is not true).[2] Their successor, the SDGs, vastly expanded the MDGs, but we are nowhere on target to reach any of the 17 goals by 2030.

To me, a major proximate reason for this failure is that the SDGs have not been anywhere near adequately funded. The estimated shortfall is hard to assess, but analysts place it at between $1 and $4 trillion a year. But why have they not been adequately funded? To me, the answer is compensatory legitimation, where the state tries to retrieve its eroding legitimacy by goodwill gestures while the actual state of the people continues to deteriorate.[3] From a progressive perspective, the unfulfilled promises and the attempts at legitimation are interrelated parts of our world system. Increasing poverty and inequality, pervasive racism and sexism, widespread conflicts, the danger of nuclear confrontation, and the specter of climate catastrophe all call into question the legitimacy of the social order. To compensate for this, actors in the world system of neoliberal globalization must introduce polices, for example, the MDGs and the SDGs, aimed at ameliorating some problematic conditions and thus restoring legitimacy to our social order. This argument does not question the good intentions of many of the proponents of these policies but *does* question their effects. Simply having these policies appears to be sufficient for compensatory legitimation; providing the needed resources and bringing about the needed structural changes in order to fulfill these promises, judging by past experience, seems not to be

forthcoming. This does not have to be so. We could achieve most of the SDGs in a very few years if we were willing to devote a relatively small portion of global resources to this cause, amounting to 1% to 4% of global GDP.[4] Yet those resources are not forthcoming.

I do not mean to negate the value of the SDGs. While systemically, they may serve as compensatory legitimation, their promises represent an advance over the MDGs. They are not simply the result of elites pretending to offer something to those marginalized. The SDGs and other goals are the result of a world of contested terrain in which those who are disadvantaged and harmed by our multiple global crises have fought for needed social change. Yet, from a different perspective, the SDGs have been a joke, an embarrassment—another in the string of promises that we choose not to fulfill.

What if we somehow made something like "Making the SDGs Real" a central tenet, slogan—something—for our new global social movement. It could galvanize global attention to our movement, and, since the SDGs cover lots of issues, they might be something all of our component movements and organizations could rally around.

The SDGs explicitly assume that what is needed is increased GDP growth and an increased role of business, markets, and private actors.[5] That, of course, is exactly wrong. If we made achieving the SDGs central to our movement, we would be showing how we will never achieve the SDGs without the systems change we are all fighting for.

Endnotes

1. Steven Klees, forthcoming, "Why SDG4 and the Other SDGs Are Failing and What Needs to Be Done," in D. Brent Edwards, M. Niaz Asadullah, and Amber Webb., eds., "Critical Perspectives at the Midpoint of SDG4," Special Issue, *International Journal of Educational Development*.

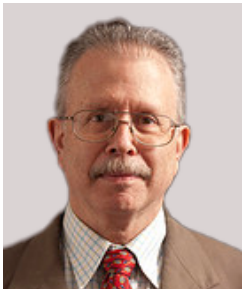
2. Jason Hickel, "The True Extent of Global Poverty and Hunger: Questioning the Good News Narrative of the Millennium Development Goals," *Third World Quarterly* 37, no. 5 (February 2016): 1–19.

3. Hans Weiler, "The Political Economy of Education and Development," *Prospects* 19, no. 4 (1984): 468–477.

4. Jeffrey Sachs, Guillaume Lafortune, Olivier Cattaneo, and Abdoulaye Fabregas, "The Case for Long-Term SDG Financing," Reflection Paper (Paris: Sustainable Development Solutions Network, 2023).

5. The UN is being taken over by private corporations under the guise of multistakeholder governance. See Harris Gleckman, "A Corporate Takeover of the UN Must Be Stopped," *Al Jazeera*, August 3, 2023, https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2023/8/3/a-corporate-takeover-of-the-un-must-be-stopped.

About the Author



Steven Klees is Distinguished Scholar-Teacher and Professor of International Education Policy at the University of Maryland and author of *The Conscience of a Progressive*. His research centers on the political economy of education and development, and he has conducted evaluations of education programs and policies in dozens of countries for a wide array of international agencies, ministries, and NGOs. He has served on the faculty of Cornell University, Stanford University, Florida State University, and the Federal University of Rio Grande do Norte in Brazil. He holds a PhD in economics and public policy from Stanford University.

The Eco-Civilization Framework

Jeremy Lent

As the planet burns, authoritarian populists dominate politics, oil executives direct the COP process, and the wealthy elite pull further away from everyone else, it is difficult not to draw the conclusion that the movement for a beneficial future is failing. We clearly need to do something very different.

Is there a better way to organize the movement for positive change? Since, as Paul Raskin wisely observes, a Global Citizens Movement may be conceptualized as a "polycentric ecology," perhaps we can take inspiration from how ecosystems themselves organize.

A key underlying principle of ecosystems, along with other complex adaptive systems, is reciprocal causality: all the disparate parts work together to form a coherent whole, while the system as a whole gives cohesion to the activities of each of the parts. In a natural ecology, systemic coherence emerges from a myriad of prior evolutionary adaptations. In human systems, the coherence arises in the form of an organizing idea or ideas. For example, as the Scientific Revolution emerged in early modern Europe, there were many different discoveries and theoretical breakthroughs, each of which reinforced each other's impact through building on the cohering metaphor of "nature as a machine" and following Francis Bacon's clarion call to "conquer nature."

In more recent times, we can learn from the rise of what is arguably the most successful transformational movement in modern history: neoliberalism. When the Mont Pelerin Society formed in 1947, it laid the conditions for powerful reciprocal causality by encouraging diverse perspectives expressed through a shared manifold of meaning: the primacy of individual liberty. The society declared in its Statement of Aims that its objective was "solely, by facilitating the exchange of views among minds inspired by certain ideals and broad conceptions held in common, to contribute to the preservation and improvement of the free society."

At that time, the ideas presented by neoliberal thinkers were utterly rejected by mainstream culture. Yet, as a result of a carefully orchestrated strategy, placing neoliberal opinion-shapers in the centers of powerful networks where they could seed conversations around their ideas, they succeeded over a few decades in shifting what became known as the Overton window: the set of ideas considered acceptable to mainstream political discourse.

Our only hope for a viable future is to shift the Overton window ourselves—not just back to where it was before neoliberalism, but into completely different terrain. The most important driver of that shift will be an alternative shared manifold of meaning: the idea of an Ecological Civilization (Eco Civ) built on life-affirming principles, setting the conditions for all people to flourish on a thriving, living Earth and leading to profoundly beneficial changes in virtually every aspect of society.

The vision of an ecological civilization invites an integrative conceptual architecture for diverse progressive groups worldwide. Giving a common name to a multiplicity of movements has the potential to unite people from around the world in a common undertaking.

