

WE'VE GOT THIS

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CHANGE NOW

It's so much easier to critique the present than to dream into the future. The weight of the past lies heavy, a stone around the neck, holding back imagination. That is, until a system reaches its final crisis. Then its hold on creativity falls away and anything becomes possible for a moment in time. We're nearing that stage just now. Glimpses of the future appear then vanish. A vain possibility here, an outlandish hope there. But it's too early yet to stitch them together into a coherent vision of what the future is calling forth. If we try too soon we risk falling back on old solutions and mindsets. What's called for will become apparent in good time.

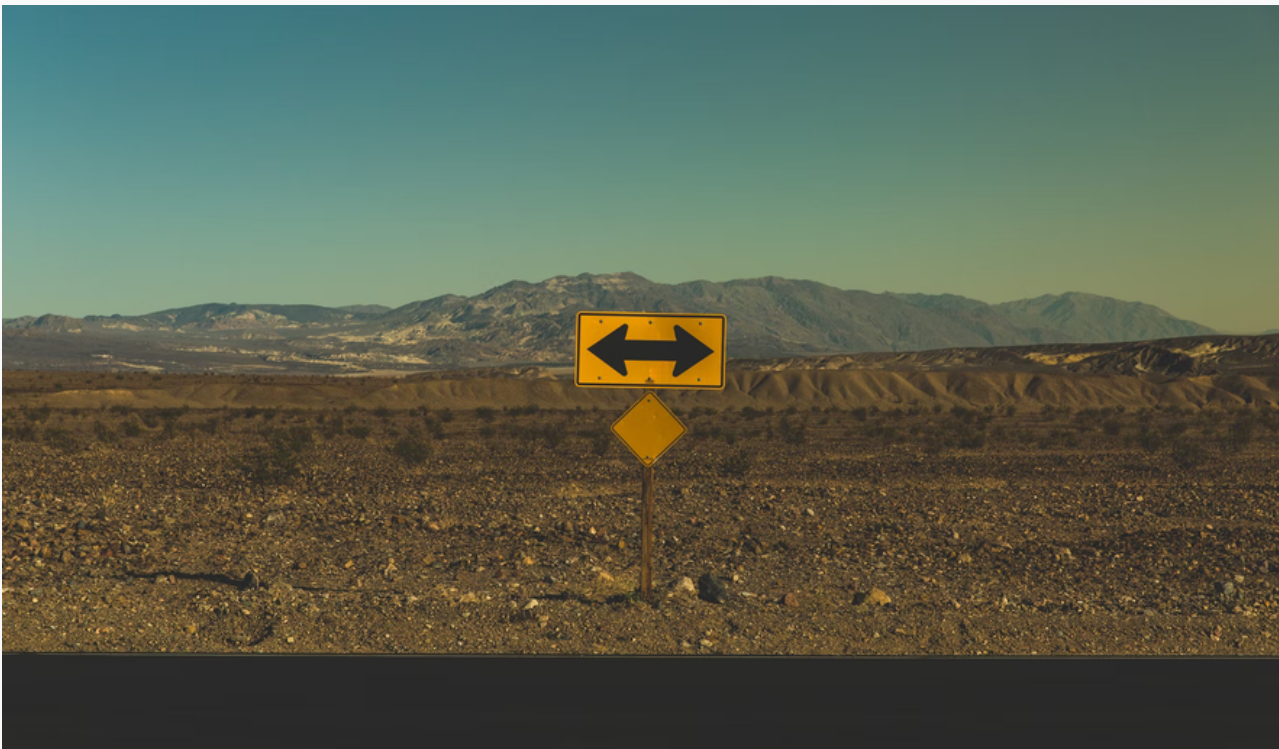
Then a phenomenon occurs that social scientists call "bifurcation". We find ourselves at a fork in the road with two choices. One leads into a more extreme and authoritarian version of the present. The other into a new and markedly different future.

The beginning of this second path, is already in view. You can find it at the margins of the world, where the hold of the status quo is at its weakest. It's in the actions, the hopes and dreams of the dispossessed, the marginalised, those who have been shunned or who have dropped out of the system, those who are working at the fringes of imagination.

