

SHEET

the global change-makers' magazine

- CHANGEMAKER PROFILE -

Shani Graham:
The Community Builder

A Complex Predicament:
PART 2 - THE ECONOMIC
PREDICAMENT

The Economics
of Human Need

VOICES OF A
GENERATION

TPP: A Threat to Democracy,
Society & Environment

Economy Plan B: Building
an Efficient, Resilient,
Solidarity Economy

The Holy Grail
of ECONOMIC
GROWTH

Follow the Money:

Unravelling the Banking System

ECONOMIZE ISSUE #2



CREDITS

Editorial team

Sean Crawley
Kari McGregor

Graphic design

Ben Matei
David Zwolski

Cover artwork

Creative Director - Ben Matei
Model - Chris O'keeffe
Photographer - Alex Cahill
Special Thanks to CHRIS HUZZARD STUDIOS

Contributing artists

Cuba Gallery - www.flickr.com/photos/cubagallery
kathleen ma - <http://www.flickr.com/photos/62570290@N02>

NEXT ISSUE RELEASE
26th May


  **READ ONLINE, DOWNLOAD,
ORDER HARD COPY**


www.sustainabilitysc.org

FOLLOW US AROUND

 @ShowcaseSustain  /AllAboutTheSHIFT

CONTACT US

 contact@sustainabilitysc.org

 +61 7 5450 0892
(Australia)



This magazine has been printed on acid-free recycled paper.

Dear reader,

Welcome to the second issue of SHIFT magazine!

And thank you for helping us to reclaim the discourse and shift the public conversation to the topics that matter most: our converging economic and ecological crises, and peaking resources. Inspiring and empowering people to work toward sustainability, resilience and community is the most important work we feel we can do, and we are immensely grateful for all those who join us on this journey.

Our all-volunteer team has worked countless hours – transcending the treadmill, and multiple time-zones – to put together this second issue of SHIFT magazine on a non-profit shoestring budget. We've investigated, interviewed, visioned, scribbled, edited, designed, and printed our way to communicating food for thought, and inspiration to practical action. All this to play our part in a much-needed shift: a shift in attitude, action, and the trajectory our civilization is on.

Each issue of SHIFT presents its own theme relevant to our paradigm-shifting emergency, and this second issue casts the spotlight on our economic system, its flaws and failings, and initiatives that have sprung up to address them. Change-makers from diverse disciplines and backgrounds have collaborated over this issue to deliver fresh material intended to shift our conversations, our ideas, and our actions. There is much scope for inspiration within these pages, despite the sobering realities told.

Every issue of SHIFT aims to feature a couple of submissions from our readers, so if you fancy wordsmithing your way into print, pitch us your idea and we'll take it from there. Submission guidelines and forms are on our website at www.sustainabilitysc.org.

Free from commercial advertising, SHIFT is fully supported by digital and hard-copy purchases and subscriptions from our readers. This means you get to read only the stuff you want to read, in the format you want it in, and don't have to leaf through pages and pages of consumer-paradigm junk. We are eternally grateful for your support, your company in these interesting times, and your feedback that goes toward constant improvement of SHIFT.

We hope that you will find SHIFT an inspiring and empowering read, and that you will find information worth sharing. Take care, and have a good read!

Love and solidarity,

 The Sustainability Showcase Team

CONTENTS

FEATURES

- 4** **The Economics of Human Need**
Human needs are at the base of every economic activity we undertake. But what are those needs, and how can we assess how well we're meeting them?
- 31** **Follow the Money: Unravelling the Banking System**
How does our mysterious banking system actually work? Spoiler alert: it's a heck of a lot more interesting than you've been led to believe!
- 33** **A Complex Predicament: How our Energy, Economic and Ecological Systems are Connected**
Feedback Loops, the Jevons Paradox, and the Three End Games: Part 2 - The Economic Predicament
In the second of this three-part series, Dave Pollard gets to grips with the complexity of our economic crisis.
- 39** **Trans Pacific Partnership Agreement: a threat to democracy, society and the environment**
Brian Feeney unpacks the Trans Pacific Partnership, exposing the agreement as a looming threat to democracy, society, and the environment.
- 41** **Voice of a Generation**
Miss Metanoia zooms in on how the millennial generation is impacted by our contracting economy, giving voice to a generation often forgotten in the realm of politics.

COLUMNS

- 16** **The Overthinker:**
Money Talks: How the dollar dominates our discourse, and why we need to ditch it
Kari McGregor unpacks the baggage of our dollar-dominant political discourse, proposing the promotion of an alternative bottom line.
- 19** **Doing it Ourselves:**
Economy Plan B: Building an Efficient, Resilient, Solidarity Economy
Theo Kitchener sketches out a vision for an alternative economy that is smart, scalable, and, best of all, DIY.
- 49** **The Human Race:**
Birth, Work, School & Death
Sean Crawley mulls over the pace of life in the Human Race, and questions whether our time on the treadmill is really well spent.

- 55** **Growthbusting:**
The Holy Grail of Economic Growth

Dave Gardner dons the mantle of heresy, and challenges the economic growth bias of the mainstream media, heaping sacrilege on its holy grail.

REGULARS

- 7** **The Critically Endangered Species File:**
The Orange-Bellied Parrot
Sean Crawley investigates what is driving the loss of Australia's Orange-Bellied Parrot, and what can be done to pull this remarkable species back from the brink.
- 9** **Changemaker Profile:**
Shani Graham: The Community Builder
Kari McGregor met with Shani Graham to find out what it takes to build a thriving, resilient community with ordinary folks, in an ordinary place, and without a lot of resources.
- 13** **Top 10:**
Ways of Meeting Your Needs – Without Spending a Cent!
The best bargain is a freebie, right? Here are ten pathways to engagement in the gift economy.
- 29** **Spotlight:**
The Bank of Real Solutions
How great would it be to have a central hub that links you up to resilience initiatives all around the country? The Bank of Real Solutions has done just that!

DEPARTMENTS

- 1** From the SHIFT team
- 3** Contributors
- 59** Economize Cryptic Crossword
- 61** References

CONTRIBUTORS



Dave Gardner

Dave Gardner has worked as a professional film director for 30 years, and directed the documentary *GrowthBusters: Hooked on Growth*. He is also founding contributor at *Growth Bias Busted*, the media watchdog project that sheds light on the pro-growth bias in our media. He writes, films and speaks regularly about our culture's addiction to growth. Dave is based in Colorado Springs, USA.

- Web: www.growthbusters.org
- Twitter: @growthbusters
- Facebook: GrowthBusters



Kari McGregor

A former teacher and escapee from the compromised Non-Profit Industrial Complex, Kari has lived and worked in the UK, Spain and Thailand before settling in Australia. Kari divides her time between consulting for the non-profit world, and working for the grassroots non-profit, Sustainability Showcase. She blogs as *The Overthinker*, freelancing a critical spin on our planetary predicament. Kari is currently based on the Sunshine Coast.

- Web: www.theoverthinker.org
- Twitter: @ThinkstOver
- Facebook: The Overthinker



Miss Metanoia

Miss Metanoia, aka Anne Nguyen, is a millennial-generation freelance writer, cultural creative, and professional homebody. A digital native, she critiques culture through the lens of a generation raised on selfies and status updates, whilst attempting to navigate an economic and political terrain unrecognizable to previous generations of thinkers. Miss Metanoia is based in Sydney, Australia.

- Web: www.miss-metanoia.blogspot.com.au
- Twitter: @stalksnu



Brian Feeney

Brian Feeney is a town planner, strategist, researcher and writer. He donates much of his time to project coordination for the Australia-based non-profit organization, Quest 2025, a transdisciplinary sustainability advocacy organization for which he is secretary. His interests are transformation, cultural evolution, ecological sustainability, social justice and nature writing. He lives on the Gold Coast, Australia.

- Web: www.quest2025.net



Theo Kitchener

Theo Kitchener has a background in activism and community building, and more recently has been working to raise awareness around collapse and transition possibilities through the Melbourne-based volunteer group, *Doing It Ourselves*. Self-described apocalyptimist, Theo is positive about the future, focusing on community, permaculture, appropriate technology, voluntary simplicity, participatory democracy, community economics and our potential transformation. Theo is based in Melbourne Australia.

- Web: www.doingitourselves.org
- Facebook: Doing It Ourselves



Dave Pollard

Dave Pollard retired from paid work in 2010 after 35 years as an advisor to small enterprises. He is a long-time student of our culture and its systems, of history and of how the world really work. His books include *Finding the Sweet Spot: The Natural Entrepreneur's Guide to Responsible, Sustainable, Joyful Work*, and *Group Works: A Pattern Language for Bringing Life to Meetings and Other Gatherings*. He is currently working on a collection of short stories about the world two millennia from now. He lives on Bowen Island, Canada.

- Web: www.howtosavetheworld.ca
- Twitter: @DavePollard



Sean Crawley

Sean Crawley has decided to hang around and get involved in earthly affairs for as long as possible because his curiosity to see how all this pans out is greater than the sometimes attractive option of hanging up one's boots. Sean has worked as an educator in schools, community settings and in youth mental health, and currently donates much of his time to the grassroots non-profit, Sustainability Showcase. He lives and works on the Sunshine Coast, Australia.

- Web: www.fourtentytwoam.blogspot.com.au

The Economics of Human Need



What is the economy for if not meeting human needs? Human needs are the basis of every economic activity we undertake. In order to reflect upon whether our economic system is effectively meeting our needs, we need to first of all understand what our needs are, their relative level of importance, and how to satisfy those needs.

Various models for understanding human needs have been developed, but none is more well-known than Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. However, a more recent model, Max-Neef's Fundamental Human Needs, poses an exciting alternative for our emergent understanding of economic satisfiers.



Maslow's Pyramid of Human Needs

Commonly represented as a pyramid of needs, Abraham Maslow's hierarchy proposes a linear progression through physiological needs, safety, love and belonging, and esteem to self-actualization. The most basic of needs lay the base of the pyramid, with each of the subsequent levels only taking priority when the previous level of need has been met. For Maslow there was a strict order to meeting the various human needs.

Physiological needs:

These are the basic requirements for survival, without which the body will not function. Therefore, these needs must be met before any others. Metabolic requirements such as food and water, and protective requirements such as clothing and shelter, form the base of Maslow's hierarchy.

Safety needs:

Once physiological needs are met, the individual can turn their focus to safety. Threats to safety include war, natural disasters, economic crisis, and family violence; hence needs tend to manifest in priorities such as job security, insurance, and the safety net of healthcare and welfare.

Love and belonging:

Once physiological and safety needs are met, humans need to be loved and belong within a given peer group. Friendship, intimacy and family connection become the priorities. Without these needs met, people can become lonely, anxious or depressed.

Esteem:

The need to feel respected — both by oneself, and by others — is a manifestation of the desire to be accepted and valued. Maslow theorized that a need for respect from others was a "lower" version of esteem, manifested in seeking status, recognition, prestige and attention, whereas the need for self-respect was "higher", manifested in seeking competence, mastery, independence and freedom.

Self-actualization:

The realization of one's full potential is at the peak of Maslow's pyramid, and becomes a priority once all previous needs have been met and mastered. Many of people's desires at this level are very specific, and unique to the individual. While one person's attains self-actualization through art, another's does so through sport, and yet another does so by being a good parent.

Max-Neef's Fundamental Human Needs

Need	Being (qualities)	Having (things)	Doing (actions)	Interacting (settings)
Subsistence	Physical & mental health	Food, shelter, work	Feed, clothe, rest, work	Living environment & social setting
Protection	Care, adaptability, autonomy	Social security, health systems, work	Co-operate, plan, take care of, help	Social environment & dwelling
Affection	Respect, sense of humour, generosity, sensuality	Friendships, family, relationships with nature	Share, take care of, make love, express emotions	Privacy & intimate spaces of togetherness
Understanding	Critical capacity, curiosity, intuition	Literature, teachers, policy, education	Analyse, study, meditate, investigate	Schools, families, universities, communities
Participation	Receptiveness, dedication, sense of humour	Responsibilities, duties, work, rights	Co-operate, dissent, express opinions	Associations, parties, churches, neighbourhoods
Leisure	Imagination, tranquility, spontaneity	Games, parties, peace of mind	Day-dream, remember, relax, have fun	Landscapes, intimate spaces, places to be alone
Creation	Imagination, boldness, inventiveness, curiosity	Abilities, skills, work, techniques	Invent, build, design, work, compose, interpret	Spaces for expression, workshops, audiences
Identity	Sense of belonging, self-esteem, consistency	Language, religions, work, customs, values, norms	Get to know oneself, grow, commit oneself	Places one belongs to, everyday settings
Freedom	Autonomy, passion, self-esteem, open-mindedness	Equal rights	Dissent, choose, run risks, develop awareness	anywhere

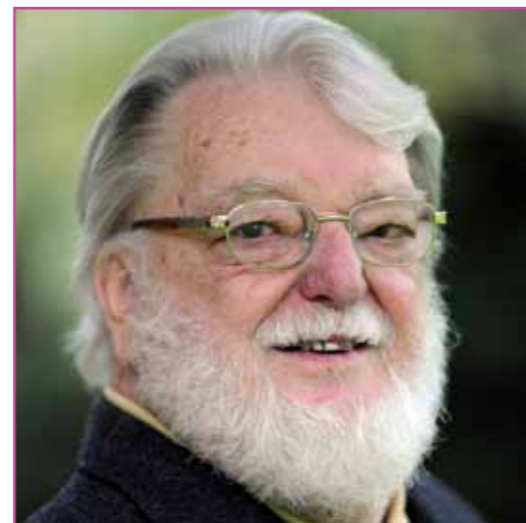
Maslow's theory is not without criticism, however. One such criticism proposes that while needs and drives in individualistic societies are self-centred — focusing on self-improvement, with self-actualization the apex — more collectivist societies tend to be more driven by the need for acceptance and community, hence freedom and individuality are not prioritised. More specific cultural differences, as well as access to resources, also affect the priorities of individuals in various geopolitical regions. Different age groups also prioritise differently, with children having higher physical needs, adolescents having higher esteem needs, and young adults having the highest self-actualization needs.

Max-Neef's Fundamental Human Needs

More recently, a Chilean economist, not yet a household name, has developed a scale of human needs to rival the accepted wisdom of Maslow's Pyramid. Manfred Max-Neef's scale is rather more complicated, but arguably more holistic, and more universally applicable. In Max-Neef's model, human needs are understood as a system of interrelated and interactive components. There is no hierarchy, with the satisfaction of needs being often simultaneous and complementary.

The Fundamental Human Needs scale proposes that human needs stem specifically from our very humanness, and are few, finite and classifiable — in contrast to the infinite and insatiable nature of economic 'wants'.

Max-Neef's Fundamental Needs hold constant across human cultures and historical periods, whereas the strategies by which these needs are met vary between cultures and over time.



The Fundamental Human Needs scale proposes that human needs stem specifically from our very humanness, and are few, finite and classifiable — in contrast to the infinite and insatiable nature of economic 'wants'.

The nine Fundamental Human Needs are classified as: subsistence, protection, affection, understanding, participation, leisure, creation, identity, and freedom. These needs are also defined according to a series of four existential categories: being, having, doing and interacting. These four categories, with the nine Fundamental Needs, result in a matrix by which levels of wealth or poverty can be understood.



Further to the scale of Fundamental Human Needs, Max-Neef proposes a series of satisfiers — ways of meeting needs — which are classified as follows:

Violators

These claim to be satisfying needs while actually creating barriers to the satisfaction of needs. For example, eating junk food appears to meet a need for subsistence, while undermining health, therefore negatively affecting subsistence.

Pseudo-satisfiers

These claim to satisfy needs while having little to no real effect. Status symbols are an example of a pseudo-satisfier for the need for identity, but they have the potential to subvert the individual's attention away from their own identity.

Inhibiting Satisfiers

These satisfiers over-satisfy a particular need, leading to the inhibition of satisfaction of other needs. As an example, a highly secure but overprotective family leads to the inhibition of individual identity and freedom.

Singular Satisfiers

These only satisfy a single need, and have no bearing on other needs. As an example, government welfare satisfies subsistence for those in need while having no impact on needs beyond subsistence, unlike meaningful work, which can satisfy participation and creation needs, as well.

Synergistic Satisfiers

These satisfiers work to satisfy a particular need while also meeting other needs. Positive parenting, for example, provides protection, affection and identity simultaneously, without inhibiting the satisfaction of other needs.

Orange-bellied Parrot

Each issue of SHIFT will present one species of life that is classified as critically endangered, Homo sapiens excluded. By definition, whether it be by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), or your nation state's environmental governance structure such as the Department of the Environment in Australia, critically endangered essentially means that the species is facing an extremely high risk of extinction in the wild in the immediate future.



COMMON NAME:

Orange-bellied Parrot



SPECIES:

Neophema chrysogaster



RANGE:

The Orange bellied parrot breeds only on the south-west coast of Tasmania in the warmer months from October to March. They then migrate north across the Bass Strait to mainland Australia, and can be found along a thin coastal strip stretching across the states of South Australia, Victoria and New South Wales. Considering the total number of this species in the wild is thought to be less than 50 individuals, don't expect to come across flocks of these parrots on the popular Great Ocean Road Trip from Melbourne to Adelaide.



THREATS:

- Loss of habitat
- Predation by cats and foxes
- Spread of noxious weeds
- Inbreeding due to small population and other genetic factors
- Competition with introduced seed-eaters and competition for hollows including the introduced Common Starling



> 50 INDIVIDUALS IN THE WILD

FURTHER CONSIDERATIONS:

In issue #1 of SHIFT we covered the Woylie in our critically endangered species file, and noted that it perhaps did not have the appeal of panda bears (cuteness) or whales (sheer size) in competing for our attention when it comes to saving a species from extinction. This issue we step down the anthropocentric ladder one full rung to the vertebrate class of Aves. Yes the Orange-bellied Parrot isn't even a mammal! Our disdain for other life-forms seems to increase the further removed the species is from Homo sapiens on the evolutionary tree or classification table. However, any student of nature will appreciate that the web of life is interdependent on every last cell of biodiversity, and that any notion of hierarchy is human-created nonsense.

This lack of regard for birds in general, and in this case for a member of a family of true parrots (Family Psittaculidae), was disgracefully epitomised when former Victorian Premier Jeff Kennett called the Orange-bellied Parrot a "trumped up Corella". This was a typical pro-growth politician's response to the threat posed by the orange-bellied parrot to the relocation of a chemical storage facility. Kennett was so off the mark with his name-calling as the Corella is, in fact, a cockatoo (Family Cacatuidae,) and not a parrot at all - back to Biology class for you Mr ex-Premier.