In the broadest terms, an ecological civilization encompasses themes of multiple groups from around the world. It incorporates Indigenous concepts such as *buen vivir* and *ubuntu*, insights from ecological economics and commons theory, and principles from the permaculture, Transition Towns, degrowth, and agroecology movements. It reflects spiritual underpinnings of Deep Ecology, engaged Buddhism, and universalist Christian theology. It embraces ideas from the anti-globalization, eco-socialist, social justice, LGBTQ rights, and Rights of Nature movements, among others. Ultimately, it has the potential to catalyze globally dispersed "blessed unrest" into a coherent, benevolent force for societal transformation.

However, an idea by itself, no matter how powerful, is not enough. As the Mont Pelerin Society understood, an organizing principle must be manifested through a concerted long-term strategy—in their case, seeding new ideas throughout the academy, then converting them into policies through a series of think tanks, new media outlets, and alliances with the business community and broadcast media.

There are of, course, significant differences between their approach and what is needed now. The Eco Civ movement would need to be heterarchical rather than hierarchical and would need to

incorporate widely diverse populations rather than mostly elite white males. Our source of power is not so much financial as in the hearts and minds of the billions of people around the world who desire a better future for themselves and their offspring. And while the Internet age can create dangerously separate silos, it also enhances the potential for stunningly rapid transmission of new ideas.

The systems thinker Ilya Prigogine once famously described how, when complex systems transition from one stable state to another, the character of the subsequent state is influenced by "small islands of coherence in a sea of chaos" which have "the capacity to lift the entire system to a higher order." These "islands of coherence" already exist throughout the world—generated by distinct visionary ideas, grassroots movements, and community initiatives laying down pathways toward a life-affirming future. However, as suggested by the principle of reciprocal causality, while these "islands" may form autonomously at grassroots levels, their collective power is significantly enhanced by a cohesive framework that amplifies their energy and supports their trajectory—a "transformation catalyst" in the words of Sandra Waddock.

We need a life-affirming, up-to-date version of the Mont Pelerin Society: an Ecological Civilization Coalition. This could be conceived as a loosely organized alliance of prominent changemakers with connections to a more focused central hub. The hub could be organized on sociocracy principles to avoid hierarchical leadership. As a focused organization, it could source funds from donors seeking transformative change and funnel resources to identified "islands of coherence" in various domains of society. A team of dedicated professionals could work with these "islands" to identify and help disseminate best practices and principles for planetary-wide adoption in a process of "fractal scaling." Finally, as a media hub, it could facilitate a coherent articulation of the Eco Civ concept in mainstream media outlets to help shift the Overton window.

Whether we can reweave the strands of our unraveling civilization into a flourishing future will only be known on the other side of the turmoil that lies ahead this century. But as each climate disaster brings our current system closer to collapse, we have an overriding obligation to future generations, and to life itself, to shine a directional beacon through the darkness of our times to a potentially brighter future—and to help lay down a trail toward it.

About the Author

Jeremy Lent is an author and speaker whose work investigates the underlying causes of our civilization's existential crisis and explores pathways toward a life-affirming future. His award-winning books, *The Patterning Instinct: A Cultural History of Humanity's Search for Meaning* and *The Web of Meaning: Integrating Science and Traditional Wisdom to Find Our Place in the Universe*, trace the historical underpinnings and flaws of the dominant worldview, and offer a foundation for an integrative worldview that could lead humanity to a flourishing future. He is founder of the Deep Transformation Network, an online global community devoted to facilitating a deep transformation toward a life-affirming future on a regenerated Earth.

Obstacles to Unity

Francine Mestrum

The Global Citizens movement is meant to be "an ecology of movements," a broad umbrella of inclusive solidarity and common purpose, a hypothesized systemic change agent for a great transition.

These starting points take me back to the 1980s, when many debates were taking place already on the possible cooperation between parties and movements of the left. There was a lot more optimism then than now. Unfortunately, almost half a century later, we have to admit our failure and understand that the optimism is fading away as well.

I would like to mention six points of explanation in order to learn the lessons from this experience and better prepare for the future.

First, this is a highly political topic, clearly positioned on the left side of the political spectrum. Avoiding the choice between left and right will not bring us any closer to sustainable solutions, since our common objective, at least I hope, is an emancipatory policy of justice, equality, and solidarity. That is a counterhegemonic exercise. Such an agenda can never be promoted by right-wing forces that do not want people to take their future into their own hands. Not being explicit about this political dimension implies the risk of multiple misunderstandings.

Secondly, today, we are no longer talking about political parties, but of movements, which makes the exercise easier but also trickier. In the World Social Forum, political parties were banned, and only individual members talking in their personal capacity were welcome. This, of course, ignored the fact that most parties have their own movements, and these were very present in the Forum and its International Council. The consequence was discussions and conflicts at an

ideological level very akin to electoral debates. We must avoid such competitive debates at all costs.

Thirdly, trying to work with others and searching for common concerns is only possible if you know each other well, if you know on what points compromises on common action are possible or not. It demands serious self-reflection and patience to listen and try to understand others.

Fourthly, for most parties and movements, the more formidable obstacle to collaboration exists when "the goal is the movement." In other words, the strengthening of the organization itself takes precedence over the pursuit of the social objectives of the party or movement, with cooperation only acceptable if this helps to give one's own movement a boost. Such movements then work together with the silent aim of dominating the cooperation itself. If this happens from different parts, it is clear the cooperation will never succeed.

Fifthly, linked to the previous points, one has to be aware that for many progressive and left-wing people and movements, political identity coincides with personal identity, making compromise or change more difficult. This policy of honesty and loyalty to your cause is too often an impediment to making coalitions and forging cooperation tactics. Giving in on one single point of your movement's identity is then like betraying yourself.

Sixthly, too many movements also have thematic blinders. If they are working on, say pensions or disabled people, they will have no mandate to discuss anything else. Even just asking an agreement to sign a text on, say, debt cancellation, will be impossible.

Finally, making this all more difficult is the decline of certain values that were once widely shared. Take universalism, which is now said to be "abstract" as if it were not a condition to preserve diversity, or "development" as if not all people aspire to have decent and sustainable livelihoods. Or take democracy, in whatever form, as if right-wing policies or military dictatorships were able to take care of people's needs. Other examples are the role of the State, "Western" human rights, the rejection of "modernity," etc. The question of definitions is crucial, since people regularly use the same words to indicate different realities. In many cases, the distance from words to things, from discourse to practice, is too large to bridge. In other cases, there are real and serious differences of opinion.

These points may look like very serious impediments to efforts towards more unity. In fact, the first thing to define very carefully is the objective itself: what kind of "unity" do we want? Is it real ideological unity or just variable and temporary platforms for making strong and common demands and proposals? Moreover, do we just want a dialogue between our movements in order to get to know each other and confirm our own identities, or do we also want to learn from and reciprocally influence each other? In other words, do we believe in universal values or not?

Before embarking upon such work, it can be useful for all movements to undertake a self-reflection on all these questions in order to assess the possibility of joining a common platform.

With the World Social Assembly of Struggles and Resistances that we created in the global WSF process, we aim to take positions on important political events, to organize meetings with global intellectuals and movements, to reflect on strategies, to organize actions, and to bring together movements working on different but interconnected topics.