This world is being transformed. One life at a time. One street at a time. One neighbourhood, network, community. People everywhere, all across the globe are changing lives from the grassroots up. US activist Paul Hawken set out to count all the initiatives that were starting to shape a new world. He got to two million, then gave up counting. It's too big, too diverse, and it's ever-changing - things come and go, grow and die, some never take off, others soar.

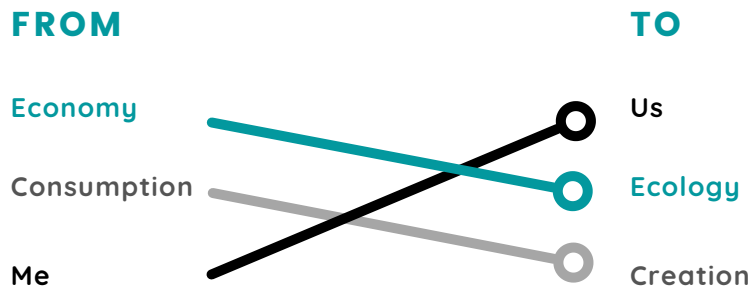
Hawken categorised these initiatives under three headings: social justice, ecological justice and indigenous rights. Some straddle all three like Café Gozhoo in Arizona which preserves Native American cuisine using local ingredients, while training young people for employment and building wellness. Others fit more into one or other category: MeToo, Black Lives Matter, Extinction Rebellion.

What brings them together? The desire to build a new civilisation based on care for people and planet: abundance, regeneration, resilience. They are the antidote to a rapacious economy which is built on consumption, destruction and division.



A FUTURE BEKONS

So what's happening at the margins? What's happening in the most oppressed or marginalised communities? Where are the places that show us a glimpse of our possible future? We catalogue some of them in Emerging Responses, Paper 5 of our series on [Navigating the Unimaginable](#). For now let's try cutting it a different way. Let's look at a few shifts that are starting to emerge:



There are shifts that are going on now, across the globe that are moving the focus of human activity away from money, economy and profit and instead to food, growing, restoring that land. In this process our happiness and satisfaction are no longer about what we own or consume or buy. They become instead about what we craft, create, share, build and grow. We move from passive consumer to active producer, from an individual with inalienable rights to a community member with responsibilities, ties and connections.



STEWARDING THE HOME



Economy: derived from the Greek meaning to manage or steward the dwelling. Not to make money; to be thrifty, careful, responsible. Ecology, from the same root: to study the place you dwell or belong. It's not such a long way from Economy to Ecology. It simply requires returning to our roots, focussing on stewardship, nurturing, care.

This is what folks are doing throughout the world. Especially at the margins. There are urban growing movements taking derelict land in cities like Detroit and turning it into food. There are camps springing up at the edge of the desert and other depleted land which in just a few years have created oases of regeneration. And there are design systems like permaculture explaining how it's done.

Peasant farmers are saving seeds, preserving food sovereignty, in the face of industrialised, mechanised farming. In India they managed to stop the invasion of chemicalised food production. In Brazil over 150,000 unemployed families have occupied more than 7.5 million hectares of land to grow food and preserve their rights and dignity.

Everywhere the movement for better food, greener cities, clean air is spreading. Concern about plastics, the state of the oceans, the clearcutting of forests is motivating people not just to protest but to protect, preserve and regenerate.

In each of these places, our love for nature is reignited, our interdependency with land and food is strengthened. Each person involved is learning anew the art and craft of stewardship. As a species we are learning to embody our role as a regenerative force within the Earth's ecosystems.

I AM BECAUSE WE ARE

Notice, none of these things is done by one person alone. The world is no longer changed by the heroic individual (if it ever was). When two or more are gathered together their power for change is multiplied exponentially. Sure things can get in the way: ego, trauma, rigidity. But with careful attention, energy is released, channelled and directed, together, in collaboration.

