

MANIFESTO

ON
GLOBAL ECONOMIC
TRANSITIONS



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MANIFESTO

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POWERING-DOWN for the FUTURE

Toward a Global Movement for Systemic Change:
Economies of Ecological Sustainability,
Equity, Sufficiency and Peace

“Less and local”

EDITOR
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CONFRONTING the GLOBAL TRIPLE CRISIS:

Catastrophic Climate Chaos

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The End of the Era of Cheap Energy—Peak Oil and Gas

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Global Resource Depletion—Fresh Water, Forests,
Oceans, Soil, & Wildlife Extinctions

(“The solutions to each are the solutions to all”)

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I. CATASTROPHE AND OPPORTUNITY



The planet's ecological, social and economic systems are on the verge of catastrophic change, for which few societies are prepared. Efforts by governments to respond to the impending emergency are thus far grossly inadequate. Efforts by corporations and industries to reform their behaviors remain largely enclosed by systemic limits that require continued growth and profit above all other standards of performance.

With each passing month, the probability of very grave outcomes increases, and will continue if we do not *immediately* alter course. Some say global ecological and social breakdowns are already inevitable.

With great crises sometimes comes great opportunity. The very urgency of the situation, and the imminence of global upheavals, bring new incentives toward more viable economic and social choices that operate within the ecological limits of the planet. But we are nearing the 11th hour.

DEADLY CONVERGENCE

The present global emergency evolves from the *convergence* of three rapidly advancing conditions:

- ▲ The exponential increase of human-induced climate change effecting all regions of the earth;
- ▲ The imminent end of the era of cheap energy (“peak oil”), bringing dramatic shifts in all operating assumptions of society;
- ▲ The extensive depletion of other key resources basic to the industrial system as well as to human welfare; these include fresh water, genetic resources, forests, fish and wildlife, fertile soils, coral reefs, and most elements of the local, regional and global commons.

We are calling this deadly convergence the *Triple Crisis*. All three problems are rooted in the same systemic circumstances, and can be ameliorated by the same systemic changes. *The solutions to each are the solutions to all.*

Root causes of these crises include the following:

- ▲ The dominant economic paradigm, now nearly ubiquitous at both global and local levels, that places rapid economic growth, the quest for corporate and individual accumulation of wealth, and a planet-wide race to exploit natural resources, at the top of institutional, and national aspirations.
- ▲ The uncontrolled use of fossil fuels to feed the growth.
- ▲ Global promotion and spread of *commodity-oriented* economic systems that promote *consumerism* as primary to individual happiness and fulfillment.
- ▲ Deliberate decimation of peoples and cultures that have traditionally offered sustainable alternative economic models and practices. These include indigenous and agricultural societies that have seen their lands and livelihoods destroyed for industrial purposes.
- ▲ Profound systemic disregard of planetary limits, in terms of resource availabilities, consumption, waste generation and absorption.
- ▲ *Overpopulation*, which exacerbates all other conditions, and has grown far beyond the capacity of the Earth to sustain.

* * *

The above combination of dangerous conditions may soon bring global environmental and social crises on an unprecedented scale, as well as a general breakdown of the most basic economic and operating structures of our society, unless they are reversed.

Climate chaos and global warming threaten the loss of much of the world's most productive lands, physical upheavals in many places from storms and rising waters, massive dislocations, desertification of many agricultural lands, and economic and social tragedy for well into the future, with problems especially severe for the poorest nations and peoples.

*Peak Oil—depletions of inexpensive oil and gas supplies (and alarming new evidence of limits to accessible coal)—*threatens the long term survival of industrial nations and industrialism itself, at its present scale. Long distance transportation, industrial food systems, complex urban and suburban systems, and many commodities basic to our present way of life—autos, plastics, chemicals, pesticides, refrigeration, et. al—are all rooted in the basic assumption of ever-increasing *inexpensive* energy supply.

Other resource shortages— fresh water, forests, agricultural lands, biodiversity of many kinds—make the survival of humans and other species far more tenuous than at any other time in human history. We also face the possible loss of 50% of the world's plant and animal species over the next decades.

As such crises advance, so do major geopolitical problems, as nation-states can be expected to fall into bloody competitions for survival. We already see advanced resource wars over oil, as in Iraq and Sudan, and many new struggles for control of diminishing oil and natural gas supplies, freshwater, key minerals, forests, and food-growing lands, among others.

As grim as these scenarios are, and as likely, they become inevitable only if individuals and nations do not immediately seize this moment for systemic transformations to mitigate the worst outcomes, resetting all societies within values systems and pathways that are far more sustainable as well as more personally fulfilling. It is the central purpose of the Global Project on Economic Transitions to help speed such local, regional and global shifts toward new viable economic and political models.

New models must all begin with acceptance of the fundamental limits imposed by the carrying capacities of the earth. Within those limits, societies must work to achieve sustainability and democracy, and to set new standards of universal economic *sufficiency and well-being*, that do not depend on overuse of global resources. They must also be responsive to the crucial need to correct the world's present economic imbalances and inequities. *Without achieving equity, peaceful solutions are not possible.*

Long term solutions also require turning away from prevailing paradigms and ideologies centered on pursuing economic growth, corporate profits and personal wealth accumulation as primary engines of social well-being. The transitions will inevitably be toward societies that can equitably adjust to

reduced levels of production and consumption, and increasingly *localized* systems of economic organization that recognize, honor and are bounded by the limits of nature. Given such realities, the possibility of maintaining the present industrial system in its current form, or at nearly its present scale, is in doubt.