This implies an open attitude to start and search for common concerns, a long-term exercise for which the rules have to be clearly spelled out. It cannot be about doing away with differences or identities, on the contrary. Nor can it be about limiting the action radius of movements. It should be about finding out which concerns a number of movements share, in spite of their diversity.

This may look very ambitious and utopian, but giving up on building "another world" should not be an option.

About the Author

Francine Mestrum is chair of Global Social Justice, an association for transformative universal social protection and the common good. With a special focus on the social commons, her research concerns social dimensions of globalization, poverty, inequality, social protection, public services, and gender. She is a member of the International Council of the World Social Forum and of the International Organizing Committee of the Asia Europe People's Forum. Her most recent book is *The Social Commons: Rethinking Social Justice in Post-Neoliberal Societies*.

Centering Labor

Ronaldo Munck

What is missing from the global movement landscape? I would like to highlight two issues.

The first is the international labor or trade union movement as an inescapable interlocutor for a strategic conversation. Our world order, globalized from above, cries out for a globalized response from below, a new international fit for the purpose of system transformation in the twenty-first century. With their global reach and strategy, trade unions have a central role to play even if labor alone cannot be the whole international of today as it might have been in the days of Marx and Engels.

To offer a coherent alternative to the status quo of violence, short-termism, and political chaos, trade unions need to link up with the broad spectrum of transnational movements fighting for systemic change on issues from climate change to food security, women's rights to indigenous rights, and racial justice to income inequality.

The labor movement, however, needs to be at the heart of any effort to build a global alternative to the failed status quo since the exploitation of labor is as much at the core of capitalist relations of production in the "new" capitalism as it was in the old. Clearly, workers will not be the sole drivers of social transformation, and there are all sorts of divisions—formal and informal workers, male and female, settled and migrants, North and South—that must be bridged before labor can realize its full potential in an international fit for twenty-first-century challenges.

Change is in the wind, and those who do not have contact with actually existing workers' organizations need to understand how, for example, migrant support groups have brought unions and migrant workers together, women's groups have brought a feminist perspective to trade unions, and environmental groups have helped form incipient green/red alliances. For me,

only transnationally organized labor can be a counterweight to transnationally organized capital.

The second issue I wish to raise refers to a question of political perspective or, rather, a missing perspective. The increasing association of "populism" with nationalism and authoritarianism in US and European political discourse is a highly restricted use of the term populism and contributes to the debate's isolation from the issues in the Global South. While recently co-editing a book on populism in Latin America, I was struck by just how limited the dominant interpretations and critiques were, being based almost exclusively on the North Atlantic experience.

Rarely has a term been so overinflated and so overextended that it has become practically meaningless, while at the same time achieving iconic status. In 2019, the liberal newspaper *The Guardian* ran a long feature on populism, the gist of which was that "populism" was a major political foe in the Global North for all left-liberal folk. It introduced authoritarianism and irrationality into good old centrist politics. These so-called centrists included Tony Blair and Hilary Clinton, who were given a platform for their views, including a call from the latter for the liberal centre in Europe to lead on keeping migrants out so that migration would not become an issue of the populist right. The mind boggles is all I can say.

The new Northern orthodoxy on populism emerged in the 2010s as a way to categorize such diverse emerging political figures such as Trump, Farage, Le Pen, and Orbán, along with their Southern cousins such as Chávez, Morales, and the Kirchners in Argentina. Populism was thus defined as an anti-elite politics, also anti-pluralist and usually based on some type of identity politics. The purpose of defining populism, we are told, is to help in defeating it as it is a threat to liberal democracy, whether it comes from the far right or the far left.

To this day, in international commentary on the "left populism" of Chávez et al., we find quite an ethnocentric emphasis on the irrationality of populism and a constant tendency to see it as the enemy of "normal" political development toward class patterns and progressive social transformation. Yet the old oligarchic order in Latin America was changed utterly by the emergence of this nationalist-popular ideology and worldview. It could also become radicalized at key conjunctures when the "people-oligarchy" opposition became the dominant divide in society.

In Western Europe, on the other hand, the term "populism" is used mainly in a pejorative way to refer to the rise of a new right and its demagogic leaders. The different trajectory of the term in Latin America should warn us against any claims to universality of this discourse. And we may also learn from Latin America, where the left "populism" of the post-2000 left governments was also the result of the flawed and biased system of representative democracy that preceded them.

About the Author

Ronaldo Munck is Head of Civic Engagement at Dublin City University, where his role includes engaging the university's teaching and research with the needs of the community. He is also a Visiting Professor of International Development at the University of Liverpool and the University of Buenos Aires. He has written widely on his native Latin America, most recently *Rethinking Latin America*, and, as an active trade unionist as well as scholar, on the impact of globalization on labor. He was a lead author for the International Panel on Social Progress Report *Rethinking Society for the 21st Century*. His current project focuses on the prospects for the new social movements in Latin America.

Constructing World Political Agency

Heikki Patomäki

Common problems and contradictions can be (at least partly) resolved by building better common institutions. Yet collective action for this purpose can be arduous to organize, especially in a world characterized by disintegrative tendencies. In any event, these processes take time. This can be conceptualized as a quasi-Hegelian scheme of development of consciousness, whereby actors shift from passive egoists to advocates for change and solidarity. Responses to common problems and related contradictions involving a likely counterfinal outcome can develop through several modes and levels of learning. At first, actors take the environment as fixed in terms of their choices, but soon they can realize that there are equally reflective other actors, and that the situation is strategic and game-like. This realization leads to attempts to organize collective action. However, if the costs of initiating and organizing collective action seem high, the strategic short-sighted reasoning tends to point towards no collaboration. This is the classic free-riding or Prisoner's Dilemma type of game-like situation, which in the world of myopic and self-regarding actors tends to result in worse outcomes for all. The goal of the next learning phase is to build a foundation for solidarity and perhaps also a common identity, the continued existence of which typically requires organizations and institutions.

While trust and solidarity help with organizing collective actions, they not only depend on the prevailing modes of agency but also are subject to manipulation by the most powerful actors. Communication is the first key to the successful organization of collective action, and the development of trust and solidarity is the second. In the past, communication often required frequent physical presence, but with new technologies, actors can communicate across space in real time much more easily. However, unless members of the relevant group come to know

and trust each other, they are unlikely to be able to overcome the contradiction.

This generic scheme of transformative institutional change is applicable to many different situations and types of actors, individual and collective, including states. Collective actors such as states are not only built on particularistic ideologies (nationalism) but are also multifarious systems. Those acting in the name of a state occupy simultaneous positions at multiple sites of power and levels of organization, and this increases complexity. Yet, in the contemporary world, usually only states can change or create new international law and thereby only they can establish new common institutions on a global scale. This may change in the future, but for the time being, transformative movements are dependent on states.