The legitimacy and necessity of every single life form (and of the non-living factors as well) on our planet is eloquently stated in David Suzuki's Declaration of Interdependence¹. With such a holistic view of nature, the existence of birds in any ecosystem being as crucial as any other life form is easily understood. From a more technical scientific perspective, the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, released in 2005, analyses and comprehensibly outlines how natural ecosystems are humanity's life-support systems. It identifies and classifies these life supporting features as "ecosystem services"².

The Orange-bellied Parrot provides services to the ecosystem in which it exists that provide life support to humanity. To explore this a little further we can break down these services into 4 main categories: supporting services; provisioning services; regulating services; and cultural enhancement services.

WHAT CAN BE DONE:

The more of us who become aware of the growing and increasingly destructive march of industrial civilisation, the better. Every aspect of our presence on this planet needs to be questioned, and if necessary, as is likely, changed to be less harmful to the interdependence of all living and non-living systems on this planet. Be an agent of change for the better in any way that you can.

On a more specific level of species extinction, even though birds are no greater or lesser deserving of conservation efforts than any other species, the dire situation of the orange-bellied parrot justifies the use of any strategy. Even emotional tactics such as appealing to the parrot's aesthetic qualities or the special place of birds in human mythology as symbols of freedom and wisdom are valid. The further reading links below are a starting point for becoming more aware, a source of contact to already established recovery efforts, and a path to motivating oneself to action. You may, for example, consider supporting the The Recovery Team, which recently celebrated its 30 year anniversary, by injecting some funds into their work, as the federal Australian Government no longer makes any financial contribution to the recovery of this species.

<https://www.facebook.com/savetheobp>
<http://birdlife.org.au/projects/orange-bellied-parrot-recovery>
<http://www.birdsinbackyards.net/species/Neophema-chrysogaster>
http://www.environment.gov.au/cgi-bin/sprat/public/publicspecies.pl?taxon_id=747

<http://birdlife.org.au/documents/OBP-wingspanarticle.pdf>
<http://www.birdlife.org.au/documents/OBP-TUC-Feb13.pdf>
<http://savetheobp.blogspot.com.au/>
http://blogs.crikey.com.au/rooted/2011/09/19/on-the-hunt-for-the-mysterious-orange-bellied-parrot-australias-most-endangered-bird/?wpmp_switcher=mobile

regulars



Former Victorian Premier Jeff Kennett called it a "trumped up Corella" - apart from noticing it's a bird (well done)... not even close!

ECOSYSTEM SERVICES:

• supports all life by:

- o dispersal and cycling of nutrients
- o seed dispersal

• provides for life (either directly or indirectly and either presently or in the future) with:

- o food
- o raw materials
- o genetic resources
- o water
- o minerals
- o medicinal resources
- o energy
- o ornamental resources

• regulates life by:

- o carbon sequestration
- o waste decomposition
- o purification of water and air
- o pest and disease control

• provides cultural enhancement as a resource for:

- o cultural expression in books, film, art, folklore, architecture and symbols
- o spirituality and history
- o recreational experiences such as ecotourism
- o science and education



FURTHER READING

Changemaker Profile

The Community Builder

Shani Graham



Each issue of SHIFT magazine will feature a changemaker profile. Issue #1 of SHIFT featured *The Resistor*. Coming up are: *The Communicator*, *The Investigator*, *The Networker*, and *The Nurturer*. This issue features *The Builder*.

Inspired by Shani Graham's recent TEDx talk titled *Take a street and build a community*¹, Kari McGregor met with the sustainability guru, co-founder of Ecoburbia² and spearhead of the Hulbert Street Sustainability Fiesta³ to get some insight into what it takes to build community.

Shani Graham and her partner Tim Darby have become well known in Fremantle, Western Australia, as 'sustainability gurus'. Their well-deserved title has its humble roots in peak oil blues and a decision to get practical with a Living Smart course.⁴ Having grasped the unpalatable realities of the looming end of the oil era and impending food insecurity, the couple arrived at a crossroads when Shani's mounting work stress and Tim's work-related physical injuries signalled the need for a sea-change.

The decision to stay in the Fremantle suburbs instead of running away to the peaceful hills of Bellingen with dreams of an ecovillage required some chewing over. With Tim keen on the idea of self-sufficient homesteading, and Shani concerned about the long-term viability of an isolated location, a compromise was reached: the couple opted for the security of suburban community. According to Shani, when it comes to sustainability, community is integral – without it there is only the facade of sustainability.

Take a street, and build a community

Shani describes her former home of Hulbert Street in Fremantle as fertile ground, with its already high uptake of technical sustainability measures such as solar panels and rainwater tanks. But resilience in the face of economic contraction and the descent from peak oil requires something more: the ability to work together. This knowledge, coupled with the fact that self-sufficiency is an unrealistic goal for most, led Shani to the conclusion that community answers many of the sustainability questions left unanswered by self-sufficiency. I asked Shani what she did to kick-start her Hulbert Street community.

"I didn't present it as that. I don't think I was even aware of it as that at the beginning; I was just thinking: what can people do together? And if we join together early on, then maybe when things get tougher this is going to make it easier. And that's actually what happened."

Many people say they want to be part of a community, but when push comes to shove participation is often lacking. Shani zeroes in on the issue of finding common ground. She comments that it is often the case that when people come

together to form intentional communities they tend to focus on their differences and tear into one another politically.

"So, my theory on this is that those people joined together because they believe that they have a common belief. And they do have a common belief. And they go in thinking that they're not going to have to argue about anything, any of those core beliefs. But nobody has the same core beliefs. And when you believe that you have things in common and that conflict happens, it really, really hurts. Now, in Hulbert Street, you'd never dream you'd have things in common with the people around you, so there's no assumption that you'd have beliefs in common. And so when you do find things in common you rejoice! So instead of being upset about the things you don't have in common, you're able to rejoice about what you do have."

Shani takes delight in the small surprises that her community offers. Despite the fact that most people in Hulbert Street didn't seem particularly interested in sustainability, what she discovered was truly heartwarming. Ranging from a gentleman across the street with an enviable olive-preserving recipe to the guy up the road whose alarmingly water-intensive rose garden and verdant lawn disguise the fact that hidden away round the back is the biggest veggie patch you've ever seen – these people are the hidden gems of suburbia.

Running away to the hills and joining an intentional community is not a move that is available to everyone, but your own street is as good a starting point for community as any in Shani's eyes. Community is essentially embedded in place, whether that means connection to the surrounding nature, stories of connection to the land, or simply a connection to the street in which you live.

Recipe for success

I asked Shani what she would point to as the key steps she and Tim took to build their community for those who would like to replicate their success. Shani describes the journey of Hulbert Street



from a quiet niche of suburbia to a sustainability hub with an annual fiesta attracting thousands of people each year, but then warns against trying to replicate the Hulbert Street model. A lot of people are looking for a recipe. They see success and they want to replicate it. They think there must be a formula they have to follow, but ultimately each community needs to find their own way.

"You can't replicate what we did. It's not like I can say 'start with a Living Smart course'. I was having a coffee with someone recently who was saying 'I want to start community in my street', and I said 'this is what we did', and he said 'I don't want to start with a Living Smart course'. This is my point. What is it you want to start with? So, what he's done now is he's held four or five tomato bottling days — it's tomato season over here — and he's got 40% of the street to come along, so they're now starting to talk to each other in the street, starting to work together."

Shani advises just starting with something you can do together. It doesn't matter whether it's a street party or a permablitz; it just has to be something you can do together.

"I don't care what you do, but everybody wants to have that connection. There isn't a single person who goes 'oh no, I wouldn't want to be involved in that.' Some people might say 'I wouldn't want it every day, and I wouldn't want meetings in my lounge room', but I've never met anyone who's gone 'nah, that's not for me and I wouldn't like to have it' — so you've got a captive audience."

Shani describes her vision for Hulbert Street in the future — a realistic future in which, despite economic crisis and the impacts of peak oil, the community is hanging in there on the thread of mutual support. She speaks of the power of visioning the future, but not setting rigid plans and trying to assume control.

"Now, I have no doubt that the reason I took that track was because I worked for the education department for a long time, and I was sick to death of writing visions and strategic plans, and I was majorly sick of committees. So, we ran a fiesta for seven and a half thousand with just two meetings. There were 250 volunteers, and a lot of them had never even met each other. We had one meeting with ideas, straight after the fiesta while it's still fresh, and we had one meeting after we put in the application, and we asked 'who wants to do that? Nobody? OK we'll leave it for another year. Who wants to do this? I do. OK, how much money do you want?' And so, I don't know if that style is the ideal, but it's worked."

During the opening ceremony of the Hulbert Street Fiesta one year the organizers allocated anyone who had donated money a very short slot each to say a few words. The major donors elected not to speak, but the politicians who had donated a little each were keen, so Shani asked them to say just two things: First, what inspired you about the fiesta? And second, what are you going to do?

"The first two politicians got up and we got the policy spiel (I think they're told by the party 'every time you get the opportunity to speak you need to say this'), and so I ended up, for both of them, saying, 'that wasn't two things, you have to finish now', which was extremely rude. And the third politician, who's our local Greens senator, Scott Ludlum, stood up and said 'what inspired me about this thing is the government had nothing to do with it, and what I'm gonna do, is I'm gonna get a plant on my way home and I'm gonna grow parsley on my apartment windowsill.' He really got the point that that was what we're on about."

Individual action

Many critics and commentators claim that individual action isn't worth focusing on due to its small impact. Shani has various responses to such critique. Although a nebulous notion, there is the ripple in the pond effect. The cumulative effect of behavior change is more concrete: when someone makes a change and begins to think of themselves as 'green', they take on this identity, and go on to make more such changes. Then there is the empowerment people feel as a result of making changes in their own lives, which enables them to feel confident in broadening their circle of influence. In her final, and most profound response, Shani talks about Africa's first ever Nobel Peace Prize-winning woman, Wangari Maathi, and her story of the hummingbird:

"She tells the story of a jungle, and in the jungle there's this massive fire. The fire is so big that there's nothing anyone can do about it. So all the animals are huddled in this one little corner that's safe, and they're saying 'there's nothing we can do; that fire's too big.' But there's this little hummingbird that goes to the lake, picks up a bit of water in her beak, and she takes it and she drops it on the fire. Then she flies back to the lake, and she picks up another little bit of water and drops it on the fire. And you get to

this point in the story and everyone thinks all the animals are gonna join in, but it doesn't happen. They don't join in. they just say to the hummingbird 'What are you doing? Even if we all joined in there is nothing we can do about this fire'. And the hummingbird says 'what am I doing? I'm doing the best I can'."

"There are lots of different answers to that question, but that last one is the reason I do it."

Circle of influence

To be effective, a change-maker needs to not only focus on issues of concern, but also to identify and navigate their circle of influence. Where your circle of influence lies is not really the point. The point is to work within it as effectively as possible. With great humility, Shani quotes an audience member from a presentation she delivered: "your story is 50% inspiration, and 50% useless". Not everyone has the same circle of influence, so whatever you tell them works for you may seem useless to them. In this way people often don't see that what others are doing is valuable.

"I loved him saying that because it made me think about what was going on, and what was going on wasn't useless!"

With their circle of influence clear, Shani and Tim don't go to rallies, and don't sign petitions unless they are hand-written. Instead, they have set to work on Ecoburbia, their new quarter-acre block on the edge of suburbia where the previous owners had ripped out every green living thing growing there. Their goal? To share space, grow food and provide for people, and foster community. Living in a renovation nightmare with chooks and goats everywhere is just part of the fun.

"We want to have as many people living on the block as though it were subdivided. But have them in smaller accommodation so we can provide all their veggies, all their eggs, all their milk, and all their honey. And a proportion of their fruit, meat and cheese. So that's the goal. How close to that we'll come, who knows? A big part of our business at the moment is actually documenting that. I don't just want people to see how it is in the end. I want them to see the dirt and grime."

Ecoburbia is a work in progress and Shani is committed to rolling out that narrative. People are often daunted by the enormity of the task of creating sustainable living spaces. It is helpful to be able to see the work in progress, to see how it all comes together. People are inspired by Ecoburbia, it seems, because it is so tangible, so real; they can see it unfolding in real time. Breaking the work down into its components enables people to see what they themselves are capable of



and how to take the first steps.

But ultimately, when quizzed about the most rewarding aspect of her work as a sustainability guru — what would lead her to recommend this pathway to others — Shani's response is simple: it's all about the people. All about the community.



TOP 10

ways of meeting your needs

WITHOUT SPENDING A CENT

Whether our motives are ideological, a matter of necessity, or pure tight-fistedness, we all like getting things for free, right? Well, it just so happens that you can get many of your needs met without spending a single dollar or cent (or yen, or peso, or shekel) on the really free market. Here are ten easily accessible ways of doing just that, and none of them involve begging or stealing!

10

Open Source & open access technology

Open source technology is really taking off, and opening up a world of opportunity to both consumers and producers – for free. The open source community started out as an information technology movement, providing free access to community-developed software, from operating systems, to web browsers, to website-building software, to office suites that rival Microsoft. Now the open source community has expanded in scope to include offerings as radical as open-source ecology – a platform that facilitates the building of industrial machines! Even SHIFT magazine is produced under an open source creative commons license, which means it can be reproduced by anyone who wants to share it free of charge.

8

Time-banking

A long-time tried and tested method, time-banking provides no-strings access to a wide range of goods and services. Different systems work in slightly different ways, but all essentially revolve around stating what you can offer the community, and asking for what you need from the community. In most systems, time-bankers can determine how much their own time is worth, and save up credits from the work they have done to spend on meeting their own needs. Even if you're strapped for cash, you may find yourself overflowing with time-banking credits if your skills are sought after.

Freecycle

Anyone who hasn't yet heard of Freecycle has clearly been living under a rock, and probably paid for the privilege. The global Freecycle network enables people to scour suburbs far and wide in search of what they need, totally free of charge. Some Freecycleers even help out with transport, although usually it's expected that you'll pick up items yourself. Freecycled items range from the ordinary, such as pre-loved furniture and cookware, to absolute steals, such as computer equipment and car parts, right down to the kitchen sink (literally – we kid you not).

9

5

Food swap

Overpriced food that isn't fresh anymore, or fresh produce for free? Supermarkets or swaps? It's a no-brainer really. Food swaps are local community initiatives that provide growers with variety in exchange for your own surplus, so it's a win-win for all involved. You may not always get the choice you find at the supermarket, but there's something special and exciting about not knowing quite what you're going to get in exchange for all those lemons!

3

Upcycle pre-loved stuff

Ever seen something old and worn – and maybe even a bit dilapidated – and thought "I could make something useful out of that"? That's upcycling – the up-and-coming extension to the tried-and-tested freecycling. And while some innovative people are making a storming trade out of it, it's an open market for creative hands. The only limits to upcycling are the trash you can find to turn into treasure, and your own imagination.

7

Couchsurf

Why stay in overpriced and sterile hotels, motels and hostels (ok, a lot of these are far from sterile!) when you can hang with locals for free with the added benefit of being shown around? Couchsurfing options are as varied as the couches available to surf on, and some hosts even offer the privacy of a bedroom with ensuite bathroom. It just takes a little courage to inquire, and you'll likely find yourself rewarded with an airport or train station pickup, a guided tour round town, and a laid-back place to crash out when you're done for the day.

6

Join a freesharing network

There are more of these around than you think, and each one works in a slightly different way, but the basic premise is the same: you get stuff for free, provided someone has it to give. Some freesharing networks are locally-oriented, while some are global. Some offer ownership, others offer access. Some offers are one-offs, while others are ongoing. There really is something for everyone's needs whether you're looking to kit yourself out with a pre-loved couch, borrow a ladder, or snatch a shared ride around the country.

it's free!

Borrow from a resource bank or library

These are popping up all over the place now. Resource banks work just like lending libraries in that you can check out the item you need for a given period of time – free of charge – and then return it when you are done with it (of when your borrowing period is up). This is particularly useful for expensive items you don't use very often, like power tools, and an excellent idea for toys for kids whose interest quickly wanders from one flavor of the month to the next.

4

regulars

2

Skillshare

When it comes to learning new skills or improving on your current skillset, there's no need to pay for the privilege if someone is willing and able to teach you for free. There seems to be no limit to what you can learn for free these days, and even if you're feeling too shy to hook up face-to-face with a teacher or go to a skillshare workshop event, there are amazing online options ranging from amateur tips and tricks to full university courses. And Transition Towns groups around the world offer skillshare events that are well worth trying out.



Pay it Forward

Otherwise known as PIfing, Pay it Forward is our favourite way of making sure that what goes around comes around. This delightful concept, which emerged from an equally delightful movie of the same name, revolves around putting out what you can to the world, and receiving what you need when your time comes around. It involves a leap of faith, but is, in essence, the basis of the gift economy that served humankind quite nicely thank you well before the invention of money as a proxy for trust. It can be as simple as paying for a stranger's bus fare or cup of coffee, or as selfless as donating your skills to a worthy cause for the day. There is even a global day of celebration of the concept, called, you guessed it: Pay it Forward Day, and the next one is coming up very soon — Thursday 24th April. There's no time like the present for deciding how you will Pay it Forward!