GLOBAL RESPONSE AND SYSTEMIC LIMITS

To reverse this emergency, we must help stimulate and support a diverse global movement on these issues. In fact, such a movement is already underway. Tens of thousands of people in organizations on every continent have recognized the problems we describe here, and have realized that major systemic change is required. They have not waited for governments or outside leadership to take hold. Most are *local, community-based and regionally based citizen-led organizational responses* that try to take solutions in hand in local contexts, devising regionally attuned alternative production and market systems. These include local food systems, and transportation and manufacturing systems that operate from entirely sustainable frameworks and values. There are countless reports of positive achievements at the local level. (See Cavanagh and Mander, *Alternatives to Globalization: A Better World Is Possible*; also postcarboninstitute.org; and wiserearth.org)

To reach their goals, such communities often find they must first break away from, and attempt to protect themselves against unsustainable practices and rules of larger national and global economies that demand conformity with the global economic homogenization project. The institutions of globalization have often been able to suppress local activity, particularly among small farming communities seeking to keep control of their traditional community-focused food growing lands against agribusiness incursions and technological processes.

There are also positive examples of substantial adjustment efforts by *national* governments in some countries and regions, notably Germany, Sweden, Iceland, among others, which have recognized that an urgent problem exists, and are seeking policies and formulas for sustainable change. Other countries including Cuba, India and others in the Third World have been forced to learn to survive with limited energy and other resources due to historic colonial intrusion and exploitation, as well as varieties of political conflicts and

sanctions regimes. Some of these places devised effective strategies to deal with extreme energy shortages, and technology and resource shortages. They may now serve as living models of how to persist under the present broader crisis conditions.

Positive efforts are also visible among hundreds of cities and towns around the world, seeking to implement models for so-called “green cities,” or “cool cities,” often in defiance of their own national governmental policies, as in the U.S. We cite particularly the remarkable work of the Transition Towns Movement in the United Kingdom, (transitiontowns.org) and the Post Carbon Cities project in the United States. Similar projects are underway on every continent. All of them are seeking extensive reforms to operating systems in order to approach zero carbon use, zero waste, reduced imports of materials, and maximum efficiency, among other goals.

There are also a myriad of examples among thousands of still surviving *indigenous* societies of the earth expressing long held economic, political, social and spiritual traditions that accept the inherent limits of nature, and the need for reciprocity with the natural world. The great tragedy for indigenous peoples, and the irony, is that their very philosophies and practices of integration with nature, have made them direct targets for global economic invasions, as these societies are now among the last repositories of the planet’s remaining biodiversity resources.

And some corporations, even very large ones, have made conscious efforts to adjust their purposes and performance to recognize the new realities. But as we will describe in further detail later in this document, such corporations are in the extreme minority, as they invariably run up against clearly defined limits imposed by corporate laws and structures in market societies. These require that the primary values of corporate performance should remain growth and profits rather than the public good.

The authors of this document have no doubt that human beings and societies faced with difficult circumstances can rise to challenges in profound and effective ways. History has shown this over and over. Great crises bring grand opportunities. These can connect people in common purposes, to build communities and systems that do not deny reality, and that are also eventually more successful in realizing peoples’ true needs than the failed economic

adventures that brought us to this place. It is those kinds of responses that need to be articulated, stimulated, and made the prevailing norm. Individual action is part of the solution. So are organized local systemic actions, and global collaborations toward systemic change.

II. FALSE SOLUTIONS AND POSITIVE FUTURES



Among the greatest dangers we face now is that the initial responses of most corporations, institutions and governments that do begin to understand the gravity of this moment, and the threats to their own survival, are to leap toward self-serving short term strategies that seriously exacerbate the problems. For example, many countries and institutions have moved to even more aggressive forms of resource acquisition, a kind of “last man standing” mind-set, already exemplified by the many violent conflicts over oil and other resources. Or else they seek advantage by controlling the rules of powerful global trade and finance bodies.

In the latter vein, global institutions such as the World Trade Organization (WTO), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the World Bank continue to create and enforce profoundly destructive policies. These give the wealthiest countries and most powerful global corporations ever-increasing incentive, ability and authority to freely move around the world and enter countries to exploit their last resources, in a revved-up form of globalized neo-colonialism.

There are corresponding bilateral pressures, such as U.S. efforts to secure access to the Alberta Canada Tar Sands oil deposits. Or in the case of China, and other industrial countries, fierce competition for the last oil, gas and other resource reserves in such places as Africa, South Asia, or the Arctic. Even as we write these words, leaders of the G8 (wealthiest nations) are pursuing a multi-decade energy plan that facilitates corporate expansion of coal, oil and

gas explorations, in addition to a revived nuclear industry.

In increasing numbers of cases, countries resort to direct military means, as with the U.S. invasion of Iraq, and smaller but expanding conflicts over not only oil, but also water, forests, natural gas, industrial minerals, etc., all of which are profoundly destructive. Some feel that the most powerful nations are actively seeking to achieve a military-resource hegemony that is a step beyond the prior controls instituted by global economic institutions.

As mentioned above, the voracious drive for the planet's last resources is especially problematic for the 370 million indigenous peoples of the planet. Many of their ancestral homelands are the last reservoirs for a high percentage of the remaining natural resources of the earth, especially in South America, southern Asia, Africa, and the Pacific islands. In many of these places, indigenous peoples are actively resisting resource invasions by corporations and are trying to protect their traditional lands and practices. One major effort is the two decades' struggle to pass the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which may soon codify certain protections for indigenous rights to control resource development on their lands. (See Mander and Tauli-Corpus, *Paradigm Wars: Indigenous Resistance to Economic Globalization*, a report of the IFG.)

TECHNOLOGICAL FIXES

When most bureaucracies, corporations and governments, finally do speak of "alternatives" to the climate change or "peak oil" problems, they tend toward technological fixes and market incentives. They are currently grandly promoting such "alternative" solutions as "coal-to-liquid" technologies to end dependency on imported sources. Or else they speak of "clean coal" via carbon sequestration, or massive use of large scale ethanol or other biofuels, or else so-called "clean nuclear energy."