Reality involves complex multi-path developmental processes that can be interwoven or contradictory in various ways. There are many possible outcomes of the dialectic of thesis and antithesis: a simple refutation of a relevant proposition, a combination of the opposing assertions, a synthesis by making a general claim that preserves the insights of both thesis and antithesis, or a qualitative improvement of the dialogue by means of conceptual complexification and innovation, perhaps taking the dialogue to a new path or level. Many dialectical moves are un-anticipatable.

Analogically, in the context of currently prevailing global problems and contradictions, there are many possible rational directions of world history, some of which can be at least in some regards un-anticipatable. These directions are also a matter of dialectical disputations, always occurring under concrete world-historical circumstances. This is what the openness of world history means. Any claim about the rational tendential directionality of world history has to be understood as a normative argument. A new transformative movement will not come about semi-automatically but can only be realized through transformative praxis.

The question of "building experiments of movements unity" is not the right question. Uniting all movements is not a reasonable goal. First, any attempt to build a movement of movements is likely to repeat the experiences and mistakes of the World Social Forum process. Its identity has been defined in negative terms only. To maintain pluralism and facilitate the participation of

many, it has been preserved as an "open space," implying that it has no agency and can make no decisions. As no one can speak on behalf or in the name of WSF, it has no transformative capacity or power. Communication in open public spaces is an important part of democratic processes, but it is not the answer to the problem of agency. Second, many organizations aspire to do something like this, especially on their own terms, which can lead to competition and power struggles, instead of cooperation. Third, the plurality of actors is good: a vibrant civil society is an essential part of contemporary democracy and also ensures the possibility for many to participate. A biological analogy to an ecosystem is also apt.

The development of global transformative agency for the twenty-first century can come about only through a learning process towards qualitatively higher levels of reflexivity and higher-order purposes, including planetary and even cosmic purposes. A transformative movement can consist of many elements and forms of agency, but I would nonetheless emphasize the importance of a new emergent type of agency. While a world political agency can assume different forms, my basic hypothesis is that a *world political party* is likely to constitute a key moment in the process of constructing such an agency. The construction of democratic world political agency takes time and will be an experimental process. The raison d'être of the party must lie in furthering transformations and various new institutional forms in which the planetary public realm can be organized. For this purpose, the sufficiently shared opinion will be forged into a program of change. We can distinguish between three moments of transformative global-democratic action:

1. Activities within the confines of established institutions
2. Advocacy to transform global institutions and create new ones
3. Participation in the newly formed global institutions

These three moments also form a logical order: (1) activities within existing institutions can include (2) advocacy of, and legislation for, global-democratic institutions characteristically assuming state-like tasks and functions, constituting an emergent layer of world statehood, while successful attempts at creating institutions of planetary democracy (3) make participation in them possible. Over time, new institutions will become established, and the cycle can continue from (1) to (2) to (3).

As the process progresses, the role of world parties will become institutionally central, and different ideologies will organize themselves into more parties, which critical civil society in turn will criticize, often for good reasons. This process—as part of the open-systemic process of world history—involves the possibility of human imagination inventing yet new forms of agency and institutions.

About the Author

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The Laboratory of the Commons

Jose Ramos

The challenge of building a global citizens movement to address our interconnected crises is an exciting prospect and a much-needed course of action.

In this forum, there have been many different perspectives on and definitions of what the crisis is. Are we in a polycrisis or metacrisis or permacrisis or civilizational crisis, etc.? Is it patriarchy, capitalism, an industrial mindset, or a deep pathology within the human species? How can we formulate actions without a clear shared diagnosis and analysis of what the problem is?

I learned early on through the World Social Forum process that the various social movements that are driving and advocating for change have a variety of definitions of the problem, with distinct temporalities. They conceptualize change depending on the movement of which they are a part and the issues that they are addressing. Each has implicit narratives and temporalities of change which are embodied—they exist within the experiential and relational mix of how different communities have come into being over time.

A global citizens movement will inherently express this kind of diversity with its accompanying diversity of analyses and narratives. I am therefore skeptical of the ability, let alone the wisdom, of trying to settle on one analysis and create one vision. So do we need to abandon the search for, and advocacy for, the single definition of the problem, the single diagnosis, the single vision? Do we need to be looking for the relational congruence between the variety of perspectives across the various actors and social movements whose hearts and livelihoods are connected to a desire for change?

The practical and theoretical work on commons and commoning is another way to consider the myriad alternatives emerging. The many people that commons scholar Elinor Ostrom has inspired have pluralized the notions of commons into a wide variety of domains, whether they

are ecological, urban, digital, affective/emotional, atmospheric, etc. These different commons, furthermore, have been studied with great rigor, and we have learned that the internal logics within the variety of commons are indeed different. They cannot be easily conflated—there is no one-size-fits-all. We can only say very generally that something on which we mutually depend for our survival and well-being is a commons, and through our implication into a commons, we are called forth to action, toward the need to collaboratively govern this commons together (be it digital, urban, educational, atmospheric, etc.). But beyond this, their logics are diverse.

Unfortunately, the World Social Forum process, with all the richness of its diversity, failed in seizing the opportunity to create a strategic program for change. It did not allow itself to be a voice or representative actor for the many groups within its orbit. Despite the efforts of some, there was never much respect for manifestos and vanguardism. What I have learned from this is that it is not enough to create a space that holds diversity, we need coordinated and targeted strategic actions and programs of change. Many people acting together. We are implicated into shared commons, and many groups and people must learn to collaboratively govern and protect these.

But what if this *acting together* is not one but a multiplicity of change efforts with relational congruence, part of a larger tapestry? What if these became a social ecology of alternatives that supported each other?

The crux of the challenge is that a global citizens movement is required to mobilize and drive change, but this GCM is marked by fundamental diversities of culture, geography, sectors, themes, and organizational types—different embodiments related to different commons. How do we support the emergence of a powerful GCM that expresses strategic and relational congruences (of analysis and action) within a GCM where diversity (ontological and epistemological) is inherent?

The following are some ideas to this effect:

- **Strategic Pressure Points:** Identify the targeted strategic pressure points necessary to trim tab change and create high-profile and high-impact opt-in projects that many organizations join. These need to be laser-focused efforts that allow many organizations and people to join and support.

- **Bee-and-Flower Logic:** Identify the types of strategic congruences that do not require people or organizations to be or think the same: "bee-and-flower logic." The bee does not consciously

know it is "exchanging a service for a product" (my pollen distribution for your pollen). The flower does not know it is exchanging a product for a service (my pollen for your transport). However, they sustain each other despite never entering into an agreement. Cosmolocalism, for example, relies on this logic, as people do not need to agree on an analysis or vision to share in the fruits of the virtuous cycle. Let us look for all the places this bee-and-flower logic can be enacted.

- **Swarm Futures:** As there are many contexts, we need many images of the futures, stories, narratives, and temporalities. Today, the nihilistic stupor of late capitalist imagination pervades. Participatory futures projects can be used to intervene in the public images of the futures. Many relationally connected images of the futures can inspire and galvanize across diverse populations. As these futures grow in richness, quantity, quality, and power, they can eventually become louder, drawing out the nihilism of other "used futures," which can fall away into the dustbin of history.