1

more

For some great go-to options and ideas, check out the list of resources below to get started:

Open source/access technology

- Software — operating system: <http://www.ubuntu.com/>
- Software — web browser: <http://www.mozilla.org/en-US/firefox/new/>
- Software — Open Office: <http://www.openoffice.org/product/index.html>
- Software - websites: <http://wordpress.com/>
- Hardware — Open Source Ecology: <http://opensourceecology.org/>

Freecycle

Global: <https://www.freecycle.org/>

Time-banking

CES Global: <https://www.community-exchange.org/>
 LETS Australia: <http://www.lets.org.au/>

Couchsurfing

Global: <https://www.couchsurfing.org/>

Freesharing

Global: http://www.streetbank.com/just_for_the_love_of_it
 (a merger between Streetbank and Just for the Love of it)
 Global: <http://free-share.org/>
 (a directory of local freesharing networks)
 Australia local: <http://friendswiththings.com.au/>

Food swap

Global network: <https://www.facebook.com/foodswapnetwork>
 Australia: <http://www.localharvest.org.au/learn/introduction-to-food-swaps/>

Resource banks/libraries

Tool bank network (USA): <http://www.toolbank.org/>
 Toy libraries (Australia): <http://www.toylibraries.org.au/>

Upcycling

Ideas hub: <http://www.upcyclethat.com/>

Skillshare

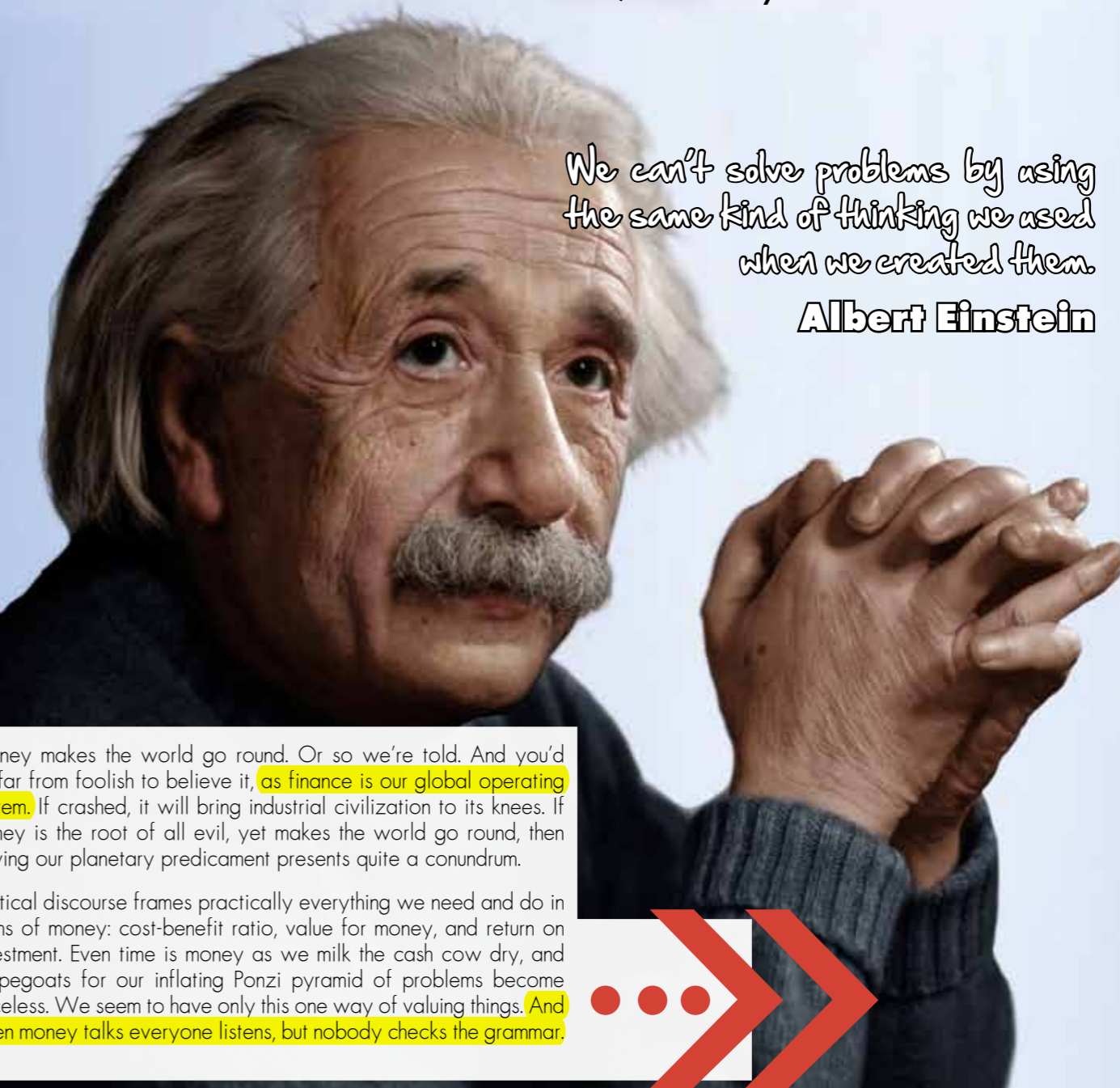
Skillshare Meetup groups: <http://skillshare.meetup.com/>
 Global online university courses: <https://www.coursera.org/>

Pay it Forward

Global Pay it Forward Day: <http://payitforwardday.com/>

Money Talks:

How the dollar dominates our discourse, and why we need to ditch it



We can't solve problems by using the same kind of thinking we used when we created them.

Albert Einstein

Money makes the world go round. Or so we're told. And you'd be far from foolish to believe it, as finance is our global operating system. If crashed, it will bring industrial civilization to its knees. If money is the root of all evil, yet makes the world go round, then solving our planetary predicament presents quite a conundrum.

Political discourse frames practically everything we need and do in terms of money: cost-benefit ratio, value for money, and return on investment. Even time is money as we milk the cash cow dry, and scapegoats for our inflating Ponzi pyramid of problems become priceless. We seem to have only this one way of valuing things. And when money talks everyone listens, but nobody checks the grammar.

Our society's problems are defined in financial terms, and so, too, are the solutions. The solution to every problem is to pump more money into it; endless economic growth will leverage us all to lofty heights. In our attempts to merge the fields of ecology and economics we've come up with the concepts of 'natural capital'¹, in order to place a dollar value on our biosphere's natural 'assets', and ecosystem 'services'², in order to integrate these features of the natural world into our financialized economy. In order to assist governments with their carving up of 'natural capital', ecosystem 'services' are being assigned economic values, much as any service performed by a human in exchange for money. But, in our money-driven growth economy, the making of a quick buck still takes precedence over the long-term stability conservatism affords, regardless the value of our natural world.

We frame the climate crisis in terms of how much it's going to cost us to address it, and how much more it will cost us if we continue to delay action. We talk about the financial toll of a climate-related natural disaster as though it were of greater significance than the death toll. Where we're going to find the money to rebuild cities on eroded coasts and floodplains dominates the discourse, and grieving loss of life credits barely a mention while we're busily doing the math. When loss and damage do crop up in conversation, such as at last year's COP in Warsaw,³ hot on the heels of super-typhoon Haiyan, it is in relation to financial loss and property damage, for which someone needs to be held accountable — for settling the account.

Biodiversity, too, has its costs. When it comes to saving critically endangered species from the brink of extinction we are told of the cost in financial terms. So far the Australian Orange-bellied parrot has cost Australia millions of dollars and conservation efforts have delayed or prevented 'developments' — apparently worth tens of millions of dollars. We are asked to consider whether such a trade-off is economically worthwhile to save the remaining 50 parrots, or whether we should give up on them entirely and focus on 'cheaper' species.⁴ The Orange-bellied parrot will likely only be saved if it can be proven that the ecosystem services it provides save more money than the parrot costs to conserve.

We are apparently unable to house, feed, heal and educate every individual in our society because there simply isn't enough money. Although there seems to be plenty for the obscenities of some. Providing the basics of survival comes at a premium, and it just isn't viable to address all needs in a system in which the almighty dollar comes first. Yet recent studies have demonstrated that it costs the taxpayer more to maintain homelessness, for example, than it does to address it.⁵ Only when the issue is framed in such callous terms are we finally prepared to throw a few dollars in the direction of the needy, patting ourselves on the back for our self-interest disguised as compassion.

Our bottom line of financial restriction means we can only afford to invest in the healing of those whose lives can be valued in quantitative and financialized terms. QALYs (Quality-Adjusted Life Years) are the benchmark for determining the cost-benefit analysis of treating a medical patient.⁶ Your QALYs are your guarantor, and don't expect an angel investment from the medical establishment this backup in your bank. Chances are you'll miss out on a transplant if you're deemed a poor investment — you're competing against those who are simply fitter for more taxable years of labour.

The bottom line of accounting has become synonymous with money, and we have no other way of assigning value or wealth. Even if we accept such utilitarian forms of value and measurement as natural capital or QALYs, should money be our only yardstick? What of intrinsic value? We are so often told there is no such thing. Nothing is of value to us unless we can make or save money from it. Hence we do not value in-home childcare, or the time and effort families put into caring for their sick or elderly relatives, and we certainly do not seem to value the thousands of hours poured into voluntary work for good causes — often by frontline activists whose media profile is often utterly demonic. If you can't make money from it, don't expect to be respected for doing it; if it doesn't have a dollar value, it isn't valued.

Why is it that we seem to know no language other than money?

This might have something to do with the fact that money is not only the way we frame our problems and solutions, but it is also the often-ignored cause.

Were it not for our pursuit of the almighty dollar, much of the damage we wreak on our ecosystems and our people — viewed as a workforce, and not individual, intrinsically valuable, humans — would simply not occur. Resource extraction and acquisition line pockets while they provide for artificial needs and destroy our landbase. Impoverished humans are chewed up and spat out by a system that spirals wealth to the upper echelons while selling fabricated wants to those in the middle. While money continues to make our business decisions for us, it is unlikely to provide satisfactory solutions to the problems it creates. Fighting fire with fire only fans the flames.

The Ecuadorian government caused great excitement when it enshrined the rights of nature in law in 2008, and immense disappointment when it stomped on those very laws five years later by violating the rights of Yasuni National Park — reputedly the most biodiverse place on Mother Earth — for the sake of oil extraction. Rafael Correa, Ecuador's president, was caught chasing his own tail when he rationalized making a mockery of law by claiming that the developing nation would need to grow its way out of poverty before she could afford to uphold

the rights of nature.⁷ And then, presumably, money would have to be spent on cleaning up the damage. If, of course, enough remains after oligarchic palms are sufficiently greased.

We're not going to grow our way out of the problems that the almighty dollar has landed us in. The notion that poverty can and should be eradicated via the mechanism of markets and growth is one that is deeply paternalistic, creates patronizing stereotypes, and hides the real cause of poverty. At the bottom of the barrel of solutions, aid is essentially a function of the trickle-down dynamic, a hierarchical donor-recipient relationship that exists if and only if the donor has sufficient surplus to allow some of it to trickle down. Such handouts reek of after-thoughtism; while a sincere

solution to the problem of poverty requires profound solidarity.

We are going to need an alternative discourse for framing our problems and their solutions if we mean to address our planetary predicament. Our alternative discourse is going to need a new vocabulary of value, and a fundamentally different framework for accounting. We need to frame that which is fundamental to our survival as priceless, and that which is damaging as too costly. Perhaps Emerson was right when he said money often costs too much; our relentless pursuit of the almighty dollar renders bankrupt both the biosphere, and the human spirit. Let's ditch it from our discourse.

Why is it that we seem to know no language other than money?



If you're keen to ditch the dollar-dominant framework and take part in evolving an alternative discourse, please tweet The Overthinker your ideas @ThinksItOver.

DOING IT OURSELVES

ECONOMY PLAN B:

Building an
EFFICIENT,
RESILIENT,
SOLIDARITY
ECONOMY

So we need to build a new economy, right? And we're trying, but it's not happening fast enough, or going deep enough. So here's a bit of a provocation, a suggested blueprint for one way of doing it. It's all fairly simple, won't take much money, and could be transformative if we put all the pieces together.

EFFICIENCY

People often frame efficiency as the opposite to resilience. As an end in itself, it can lead to brittle systems like the just-in-time ordering practices that characterise our insane economy. **We absolutely need resilience, but in a world of scarce and ever scarcer resources, we absolutely also need efficiency.**

We absolutely need resilience, but in a world of scarce and ever scarcer resources, we absolutely also need efficiency.

Which has been leading me to think, I'm not sure anymore that we should be promoting the idea that everyone should grow their own food (and everything that can go into that – composting, raising seedlings, veggie gardening, caring for trees, bees, animals, aquaponics, etc.) as well as fixing their own bikes, making their own cheese, environmentally friendly cleaning products and various appropriate technologies, and so on. **This is an old and important argument, we shouldn't be trying to be self-sufficient; we should be trying to build community sufficiency.** But somehow we all still end up trying to do it through self-sufficiency; we focus on getting our own place really well set up and learning a big swag of different skills, so we can teach others how to do it too. We think "sure, I won't do everything, I'll just learn and do as many things as I can, and leave the rest to others." But we get really good at things by focusing really

intensively on them. Someone spending say three days a week growing vegies will quickly become a much, much better gardener than someone trying to learn vegie gardening plus composting, raising seedlings, managing fruit and nut trees, woodworking, making a composting toilet, rainwater system and so on, like I have been. It's also a lot less stressful to not have so many different things you're trying to be on top of all at once. I know that personally I'd much prefer to get really good at woodworking than trying to juggle all of it.

So I think we need to start co-operatives and work together to meet each other's needs, specialising in

but I think we just have to accept that we depend on other people, as scary as that might be.

different things. People could work in two or three different co-operatives if they want to for the sake of resilience and stimulation, but I wouldn't go any further than that. **That might not sound very resilient, but I think we just have to accept that we depend on other people, as scary as that might be.**

We'll need specialisation to make this transition; no matter how well things go, people are going to suffer, **and the more efficient we can be with the scarce resources we have, the less that will have to happen, and therefore the less likely it is that we will end up with some kind of localised fascism/warlordism as well.**

Now, why have I been talking about co-operatives? Groups making decisions tend to make much better decisions than any one person can - you get a diversity of opinions, and talk it over logically.² Of course you don't need the whole group making every decision - co-operatives can include people with different roles and smaller working groups, so only decisions that are necessary for the whole group to make get made at that level (and most of these get made at the beginning while the group is still small).

Plus we all hate being told what to do. Especially when we know better than the boss - which we often do, because they're not actually doing our job. Workers in hierarchical businesses tend to lack the incentive to really put all their energy into their work. Co-operateurs don't have this issue because they can design their work the way they feel makes sense and are essentially working for themselves. I'd argue that with the crises we're facing,

we don't have the spare capacity available to allow for bad decisions or people not giving their best.

Also, in terms of efficiency:

- these co-operatives should be constantly monitoring their performance and constantly learning so that they can get better and better at what they do.
- they should open-source everything they learn so that other co-operatives don't need to make the same mistakes and we create a community of practice that learns really fast.
- at least two or three people in each co-operative should prioritise learning to be a good meeting facilitator so that we can minimise wasted time in meetings and make sure we hear from all voices (so we get better decisions and everyone is meaningfully involved).

we should focus on only producing things that people really need, and selling them at affordable prices.

solar ovens and biochar stoves⁴, solar hot water, bicycle powered washing machines and so on. There are a myriad of these kinds of technologies that can be made with locally available materials, often out of waste materials. Where electricity would still be really useful, for example for internet connectivity and machine tools⁵, we can make do with appropriate technology versions of renewable energy.⁶

Tied in with thinking appropriately, I think we should focus on only producing things that people really need, and selling them at affordable prices.

With the worst of the economic crisis still ahead of us, and a long decline following that, it doesn't make any sense to start a cafe for example, even if it is selling all local food. People probably won't be able to afford to go there in the future and it will likely go out of business. We need to focus on food production and appropriate technology and other necessities like medical care.



One of the main reasons a cafe won't work is rent and start-up costs. I also think we need to forget about starting businesses with shopfronts or start-up loans. That may be the way a traditional business works, but that's the past, and traditional businesses just aren't resilient enough. We need businesses that don't require too much money or planning to get started, and that won't fall over when the economy goes downhill. Starting in a backyard⁷, garage, home kitchen or spare room with a small number of people who don't expect to get paid straight away⁸, not paying for advertising and not taking on any loans is the least risky (and therefore also the least stressful) way of starting a business. Most people don't generally believe they've got what it takes to start their own business, but I think if we redefined starting a business to mean providing something simple from home and selling it regularly to people you know, that would change, which would mean we'd get a lot more of the new economy built quicker.

Most of the risk in these kinds of co-operatives would be of a personal or interpersonal kind - mainly burnout and conflicts - so it would be important to put a lot of energy into managing those risks. I'm imagining there being a co-operative support co-operative (that's a pretty boring name, but let's call it CSC for now), which would organise a course for new co-operateurs.

Holistic Management⁹, a very exciting planning and decision-making tool, which came out of Allan Savory's land management work, could be a key way to prevent burnout and conflict. It involves planning what the group aims to achieve, as well as what they want to be like while they're getting there, which enables groups to stop workaholic tendencies and other negative dynamics from getting in the way¹⁰.



The CSC would also help to develop a culture for dealing with interpersonal conflicts. It would be naive to expect for everything to be rosy straight away; that sort of thing will take several generations if it's even possible, so it's best to be prepared. There would be training in good communication, assertiveness and particularly in responding to manipulative tactics. Mediation would be available wherever necessary and each co-operative would have a conflict resolution policy which would allow for the possibility of removing individuals from the group by a decision of the other members if they don't have the interests of the group at heart.

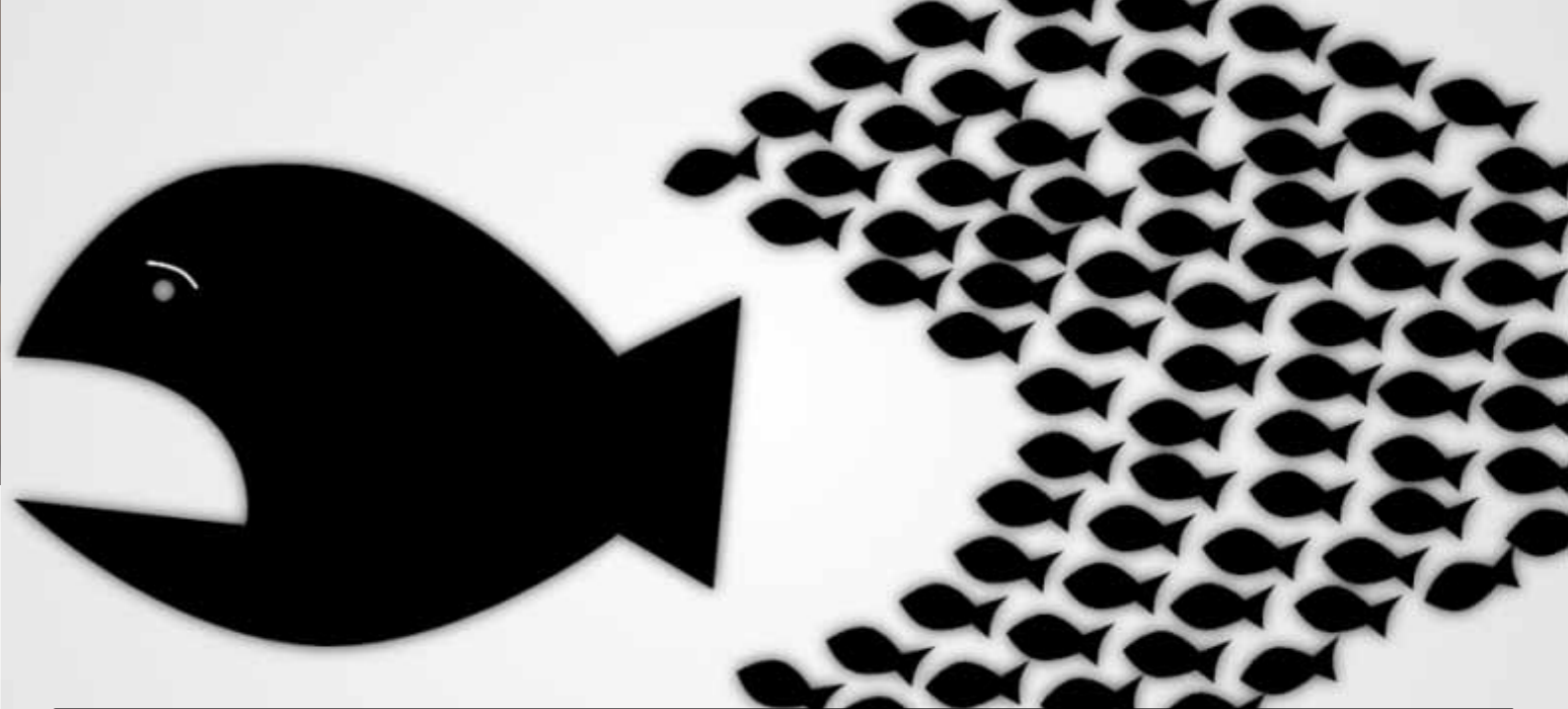
The CSC could provide action-learning based training in managing money, business planning, privilege and oppression awareness, facilitation skills and so on. They could also offer organisational template resources such as a meeting structure, an online communication system, a conflict resolution policy, a decision-making policy, a partnership agreement and more. They would also connect co-operateurs with contacts or mentors who could help with skill development, legal advice and whatever else the co-operatives needed.