Governments promise unprecedented subsidies for research and development toward a new age of technology. These new technologies, they say, would successfully and cheaply capture and safely store carbon from coal, protect stored uranium, achieve unprecedented levels of efficiencies in all industrial processes, and thus maintain an industrial growth paradigm that allegedly will not deplete the natural world, or destroy species, natural resources, or rivers or air.

At this point, however, such new technological capabilities are highly theoretical and may *never* be achieved. Optimistic projections for such technologies put them at least a decade away, or more. But even if achieved, many of the technological fixes may bring new sets of problems, as we will see.

What *is* achievable, however, even in the short run, is a shift to far simpler and more direct means of reducing negative impacts on the planet, such as *less resource use, less consumption, more conservation*. These notions are rarely touted by governments or industry, as they cannot be made to serve conventional standards of global corporate growth. They imply preference or at least a recognition of the need for systemic transformation, an idea that is strongly resisted.

In the United States, the official position is that technological fixes for all problems are achievable and desirable, and that they can solve all problems and sustain the industrial growth system. Such arguments come not only from corporate and government sources, but academics, some NGO groups, and nearly all presidential candidates desperately seeking solutions that are not disruptive of the current economic model.

Regrettably, most such technological fixes themselves would remain dependent for their own production on continuing large supplies of *cheap energy and/or cheaply imported foreign materials*, a highly dubious prospect. Also, the “net energy gain” from many of these technological innovations—once all *externalized* environmental and social costs are accounted for—may often be small, or *negative*.

Even if present unsustainable energy technologies were fixed so that they did not directly emit large amounts of carbon dioxide, they bring such overwhelming environmental and human health degradations on so many fronts, and with so many social disruptions, that long run net benefits are illusory. For example, while many speak of “clean coal” or “carbon sequestration,” there are the nearly unimaginable environmental tragedies from the “mountain top removal” process, to get the coal out of the ground in the first place, in many parts of the United States. Tens of thousands of acres of mountains and forests have been devastated, and thousands of people made to suffer awful pollution and poisonings. Other coal retrieval processes have similar impacts. Such examples put the lie to the very concept of “clean coal.” (See

Appalachian Voices, www.appvoices.org and www.ilovemountains.org)

Another example is the imminent invasion of the Alberta Tar Sands for oil extraction, already bringing serious social and environmental consequences. Also, the growing frantic conversion of forests and agricultural lands to bio-fuels is bringing enormous negative impacts upon rural and agricultural peoples throughout the world and upon global supplies of already scarce fresh water, intensively used for biofuel production.

In fact, biofuels are being very aggressively promoted these days as some kind of *panacea* by industry, government and alas, those same U.S. presidential aspirants. This is despite the fact that biofuels are seriously limited in their potential to contribute on a scale that could meaningfully allay the climate or fuel crisis. For biofuels to make possible a substantial contribution toward eliminating reliance on oil, gas, and coal, would require the conversion of a huge percentage of the planet's current *food-growing* lands to *fuel-growing*. This conversion by itself could bring starvation to millions of currently self sustaining farmers and communities, especially in poor countries, as well as in the United States. The impacts are already being strongly experienced in such places as Brazil, Mexico, Malaysia, many countries in South Asia, as well as among thousands of indigenous communities on the planet whose lands are being forcibly converted to biofuels production. (See Tauli-Corpuz, *Monocropping: Impacts on Indigenous Peoples' Land Tenure and Resources Management Systems and Livelihoods*, The UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues.)

Far too much food-producing land has been lost to industrial development. Biofuel production adds significantly to the problem. This trend on agricultural land needs to be reversed, not expanded. Viable food growing lands need to be protected as a first priority, not sacrificed to non-sustainable economic processes.

Ultimately, we must all come to understand that the purpose of all these highly touted technologies is not to achieve long term ecological sustainability. Their first purpose is to sustain the current bloated corporate-industrial growth system in its present form, as well as the individual profits of corporations that market the products.

What of the role of other renewables?

A full transition to non-carbon, non-nuclear, 100% *renewable* systems is obviously greatly desirable for the crucial tasks of slowing climate chaos, and for partly replacing dependency on diminishing oil and gas supplies. Most renewable systems such as solar, wind, wave, small-scale hydro, (and selected *local* biofuels) produce far less environmental impacts than oil, natural gas, coal or nuclear. They are also not nearly as subject to geopolitical traumas, including wars, that characterize oil, gas, and nuclear technologies. (See Klare, *Resource Wars* or *Blood and Oil*.) However, even with renewables, some problems may still remain.

If it was decided today by the powers-that-be that a combination of renewables such as we have named could be mandated, that would be a very good development. *And yet, it remains unlikely that even that desirable combination of alternative renewable systems would be sufficient to sustain the current industrial growth model at anything approaching its present scale.* To deploy those renewable systems on a meaningful scale would still require the continued use of considerable amounts of *cheap fossil fuels* to be able to build the huge volume of production equipment required to efficiently service today's overextended industrial system.

Another issue is that some renewables, if used on a large industrial scale, might themselves operate at relatively low "net energy" ratios, providing only modest energy return for the energy invested in producing them. This is surely the case with most biofuels, though to a lesser degree the problem also applies to solar and wind technologies. (See Santa Barbara, *The False Promise of Biofuels*, an IFG Report.)

The materials and energy requirements for mass-scale construction, transportation and maintenance of these otherwise desirable alternatives might also bring negative environmental and social consequences. And yet, on balance, the many profound environmental and geopolitical reasons that favor renewable energy options still make them far better choices than oil, gas, nuclear and coal, for a sustainable future.