- **Protocol Commons:** As the internet was born of HTTP when invented by Tim Berners-Lee, we may need to create our own version of HTTP for the global citizens movement. This Protocol Commons is a hypothetical way of enabling bee-and-flower logic across the relational diversity of a GCM. It is a potential meta-language or meta-system that allows for distinct groups and organizations to join the tapestry to connect and find their own relational congruences.

- **Planetary Commons:** What are the commons into which all humans are implicated? Where none of us can opt out? These are things that without we cannot mutually survive, let alone be well. The atmospheric commons is one. A denuclearized world, a global public sphere free from mis/disinformation, a world with real equity and free of oligarchs, these may also be considered commons. These general commons can become the basis for allowing many GCM people and organizations to play a role in collaborative governance (support, decision-making, etc.). We could also create prototype governance systems for these various planetary commons.

- **Living Labs for Living Webs:** We do not know how to build a GCM, yet. Much of what will work can only be discovered through a sustained commitment to experimentation. We will need to try, try again, and learn and learn more. We will need a diversity of experiments (trying new things) in a wide variety of contexts to find out what works. We can draw from the action research and living labs communities to learn how to do experimentation for building a GCM.

About the Author

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Earth-Centric Activism

Vishwas Satgar

"We are lost as a species, harming ourselves and the world around us." I placed these words into a circle of respect with indigenous leaders, climate justice activists, lawyers, and conservationists deliberating the idea of harmonious co-existence in South Africa. While the planetary clock is against us, dark times clash with hope-based resistance; an inscrutable future of a rapidly heating planet becomes a bit more certain as next-world-making praxis is mapped, shared, and connected on a larger canvas of emancipatory futures-making. Common to these initiatives is the remaking of human-earth relations at different scales—the everyday, the biosphere, and planetary systems. Many exits from harm are being opened as we learn to live on a new earth. There are no victories on this long and perilous journey, just new discoveries (in most instances, of old truths pushed to the margins by shallow Euro-American universals or truths recovered after colonial erasure) of how to sustain, care for, and enhance life as we displace an ecocidal, violent, and oppressive capitalism.

Earth-centric activism and movement conceptions are the new frontier for new mass politics. Transformative movements rising today must appreciate three basic ideas about the politics of knowledge central to socio-ecological transformation. The first is the ontological shift from human-centered to human-in-earth politics. This is happening whether we like it or not. The life-enabling biosphere that the earth supports is no longer static wallpaper on a planet conquered by capitalism. Earth's response, from the micro ecosystem to the climate system to the harms done, is underway. Paradoxically, it is bringing great suffering but will also work as an ally that will prevail over the supremacy of Anthropocentric humans, imperial power structures, and delusionary ecological modernization, including contemporary forms of ruling class eco-fascism.[1] An agentic earth, with its awesome power, is upending the short age of the Anthropocene and will make current distributions of global power meaningless. It has begun

with ecosystem collapses and several climate extremes—floods, droughts, cyclones, and recent heat waves in parts of the Global North and Latin America. In this context, climate and ecological determinism must feature centrally in transformative theories of change to center the acceleration of deep just transitions in communities, workplaces, sectors, and the state to mitigate harms.[2] Every environmental shock is going to be a moment of tragic loss, fierce rage, and awakening for transformative change.

Second, we have to appreciate the limits of human knowledge on this journey and end the myth of human genius. I am not anti-human, but I am against human supremacy. We do not have the intellectual apparatus to understand the complexity and wonder around us at a subatomic level, at the level of evolutionary biology, and even at a cosmological level. Our knowledge is epistemologically limited, yet we hubristically believe that we are the apex species and can be masters of earth even through geoengineering. In the great expanse of nature, our knowledge is equal to what is spotlighted when we shine a torch. This is an opportunity to also escape dogmas, such as techno-obsession, the growth-driven state-market dyad, or treating nature as an object of exploitation. A great humility must inform and guide us as we democratically aggregate grassroots power.

Third, from Leninism (elite vanguards) to contemporary global crowd politics (mimetic), there has been a failure to appreciate national points of departure. Even though climate shocks refuse to recognize borders, they will be entwined with local complexities. Put differently, local political traditions, cultures, histories, and modes of thought matter and will shape how societies respond. As long as nation-states exist, the role of planetary internationalism should be about "bridge-building" (not wall-building) via strengthening local resistance and amplifying cross border solidarities. Intra-country bridge-building has to engender a politics beyond narrow labor issues, environmental issues, identity issues, and more. Deep convergence on political projects for life-making, regeneration, joy, and care need to crystallize to accelerate the just transition from below and above. We must support local resistance efforts to experiment with new and deep democracy paradigms of power and not securitized as part of elite risk management. Such shifts should be complemented by work towards a post-UN earth commons peer governance architecture.

On the issue of cross-border solidarities, emancipatory feminist analysis brings a crucial analytical

and strategic challenge to the fore. In its understanding of contemporary crises, it is not about notions of human endings or apocalyptic end-of-times discourse. Instead, it furnishes us with an analysis of the crisis of everything: the crises of socio-ecological reproduction as the latest crisis of ecocidal capitalism. With climate shocks intensifying, grassroots women everywhere are the shock absorbers and are screaming out for the planetary emergency to be front and center, refusing to be collateral damage. The time has come for movements rising to converge around climate emergency demands. It is time to demand what is necessary to sustain life now and to show the hypocrisy of the Euro-American world by highlighting how Putin is no different from fossil fuel corporations destroying our life worlds. It is not enough for the General Secretary of the United Nations to declare that we are now a "boiling planet" while carbon capital is left off the hook at every turn. COVID-19 locked down global capitalism. It is time for the lockdown of fossil capital, and the following demands need to be considered for cross border solidarities and global citizen action now:

- Prosecute fossil fuel executives in a climate "Nuremberg trial" for the crime of ecocide, the intentional creation of a global gas chamber that is causing the mass-scale destruction of human and non-human life;
- Phase out all fossil fuels rapidly by 2035 or sooner, with no new investments permitted;
- Phase out all combustion-engine-based cars, trucks, and rail systems by 2035 or sooner;
- Ban all fossil-fuel-based air travel, luxury yachts, and container ship movements for the next five years to bring down carbon emissions, except for humanitarian reasons;
- Ban all processed livestock meat products, industrial-scale fishing, and exports for the next five years to bring down greenhouse gas emissions and restore biodiversity;
- Ban the destruction of all remaining rainforests;
- Accelerate deep just transition finance through debt write-off for all poor countries, $100 billion dollar per annum pledges for the climate fund, and the establishment of loss-and-damage funds;
- Place all military conflicts on a ceasefire footing and divert all military spending, resources, and capabilities to the climate emergency.

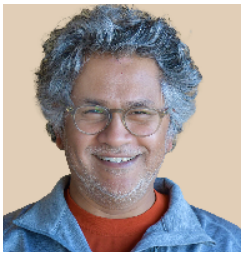
Raising such climate emergency demands collectively after a 1.5 °C overshoot will be too late.