RESILIENCE

Our economy is heading for a financial crash of much greater proportions than we've seen so far.³ Resources and energy are already scarce and will become ever scarcer into the future; meanwhile we've damaged our environment so seriously that we can't count on it to continue to provide for us into the future, so it makes sense to design our new systems to be able to withstand shocks of all kinds, and to minimise our destructive environmental impacts. In a nutshell, that means elegant simplicity. The kind of economy we should be aiming for needs to be a lot more basic and grounded than what most of the environmental and transition movement are currently going for.

For instance, I think we need to forget about large scale renewable energy and look at replacing our energy needs with appropriate technologies instead. We can use evaporative coolers (instead of fridges),

The kind of economy we should be aiming for needs to be a lot more basic and grounded than what most of the environmental and transition movement are currently going for.



Additionally they could provide one-on-one coaching and/or action learning sets¹¹ to help people workshop any issues they're having in getting started. So often the things people struggle with in getting businesses started are actually personal issues, such as, 'I need to get other people involved, but I don't know how', tends to actually be a matter of, 'I don't think my idea is good enough', or, 'I'm scared of working with other people', both of which can be reframed.

SOLIDARITY

In my opinion, profit is basically overcharging customers, or underpaying workers or suppliers in order to siphon off money into private hands, contributing to the issues created by inequality.

So just on an ethical/solidarity basis, I only feel comfortable starting not-for-profit enterprises. We can still pay ourselves fair wages and operate in every other way like businesses, we just don't need to set aside profits for anyone. I'd calculate prices by making sure we can pay ourselves a fair wage, cover all other costs and include a 10% or so error margin. Any money left over at the end of the year is either put into expanding the co-operative or donated elsewhere.

Now if we have a network of efficient, resilient, sustainable, solidarity co-operatives, how should they trade? I've always been keen on local currencies, but I've also always seen them as a stepping stone to a time in the distant future where we could hopefully do without money at all and just live in a gift economy, much like Charles Eisenstein advocates. I felt like there wasn't enough trust in our communities for us to get there straight away, so there was no point trying too soon.



profit is basically overcharging customers, or underpaying workers or suppliers in order to siphon off money into private hands, contributing to the issues created by inequality.

However, an exciting conversation with a friend recently got me thinking that if we build it in as expectations within a bounded system, then maybe we could just jump straight to an economy where people work a given amount (unless they have a good reason not to) and are freely given whatever they need that's available. Then, in my research for this article, I read about the self-help co-operative networks that were around in the US during the Great Depression.¹² Just one of them, the Unemployed Co-operative Relief Organisation in Los Angeles, served 150,000 people and operated on the basis that each member would put in two days a week of work, and in exchange could have what they needed from the network – which provided food, medical care, shoes, household repairs, and a whole lot more.

So history shows that it is possible that a large number of people could get involved in a co-operative network or a solidarity economy which didn't use any kind of money, particularly if they could see that it would be a way to actually get their needs met, which they're unable to do in the faltering mainstream economy. Basically I think that if there's a chance of it working out without the need for a stepping stone, then why try the stepping stone option?

As to why I think it would be better to have a solidarity economy than a local currency, it basically comes down to the question of whether we want to put a number value on everything we contribute and on everything we need, and what happens when these don't match up. When we happen to earn more than we need, we might donate some of it to good causes, but we tend to spend most of it on things we don't actually need and create concentrations of wealth that feed inequality. And then

of course there are the people who don't have enough – this is hardly ever a result of choice. It's medical or mental health issues, or straight out lack of opportunities and economic disadvantages due to being part of a marginalised group. Nowadays it's also happening to a lot of people who've just gotten themselves into way too much debt (that was socially acceptable at the time – it kind of made sense if the economy was always going to keep on growing).

The main benefit a local currency would have as opposed to a co-operative solidarity network is that it could cut out a whole lot of talking that we might need to do about who's not contributing enough or taking too much. That one nearly had me back at wanting to create a local currency, but the thing is that all that talking is what we really need to do to get each other to understand that some people actually do have different abilities and some people have different needs. Plus it would mean we would develop the skills required for actually doing that kind of talking, which would be immensely beneficial for our ability to work together and make good decisions as large groups.

Of course where someone was perceived to be 'slacking off' or taking more than they needed, perhaps they'd have a good reason that no one had thought of, only discovered when talked to about it, or perhaps the talking the group would do would create enough peer pressure for the individual to change their behaviour, perhaps some sort of compromise would be agreed to, or if necessary the person could be removed from the group.

WHY GO THAT FAR?

I believe that, if ever, now is the time to try our hardest to transform society into one that makes sense for both people and the planet. We have to build a system that makes sense for people if we expect to be able to work together well enough to fix this ecological and humanitarian shit-storm we've created.

there's no point in not aiming for the sky. If we don't, we end up with half-baked strategies

I know that sounds idealistic, even the idea that we might actually fix things. Of course it is, but there's no point in not aiming for the sky. If we don't, we end up with half-baked strategies

like trying to convince governments to create large scale renewable energy systems, simply because we think it's the most politically viable option, even though it's actually highly unrealistic and wouldn't really solve the ecological crisis at all.¹³ I don't think we've ever had the

kind of chance we've got now to transform the way we do things. Everything is up for grabs, we need a new system, and if we're the ones who are going to build it, why not design our new economy to be something really worth living for and living in?

I don't think we've ever had the kind of chance we've got now to transform the way we do things. Everything is up for grabs, we need a new system, and if we're the ones who are going to build it, why not design our new economy to be something really worth living for and living in?

What I'm proposing has, I think, more of a chance of working than the slightly more conventional local currencies and not quite resilient enough local enterprises. Largely because it's more likely to quickly become something that people can see being able to meet their needs.

of the people who understand collapse and who generally want to do something both ethical and secure with their money. If even 5% of local funds of this kind were donated towards starting something like this, we'd have tens (if not hundreds) of thousands of dollars, which would be more than enough to get started. There's always crowdfunding as well. The incentive for people to donate money to something like this is that for many of us we can't afford to buy land outright, and while renting, most people don't want to invest in water tanks, fruit trees or other infrastructure; so there's not much they can do with their money that will actually bring them a sense of security. While it's a risk of course, I think it's a worthwhile one considering the existence of a solidarity economy like this could offer a real sense of security, especially as it grows.

MAKING IT HAPPEN

So how would we actually make it work? Obviously you'd start with people who really believe in this vision (which would give you time to get the CSC set up and offering all its different trainings and resources concurrently to the first few co-ops getting set up). More mainstream unemployed people would probably only come on board later once the system is shown to be working for people. Almost every conversation I've had about this so far has found people who would love to get involved, so I don't think finding the right people would be a problem.

None of this would take much money to get started. We'd just need tools (many of which we already have) and some supplies to start out with (and many of these could be found for free or cheap). There is actually quite a lot of money spread amongst a small percentage

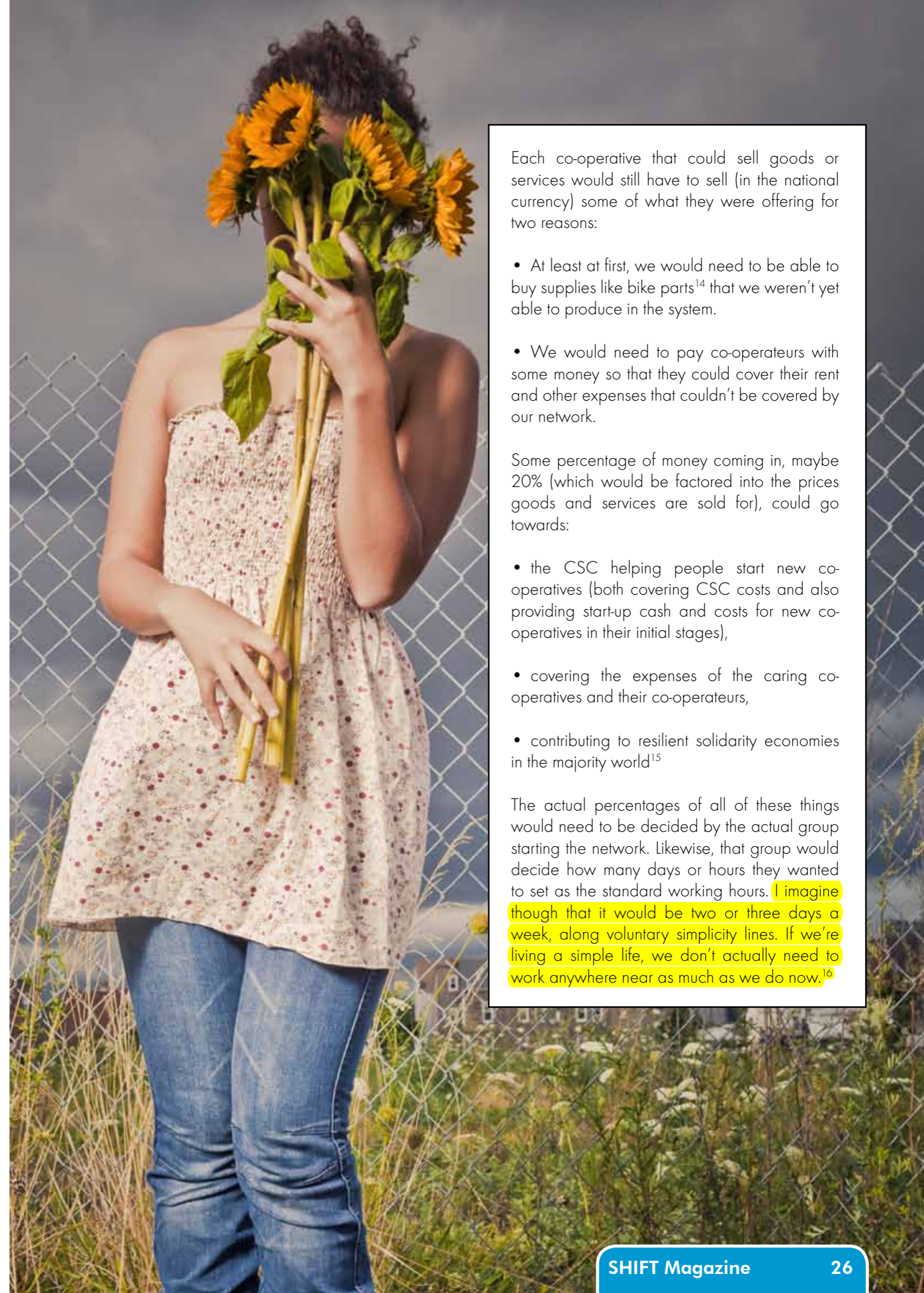
Each co-operative that could sell goods or services would still have to sell (in the national currency) some of what they were offering for two reasons:

- At least at first, we would need to be able to buy supplies like bike parts¹⁴ that we weren't yet able to produce in the system.
- We would need to pay co-operateurs with some money so that they could cover their rent and other expenses that couldn't be covered by our network.

Some percentage of money coming in, maybe 20% (which would be factored into the prices goods and services are sold for), could go towards:

- the CSC helping people start new co-operatives (both covering CSC costs and also providing start-up cash and costs for new co-operatives in their initial stages),
- covering the expenses of the caring co-operatives and their co-operateurs,
- contributing to resilient solidarity economies in the majority world¹⁵

The actual percentages of all of these things would need to be decided by the actual group starting the network. Likewise, that group would decide how many days or hours they wanted to set as the standard working hours. I imagine though that it would be two or three days a week, along voluntary simplicity lines. If we're living a simple life, we don't actually need to work anywhere near as much as we do now.¹⁶



We're in the very beginning stages of getting something like this going here in Melbourne. This week we've got a first meeting with a few interested people to turn a small backyard farming enterprise into a co-operative. **Meanwhile my partner is planning a first meeting to start a soil building co-operative, focusing on composting, biochar and humanure, as well as wanting to work on a co-operative a bit later to build tiny houses (to reduce rent, live more sustainably and obtain housing security).**

Another co-operative I'd love to get going early on would **be an appropriate technology co-op.** It could make biochar stoves, evaporative coolers, and so on for everyone in all of the co-operatives. This would reduce everyone's utility bills, reduce our ecological footprints and make us more resilient all at the same time. Beyond that, perhaps co-operatives specialising in water systems, seedling raising, orchards/food forests, aquaponics, chickens and other animals, baking bread, other food processing, medical care, bike repair, sewing, carpentry, emotional wellbeing, child, elder and disability care, home-cooked social meals, micro-manufacturing, appropriate renewable energy, repairing appliances, making soap and other cleaning products, salvaging the waste of this crazy world we live in, weatherproofing houses, making panniers and bike trailers, and whatever else we think up.

We'll be documenting what we're up to and what we learn at www.doingitourselves.org/co-operatives. Feel free to get in touch through there if you'd like to get involved, either in Melbourne, or by working along similar lines and contributing to our collective learning from wherever you are.

Here's hoping we can build an efficient, resilient, solidarity economy that can meet our needs, help solve the ecological crisis and transform society!

1. I'm not suggesting though, that we outsource everything the way our economy currently encourages us to; we'd still cook, clean, raise our children, emotionally support each other and so on ourselves, probably more than most people do these days. Additionally if we were only working two or three days a week, the culture around work might change as well, such that there would probably be greater equality between men and women of emotional and domestic work being done.

2. Of course sometimes group dynamics can be negative as well; more on this later though.

3. See for example <http://www.feasta.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/Trade-Off1.pdf> and <http://theautomaticearth.blogspot.ca/2011/12/december-5-2011-look-back-look-forward.html>

4. Efficient wood stoves that also make biochar which sequesters carbon and can increase your food production. See link to biochar zine coming soon

5. For example, a fab lab is a set of open source micro-manufacturing fabrication machines that fit in a garage. The inexpensive kind range between \$1500 and \$10,000 and can make almost anything out of metal, plastic or electronics. See for example http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fab_lab More appropriate/old-school versions of machine tools which use mechanical power instead of electricity could also be used. We don't need to go back to the dark ages, but energy and resources wise, we do need to be really picky about what kinds of things it makes sense for us to manufacture.

6. See for example <http://solarflower.org/?lang=en&content=tutorials>

7. Working from home is also a lot more fulfilling and relaxed. Right now as I write I'm continually distracted by short refreshing breaks to watch the chickens, guinea pig and rabbit forage around my partner's backyard.

8. Perhaps they still have part time jobs or government benefits, and have found ways to be happy living on not much money already.

9. See holistic management zine forthcoming

10. For example my holistic management plan insists that I be having fun and be relaxed, whilst also meeting my needs, and positively altering the world as much as I possibly can be

11. Where each person takes a turn to describe an issue they're having and the rest of the group asks them questions (and says nothing other than questions) for forty minutes or so, giving them the chance to figure out the answer for themselves. See http://www.foodsec.org/fileadmin/user_upload/eufao-fsi4dm/docs/PG_ALSets.pdf

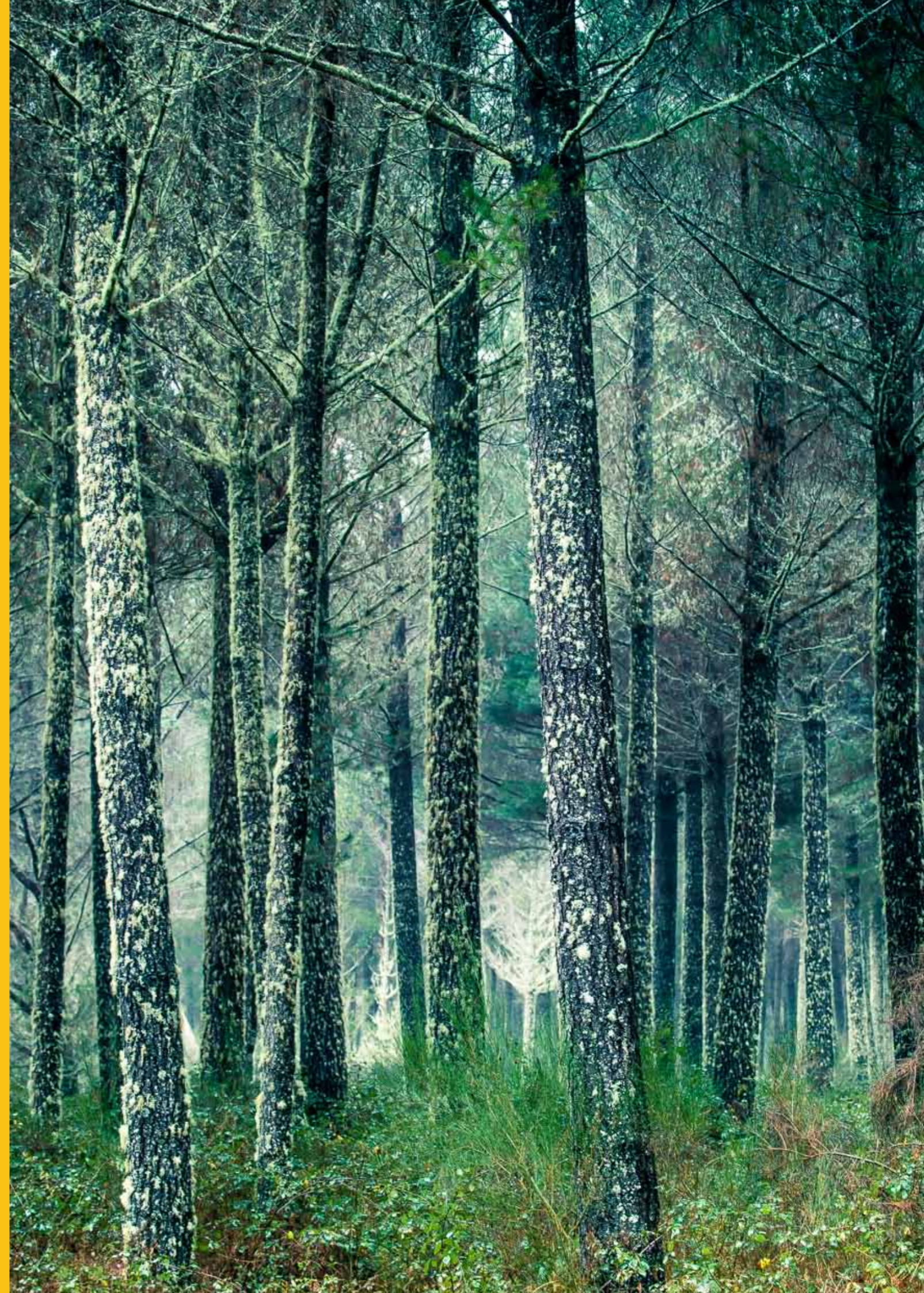
12. See for example <http://www.yesmagazine.org/issues/5000-years-of-empire/entrepreneurs-of-cooperation>

13. See for example <http://www.theautomaticearth.com/renewable-energy-the-vision-and-a-dose-of-reality/> and <http://www.doingitourselves.org/sites/default/files/Why%20Global%20Consumer%20Society%20Can%27%20Fix%20the%20Climate.pdf>

14. Later on the micro-manufacturing co-operative could produce bike parts, irrigation system parts and other supplies like these.