In assessing the opportunities from renewables, a crucial step is not only to determine how renewable systems compare with non-renewables, but also with each other. Which ones are least damaging to nature, and which achieve

the best “net energy” ratios—that is, produce far more energy *output* than the *inputs* needed to produce the energy. They must be able to demonstrate sustainable “life cycle footprints”, beginning from the process of mining the raw materials used for production all the way to the eventual disposal. (This complex calculation includes *internalization* of all related pollution costs, *plus* the *embedded* energy and materials costs of the base technologies used to build the new technologies, *and* the embedded costs of long distance transport, mineral extraction, processing, etc. All must be factored in.)

Finally, the technology must be available to the entire global population i.e., it should offer equitable access. (*Note: The Scientific Working Group of the IFG is now preparing an extensive net energy comparison of all renewable and nonrenewable energies. This will be available in late Fall.*)

In any case, we believe that renewable energy systems should never be thought of as instruments whose primary purpose it is to sustain the present wasteful industrial economy, which has already grown far beyond the inherent capacities of the planet. Renewables *should* be used as much as they reasonably can be, to replace present highly destructive carbon and nuclear systems, and be combined with conservation, efficiency and lower consumption levels to bring society back within the limits of nature. The technologies by themselves will not save us.

FUTURE PATHS: NON-GLOBAL, POWERED-DOWN, PRO-LOCAL

Ultimately we must accept the need to rethink the present economic growth paradigms, goals and systems. Permanently viable solutions to the irreconcilable conflict between the planet’s limited resource base, and the ever-expanding drives of the global industrial model, will inevitably involve making the choice to reduce overall human enterprise and presence, i.e., to “power down” to levels of production and consumption that stay well below the environmental capacities of the earth.

And so, instead of trying to support bloated systems based on exponential growth, and then desperately trying to find, as we do now, whatever energy systems and materials can sustain that excessive growth, society needs to evolve its values toward new systems that follow different processes, with different goals, such as these:

First, try to estimate the maximum renewable energy use and material throughputs that the planet's ecosystems can sustain (i.e., maximum "planetary capacity.")

Second, determine a level of *sufficient* resource and energy use, below the maximum sustainable level. This should be optimally balanced to insure both planetary and human well-being, while providing an adequate margin of safety for the future protection of biodiversity and natural systems.

Third, conceive of all major operating systems of society—transport, manufacture, agriculture, energy, building design, et. al.—to be in synch with those standards, deploying renewables in tandem with *increased efficiency, conservation and lower levels of consumption*.

Fourth, reallocate by various means (per below) the limited resources of the planet on a far more equitable basis. This must include returning local farmlands to local peoples from whom it has been taken over recent years. This will enable them to again sustain themselves while protecting the long term viability of their soils and lands. It will also help eliminate the excessive energy consumption now intrinsic to industrialized agriculture.

* * *

The goals of increased conservation, greater efficiency, and reduced material consumption must be augmented by a combination of *small scale renewable energy systems* that offer positive EROIs, (i.e. positive energy returns on investment), and finally clear plans to *reduce absolute amounts of energy use*. One step in this direction is envisioned by the proposed Oil Depletion Protocol. (See Heinberg, *Oil Depletion Protocol* and Campbell, "The End of Cheap Oil" and *The Coming Oil Crisis*.)

There is little doubt that all of this will inevitably bring significant changes in the way we live our lives. It will also require that we steer economic activity away from globally centralized export-oriented economies, as much as possible, toward regional, local and community-based economic models that are *inherently* more environmentally sustainable.

In an era of climate chaos and diminished resources, the neo-liberal economic globalization model may soon become largely non-viable. Its dependence on

export-oriented production, enormous amounts of global transport, ever expanding resource use, and ever expanding global markets cannot possibly be sustained on a finite planet. Future economic viability must eventually dramatically shift to local economies under local and regional governance (*subsidiarity*), which emphasize, as much as possible, local production for local consumption, local ownership using local labor and materials within ecologically stable democratic models. Local economies that so operate, are less dependent on long distance transport and resource supply and thus less likely to negatively impact the planet. This does *not* suggest, as some charge, a predicted end to all international or inter-regional trade, or to all travel. It does suggest a *reversed emphasis* and a priority toward localization of economic activity, as much as is practical; a bias in favor of the local. (See Hines, *Localization: A Global Manifesto*.)

Finally, all solutions must also include locally designed voluntary programs that respect reproductive rights of women while working toward *reduced birth rates* to match the carrying capacity of communities and the planet. Reduced consumption and throughputs will automatically be served as population decreases over time, and economies are increasingly localized.

ACHIEVING EQUITY: CAP AND SHARE / CONTRACTION AND CONVERGENCE

As the currently over-consuming nations of the world proceed to “power down” their energy use, and to reduce material throughputs, while lowering personal consumption levels, overall global impacts can eventually be optimized *well below* the maximum sustainable capacities of the planet. However, we must remain cognizant of enormous disparities among nations as to *present* levels of use. Many nations and peoples of the world already live at very low consumption levels; in fact far below levels that can sustain personal, family and/or community well-being. Such disparities among and within nations are often the result of prior or present colonial periods of exploitation. It is unarguable that many countries of the industrial north have achieved their excessive natural resource use by depriving southern countries of theirs, a process that continues in many places today.

Recognizing this, we believe that each person and community, whether in the industrial North, or the global South, has fundamental rights to “sufficient”

food, shelter, clothing, housing as well as sufficient community health and other public services, to sustain a satisfactory level of well-being beyond bare minimum survival needs. (*Note: Working definitions of “sufficiency” and a “global sufficiency index” have been proposed and need further development and definition. As part of this project, we hope to soon advance a viable new clear standard.*)

Meanwhile, the argument is compellingly made by some Southern countries, historically disadvantaged, that they should not be asked to “power down” to the same degree as Northern countries. In the interests of survival, they may often need to increase their material throughputs, and energy use, from renewable sources; *not* to approach a level of excess consumption, but toward a level of “sufficiency,” well within the planet’s capacity to sustain.