Endnotes

1. See my essay "The Rise of Eco-Fascism" in Michelle Williams and Vishwas Satgar, eds. *Destroying Democracy: Neoliberal Capitalism and the Rise of Authoritarian Politics* (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2021). Free online access available here: https://library.oapen.org/handle/20.500.12657/50256.

2. See Vishwas Satgar, Jane Cherry, and Awande Buthelezi, eds. *People's and Workers Climate Justice Charter Futures – Accelerate the Deep Just Transition Now* (Stellenbosch, South Africa: African Sun Media, 2023).

About the Author



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Navigating the Deep Currents

Gus Speth

In my imagination, the activist communities to which many of us feel close affection are each in separate little boats paddling ourselves through swirling waters. Whether flagged environmental integrity, social and economic justice, community solidarity, or people's democracy, sometimes our boats go forward, then backwards, sometimes sideways. But one cannot help but notice that the boats tend strongly to move together, carried along by currents more powerful than our efforts.

Far too often, progressives neglect the underlying currents that are powerfully affecting all our boats. These currents heavily determine whether we make progress in our journeys or move backwards or go nowhere at all.

To succeed in the major ways we dream about requires understanding those underlying forces that shape our prospects. Once we know what we are dealing with, the good news is that progressives can join together in facing a shared situation. The inconvenient news is that when we look at the common, underlying causes of the problems, we find forces that are often deeply burrowed in the mainstream, often so widely and conventionally accepted that to challenge them appears radical to many.

Any search for the sources of the currents holding back real progress must start with the political and economic system. Its prominent features include ramping up GDP, growing corporate profits, focusing on high financial returns to guide investments, increasing the incomes of the already well-to-do, neglecting those marginalized and desperate, promoting runaway consumerism, facilitating great bastions of corporate political and economic power, and pursuing a host of self-serving and harmful policies internationally—all the while demonizing governmental efforts to correct its side effects and shortcomings.

There are more sources of unwelcomed currents, of course. Dominant cultural values tend decidedly materialistic and anthropocentric. Democracy is impaired in many countries. And there is an ever-active military-industrial complex working away.

It is hard to see where to turn. We know what must be done. But how?

This we can do. We can search for small openings, seizing opportunities wherever. We can be crisis-ready, anticipating moments of punctuated equilibrium when impossible becomes inevitable. We can back leaders with vision and skill. We can meld now-siloed progressive energies into an unprecedented fusion of forces. We can sustain journalism and scholarship to keep truth alive and core values burnished. We can embrace our preachers and prophets, those who elevate new values and battered spirits. We can hold each other tightly.

There are some encouragements and, even more, avenues for engagement. Among the building blocks now evident, activism is increasing, especially among the young, the marginalized, the victims, and organized labor. Doubts about the current order are surfacing, and calls for transformative change grow louder. Aversion to socialist ideas, once off-limits, is fading, especially among young people. The rising menace of climate change is bringing home the imperative of a strong, effective government of, by, and for the people. The threat to democracy is recognized, and the fight for a democratic future is joined. All is not lost, but it is already a close call.

There are already positive currents driving toward transformative change, and they will likely strengthen in the future. The possibility progressives must face, however, is that this strengthening will be too modest and too slow to head off a series of genuine catastrophes. This possibility underscores the imperative of progressives leaving their own little boats—their issue silos—and together forging a mighty political force for deep, transformative change. This fusion of forces, a movement of movements, would be new and could make all the difference.

About the Author

Gus Speth is an Associate Fellow at Tellus Institute and co-chair of the Next System Project at the Democracy Collaborative. He has served as a professor at Vermont Law School and Dean of the Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies. From 1993 to 1999, Speth was Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme and chair of the UN Development Group. Previously, he was founder and president of the World Resources Institute, professor of law at Georgetown University, chairman of the US Council on Environmental Quality in the Carter Administration, and co-founder of and senior attorney at the Natural Resources Defense Council. He currently serves on the boards of the New Economy Coalition, the Center for a New American Dream, and the Climate Reality Project. He is the author, co-author, or editor of seven books, including *America the Possible: Manifesto for a New Economy* and *Angels by the River.*

Dethroning Big Finance

Guy Standing

Experience over thirty-seven years of activism has made me suspicious of "a movement of movements." It is easily presumed that a "movement" is about a forward march. But many "movements" have been atavistic and reactionary. Looking back, with metaphorical scars, I am sad that the most vehement and barrier-building opposition to the progressive idea that everybody should have basic economic security has come from those purporting to be on the left, most notably those in social democratic and labor parties and trade unions.

A transformation involves a rupture in the predominant social relations of production and a rupture in the technological forces of production. Thinking about it in a Polanyian sense, such a transformation begins with a disembedded phase, when the economic system is out of control by society, and when old systems of regulation, social protection, and redistribution are dismantled.

In such a phase, "free market" rhetoric predominates, although what actually happens is that private property rights triumph and finance becomes all powerful. The neoliberal economics revolution of the 1980s ushered in the current era of rentier capitalism. While rentiers have morphed into a global plutocracy, they and their political representatives have pursued a strategy of GDP growth, at the existential cost of ecological decay, global warming, multiple inequalities, and "permacrisis."

At the end of all that horror, where is the political left? It is offering a mild reform of rentier capitalism without touching the structural fault lines. In the USA, Bidenomics offers more subsidies to capital to "onshore" jobs, while operating a blatant neo-mercantilist policy designed

to impede Chinese development, and enlarge a geopolitical bloc of "friendly" pro-capitalist countries confronting a rapidly growing BRICs bloc.

Characteristically, the UK Labour Party, which looks likely to win the next election, is aping its US Democratic sibling, offering what it calls "securonomics," i.e., postponed environmental action, continued low taxes on wealth, more subsidies to industrial capital, and assurances to finance. Elsewhere, lukewarm social democracies tiptoe around "net zero" efforts while promoting a Green New Deal that has more about resource-depleting jobs than about any transformation. There is talk of a green technological revolution, but really this is about transferring environmental costs of GDP growth to the oceans in what is being called "blue growth." The sea, which covers 71% of the earth's surface area, is the new economic frontier of global finance. In the past thirty years, the sea has been subject to easily the biggest enclosure in human history, giving financial capital a bonanza that has gone under the analytical radar.[1]

In short, the old left are dead men walking. That is the context in which to consider the idea of a transformative movement of movements (MOM). For such a MOM, there must be both a consensus on a diagnosis of the causes and character of the crisis and a consensus on what would constitute a Good Society in the foreseeable future. As Karl Polanyi explained in *The Great Transformation*, the primary cause of economic crises was the domination of the economic system by financial capital, which induced a period of protectionism and neo-mercantilist struggle.

Today, we are at a comparable point, where global finance is manipulating the global economy and political processes, and where the declining rentier state, the USA, is pitted against the rising rentier state, China, with localized wars being proxies for rising geo-political tensions. The rest of us are collateral damage, and that includes all of nature. Finance fosters two existentially threatening trends: chronic debt and short-term profit maximization.