15. This is the best alternative descriptor for 'third world' I've been able to find. See <http://masalai.wordpress.com/2009/02/11/majority-world-a-new-word-for-a-new-age/>

16. See for example <https://socialsciences.arts.unsw.edu.au/tsw/HOWCHEAPLY.htm>





The Bank of Real Solutions

New Zealand has felt the pinch of economic crisis much as other countries have done, and, with necessity the mother of invention, a small group of enterprising Kiwis have invested time in banking some real solutions.

Unlike our dominant financial operating system, the Bank of Real Solutions takes a holistic approach, focusing on economic alternatives that make our households, neighbourhoods, regions – even nations – more resilient, vibrant, healthier, happier, and more connected.

Originating from a proposal at a national Transition Towns forum on Waiheke island in March 2009, the Bank of Real Solutions was brought to life as a collaborative partnership between Transition Towns and the Anew NZ Trust. The core aim of the Bank is to shine a spotlight on already existing working models that are being used to overcome economic, social and environmental challenges.

Unlike our dominant financial operating system, the Bank of Real Solutions takes a holistic approach, focusing on economic alternatives that make our households, neighbourhoods, regions – even nations – more resilient, vibrant, healthier, happier, and more connected.

The Bank of Real Solutions was placed in the context of economic crisis by co-founder Laurence Boomert in his recent appearance on Peak Moment TV! alongside

finance analyst Nicole Foss. In the first part, Boomert highlights some of the Bank's success stories, explaining that "if we didn't have crisis, we wouldn't change", as he details how his home town of Golden Bay made use of alternative currencies to keep educational programs going when these programs faced the chop due to government austerity measures.² Boomert also addresses the question of how to cooperate and build a collaborative culture now – before the going gets really tough.³ Local currencies, barter cards and time banks are presented not only as effective alternatives in the face of financial collapse, but also as a means of empowering enterprise and innovation. Such alternatives

enable people to share space, resources and time, while inspiring outside-the-box collaborations that enhance wellbeing and community connection.

Inspiration is abundant in the success stories of individuals and communities throughout New Zealand whose models are worth emulating. The resilience modeled takes the form of more conservative use of resources, reduction in financial overheads, restoration of ecosystems, job creation, and enhanced self-determination. There is no need to reinvent the wheel with off-the-shelf systems available for plug-and-play in the Bank of Real Solutions. With the trial-and-error stages already dealt with, models exhibited in the Bank of Real Solutions can be learnt from, replicated, and built upon by can-do people with creative determination to overcome their challenges.

With the trial-and-error stages already dealt with, models exhibited in the Bank of Real Solutions can be learnt from, replicated, and built upon by can-do people with creative determination to overcome their challenges.

One great incentive posed by the Bank of Real Solutions is the opportunity for each success story featured on the site to win \$1,000 to help develop their project. Initiatives focused on real solutions are thus rewarded for their efforts in practical ways that enable greater reach and enhance success to help more people.

Is there a Real Solution you think we should know about that you'd like to shine a spotlight on? If so, why not drop us a line and tell us all about it:

contact@sustainabilitysc.org

i To learn more about The Bank of Real Solutions, visit their website at: www.realsolutions.org.nz



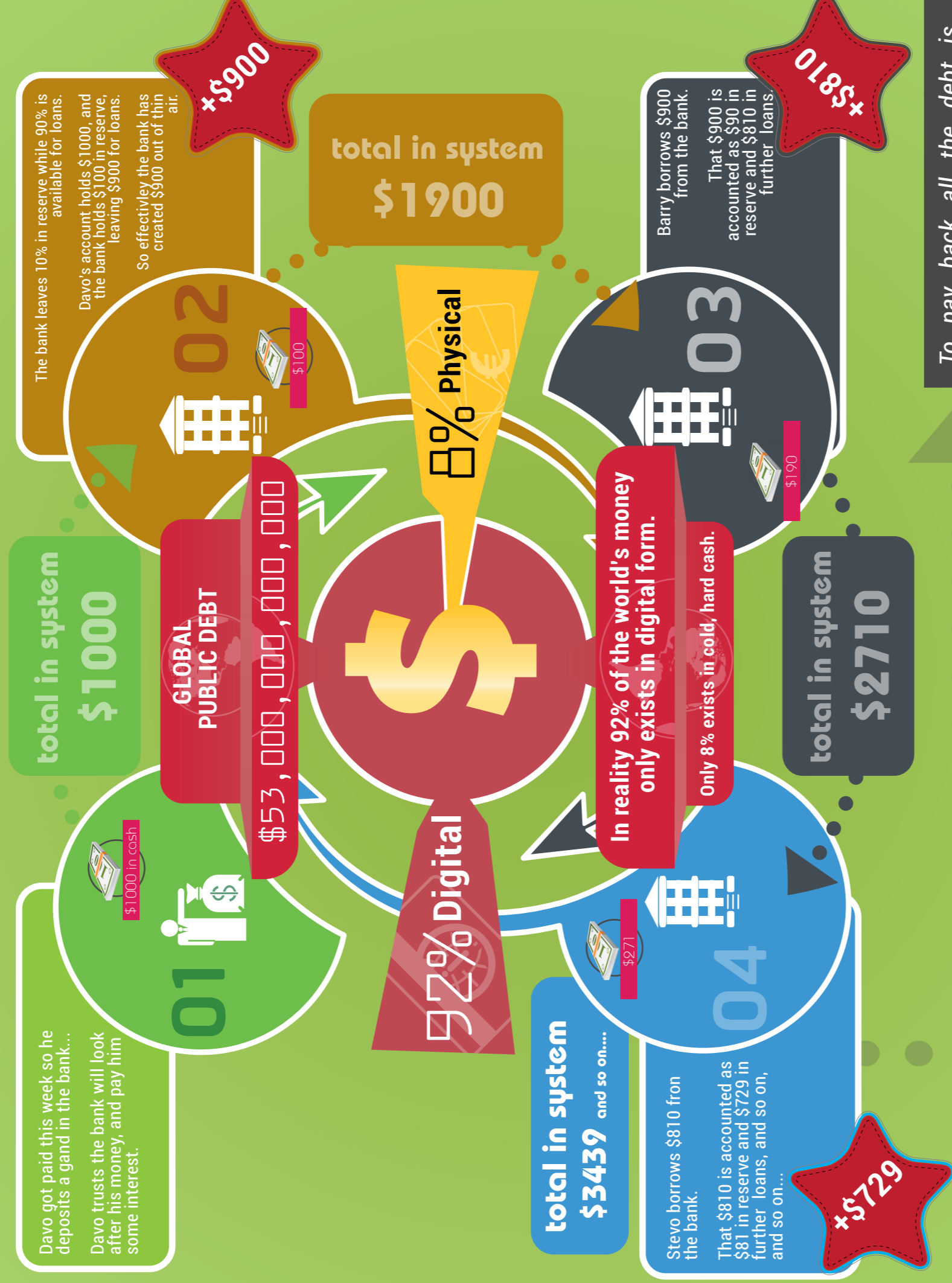
Follow the Money:

Unravelling the Banking System



How does money work?

The fractional Reserve Banking System: a system that creates money out of debt.

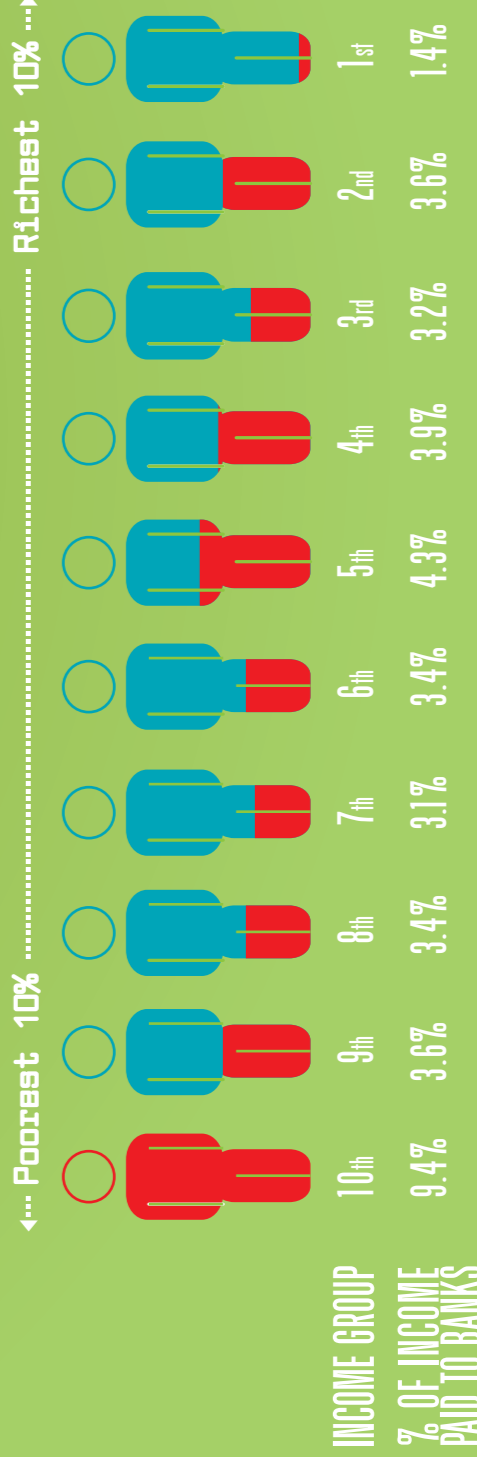


To pay back all the debt is impossible as there is only \$1000 in real money, even though \$3,439 "exists" in the system.

If every depositor tries to withdraw their money the bank cannot pay out. This is called a run on the banks.

Different countries have different legal limits for how much their banks must keep in reserve, ranging from as much as 10% to as little as 3% (US and UK). Australia has no reserve limit.

How does it affect people?



REFERENCES

www.money.howstuffworks.com/how-much-money-is-in-the-world.htm | www.economist.com/content/global_debt_clock | bit.ly/Oa7e4i
 www.moneysmart.gov.au/borrowing-and-credit/credit-cards/credit-card-debt-clock | mmtwiki.org/forums-topic/what-happens-when-loans-are-repaid/
 www.positivemoney.org | http://money.howstuffworks.com/currency6.htm

A COMPLEX PREDICAMENT

How Our Energy, Economic and Ecological Systems are Connected:

Should We Try to Precipitate Economic Collapse to Mitigate Runaway Climate Change?

PART TWO:

The Economic Predicament

By Dave Pollard



This is the second of three articles on understanding complexity, and how positive feedback loops are leading inexorably to civilization's collapse – and what we can and can't do about it. In Part One I looked at our global energy and resource systems, and the complex relationship between resource prices, regulation, exploration, supply and demand, and how they are pushing us towards disastrous resource exhaustion.¹

In Part Two, I look at the complexities of our global economic systems, and explore whether, although it won't 'save' civilization, the dismantling or crumbling of our current industrial growth economy, sooner rather than later, might lessen the hardship and suffering of the collapse we and our descendants are likely to face.

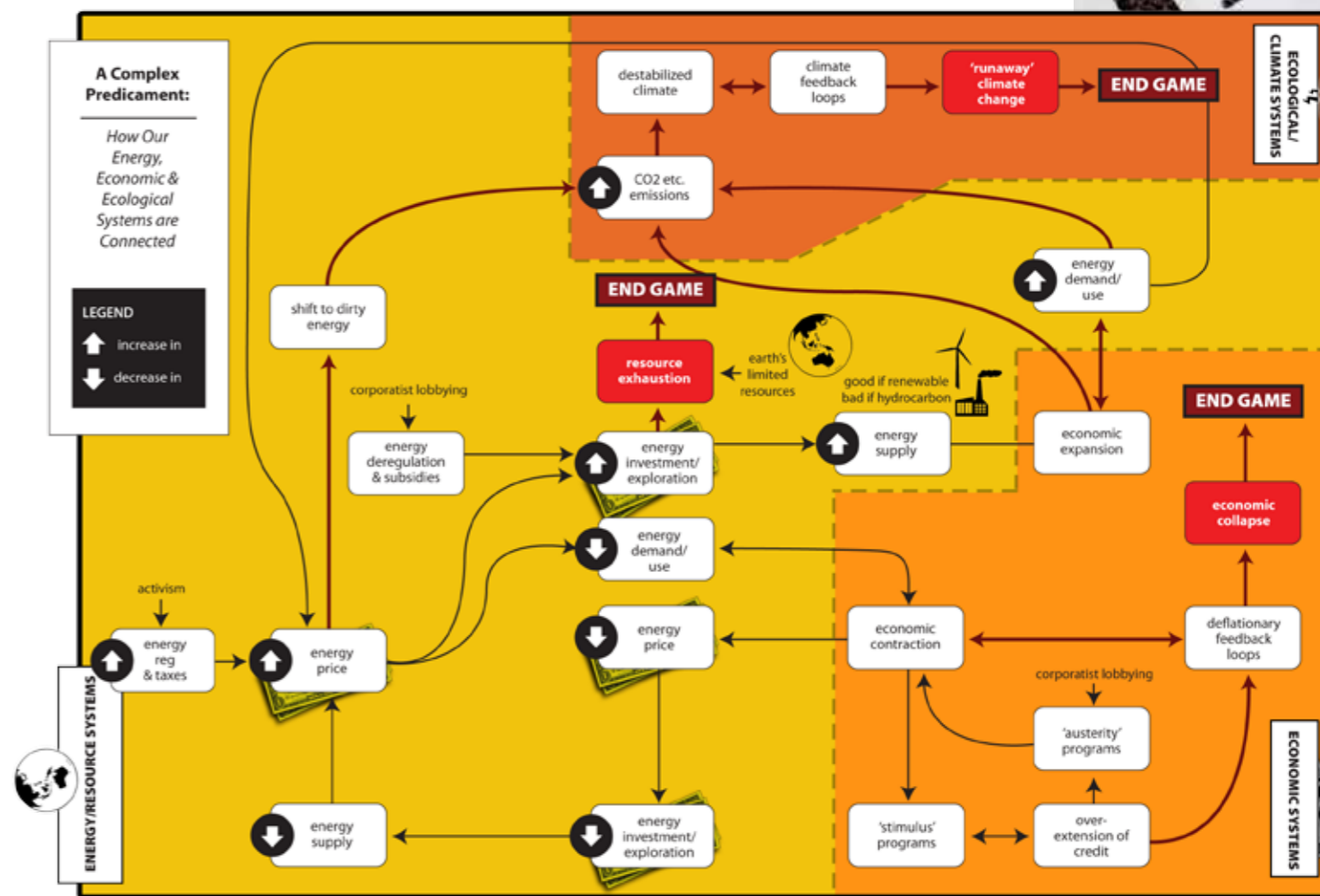
David Holmgren, one of the founders of the Permaculture Movement, recently stirred up a firestorm of controversy with his *Crash on Demand* essay², suggesting that it would be useful for us to precipitate economic collapse as a means of mitigating both energy/resource exhaustion and runaway climate change. He summarizes:

My argument is essentially that radical, but achievable behaviour change from [being] dependent consumers to [becoming] self-reliant producers (by some relatively small minority of the global middle class) has a chance of stopping the juggernaut of consumer capitalism from driving the world over the climate change cliff. It may be a slim chance, but a better bet than current herculean efforts to get the elites to pull the right policy levers... My argument suggests this could happen by reducing capital enough to trigger a crash of the fragile global financial system.

This insight shows David's appreciation of the nature of complex systems and the interrelationship between our

global energy/resource, economic and ecological/ climate systems.

The chart below, reproduced from Part One of this series, illustrates the main components of the global economic system and its connection to the other two systems.



As the chart shows, economic expansion is dependent on energy/resource supply, which is itself a function of the price, demand, investment and regulation variables I described in Part One, and in any case is not endlessly sustainable even if the economy is able to support higher and higher extraction and development costs. A significant drop in energy/resource demand and use will precipitate a strong economic contraction (which has happened each time energy costs have moved significantly above the \$100/bbl level).

But an even greater threat to the continuation of our current “grow or collapse” economy is the realization that current levels of debt in our economy are unsustainable. When that realization becomes impossible for markets to ignore, we will face the greatest depression in human history; no amount of ‘stimulus’ will be able to mitigate it, and there is no deus ex machina like war spending or the discovery of new cheap resources to get us out of it. More about that scenario, which even many economists can’t seem to comprehend, later in this article.

Back to David Holmgren’s proposal: The reactions to his article have been swift and sometimes harsh. Transition founder Rob Hopkins called David’s suggestions “a dangerous route to go down”³. Rob remains firmly in denial about the inevitability of collapse, citing several optimistic ‘prosperity-without-growth’ economists in support of his belief that a concerted global effort by a broad coalition of knowledgeable, influential people can pull us out of the positive feedback loops currently leading us towards economic collapse (and indeed, End Games in all three major systems). I’ll look at that argument later in this article as well.

Dmitry Orlov essentially dismissed David’s argument as being inadequate to the task⁴, but said that despite its futility, “Don’t let that stop you from trying because, regardless of results (if any) it’s a good thing to be trying to do.”

Nicole Foss, who David acknowledges as one of his influences, takes the opposite point of view to Rob’s. She has repeatedly argued that economic collapse will come soon in any case, with or without our attempts to undermine the current economic system (or for that matter, prolong it). She writes:

In fact, some US states are already dealing with large-scale abandonment of quickly-exhausted fracking sites (with their commensurate ecological damage), and Shell recently announced it is abandoning its Arctic

drilling programs because they are not economic, even at today’s \$100+/bbl oil prices.