Thus, the concepts of “*cap and share*,” or, “*contraction and convergence*” have emerged. As wealthy over-consuming countries reduce their activity far below present overconsumptive levels, the goal is for the poorest countries and peoples to bring their levels *up* until “convergence” or equity is approached. Overall, however, the convergence target must remain far below the maximum sustainable levels for all planetary material throughputs, including total energy use, thus requiring profound net reductions in all areas.

To assist this process will require considerable reallocation of planetary resources, wealth and sustainable technologies from the rich countries to the poorest countries and peoples, being certain to avoid the pitfalls and corruptions of prior historic patterns of aid, also usually rooted in colonial contexts. For example, within poor countries there are sometimes very wealthy elite minorities who gained from colonialism and globalization; they are sometimes called “the north within the south.” Transfers and contributions from this wealthy class should be included in the domestic equation. (*Note: There are a growing number of proposals for how such transfers from North to South might operate, several of which are mentioned in the Resources section. We do not favor any of these proposals above others at this time; all should be studied and debated as to their optimum viability.*)

Equally important: The interests of equity also require rapid withdrawal of giant export-oriented agricultural corporations from food growing lands in poor countries. These lands have mainly been acquired over years by a vari-

ety of unacceptable means—sometimes militarily, or with the help of corrupt regimes—and most recently via the appalling rules of global bureaucracies, including the WTO and World Bank. Lands thus alienated from local people must be returned to the control of local communities and farmers. This in itself would free millions of people to re-assume their traditional local food growing activities that sustained their communities.

Ultimately, the goal must be to achieve international accords on formulas that achieve “contraction” and “convergence,” i.e., formally mandated global economic formulas that lead to overall economic “contraction”—to live within realistic planetary limits—and “convergence” at an agreed global standard of “sufficiency” for all, as planetary health and resources permit. We believe that such a transition can lead to successful responses to this crisis, increased equity within and among countries, and a renewed sense of personal and global good feeling, well-being and peace.

BOUNDARIES OF CORPORATE CHOICE

To achieve the reforms above will require the cooperation or acquiescence of not only governments, but all major players in our system, most importantly corporations who are the dominant factor in economic activity on the planet.

Unfortunately, at present, the long range policies and practices of a majority of corporate and government leaders continue to deny or ignore the true nature of the problem we face, and its implications for the present global industrial system. This is a major impediment to change.

We have mentioned that there are a minority of corporations within industrial nations that have begun to appreciate the scale of the problem, and have sought new ways to operate with greater consciousness of the impacts of their industrial processes. Some have lately taken leadership roles in lobbying among lagging governments for supportive transformative policies. They need to be encouraged. However, it also should be acknowledged that they face significant and possibly insurmountable obstacles to truly significant corporate transformations.

The difficulties in reforming corporate behavior are rooted in the inherent characteristics of all corporate structures in market economies, and the legal rules that govern them. *At present, the economic viability of any publicly trad-*

ed corporation, and specifically its abilities to attract capital for its operations, requires short term rapid growth, investment, expansion and profit, above all other purposes, including social and ecological well being. For a publicly held corporation to fail to follow that formula can make its directors directly vulnerable to dismissal and sometimes legal challenges from financial stakeholders. Bankers and investors do not judge corporate performance by the degree of their contribution to the public good. Corporations are fundamentally amoral. Their central operating goals are toward growth and profit, which is what investors expect. All other goals are subordinate.

As a result, even those corporations, and people within them, that do hope for more responsible pathways, find it difficult to make meaningful shifts in their hierarchies of performance standards. Examples of corporations voluntarily foregoing profits, or the personal wealth of top management, in the interests of environmental health or social equity, remain rare exceptions, and are especially rare among *publicly* held and traded companies. All too often, the opposite is the case; corporations campaign vigorously *against* health, safety and environmental laws. In the specific case of climate-related issues, such as fuel economy or efficiency standards, corporations resist especially strongly. Even their proposed “carbon trading” solutions are little more than a kind of legal doublethink that allows them to continue polluting at the same levels as before.

(*Note: We make a distinction between corporations themselves, that is, the package of rules, structures and inherent objectives, versus the people who work within them. People within corporations often wish they were free to follow other priorities, but run up against the boundaries of corporate structures that demand profits first, and indifference to public impacts. There are examples of corporations, even several large energy corporations, seeking new profit potentials in shifts from oil production to certain renewable energies. But that choice too is likely to be limited in future by the fact that renewable systems will not perform at the volume of oil or coal. If such shifts to renewables turn out to be unprofitable, they will not be continued.*)

Corporations that present positive alternatives may indeed sometimes sustain profits, though this too is tricky business. For example, the new emphasis on “green consumption”—implying that we should *buy* our way out of the crisis; that no deeper changes are needed—is a dangerous illusion. *All*

consumption of new products involves significant added material throughputs and energy.

We have seen the tremendous popular success of the new hybrid cars, because of their much improved fuel mileage. They have been bought by many thousands of people eager to do the right thing. And yet, it is likely that this will ultimately be revealed as more of a marketing victory for auto companies than a boon to the planet. When all material and energy inputs to any automobile's manufacture and delivery are calculated, including an astounding amount of trans-ocean shipping, back and forth, of various materials and parts at different production stages, even hybrids may deliver a significant net energy and materials loss over their lifetime. This is *despite* the improved road mileage. For the environment's sake, a well performing, relatively high-fuel-mileage *used* car will often be far more efficient in terms of planetary materials flow, and energy use, and ultimately be a more ecologically viable choice than any brand new package of newly mined, shipped, shaped, and assembled natural resources. This might be said for many newly manufactured "green" products.