One cannot imagine any global transformation without dismantling the power of finance. But it is hard to see a currently envisaged MOM addressing the elephant in the room. How many NGOs go cap-in-hand to finance to form partnerships? But any realistic manifesto of a MOM would have to begin with a commitment to campaign to combat the power of finance.

GDP growth has become a fetish since the neoliberal economics revolution of the 1970s and 1980s, and the concept itself only originated in the 1930s, as a rough measure of mobilizable resources for war. Our politicians suffer from Growth Fetish Syndrome. Instead of seeing growth as more goods and wealth, politicians and commentators must be induced to see growth as a tumor—the bigger, the more life threatening.

So, a MOM manifesto must have a second core element: *eco-growth, not GDP growth*—or something like eco-growth, perhaps with "development" instead of "growth."

Suppose the MOM manifesto could be grounded in opposition to finance and GDP growth, the next task would surely be to agree on class-based demands. Every progressive transformation is about the insecurities and aspirations of the emerging mass class. And it is about a struggle over the distribution of the key assets of the era. Today, the key assets are not the means of production but less tangible aspects of life—economic security, quality space, quality time, financial knowledge, and education.

Consider just a few of those assets. The plutocracy and elite have almost complete economic security. They are protected against the threat and impact of natural disasters and financial crises, except to some extent pandemics, although even there they have more security than the growing precariat. A progressive MOM would seek to reduce security inequality.

Similarly, the inequality of time is enormous, with most in the precariat having no control over how much they can call their own free time. And many people have none, making them opportunistic by necessity. If we want people to behave ecologically and vote accordingly, we need a Politics of Time in that MOM manifesto.[2]

The manifesto should also contain a strategy for redistribution of other key assets. In particular, it must address the existentially threatening maldistribution of real education. We are living in the first Age of Dis-education, in which a large number of people are being taught to be ignorant, ignorant of science, and ignorant of the great human sentiments of compassion, empathy, *paideia* (the search for truth), and a reverence for nature. Instead, the majority are being told through their schooling and through social media that they are latent "human capital," measuring schooling by

its contribution to earnings from jobs and accumulation of material goods. This is a self-destructive madness that permeates the increasingly financialized "education industry."

We cannot hope to attain a great transition without a strategy for rescuing the education as a commons. We can have as many wonderful civil society organizations or movements as we would like. But if people are dis-educated as well as insecure and scrambling around for "free" time, there will be no MOM with sufficient drive and direction. It brings to mind Bertol Brecht's aphorism, "First food, then morals." We cannot expect people to be progressively radical unless they have basic security, have time to act, and are educated.

Endnotes

1. Guy Standing, *The Blue Commons: Rescuing the Economy of the Sea* (London, Pelican Books, 2022).

2. Guy Standing, *The Politics of Time: Gaining Control in the Age of Uncertainty* (London, Pelican Books, 2023).

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Guy Standing is Professorial Research Associate at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London. He is a Fellow of the British Academy of Social Sciences; co-founder and now honorary co-president of Basic Income Earth Network (BIEN); and Council member of the Progressive Economy Forum. His books include *The Politics of Time: Gaining Control in the Age of Uncertainty*, *A Precariat Charter: From Denizens to Citizens*, *The Corruption of Capitalism: Why Rentiers Thrive and Work Does Not Pay*, *Plunder of the Commons: A Manifesto for Sharing Public Wealth*, and *Battling Eight Giants: Basic Income Now*.

Becoming Transformation Catalysts

Sandra Waddock

The world cannot wait for us to learn or know everything that we need to know for bringing about *purposeful* system change towards desired and broadly shared aspirations for a more equitable, just, and ecologically flourishing world. The key question before us is how to become *transformation catalysts* that work with numerous associated initiatives and leaders to form purposeful and action-oriented *transformation systems* that build on the collective strength inherent in the many networks already working towards transformation. Doing that requires new approaches to organizing for transformation where multiple initiatives connect, cohere, and amplify their individual and collective transformative actions.

There is no shortage of initiatives, actions, and coalitions that share the underlying agenda of the GTI. The issue here is that this collection of initiatives has the same problem that Paul Hawken identified as *blessed unrest* in his so-titled 2007 book.[1] Although numerous of these initiatives now represent quite extensive networks of actors with similar interests, they still generally lack the cohesive power and perhaps action orientation to overcome vested interests in maintaining the *status quo*. To overcome these significant barriers, they need to come together in new ways, form new and broadly shared understandings and aspirations about what needs to change, and co-formulate and implement action strategies to bring change about, all the while learning from different experiments (and possible failures) and moving on to new strategies.[2]

Catalyzing transformation offers a generalized (and prospective, i.e., future-oriented) process for how to build powerful coalitions of actors oriented towards taking transformative actions through developing purposeful transformation systems.[3] We know relatively a lot about "what" needs to change, and towards what. We also know a lot about the multi-dimensional complex adaptive systems and wicked problems that are besetting humanity these days—expressed

now as polycrisis—the intersecting set of intractable and potentially civilization-threatening crises. We also know quite a bit about the characteristics of stewards (leaders) and systemic approaches needed to foster the types of collaborative change approaches, values, and leader/steward and coalition attributes, that underpin any successful transformation efforts. What is more lacking, however, are approaches to transformation that can be applied in and adapted to multiple (and necessarily unique) contexts to provide a framework for building such action strategies. Here I would introduce the concepts of transformation catalysts who build effective, purposeful transformation systems using three general processes of connecting, cohering, and amplifying.

A transformation catalyst is an actor who brings together numerous initiatives and actors around a shared and co-defined set of interests with an action agenda in mind. The TC stewards these actors through a set of three general (dialogue- and action-based) processes that can be adapted to the unique context, needs, and interests of each system and its players. So organized, initiatives can collectively co-evolve and co-emerge into a purposeful transformation *system* oriented towards whole system change in a given context (which could happen locally, regionally, bioregionally, or even more broadly depending on the actors and orientations involved).

Connecting processes involve *seeing* or understanding the system to be transformed, that is, mapping and understanding the relevant system—and defining its boundaries for transformation purposes. It also involves engaging actors who have been brought together in collective processes of *sensemaking* to engage participants in co-creating shared understanding of their system, its dynamics and processes, where opportunities and gaps exist, and the like.

Cohering engages two sets of processes: *co-envisioning* the shared, desired, or aspirational future, and co-creating both shared and independent *action plans* to bring about change. That means developing holistic assessment strategies to help learn when things are working—and when they are not—so that actions can be changed as needed. Any number of approaches can be used for these processes, depending on the particular skills of people involved and the needs identified in the connecting activities. Notably, the transformation catalyst(s) stewards or guides these actors together in new ways—into coalitions, into new dialogues and conversations, into strategy development and implementation, so that *they* can co-evolve their own shared visions, strategies, and actions with greater potential transformative impact.