Nicole’s concern about David’s approach is that, since economic collapse is (she believes) inevitable and reasonably imminent anyway, taking an activist approach to opting out of the dominant economic system in order to accelerate that collapse runs the risk of stirring up virulent opposition from the rich and powerful, who could then demonize the entire transition/collapse preparation movement as anti-human, and ultimately shift the blame for the suffering that collapse will inevitably bring about to the “anti-growth” activists. She writes: “Inviting blame for an inevitable outcome seems somewhat reckless given the likelihood that many will be casting about for scapegoats.”

It is hard to explain why the Ponzi scheme that is our modern growth-dependent industrial economic system is unsustainable. It’s all really about faith in the value of money. And on the surface it seems to be holding: Governments and corporations, working together, have been able to suppress interest rates to near-zero levels for more than a decade now.

Once the financial system has the accident that is clearly coming, we will be looking at a substantial fall in societal complexity, but that fall in complexity will eliminate the possibility of engaging in such highly complex activities as fracking, horizontal drilling, exploiting the deep offshore or producing solar photovoltaic panels and inverters...

The banks and institutional investors don’t need high interest rates when they can make greater profits through a combination of high user fees, arbitrage, hedged speculation, the sale of high-risk bundled ‘investments’ to unwary investors, usurious credit card and poor-credit interest rates, and foreclosures – and be bailed out by their government friends with taxpayer money when their investments go bad. They also lie about real rates of inflation and unemployment⁶ to suppress citizen dissatisfaction about the true state of the economy.

The Australian group, Doing It Ourselves, have put together a terrific 12-minute explanation⁷ of why and how our economic system is dependent on perpetually-accelerating growth and commensurate levels of debt –

and on our faith that this is possible. That growth cannot continue because the remaining energy and resource supplies of our planet are becoming exponentially more expensive, and because the current staggering levels of debt – government, corporate, mortgages and other personal debt – can only be repaid as long as land and other prices keep going up, and incomes and borrowing capacity combined keeps rising to make the payments on those debts possible (and as long as interest rates remain very low). When this capacity peaks – and Nicole Foss and her Automatic Earth colleagues have eloquently argued it already has – buying freezes up, housing and investment values commensurately tumble, lost collateral means a plunge in available credit and

an explosion of foreclosures, margin calls and debt repayment demands, falling sales, layoffs, and defaults, to the point that a positive-feedback-loop – a chronic deflationary spiral – kicks in. Japan has been suffering from this for two decades, and most Western nations are poised for a similar collapse – starting with the current fall into poverty of most of the middle class.

To get an idea of what this means, consider that the median household net worth in real currency in most Western nations is not significantly different from what it was in the 1940s, before the Ponzi scheme and the era of cheap money began – that is, a net worth essentially not much more than zero. All of the increase in apparent affluence – owning instead of renting, much larger average homes, two cars per family, more expensive ‘average’ cars, more clothes, more energy use, more stuff of every kind – has been borrowed, in the expectation that all these debts can and will be repaid. How? By whom? We dare not ask, because the answer is, nobody knows. We just keep hoping against hope that growth can continue forever, real incomes will rise, more efficiency will keep prices down and profits rising, more cheap energy will be found, our pension investments will keep rising in value, and someone will be willing to offer us more for our home than we paid for it, so we have more collateral to borrow even more against.

The Great Depression and the Recession of 2008 are just two indications of what happens when we realize this is not sustainable.

Advocates of “austerity” claim that theirs is a response to this unsustainability. But history has shown that austerity programs simply precipitate collapse faster, and place the entire burden for it on the poor, disadvantaged, ill and unemployed. That’s why progressives keep arguing for “stimulus” programs that crank up the illusory growth machine even more. But when the stimulus amounts to just printing of more money, most of which ends up in the pockets of the bankers and the already-rich, it is just an acceleration of the unsustainable, and will inevitably

lead to even more spectacular collapse and greater suffering for all.

A number of “third options” to prevent economic collapse have been proffered. A transition to a steady-state economy, coupled with a large-scale re-localization to a world of more self-sufficient communities producing more

themselves, living within their means, and hence more resilient to collapse, is the most popular of these options. If our economic system were not global, and was simple, with a few people controlling the whole economy, this might be feasible. But we live in a staggeringly complex, global economic system with no one in control, not even in individual countries with autocratic regimes. The “market” determines and affects our economic actions, and it is the product of all of our activities, and cannot be stewarded to some idealistic, better economic reality, even if we could agree on what that would look like. Billions of people in struggling nations want an economic life like that of the wealthy in Western nations, and they will act in accordance with that desire, regardless of what we, or their governments, seek to impose on them.

It is our nature to attend to the needs of the moment, to seek short-term betterment for ourselves and those we love, and to hope that future generations will be able to do likewise, even when faced with growing evidence that they will not.

The question of whether or not to try to precipitate economic collapse before it happens anyway, can only be answered in the context of your own personal (who you think you are) and cultural (who you think we are) narrative.

Top-down reform of our economic system cannot succeed for the same reason top-down climate change prevention has not and will not succeed. No one is in control of large complex global systems. It is not the evil rich or evil corporations driving us to collapse. It is the ever-evolving systems in which we all participate and which no one influences enough to change direction in any coherent and sustained way that determine our trajectory to collapse. We want someone to blame, and even argue that “we are the system”, and we are all to blame, but we are not. The system will take its own course, as it always has. And all signs are that the courses our energy/resource, economic and ecological/climate systems are on, lead in each case to an End Game.

The economic collapse End Game has been vividly portrayed by Nicole in a ghastly list of “40 Ways to Lose Your Future”⁸. No surprise that we don’t want to believe such collapse is now inevitable.

So back to the question that David Holmgren raises – about whether precipitating such a collapse before it happens anyway is (a) possible and (b) a good idea. I think it would be fair to say that David says ‘yes’ to both, Rob says ‘no’ to (b) and is afraid the answer is ‘yes’ to (a). Dmitry says ‘no’ to (a) but ‘yes’ to (b) anyway. And Nicole says ‘not really’ to (a) and hence ‘no’ to (b). I’d love to know what Charles Eisenstein would say. I suspect he’d agree with Eric Lindberg, who in a new article on the Historical Problem of Agency draws brilliantly on historical examples and the evolving narrative of human agency to these very tentative, thoughtful and honest conclusions:



What little agency humans might have [in complex systems] can only be achieved by understanding the underlying logic of history and by accepting the limits that logic imposes. When we realize this, we want try to grow the economy, develop the developing world, depend on genetically modified seeds and chemical fertilizers, look for a new source of fuel on Mars, and so on. Instead we will accept the coming contractions and adapt to them as best we can. Rob Hopkins is one of my heroes, but I read his response to Holmgren as a rather desperate attempt to maintain a course set by a narrative that is crumbling beneath us [as the runaway climate change narrative is eclipsing Transitions peak oil narrative]

Many of us understand the perils of revolution and violence, the simple fact that it has so infrequently worked. We understand, moreover, that the collapse of global economies, of civil society creates its own predictable violence. We understand that the result and consequences of any action that pursues radical, human designed change is neither controllable nor predictable. But at the same time, refraining from radical, potentially destructive, action is also a choice whose results are unpredictable and almost certainly dire. The stakes are as yet beyond comprehension. The question is no longer whether we can make history as we please, but whether history itself will continue to exist. ?



David Holmgren

Is precipitating a collapse before it happens is (A) possible and (B) a good idea?

(A) - YES

(B) - YES

Nicole Foss

Is precipitating a collapse before it happens is (A) possible and (B) a good idea?

(A) - NOT REALLY

(B) - NO



Dmitry Orlov

Is precipitating a collapse before it happens is (A) possible and (B) a good idea?

(A) - NO

(B) - YES

Rob Hopkins

Is precipitating a collapse before it happens is (A) possible and (B) a good idea?

(A) - YES

(B) - NO



Eric concludes with a call for patience and tolerance and dialogue, and I think that’s a very sensible response to trying to cope with three intertwined complex global systems, all overextended to the breaking point and heading in disturbing directions very quickly. The economic system is the only one we may be able to intervene in (lunatic plans for geoengineering to prevent climate change aside), and the result of any intervention in our economic systems is doubtful and probably unpredictable. We can act, or we can, as Eric says, just accept what comes and adapt to it as best we can. The question of whether or not to try to precipitate economic collapse before it happens anyway, can only be answered in the context of your own personal (who you think you are) and cultural (who you think we are) narrative.

For many, the answer may depend on what we learn, in the coming months and years, about the accelerating melting of our planet’s polar regions, and the trajectory of runaway climate change. That’s the subject of Part Three of this series, in the next edition of SHIFT. I’ll explain how our biosphere is yet another complex system, look at some of the latest scenarios, and try to paint a picture of a future world as much warmer than our planet is today as it was colder at the coldest point in the Ice Ages of Earth’s recent past. And I’ll try to help you imagine the amazing, joyful future that is possible for the planet’s remaining humans a few millennia (not a long time, really) from now.

TPP

Trans Pacific Partnership Agreement: A THREAT TO DEMOCRACY, SOCIETY AND THE ENVIRONMENT

TPP TIMELINE

- 1995-1998: Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI) tried to limit national government controls over foreign corporations
- 1999-2003: World Trade Organisation (WTO) tried to do the same
- 1998-2003 Community opposition stopped these proposals
- 2005: Brunei, Chile, New Zealand and Singapore signed the Trans-Pacific Strategic Economic Partnership Agreement (stage 1 of the TPP)
- 2008: US, Australia, Vietnam and Peru joined TPP negotiations
- 2010-13: Malaysia, Canada, Mexico and Japan joined negotiations
- 2013-14: various TPP documents leaked; opposition to TPP grows
- Feb 2014: TPP negotiations continuing

Under the guise of a proposed international trade deal called the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) Agreement, foreign corporations could soon threaten the right of national governments to make their own laws. Australia is a member of the 12 country TPP negotiating group where national sovereignty over issues like working conditions, food labelling, healthcare and environmental protection could be exchanged for the promise of better access to overseas markets.

TPP negotiations are being held in secret, but leaked documents have revealed some of the alarming ambitions of the corporations.

TPP is anti-democratic

The TPP proposes to give foreign investors the right to sue governments for loss of potential future earnings due to government decisions (investor-state dispute settlement, or ISDS). **An unaccountable international tribunal would rule on these disputes, but would be obliged to give priority to investor interests over national priorities.**

Australia has previously resisted the ISDS proposals in the TPP negotiations, but there are now signs the current government will not be so protective of Australia's independence.

We're already seeing evidence of how the ISDS could operate. Through provisions in the 1993 Australia-Hong Kong trade agreement, tobacco giant Phillip Morris Asia is suing the Australian government over the cigarette plain packaging laws introduced in 2012. **ISDS provisions in the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) have allowed the US oil and gas corporation Lone Pine to sue the Quebec provincial government for \$250 million after the government halted shale gas production pending further environmental studies.**

TPP is the MAI reincarnated

The TPP is the latest chapter in the corporations' push to bypass national regulations. Beginning with the MAI in 1995, there has been almost continuous pressure to water down national regulations (see timeline).

After the MAI and similar proposals in the World Trade Organisation's 'Millennium Round' of negotiations were rejected following widespread NGO campaigns, the corporations began to focus on the TPP.

TPP is a risk to social and environmental standards

As well as being a threat to democracy, the TPP is potentially a danger to public health, workers' conditions, local media content, food labelling and pollution standards. Particularly worrying for Australia is the threat to the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (the PBS), which subsidises medicines. **Foreign corporations could challenge the PBS**, with the result that medicines

become more expensive. Our relatively strict food labelling laws could also be swept away, leaving us exposed to low quality imports. It is also likely GMO ingredients in foods would not have to be labelled.

Government regulation of coal seam gas could also be challenged under the ISDS provisions of the TPP.

What's behind the TPP?

Apart from a grab for more corporate power, the TPP is part of the larger neoliberal (economic rationalist) free trade agenda. The economic argument is that trade increases global economic output because each country focuses on what it's best at producing. **Specialisation and the resulting economies of scale increase global capacity to produce goods and services.**

This narrow economic growth idea of 'progress' ignores the downsides of free trade and globalisation – loss of cultural diversity, rich countries dominating the terms of trade, unequal in-country distribution of any benefits accruing to developing countries, and loss of social capital and resilience. **Arguably, lightly regulated international trade is a disguised form of colonialism** exploiting the cheaper labour of the Third World, and impoverishing First World workers at the same time.

What can we do?

It's not too late to add your voice to those opposing the TPP. Growing opposition in the US Congress is an indication that the tide is turning against the TPP.

What we can do:

- Find out more – see Resources below
- Support the Australian Fair Trade and Investment Network's campaign (first link below)
- **Write a (paper) letter to your Federal elected representatives (this is much more likely to get his/her attention than an email)**
- Write to your local media
- Call talk-back radio and get your voice heard

***FURTHER RESOURCES** > pg61

VOICE OF A GENERATION

By
Miss
Metanoia

one rarely disputed truth millennials have in common is we will likely end up inheriting a world which is far more geopolitically volatile, ecocidal and impoverished than our predecessors might have dared to imagine.

I'm reaching that daunting point in life where I have to start planning a career path in order to be taken seriously as a young adult. **Despite my personal view that careers are an artificial construct of economic conscription, rather than an inspiring signifier of moral prosperity,** I'm anxiously adapting to a cutthroat culture of meritocratic musical chairs in a highly convincing game of class conscious monopoly. I wish my words were enough to seal that next paycheck, to keep a roof over my head, to prove I'm worthy and human enough to earn a humble living among the towering chess pieces of industrial civilisation. Instead I find myself playing dead on desks with my Bachelor of Adulthood; stuttering clumsily through interviews and panicking at performance reviews. My dreams are carefully nested within a usufruct matrix of violent financial roulette, among the mere paper shuffling of entire empires, vulnerable communities and ecosystems. I am a second generation survivor of history's war-torn Vietnamese arms race, a potential future climate refugee, a disposable human resource sheltering from the blow of imminent collapse; one of the lucky ones like you, at least for now.

I don't claim to speak on behalf of my generation, but one rarely disputed truth millennials have in common is we will likely end up inheriting a world which is far more geopolitically volatile, ecocidal and impoverished than our predecessors might have dared to imagine.

Evidence shows that young people are hit hardest during a recession, and a survey of my millennial peers reveals that, despite our differing positions on the political compass, I'm not alone in feeling the overwhelming crunch of an insecure, uncertain future.¹

Chelsea*, 25, believes young people today have been sold lies and raised on platitudes about the world being their oyster – that they can accomplish anything they want if they simply work hard enough and follow their dreams:

“While unemployed for 2 years, I have \$150,000 in student loan debt after receiving a first rate post graduate education with the promise of a brighter future.”

Ryan*, 22, a public relations student at Swinburne University, is also worried about rising costs of living and making ends meet while trapped in an inevitable debt spiral:

“The concern that even after I finish my degree, the ability to find a job worthwhile enough to be able to support me and pay off my debts is becoming more and more alarming. Instead of being able to save for my future or even for a car, I am having to live pay check by pay check, and, when not working, I have to deal with surviving on the bare minimum. As a university student, the growing economic problems facing me relate to my inability to both study and hold a part-time job sufficient enough to allow me to live outside of home. The need for independence is what everyone in their early twenties wants, but because of the rise in basic utilities, transport, groceries and rent, it’s becoming harder and harder to reach.”



64.7% of young Australians are anxious about lack of financial security, while feeling the strain of being poor in a wealthy country.

According to the 2013 Pedestrian Youth Research Report, which surveyed over 2000 respondents aged 18-29, 64.7% of young Australians are anxious about lack of financial security, while feeling the strain of being poor in a wealthy country.

98.8% of us want to pursue work we’re passionate about, but 64.4% are concerned that the number of job seekers will continue to outnumber meaningful employment opportunities.² With the youth unemployment rate reaching crisis levels of up to 20% in some parts of the country³, Sarah*, 21, who is studying pharmacy at Sydney University



thinks we have a right to be concerned:

“In terms of job prospects after uni, I’m not holding out on too much hope. I know it’s fierce competition, and most likely the best of the best will be on top (with a dash of very good luck). But, after all, there are still people getting work that aren’t that great too, so I just need to work from the bottom and keep climbing.”

Unsurprisingly, university students face three times the stress levels of the general population, with a fifth developing serious mental illness, according to a 2010 report.⁴ The pressure to become financially independent without clear, definite transition pathways between study and stable employment is especially alienating to young people who lack social support and experience when they graduate,

“It’s difficult to try and make new connections that can help in the future with job recommendations and advice, so right now I know it’s going to be a tough ride.”

Amir*, 28, works in the community services industry and stresses that, with limited support, young people face the difficulty of needing to either settle or hustle in pursuit of social mobility and strangled ambition:

“Employers can be ruthless when profitably incentivised to downsize job security and avoid paying new recruits appropriate wages. In my experience working with youth at the PCYC, young people do not have the skills or tools to proactively seek work and opportunities. Nowadays youth have to use their initiative and be a little bit creative.”

Competing in an unstable job market means many twenty-somethings have to work an average of seven jobs before securing an established career.

Competing in an unstable job market means many twenty-somethings have to work an average of seven jobs before securing an established career.



It means fewer entry-level positions, while more advanced training and education is required to adapt to an information-based economy. Psychologists have even coined a new developmental phase, "emerging adulthood" to characterise the reinvention, or delaying, of traditional milestones driven by cultural and economic pressures, such as graduating, moving out, gaining financial independence, marriage, and starting a family.⁵



So it turns out they wanted someone that could also do their accounting...

But honey, you applied for a graphic design position...

Exactly...

Australia's inflating property bubble has estranged a generation of prospective homebuyers into lifelong renters, with 68.2% believing they will never be able to afford a mortgage while independently supporting themselves.

Australia's inflating property bubble has estranged a generation of prospective homebuyers into lifelong renters, with 68.2% believing they will never be able to afford a mortgage while independently supporting themselves.

Danielle*, 26, a graphic designer working from home, has dealt with difficult tenancy arrangements while struggling to maintain a consistent income that pays the bills and suits her temperament:

"I've witnessed some people rent out their living rooms or keep several people to one room, just to pay property costs. My roommate was so concerned about paying the rent she let a random guy stay in our empty room without much background checking. Right now, I get most concerned about the instability of a weekly income. Since moving out of home I've found it difficult to get hold of a stable income, relying upon transient contracts and some savings to pay bills."