Many of our colleagues continue to express faith that a new generation of conscious business managers is emerging that will place the public good at a higher value level than profits, and to seek new and different standards of achievement that defy normal corporate profit-seeking. It remains to be seen if this can happen. The argument is also made that herculean efforts toward production *efficiencies* can aid profits while also serving the public good. This is certainly true. We believe that all corporations would be wise to adopt that policy.

Eventually, we hope that a general understanding of the true nature of the coming crises will lead to fundamental shifts in corporate laws, structures, values and behaviors, even among institutions presently designed for other primary purposes. We also believe that corporations should eventually be subject to new governance rules that demand accountability for all corporate behaviors. These will include *internalization* of the costs of external harms such as from pollution and transportation, as well as raising such other standards as: personal liability for all investors and executives, requirements for local community control, laws of non-mobility of capital, "site here to sell here" policies, requirements for increased local labor, local investment, local ownership, and majority board membership by local stakeholders, among other proposals.

For the moment, however, the overwhelming majority of corporations of the world, and their governments, still remain obligated to the global growth and market standards that are the central perpetrators of the problem. This leaves nations and peoples tragically vulnerable to the difficulties that wait around the next turn. So, it remains a top priority for activists to expose such schisms between present corporate goals and values, and long term ecological viability.

III. TRANSFORMATION OF VALUES



The kinds of systemic changes as have been suggested above—toward localization, standards of sufficiency, and economic limits that reflect natural boundaries—as well as urgent reforms to achieve equity, have been made to seem highly painful and negative by corporate and government proponents of continued high growth and high commodity consumption.

Promoters of the *status quo* argue that such a fundamental economic transformations of values and practices, and especially efforts to reduce consumption, will bring unacceptable hardships to people, and will slow the march of “progress” toward ever-increasing economic growth, corporate profits, material comfort and personal wealth creation, key stated goals of the present system. They continue to conjure Utopian images of the benefits of globalization, and disastrous expectations for any shift of direction. They often go so far as to predict a return to “primitive living in caves”, or to “standards of the 18th century”, as if those are the actual choices: Corporate growth, or cave dwelling?

Proponents also argue that the current system is crucial to relieve global poverty, as if *that* was ever a primary goal, rather than merely a public relations argument. They tout the benefits of rapid economic growth under global corporations, using such tools as corporate free trade and investment, privatization of the natural and public commons, deregulation, and export-oriented production. They say that is the way to “lift all boats” benefiting everyone, thus justifying unavoidable impacts on resources and the earth.

What they do not say, however, is that even judged by its own terms, the current global economic model has been a failure. It does *not* relieve poverty or increase personal wealth or well-being—except for a scant few who sit at the wheels of the industrial machine. These are an increasingly small percent of the population. United Nations reports show that economic globalization has consistently concentrated wealth in an ever smaller number of countries and economic elites. The top 1% of world population now accounts for 40% of the world’s net worth; the richest 10% own 85% of global assets and their holdings are increasing. The world’s 946 billionaires have wealth equal to two-thirds of humanity. Similar disparities are found between rich and poor countries. (See Davies and Sandstrom, “*The World Distribution of Household Wealth*”, 2006, World Institute for Development Economics Research, United Nations University. See also, “*Does Globalization Help the Poor?*” published by IFG. And Anderson and Cavanagh, “*Field Guide to the Global Economy*,” published by IPS.)

The current global industrial growth model does not “lift all boats,” as is claimed, only yachts, while the great majority of people are in ever-worsening condition each year, suffering unprecedented 21st century hardships. Meanwhile, the natural world, the true source of all wealth and sustenance, has been brought to near catastrophic collapse in the empty cause of commodity accumulation, and corporate growth, while the visible limits of the planet’s resources bring the end of the entire economic process into clear view.

UNIVERSAL STANDARDS OF SUFFICIENCY, WELL-BEING, AND HAPPINESS

All of the above raise deeper questions concerning how we should live on a finite earth? *What is actually required for human well being, personal contentment, material sufficiency and ecological sustainability? What are the political and economic forms that are appropriate for such shifts?* How can we achieve transitions toward more localized, community based economies with real political power nearer to the people?

Voluminous recent research and evidence suggests that if human “well-being,” personal contentment and “happiness” would ever become standard measures of society’s success, they would less likely be realized by competition for personal wealth, or by extensive commodity accumulation, than by basic

fulfillment of more fundamental conditions of well-being. These include sufficient food, shelter, clothing; good health and the values of strong community engagement; family security; meaningful livelihoods; freedoms of movement, speech and worship; a responsive public sector; and the clear presence and easy access to a thriving natural world. Studies show that as individual levels of consumption and material accumulation increase well beyond an approximate level of satisfactory comfort and security, a sense of happiness and well being does not steadily advance at the same rate. As material standards continue to increase, the personal sense of well-being and contentment tends to actually diminish, because of emotional sacrifices required for such acquisitions, and the time and behaviors required for their achievement. (See Costanza; Kasser; Lane; Layard; Princen; Robin; Vemuri; et al in Resources.)

If true, such research calls into question the validity of the most basic values and standards of society today, sacrificing the health of nature and of humans to achieve a false commercialized and advertised standard of happiness and contentment. For societies that now adhere to the media-hyped images of “the good life” based on hyper consumption of commodities, new strategies for the use of *less* resources, *less* accumulation, and more modest standards of living also become arguments for greater personal fulfillment, less stress, more time for family, friendship, nature, creativity, recreation and leisure which are all now in short supply. Truly, among presently over-consuming societies, *less* would be *more*.

Meanwhile, millions of people on this earth are not waiting for official recognition of these truths. As suggested at the outset, even in the absence of governments and global bureaucracies that promote sustainable models, there are uncountable numbers of people on the ground who are already actively attempting to “actualize” a great variety of alternative economic practices and systems at local, community and regional levels, in both rural and urban contexts. (In the U.S., we cite particularly the organizing work of the Post Carbon Institute, and Community Solution, listed among others in Resources.) In even the most industrialized countries, people have realized a major shift is on the way, and have approached it with creativity, enthusiasm and collective action.