In the wake of the COVID pandemic there has been a wave of folk queuing up to leave the city for a better life. Who can blame them. Applications for membership of intentional communities have increase two or three fold in the UK.

In the community, where I live, a working organic farm in the borderland between England and Wales, we have been inundated with requests to visit. We grow and farm food together sharing everything communally. We eat together several times each week and retreat to our homes when we need space. Decisions are made communally using consensus as a guiding principle. And it's all been working well for over forty years now.

The best part is we're by no means unique in this. There are tens of thousands of Eco-Villages, Intentional Communities and Co-Housing schemes throughout the world. There are even entire neighbourhoods and towns that have been established to embody a future for human civilisation. And there is a whole network of towns and cities transitioning, to a cleaner, fairer future.

These new forms of living and working together are transforming our understanding of decision-making, setting a new course for politics and governance. Typically power is far more dispersed, held by those who are most impacted by the situation. Decisions are made collaboratively using systems like consensus, sociocracy or Holacracy. People sit in circle, listen, discuss, take time and care because the outcomes are important - they build community ties as well as getting stuff done.

The future is possible and it's here, amongst us now.



SHARE YOUR SOUL WITH THE WORLD

As people come together, in service of a brighter world, their creativity blossoms. Energy is directed by clear structures into the activities that allow life to thrive. Self-organisation works – so long as the North Star is visible and the rules of engagement are clear. Then we can all step in, in whatever ways we see to contribute.

And it's already begun. Social purpose start-ups are emerging everywhere, makers spaces are blossoming, repair cafes pop up on every High Street. Arts and Crafts are experiencing a resurgence as folks find meaning and purpose in “make do and mend”, upcycling and just expressing who they are.

— “ —
Creativity is the way I share my soul with the world.

— Brene Brown

— ” —
The revolution is about artisan bread, craft breweries, knit-and-natter sessions. It's about music and dance, art, puppetry, public sculptures made of recycled rubbish. It's about turning swords into ploughshares, literally.

The reinvention of community is a creative process. It takes place around mural-making, sharing meals, street bands and community choirs. It picks up pace when we share our gifts alongside our vulnerabilities. This is how we create bonds of interdependence because my need is met by your gift.