To get an idea of how disproportionate Australia's salary-to-property ratio is, the average Aussie earned \$28,000 per year in 1990 with a \$71,000 mortgage. While middle

class families today earn \$44,000 more per year, Australian property prices have risen to be among the world's highest, with houses and apartments in Sydney averaging between \$475,300-\$656,400 (Source: Cosmopolitan magazine August 2013, "So You Want to Buy A House?"). Progressive thinking twenty-somethings are inevitably prompted to question the dominant live-to-work mentality of owning a bigger house, car, baby stroller, etc. at 4.9% interest, quitting the cult of status anxiety and affluenza in favour of simpler, more meaningful lives.

The students I spoke to emphasised the need for practical quick-fix solutions to alleviate immediate economic pressures before feeling hopeful enough to propose potential systemic changes. The fact that debt, unemployment, cost of living, and inequality are such central concerns to young people reflects the brutal reality that our right to survival is coercively conditional.

A subsidised universal basics discount card could complement government Newstart, Youth allowance and rent assistance packages, suggests Andreas*, 27. Most students reject the entitled Gen Y stereotype, and abide by the assumption that if they want a highly comfortable, luxurious lifestyle, they're going to have to work for it.

"Convention has it that you have to work 9-5, Monday to Friday, to afford the bills and some extras on the side. However, if you're averse to that lifestyle, paying the bills doesn't come easy."

Young people aren't pushing for more generous cash handouts so they can spend recklessly on anything they want. Rather, they're requesting sponsored discounts from the big guys who can afford it on a range of basic necessities, such as food, electricity, internet, textbooks, and potentially free access to public transport to help them transition toward greater independence.

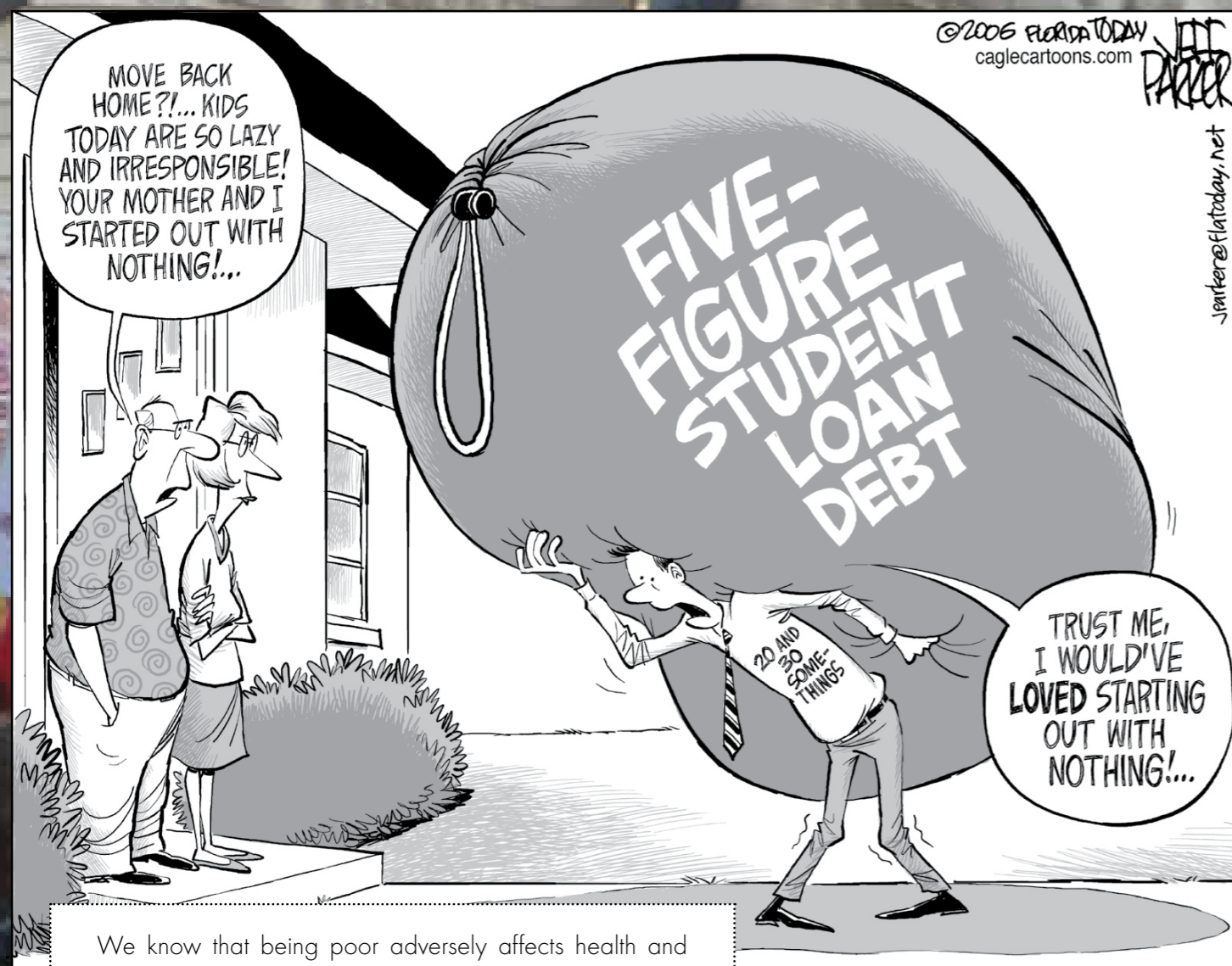


The fact that debt, unemployment, cost of living, and inequality are such central concerns to young people reflects the brutal reality that our right to survival is coercively conditional.



Just bought our first home!!! Found an amazing affordable converted shipping container right in our price range!

It's such a new up and coming area, there are barely any roads! Plus it's only 3 hours from the city, what a deal!!!



We know that being poor adversely affects health and lifestyle choices, while the fast food and liquor industries continue to target their marketing predominantly at young people.

"Encouraging supermarkets to endorse generous student discounts may incentivise young people to start cooking for themselves, which works out to be much cheaper and healthier than blowing \$150 a week on takeaway."

says 24 year old nutrition student, Kelsey*. Alleviating the stress of mundane financial burdens will enable young people to save up and plan for their futures more holistically, freeing up time to devote to things that really matter to them, such as travel, health and fitness, personal growth, and relationships.

"It can initially be tricky to balance being financially independent and having free time – it's one or the other for most people, but I think it's possible, in time, to have both."

If we've learned anything from past student protest movements – the London student riots being a prime example – it's that elected leaders aren't very good at empathising with the needs of young people.

In order for millennials to feel more confident about their future, perhaps governments need to reassess their priorities, and start valuing Gross National Wellbeing (GNW) as an indicator of economic prosperity above GDP alone. If we've learned anything from past student protest movements – the London student riots being a prime example – it's that elected leaders aren't very good at empathising with the needs of young people.

We should be able to vote directly on issues affecting us, such as education cuts and climate change, which 82.2% of surveyed respondents believe demands stronger action. Policymakers can only help young people succeed if they recognise the complexity of emerging adulthood as an integral life stage; filled not just with financial challenges, but ethical dilemmas, identity exploration, existential wanderlust, and an opportunistic sense of being "in between" liminal possibilities.

**All names have been changed to protect the privacy of interviewees in this article.*

THE HUMAN RACE

Birth, School, Work, Death

By Sean Crawley

"There is no greater modern illusion, even fraud, than the use of the single term "work" to cover what for some is ... dreary, painful, socially demeaning and what for others is enjoyable, socially reputable and economically rewarding"

JK Galbraith

In good faith, many of us accept the conventional wisdoms of our times and get on with life according to the scripts already written for us by society. Parents, schools and workplaces enculturate us to believe that being a member of a modern progressive liberal society is a blessing that we should be grateful for. Respect for the traditions of family, education and work is expected and if one does adhere to the rules a rewarding and comfortable life is the widely advertised outcome. Governments and business promote a strong narrative that the current versions of democracy and capitalism are the essential (and only viable) foundations that guarantee the peace, freedom, equal opportunity and material standards that humankind deserves. The implication is that, without the business as usual model,

citizens of the modern world, with tacit consent, have no option but to get on the economic treadmill and follow the simple script of birth, school, work and death.

where governments – under the guise of protecting an individual's basic human rights – allow the unfettered and unlimited accumulation of private wealth to continue unabated, we would all likely descend into some sort of pre-Renaissance and Enlightenment chaos.

Consequently citizens of the modern world, with tacit consent, have no option but to get on the economic treadmill and follow the simple script of birth, school, work and death.

The dream, promised by the western world's doctrine of progress, which promises abundance for all, and increased leisure time (yes you can stop laughing now), is vanishing in front of our closed eyes.

The party is over and all that's left is a nasty hangover and a lot of rubbish to deal with. The privileged few who got in early, and who have benefited from the obscene flow of wealth their way, may still be enjoying the twilight hours of materialism, but even they are waking up at night with fear in their own stomachs as the discontent amongst the financially indebted working class who have realised that their mindless participation on the employment/consumption treadmill is what is really driving the aging and tired economic beast.

BIRTH

An increasing number of parents are starting to "educate" their unborn children in an attempt to give them the very best start in life. The frequent and disturbing vision of three year old violin virtuosos and other pre-schoolers that have been trained by hyped-up parents to perform feats of intelligence and skill is bad enough; now it seems that the peace and solitude of our very first moments of life are being interrupted, in utero, by ambitious parents determined to give their children a better life than the rest of the teeming mass of humanity that they are being born into.

It's likely too that these very same parents have already decided upon, and wrangled their way onto the waiting lists of, the very best schooling options for their progeny. This can, and is, argued by many as a pragmatic strategy, as the truth that their child will need every last qualification on offer to secure a decent paying career is hard to refute. In a world where literally everything has a price tag is this not the best way to play the game?

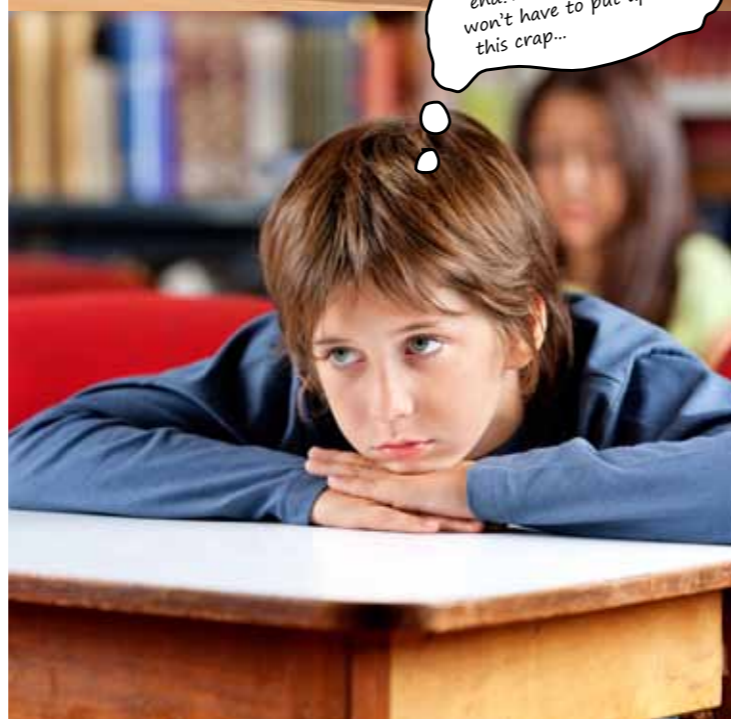
Gestation has now, along with the other stages of childhood and adolescence, been hijacked as valuable time for moulding the next generation. The days of a cosy, warm and quiet womb to develop some of your

finishing touches as a human being are well and truly over. We are observing and measuring their every parameter and behaviour so we can design programs of development under the pretence that without exploiting every last opportunity for our unborn children they will be disadvantaged in the human race to get ahead of the pack. To leave them be and just be embryos is deemed as unacceptable, even irresponsible, now that leaving children alone to be just children is a long-forgotten figment of the past.

The whole practice of preparing the next generation to be smarter, faster and harder than their ancestors so they can enter the workforce to pay for an existence in a world where everything has a market value is a crime for which humanity is yet to be judged.

Check out www.babyplus.com if you want to learn more or, should I say, if you want your unborn baby to learn more. As one of the so-called experts, Brent Logan, says:

“Every Child Deserves Giftedness, Every expectant parent owes their offspring at least consideration of a choice that simply as well as safely furnishes those means by which the individual, family, and entire human community will benefit beyond measure.”



SCHOOL

When I accepted a voluntary redundancy as a science teacher from the only senior high school in the region many of my peers thought I was mad. After 13 years of compulsory schooling, three years at teachers’ college and 15 years as a high school teacher, I admit I was ready to leave school. However, the main reason was that the vast majority of students, especially those in my favourite subject, Physics, had absolutely no interest in learning or understanding the world, and were only concerned with getting the highest mark possible so that they could gain entrance into a university course that would lead to the highest paying job. The list of most desired careers for senior high school students correlates very neatly with the list of highest paying careers.

Future income was the main, perhaps only, motivation for attending school at all. My experience was that the education system, by Years 11 and 12 – if not earlier – had effectively extinguished any semblance of innate curiosity or love of learning in the youth that we are hoodwinking to do their best and study hard.

What I was unable to understand then, and now, twenty years later, is why institutionalising our children from five to eighteen into a compulsory and competitive education system, primarily designed as preparation for participation in the workforce, is largely unquestioned. The public debate about education, which involves parents, teachers, employers and politicians (note the absence of children here) chiefly centres around raising academic performance for the purpose of boosting the productivity and economy of the nation. History will judge harshly the intention and methods of this era of compulsory training of children for the workforce. choice that simply as well as safely furnishes those

The list of most desired careers for senior high school students correlates very neatly with the list of highest paying careers.

WORK

Nowadays, after a succession of different jobs, my paid employment has decreased in hours and pay rate. My aim since leaving teaching was to find work that, at the very least, did not induce nausea from about 2pm on a Sunday afternoon.

Some people, including some very close to me at the time, tried to enlighten me that people did not enjoy work but simply did it as a means to gain sufficient money to enjoy the time that they were not at work. When I refused to swallow this upside-down maxim I was branded a dreamer and told to “get real”.

What ended up being “real” was that, as I did find meaningful employment that consequently paid less money, the happier I became. The script dictated that as a member of the society I was required to work full time, until 65 years of age, and up until then I ought to be grateful for weekends and holidays to compensate for five full days of drudgery. I was not blind and knew of many people who loved waking up each day because of the work they did. If that was unrealistic, and was an illusion for dreamers, then I wanted to reside 100% in dreamland. The realistic option was way too depressing and reeked of submission, submission to cultural norms that I had always been suspicious of.

When I refused to swallow this upside-down maxim I was branded a dreamer and told to “get real”.

The ubiquitous mantra of economic growth and job creation is understandable when one considers the financial processes that rule every aspect of our lives. In simple terms, if everything is a commodity with a price tag, then everyone must work to earn money to buy goods and services to survive and join in the world as it exists. Everyone must pay their way. Today for the first time humans must face the reality that our population has reached a point where there are no commons left for people to be free, and there are no new lands to start afresh. When every cubic metre of the planet is owned or controlled by someone or something there is no option for newcomers but to enter into the fray and compete with everyone else for an ever-decreasing share of space and time to lead some form of, at best, satisfactory life. Equal opportunity in a capitalist market





place, made free under the rule of democracy, is becoming harder and harder for the corporatized mass media to sell to the mass of people chained to the treadmill of unhealthy workplaces and meaningless activity. But the general apathy, chiefly caused by a lack of time to even contemplate the fear and ignorance that bind us, plays into the hands of the wealthy elite.

The dream is over, unlimited wealth for all was never viable in the first place, and what is needed now is a stock-take of the remaining resources, and some just and rational decisions about distribution, conservation and future sustainability.

The race for individuals to get ahead is only intensifying, and dividing humanity further and further. Relentless and increasing pressure in the workplace to lift productivity and profits is taking its toll on many. The belief that your income or salary is a measure of how hard or smart you are working only adds insult to injury to the masses who are finding that the working life is actually detrimental, and not beneficial to the quality of life.

the general apathy, chiefly caused by a lack of time to even contemplate the fear and ignorance that bind us, plays into the hands of the wealthy elite.



DEATH

Because we are all living longer does that mean we have to retire later? Does that also mean we have to populate the world with a fresh new generation of highly skilled young and fit specimens to get on that treadmill to grow the economy even further to pay for us oldies? Is in utero training for the next generation starting to appeal more and more to the prospects for my retirement?

The treasurer of Australia recently announced that the age of entitlement is over. The ideal that as we age we will be looked after is also vanishing before our eyes. Those of us who entered the workforce believing that our hard work would pay off in the end must surely be justifiably pissed off.

Those of us who entered the workforce believing that our hard work would pay off in the end must surely be justifiably pissed off.