Such responses are nothing new. We have seen this kind of inspirational response so often before. Americans, for example, have only to remember the

days of World War II, when such basics as food supply were extremely limited, and extensive rationing was imposed. Hundreds of thousands of American families who never grew anything in the soil, suddenly took to growing backyard “victory gardens,” and did so with renewed community spirit and joy, and with great impact.

So, another central purpose of our work is to help assemble such examples and support them, developing new programs that advance this process, while also spreading alarm about the potential for catastrophic breakdown from the continued dominance of the global industrial growth model.

Ultimately, all solutions will be local *and* global, personal *and* political, visionary *and* concretely practical.

IV. STEPS TOWARD ECOLOGICAL SUSTAINABILITY, EQUITY, SUFFICIENCY AND PEACE



In this document, we have deliberately not offered a fully rationalized single new model for solving the Triple Crisis, that we hope to convey or impose on the world. Our effort seeks to begin processes toward such models, however, and to suggest many of their most obvious ingredients. The following therefore are some of the positions, ideas and steps that we believe will eventually be included in comprehensive sustainable models and practices. We encourage discussion and debate of all of these, and their further amplifications, eventually leading to an international movement that demands fundamental change in the way societies now operate, and how we live, as communities, families and individuals.

Here are the beginnings of a list of steps toward a new economy of sufficiency, equity, sustainability and peace.

- 1) Rapid withdrawal from all carbon-based energy systems, including adoption by all countries of an “Oil Depletion Protocol”, or similar proposals for fixed annual downscalings of oil, coal and gas consumption.
- 2) Rejection of large-scale so called “alternative” energy systems designed to prolong the industrial growth system. These include nuclear energy, “clean” coal, industrial scale biofuels, and the combustion of hazardous materials and municipal waste, among others.
- 3) Speedy transition to small-scale, *locally oriented* and locally owned, ecologically sustainable, renewable energy systems, including wind, solar, small scale hydro and wave, *local* biofuels. Equally important is a dramatic increase in the practices of *conservation and efficiency*—i.e., *powering down*, together with a corresponding decrease of personal consumption in countries where it has been excessive.
- 4) Recognition that some nations, because of historic patterns of colonialism, aggression, and resource exploitation have gained disproportionately from control of the planet’s resources. All solutions to the current crises must include awareness and an active effort toward reallocation of global resources to restore an equitable balance between and within nations.
- 5) Rejection of all the primary negative elements and goals of economic globalization, and the highly undemocratic “neoclassical” economic model itself. These negative factors include: hyper economic growth; export-oriented production in agriculture, energy, and manufacturing; deregulation of corporate activity; privatization of the natural commons; privatization of public services; “structural adjustment” of economies toward global trade and away from local needs; emphasis on global markets; destruction of local markets; suppression of protective tariffs and investment controls (meant to protect local resources and businesses). Such features of economic globalization are designed to sustain global corporations, not the environment or viable communities. Any sustainable democratic system will feature values and practices which are virtually the opposite of all those.
- 6) Reorienting the rules of economic activity—trade, investments, standards—to favor economic localization and local political empowerment (subsidiarity) wherever possible. The many global examples of existing sustainable communities should be acknowledged, and local economic well-being should take

precedent over global corporate trade and growth. We favor major reforms of current international trade and finance bodies, such as WTO, World Bank and IMF, and export credit agencies, which are now primary actors in supporting the unsustainable global economy of today. Where institutional reform is not achievable, we seek their replacement by new international, national and local institutions and processes that do not act as surrogates for global corporations, but act in the interests of environmental sustainability, equity among nations and peoples, principles of subsidiarity and democracy; ecological, cultural and biological diversity, within the inherent limits of nature. (See also Cavanagh and Mander, *Alternatives to Globalization*.)

7) We favor *less* long-distance trade rather than more; *more* and deeper regulation of corporate activity; *less* movement of capital across borders; more emphasis on regional and local self sufficiency, sustainability and control; greater community participation on corporate boards, and increased rules of investment that favor local ownership; graduated, negotiated use of import and export controls as necessary, with corresponding transfers of resources from North to South to offset displacements from reductions in trade; use of trade policy to protect small farmers and small entrepreneurs in all countries, while recognizing the special needs for transitions of farmers and workers in less developed countries; re-empowerment of the concept of the local, regional and national commons; redesign of urban and non-urban living environments to conform to the true realities of a post carbon era; restrictions on all conversion of agricultural lands away from food-growing, and reconversion of many lands that have already been removed from agriculture and their return to local community ownership.

8) Internalization of the full ecological and social costs of corporate production; codification of the “polluter pays” principle.

9) Promotion of an orderly *re-ruralization*, and revitalization of communities by way of land reform, education and application of eco-agricultural micro-farming methods, import/export controls, and emphasis on local democracy; all of these in preparation for the inevitable de-industrialization of agriculture, as cheap energy supply declines.

10) Reintroduction of a modernized version of “import substitution”, or regional self reliant models among nations, i.e., where nations seek to satisfy

their most fundamental needs such as food, housing, energy, resource production and control, and livelihoods, from local systems and resources rather than being dependent on long distance supply, which routinely leads to dependency, insecurity and exploitation, empowering global players while harming local.

11) Introduction of new standards of measurement regarding the success of societies. Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and Gross National Product (GNP) must be recognized as inadequate and incompatible with societies that now seek basic shifts in values. Emphasis must now become human well-being, environmental sustainability, and the preservation of “natural capital” as primary concerns, rather than exponential growth, corporate profit, or personal wealth accumulation.

12) Within the contexts of global carrying capacity, establishment of global limits on total overall quantity of energy production, and the creation of standards of “sufficiency” equity, sustainability and resource reallocation.