Amplification is the implementation process for what GTI calls "experiments," which also involves evaluating and learning from those experiments—and then changing course when necessary. It also quite possibly means building or growing other transformation catalysts in different parts of the relevant context so that new and growing transformative actions can begin. Obviously, there is much more to these processes than can be outlined here. The key is that they are meant to be general enough to be adapted to different (unique by the nature of their complexity and wicked problems) contexts. They also recognize that the catalyst needs to take exactly that role, which is one of bringing together initiatives without necessarily being able to predict the outcome of *their* deliberations and action strategies. It is the actors and initiatives in the transformation system, hopefully aligned in new ways, who initiate transformative actions.

Endnotes

1. Paul Hawken, *Blessed Unrest: How the Largest Movement in the World Came into Being, and Why One Saw It Coming* (New York: Viking, 2007).

2. Sandra Waddock, *Catalyzing Transformation: Making System Change Happen* (Hampton, NJ: Business Expert Press, 2023). I want to acknowledge the Bounce Beyond initiative and particularly its founder Steve Waddell, where many of these ideas gestated.

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4. Thomas Homer-Dixon, Ortwin Renn, Johan Rockstrom, Jonathan Donges, and Scott Janzwood, "A Call for An International Research Program on the Risk of a Global Polycrisis," Rochester, NY, Dec. 16, 2021. doi: 10.2139/ssrn.4058592.

About the Author

Sandra Waddock is Professor of Management, Galligan Chair of Strategy, and Carroll School Scholar of Corporate Responsibility at Boston College Carroll School of Management. She has published more than 180 papers and chapters and sixteen books on issues ranging from corporate responsibility to management education to her current interests in system transformation and stewardship. She is the winner of multiple lifetime achievement awards, including the 2016 Lifetime Achievement CSR Award from Humboldt University and a 2017 PRME Pioneer Award, among others. Her latest book is *Catalyzing Transformation: Making System Change Happen*.

Allying for System Change

Stewart Wallis

The evidence on how complex systems are changed shows that two interconnected changes are now essential to foster a polycentric ecology of movements, organizations, and associations (further elaborated here):

> (1) The creation and dissemination of a powerful new narrative(s) about how we live together focused on a shift to an ecological civilization.
>
> (2) The creation of a new vanguard power base seeking system changes across all sectors, at all levels (bottom-up and top-down), and across all geographies (local, regional, national, and global)—which, in turn, needs radical collaboration by thousands of organizations and the mobilization of millions of citizens.

So how do we catalyze these vital changes? In addressing this question, we need to realize that this is an innately relational and emergent process. It is impossible to say in advance what mix of planned versus evolutionary change will work best or what mix of structure versus unconstrained local action. In fact, we need holarchy—simultaneous multi-level structure and coherence. Our approach needs to be governed and guided by an agreed set of principles which set out both a vision and the ways we need to work together. We also need to start by addressing a series of agreed upon questions. Our answers to these questions and the questions themselves will, however, need to change as the world around us changes.

In other words, we need to agree that we are setting out on a journey together with a shared vision and values but without a map, and thus we will have to constantly reassess where we are on that journey and what are the next wise steps.[1]

Principles

1. *Agree upon a shared vision.*

Much of the material for this already exists—for example, the Earth Charter, the Unitive Narrative of the SDG Thought Leaders Circle, and the work of the GTI. The dissemination of this meta-narrative would happen as the new global power base for system change develops, evolves, and grows. Crucially, citizens and organizations at local levels would take the principles of the global meta-narrative and together co-create locally relevant new narratives.

2. *Collaboration is more important than agreement.*

This is a principle that has worked well for the Wellbeing Economy Alliance (WEAll). Too many progressive organizations fail to collaborate because they disagree about the required mechanism of change, for instance degrowth versus green growth. What is important is radical collaboration between all organizations that share a common vision and values.

3. *Challenge each other but with care.*

Challenge is creative, and care models the values of love at the heart of an ecological civilization. We need both.

4. *Embrace difference.*

Embracing and building on difference is a key component of how complex systems move forward and evolve.

5. *Go with the energy.*

Organizations and individuals that have the enthusiasm and energy to catalyze change will be more critical than those with the perfect role description. What is needed is to catalyze a series of positive changes which are greater than the sum of their parts.

6. *Stay highly externally focused.*

It will be crucial to continuously scan the external environment to adjust to key changes and to seize new opportunities.

7. Multiple levels simultaneously.

In the words of Jude Currivan, all organizations and individuals need to (a) act local, (b) feel global, and (c) think cosmic.

Starting Questions

1. What needs to be done locally, regionally, nationally, and globally?

Most of the transformative change needs to happen at the local, regional, and national level according to locally co-created narratives (guided by the principles of the new global vision and in turn helping evolve it) and supported by radical collaboration between organizations and citizens campaigning and lobbying for radical policy shifts at all levels of governance. At the global level, citizens need to come together supported by global campaigning organizations to form one powerful voice pushing for crucially needed changes in global institutions, policies, and governance and addressing global issues such as global burning.

2. Planned organization versus local evolution?

It is clear that both are essential to address different needs. Some degree of planned organization is important at both national and global levels. However, it is not clear to me whether a central organization to bring together all global citizens will be needed. My instinct is not, but this will become clearer as the GCM evolves.

3. What different roles are needed by the organizations in the GCM?

Radical collaboration among organizations committed to system change is vital (1) to ensure rapid growth of a GCM (all participating organizations would encourage their members/supporters to join the GCM), (2) to provide research and evidence to underpin campaigns, (3) to lobby policymakers, and (4) to play a coordinating role in their sector of expertise at a city/regional/national level. Organizations prepared to play a catalyzing, coordinating, and amplifying role in each broad sector will be needed, both nationally and globally, to help get this process of radical collaboration underway—thus playing a role very similar to the one WEAll and its member organizations are playing in the economic system change arena (together with several other organizations). In addition to the economy, such organizations will be needed, for example, in

the areas of (1) democracy, governance, and rights; (2) climate change, biodiversity, and food; (3) spirituality and faith; (4) inner development and personal growth; (5) education; (6) health; (7) housing, built environment, and transport; and (8) culture, arts, and media.

Next Steps

So, who is the "we" referred to throughout this note? What is needed is an organized alliance of prominent changemakers—both individuals and organizations. This alliance could then help bring into being a more focused central hub organized on sociocracy principles. The first tasks would be a process of coalescing around a unitive narrative, agreeing on operating principles, and then addressing a set of starting questions to aid the journey ahead.

Endnotes

1. I have been assisted in this thinking by the wisdom and council of Jude Currivan, Glenda Eoyang, and Wendy Ellyatt, but they are not responsible for any flaws in my contribution.

About the Author

Stewart Wallis is a co-founder of the Wellbeing Economy Alliance (WEAll) and the co-author of *A Finer Future*. He is the previous executive director of the New Economics Foundation (nef) and International Director of Oxfam GB. Prior to this, he spent seven years with the World Bank working on industrial and financial development in East Asia and thirteen years working in business. He holds Master's degrees from the University of Cambridge and the University of London and an honorary doctorate from Lancaster University.