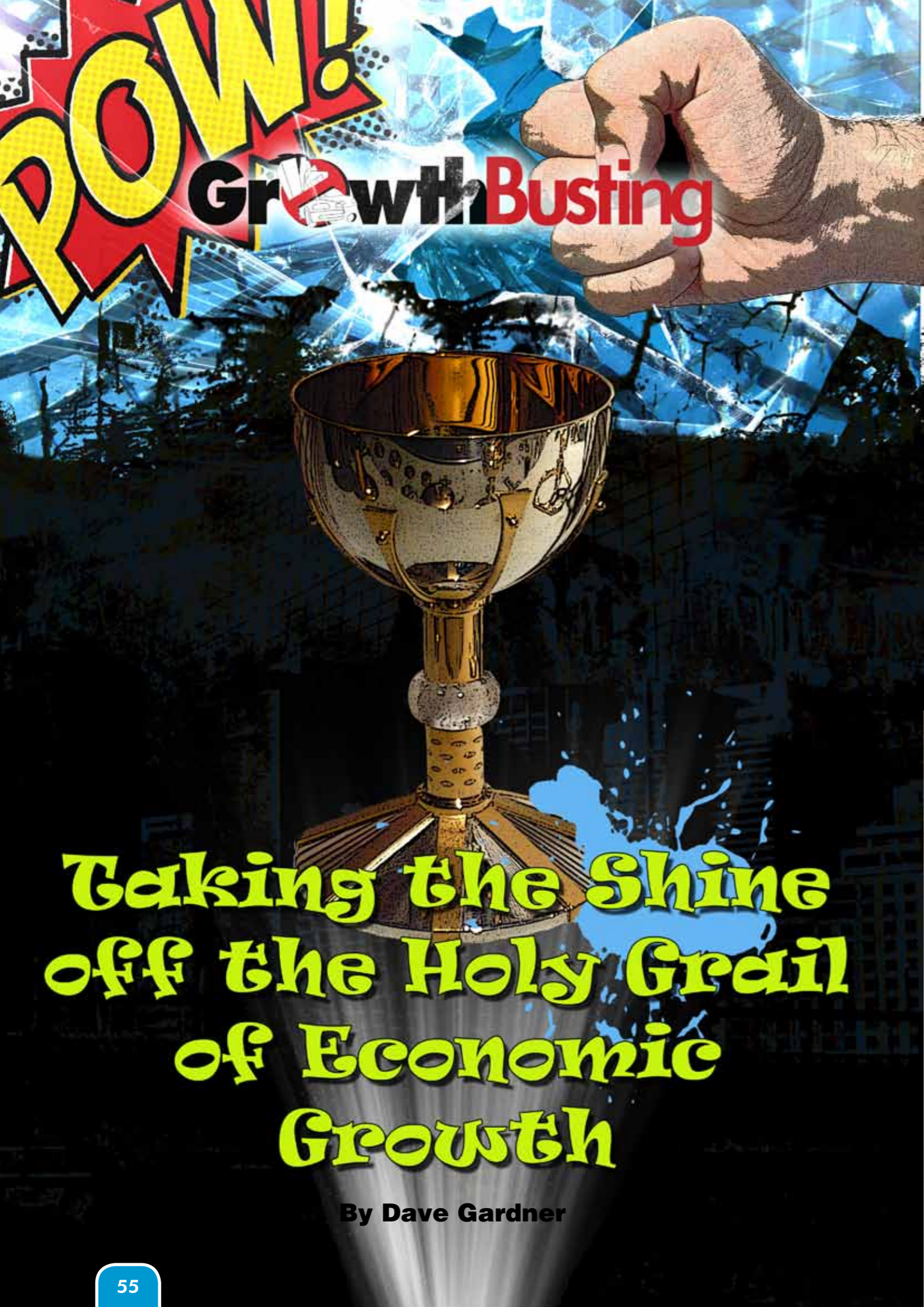
The cost of our health care is now deemed to be too much of a burden for the public purse. How this sentiment can be even uttered in a world where bucket loads of money seems to defy gravity and every other law of nature to float effortlessly upwards to those heavenly members on the rich lists gnaws ferociously at every bone of common sense in my earthly body. The growing number of ordinary people who went to work for 50 years or so cannot expect to be looked after anymore. If you are not a self-funded retiree, you are simply classed as a burden on society. To top this off, in middle age many of us feel guilty that we are not able to care for our own ageing parents. The irony is that many of us are working – or seeking work – in the growing industry of aged care because we are prepared to care for the aging, but we still have mortgages or rent to pay. We cannot afford to do it out of love or duty to our own aging parents; we can only do it for money. Logistically, as well, the diaspora created by outrageous property price growth means that many of us live further out on the expanding fringe of suburbia, hours away from where our parents still cling to their over-valued homes. In many cases mum and dad have actually had to reverse mortgage the family home to purchase adequate aged care from strangers in profit-making retirement villages.

The dream of modern democratic capitalistic society is suffocating in the limited finite world in which it was dreamed up.

A free-for-all competition of everyone against everyone was never going to be a suitable model for human existence on this planet. The unlimited growth required for such an ideology is hitting the wall north, south, east and west. The mad scramble for what is left is getting uglier by the minute. The treadmill we are all on is spinning faster and faster and the axles holding it all in place are wearing mighty thin.

The dream of modern democratic capitalistic society is suffocating in the limited finite world in which it was dreamed up.

Those who profess that collapse is inevitable, and who are building the lifeboats, have given up on any trust in human nature to wake up and do something to avert disaster. I salute you for a virtuous display of human foresight and planning. I personally am hedging some of my remaining energy and time on a new revival of human consciousness and collective action to change course, even if it needs to be a 180 degree about-turn, for a while at least. My personal actions at stepping off, to some degree, the treadmill of Birth-School-Work-and-Death has been something that others have had a geek at. When I smile and laugh and write and question, and when just one person with their head down, racing against the clock and seven billion others, slows down just a bit to have that geek at me, and in puzzlement wonders why the hell does that guy look so happy, that's when I know it's been a good day.



Growth Busting

Taking the Shine off the Holy Grail of Economic Growth

By Dave Gardner

Economic growth has without a doubt become the most fetishised public goal of our time. Every politician must promise it to get or keep elected office. It solves many problems. It is a goal shared by all. It reduces unemployment, provides governments with much-needed tax revenue, makes hard workers rich, reduces wrinkles, and clears up your complexion. Who in their right mind would not favor robust economic growth?

If you're a true sustainability advocate who's done the homework, you're among the few who understand that endless economic growth is not possible on a finite planet. But you may be struggling to understand why the siren song of prosperity from economic growth is so strong it overwhelms all the science, facts and logic that tell us otherwise. I know I did. And I'm quite confident I found the answer.

The stories we tell ourselves define our culture.

They are our way of passing on and reinforcing our beliefs. Since the Great Depression the story we've been telling, over and over and over, is one of economic growth as the Holy Grail. This commentary won't address the lunacy of choosing "economic growth" over "economic health" as a long-term public policy goal. I think we chose it as a short-term goal and then just got used to it. The story was sticking. What I do wish to address is the stickiness of the story and how we might free ourselves from it.

"The mythology of your culture hums in your ears so constantly that no one pays the slightest bit of attention to it."

Daniel Quinn, in Ishmael: An Adventure of the Mind and Spirit

As Daniel Quinn wrote, no one pays attention to it. But it is there, all the time, informing everything we do. Of course the world is flat. Of course the sun revolves around the Earth. It's easy for us to ridicule the mythology of earlier civilizations. We know better. But don't underestimate how strong that mythology was, and how it was woven



You see, in order to live peacefully we must expand our borders...this may mean killing those that stand in our way...such is the price of peace...

...this is why we must be in charge...they simply can't understand

Hahaha, 'within our means' Growth is progress, more is better. You suggest we stagnate!

Nonsense, if we're not growing then we're dying!

Can't we live within our means?

Perhaps she is suggesting we find a balance between our resources and needs

I believe that is a false dichotomy...

it was woven throughout the fabric of those cultures. Our version of that is the story of progress and prosperity from economic growth. It is so pervasive and interwoven into our culture that I compare it to Windows or Mac OS. It is the operating system of our society. And all the "apps" we write are written to run on this "endless growth" operating system.

The story that there is a pot of gold at the end of the economic growth rainbow has now been told for a long time. We are programmed from birth to believe in the Holy Grail of economic growth. It's been repeated and repeated. It's told by politicians and many economists, and it is repeated by the news media ad nauseum. It's taken on such prominence in our culture that it is virtually never questioned. The very fact that journalists report on economic growth as though there is no question about its benefits greatly increases the strength of this cultural programming.

In trying to awaken others to the fallacy of the myth, we face this formidable obstacle. There has, for some time, been growing dissension about this common goal. But relatively few have heard about it. If the economics reporters of the Wall Street Journal, New York Times, Associated Press, The Australian, ABC, CBC, BBC, NPR, and the Financial Times are all treating economic growth as an unquestioned, unalloyed good, then we have our work cut out for us. I believe we have to do two things to take away the power of that programming:

1. Point out, again and again, the pro-growth bias in the reporting, so the masses begin to recognize it for what it is.

2. Influence journalists to begin reporting more fairly and accurately on economic growth, acknowledging it has critics. If necessary, embarrass them into doing their job.

Nearly a year ago I started Growth Bias Busted¹ to execute these two strategies. On a daily basis we spotlight news stories or commentary that fail the balance test on our Wall of Shame, or we congratulate exemplary work on our Wall of Fame. Journalists are offered suggested resources to explore for more balanced perspectives. We invite the public to contribute critiques and salutes as well.

"Once you learn to discern the voice of Mother Culture humming in the background, telling her story over and over again to the people of your culture, you'll never stop being conscious of it. Wherever you go for the rest of your life, you'll be tempted to say to the people around you, "how can you listen to this stuff and not recognize it for what it is?"

-Daniel Quinn



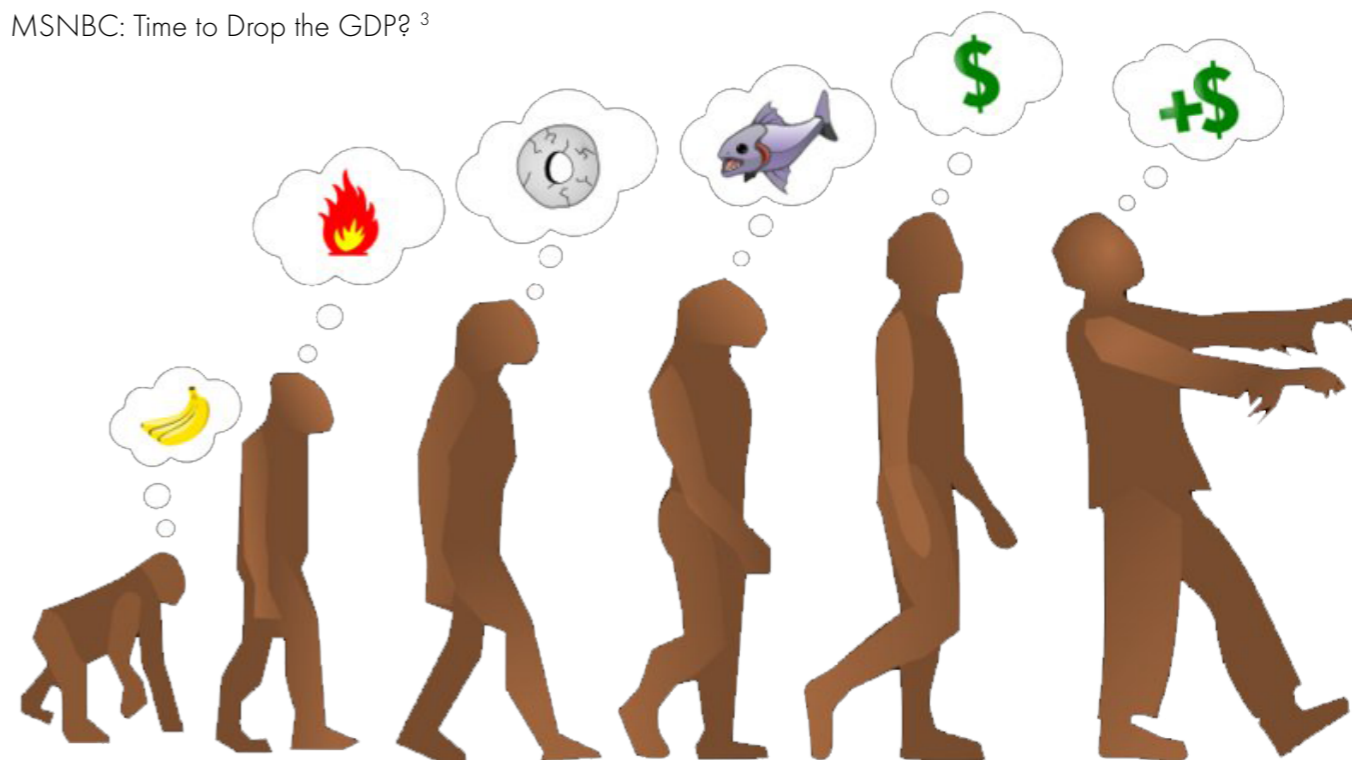
"There's nothing fundamentally wrong with people. Given a story to enact that puts them in accord with the world, they will live in accord with the world. But given a story to enact that puts them at odds with the world, as yours does, they will live at odds with the world."

-Daniel Quinn

While it's impossible to pinpoint where credit is due, there is good news. We recently found two very promising examples of reporting that did acknowledge there are questions about the universal goodness of growth:

- San Francisco Chronicle: Critics Question Desirability of Relentless Quest for Economic Growth²
- MSNBC: Time to Drop the GDP? ³

The fact I'm excited about two examples illustrates just how rare unbiased reporting is on this subject. However, as more members of the public discover our critiques, and as more journalists find their names on the site, we'll slowly begin to change the stories we tell ourselves.

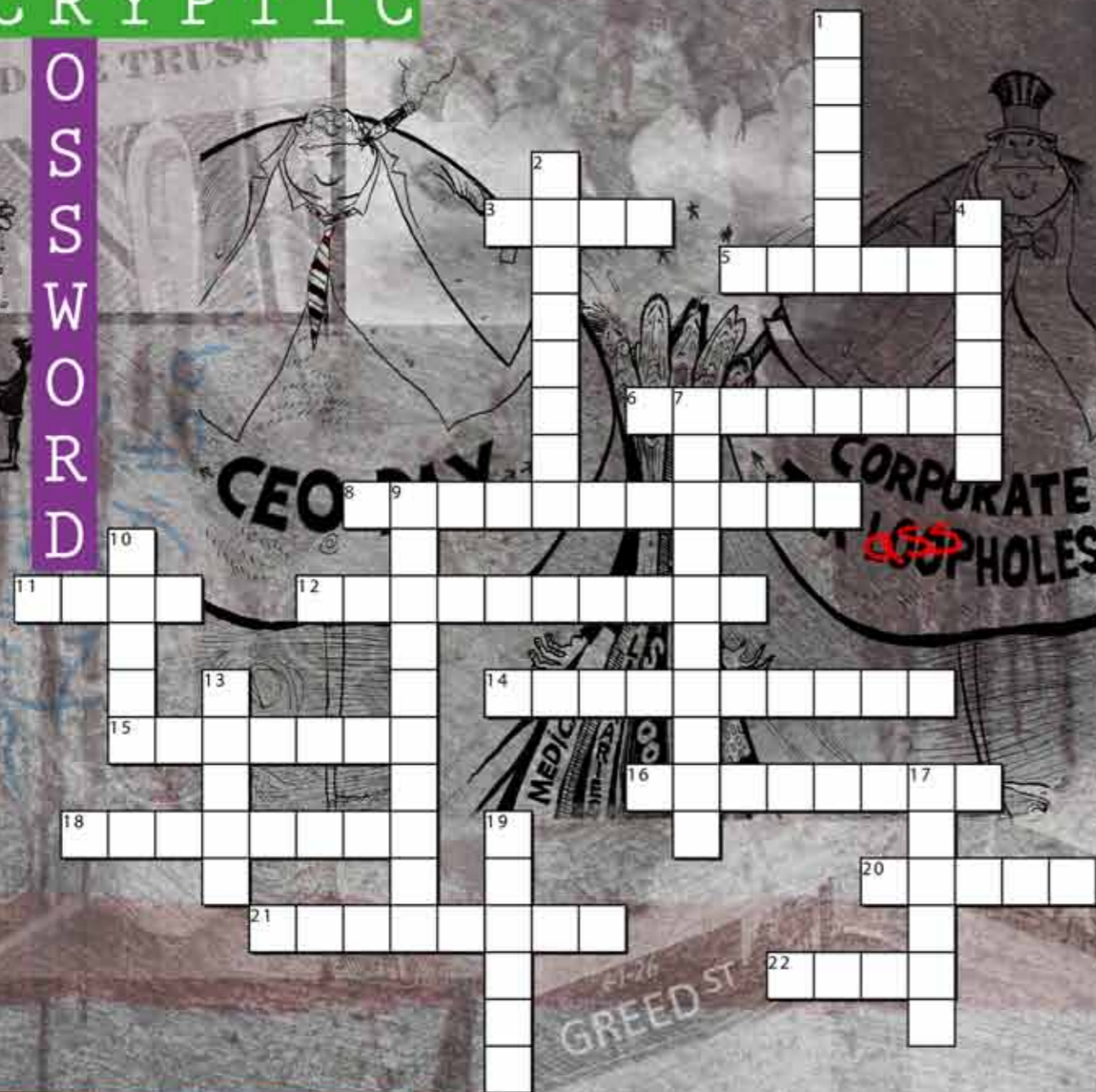


Economize

the totally free but high value brain activity

CRYPTIC

WORD



Across

- 3. Italian car is money out of thin air (4)
- 5. Alternative to consumerism has Homer's son next to emergency room (6)
- 6. Savvy shoppers look for scattered coin dust (8)
- 8. Very best lad mixed up and caught in cycle of modern day life (4,7)
- 11. Initially we only risk knowledge then it becomes an unpopular 38 hour activity (4)
- 12. Is mail pact crazy way to increase wealth and power? (10)
- 14. Freak meter reassembled as a supposed cure for all the world's problems (4,6)
- 15. Money Co. rearranged the flow of resources and services (7)
- 16. Insidious inflated payback mixed up in setter (8)
- 18. Effort, load and fulcrum before an era is a canny way to get ahead financially (8)
- 20. Much more useful in containing rivers than money (5)
- 21. Home loan from re-engineered goat germ (8)
- 22. From the start we all get emasculated, but its needed to "pay your way" (4)

Down

- 1. Inside idol largess is what everyone's striving to make quickly (6)
- 2. Wall Street is the home of the worlds' chaotic nice fans (8)
- 4. From the beginnings of getting rich, one way to hell, is the word on every pollies' mouths (6)
- 7. Tangled vines plus many moles plus nothing else and you have money for venture (10)
- 9. "No, my temple" mumbled the workers' lament (10)
- 10. Look inside the extra dear exchange of goods (4)
- 13. My one mess makes the world go round (5)
- 17. In the middle fish are selling basic market units (6)
- 19. The law gone wrong allows the one percent to get almost all of it (6)

Answers to POWERDOWN Cryptic Crossword – Issue One

Across

- 1. Go ask someone starts to asphyxiate - GAS
- 7. Switch it off to get some sort of clout back - BLACKOUT
- 9. 'What about the election results?' starts to give life to plants - WATER
- 10. Love tag messed up potential - VOLTAGE
- 12. Boiled innards for peaking fuel - OIL
- 13. Hate bad effect of climate change - HEAT
- 14. Endless fun with Spanish beginnings drives us all - FUEL
- 16. Automobile on famous beach rusts and traps infrared - CARBON DIOXIDE
- 18. Buried underwear generates heat - THERMAL
- 21. Dirty distillation regarding ostentatious clothes - REFINERY
- 22. Wrap around flatulence - WIND
- 23. Sounds like diet brand, illuminating - LIGHT
- 24. Inventor of crazy slate - TESLA

Down

- 2. Sing G and A for a bright future - SOLAR
- 3. Energy in the crown - JOULE
- 4. Pull out whatever rots. Initial instructions for fridge salvage gives energy over time - POWER
- 5. Methane came salsa go crazy - COAL SEAM GAS
- 6. The lone mistaken petrol substitute - ETHANOL
- 7. Try beat rearranged cells - BATTERY
- 8. Throw way the MDMA and come bust ions in singular ignition - COMBUSTION
- 9. The wide roof makes a cold night cosy - WOODFIRE
- 11. Vote then start radical innovation before the metropolis charges flow - ELECTRICITY
- 15. Bad mates have a head full of this watery vapour - STEAM
- 17. Life story of the fifth fraction of crude - BIODIESEL
- 19. Drill and pump right in the middle of the beef racket - FRACK
- 20. Round and round we chase the snake out of the circus, it was fun - CIRCUIT
- 22. Questionable power unit - WATT



“

The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy.

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.