13) Prior rejection, and clear limits upon all technologies assessed as environmentally or socially unsustainable. Application of the “precautionary principle” with respect to all technological development.

14) Recognition that protection and preservation of the natural world—its full biological and genetic diversity, and all of its beings, is a primary goal and necessity of a sane and sustainable system, and that nature has inherent rights to exist on the earth in an undiminished healthy condition, separate from its services to humans.

15) Recognition that personal behavior shares responsibility with systemic conditions for the present problems, and for their solution. Many western industrial peoples have been privileged to enjoy the fruits of the present process, but must now work to change excessive consumption habits, while realizing that such change will actually bring *positive benefits* via greater free time for personal, family, social, recreational and spiritual pursuits.

16) Recognition that many indigenous societies of today, and many countries of the South, have already established societies with priorities and values such as we have listed above, and should be consulted as models and guides for change.

17) The success of all systems and societies should be judged by fulfillment of five fundamental criteria: ecological sustainability; degree of “net energy gain” or loss; degree of social equity, well-being, and “sufficiency” rather than surplus consumption and wealth; democratic decision-making processes; and non-violent conflict resolution.

18) All nations should conform to these principles.

V. STRATEGIC CAMPAIGNING



To affect the kind of change that is described above, will require broad conceptual change, but it will also require *focused activism in multi-dimensional zones*. Action needs to be local and also international. It needs to cause change in such areas as these: consciousness concerning the limits of human activity on earth; concepts of the good life, and true well-being; practices in all areas of societal activities; changes in the fundamental rules of economics, public policy and the goals and scale of governance, among others. Target areas for activism are, of course, unlimited, but will certainly include these examples:

- ▲ Focus on corporations: Organizing to achieve effective new limits to corporate activity, options, ownership, mobility and structures;
- ▲ Focus on global bureaucracies and institutions, for their rulemaking and financing of unsustainable models of development, and the infrastructures, practices and goals of these models;
- ▲ Focus on operating systems: manufacturing, agriculture, transportation, energy, plus *standards* by which their achievements are measured. All of these now proceed on the assumption of unlimited resources; all must be redesigned to fit within the scale of a sustainable society based on sufficiency, equity, and local and regional control;

- ▲ Focus on urban, suburban, and rural systems in both North and South, to redesign them toward integrated societies based on sufficiency, equity, and local and regional control;
- ▲ Focus on political reform toward achievement of global “subsidiarity,” i.e., the conscious movement of governance and operations to favor local and regional controls, and toward standards of self reliance, wherever possible;
- ▲ Focus on a new economics, governed by the absolute limits and boundaries of ecological sustainability, the carrying capacities of the earth, a more equitable sharing of global and local resources, encouragement and support of self sustaining communities, and respect and support for the natural world;
- ▲ Focus on technologies, to determine which technologies have characteristics that put them intrinsically in opposition to ecological sustainability, social equity, and democracy (global oil development and transport; nuclear energy; the automobile; industrialized agriculture), versus those with the potential to serve democratic, local, sustainable models (certain renewable energies, and limited scale operating systems.)
- ▲ Reassertion of the concept of “the public commons” in its traditional mode as common resources for sustaining life, but also in the modern mode of shared public services from education to true security.
- ▲ Focus on the media, now integrated within the prevailing paradigms of centralization, growth and exploitation of nature, but which must itself be reformed to reflect new realities in content and form.
- ▲ Among others.

Each of these areas are appropriate for campaigning within the context of the new realities facing the world, and the need for an integrated local and international system. Campaign targets need to be broad and deep, but also achievable. All are needed if we are to work our way out of this crisis.

The International Forum on Globalization, San Francisco
The Institute for Policy Studies, Global Economy Project, Washington DC

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- EcoEquity, www.ecoequity.org
- End Mountaintop Removal, www.ilovemountains.org
- FERN (Forests and the European Union Network), www.fern.org
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James Kunstler, http://www.kunstler.com/mags_diary21.html
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New American Dream, www.newdream.org
New Economics Foundation, www.neweconomics.org
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People-Centered Development Forum, www.pcdf.org
Polaris Institute, www.polarisinstitute.org
Post Carbon Institute, www.postcarbon.org
Rainforest Action Network, www.ran.org
Research Foundation for Science, Technology and Ecology, www.navdanya.org
Sierra Club, www.sierraclub.org
The Simple Living Network, www.simpleliving.net
Small Planet Institute, www.smallplanetinstitute.org
Step It Up, www.stepitup2007.org
Sustainable Energy & Economy Network, www.seen.org
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Third Generation Environmentalism, www.e3g.org
Third World Network, www.twinside.org.sg
Transition Towns Movement, www.transitiontowns.org
Transnational Institute, www.tni.org
Wiser Earth, www.wiserearth.org
World Future Council, www.worldfuturecouncil.org
Wuppertal Institute for Climate, Environment and Energy, www.wupperinst.org

CO-SIGNERS: THE MANIFESTO ON GLOBAL ECONOMIC TRANSITIONS



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Claire Greensfelder, director, Plutonium Free Future; co-author, *The Safe Energy Handbook*

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Randy Hayes, founder, Rainforest Action Network; senior fellow, Int'l. Forum on Globalization

Richard Heinberg, author, *Power Down*, and *The Party's Over*; fellow, Post Carbon Institute

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Rob Hopkins, founder, Transition Towns Totnes Movement (UK)

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David Korten, president, Positive Futures Network; author, *The Great Turning*

Satish Kumar, editor, *Resurgence* magazine; president, Schumacher College (UK)

Sara Larrain, director, Chile Sustentable (Chile)

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Caroline Lucas, member, European Parliament (UK)

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Frances Moore Lappé, author, *Hope's Edge* and *Diet for a Small Planet*

Pat Murphy & Megan Quinn, *The Community Solution*

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