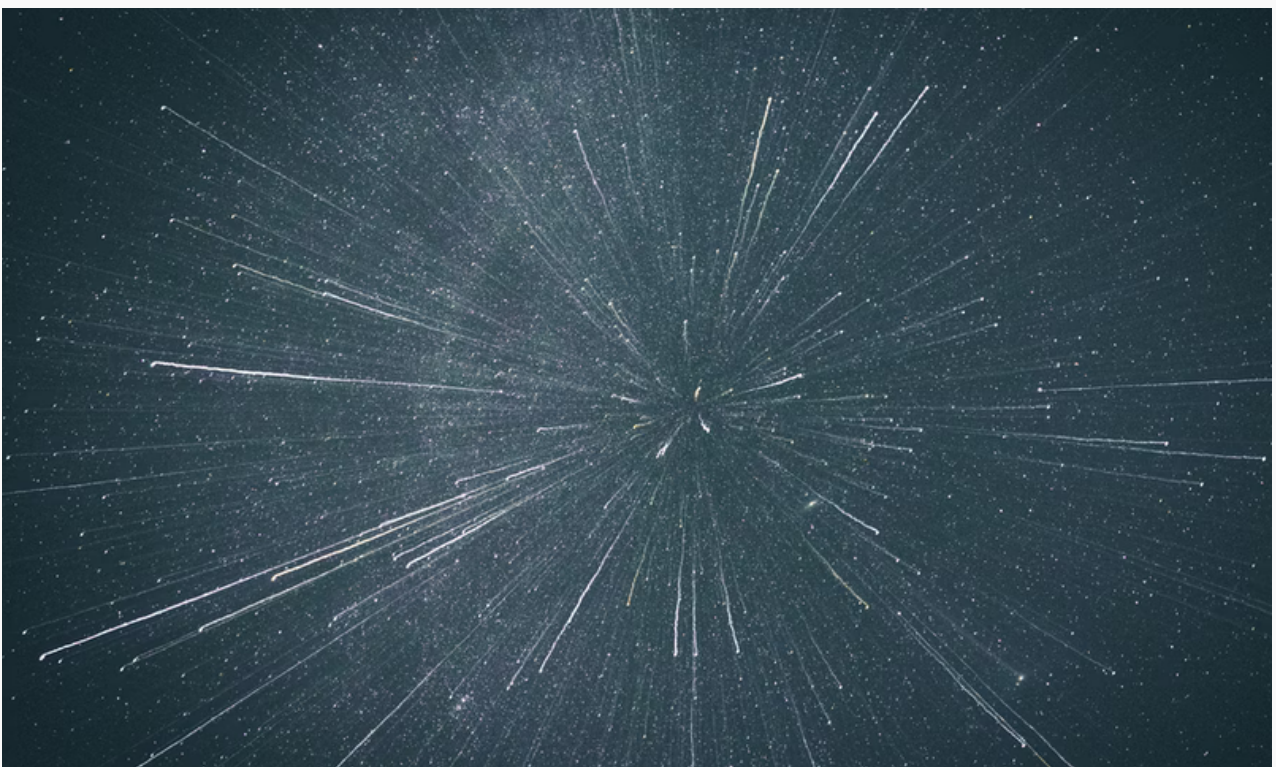
FINDING THE NORTH STAR


It may be too early to see a complete picture of the future ahead. But a felt-sense is enough. We don't need the whole picture of what's on the other side of the ocean. We just need the will to travel and a few stars to navigate by.

The North Star stays true, allowing us to always locate our overall direction. Around it swirls a skyful of constellations each reminding us of stories to guide our thoughts and deeds. What's the question that guides your curiosity about the world to come? It will likely be something in the vicinity of "What helps life to thrive?" or "What would love do?" or "If I listen to my deepest hopes and longings where do they take me?" These are the questions that call the future into our consciousness. "What is the world asking of me now?" or "What makes my heart sing?" Follow these and you can't go far wrong.

When I lean into these questions there are two approaches that start to peak my interest - Resilience and Regeneration. To weather the storm we are going to need resilience at the personal and communal levels. And to restore the Earth to its full thriving we will need to go beyond "sustainability" into active regeneration. So that's where I've started to put my energies. Where are you? How do you locate yourself as we move towards choppy seas?

The point here is, that we can all do something. We can all contribute to the transition out of one civilisation and into another. For some it will be hospicing the old, for others, composting the remains, for others creating the fertile conditions for the new. All of these can be started now. In whatever way you see to do, starting where you are. Begin anywhere, follow the North Star everywhere. And stay connected. What's happening is the emergence of an ecosystem of change. Initiatives feed off each other. Hidden mycelium is nourishing the roots. The composting of the outmoded will feed the seeds of the new civilisation. In these connections and relationships lies the strength and resilience of the ecosystem of change. Together we are birthing a new human civilisation - one that put regeneration above destruction, life before wealth and the ecology before the economy. After all, isn't that what being human is all about?





Our world is being transformed. In every country, on every continent, ordinary people are doing extraordinary things. They are greening cities, bringing diverse communities together, supporting each other through the pandemic.

Together, these initiatives are building a new human civilisation, from the ground up. This is a civilisation that cares deeply about people and planet. It dares to dream big and act small. It is the future. Here and now.

At the same time, something else is happening. A rapacious economy beyond political or social control is steadily destroying life on Earth.

We face a stark choice between these two futures. Which will you choose? In this heart-felt call to action we ask you to face into what's coming and wake up to its danger and its potential.

Then we invite you to move on to our ground-breaking series [Navigating the Unimaginable](#). Here we share the perilous state the world is in, provide numerous examples of grass-roots innovation and sketch out a framework for action.

If you want to get behind the brighter future, join us in shaping it. Whether you're an individual, a community, a business or a government, we all have a part to play. We all have crucial choices to make.

This is the challenge of our age: to build resilience in self, community and planet, to move from destruction to regeneration.