

I sincerely believe that people would be well served by learning to conceptualize issues in terms of organic process that facilitates homeostasis in preference to oppositional dualities that lead to de-stabilizing conflicts. My paramount hope is that Watershed Communities will stimulate people to view their world more in this way.

conception of land and money as primarily elements of the commons, not as means to elevate one individual or one class of individuals over all others.

Assuming that you do, indeed, look with suspicion on what you have read so far, I hasten to assure you that, at age 80, given my track record, I'm not the person to entertain megalomaniac visions of becoming a "recognized authority", much less the savior of humanity. In fact, even the rigors of a book tour would probably be beyond my endurance.

Yet I put myself forward as a person who plans to publish a book proposing the formation of a group, to which I can only promise to relate to as some kind of senior advisor and contributing writer. I'm forced to ask myself if this is worth the effort. I must also consider the possibility that I'm putting some kind of mischief into the world. I have no emotional attachment to the acceptance of my synthesis. My minimum hope is that those reading and discounting these ideas will come back to them years later as fresh inventions of their own fertile minds. A goodly portion of all discourse is re-invention of the wheel, and mine is also quite surely no exception.

The major concerns of my working life have been the design of buildings and the composition of music. The one integrates the disparate functions of occupants, ambience, and integuments into a built environment of utility, strength, and beauty. The other shapes sound to express emotion, thought, and bodily physicality by the creation of melody, harmony, and rhythm.

Being a person who has devoted his life to design and composition, one who has also tried to be an informed citizen, has led me to be attracted to the search for a way to build our way out of the present dilemma. But actually, when I started this quest, the threat of total collapse seemed distant. I saw the social/political/economic system as one severely out of balance: out of balance with Nature; societies unbalanced in their distribution of opportunities, rewards, punishments, and status; individuals out of balance with themselves. The system looked to me like a building designed by architects and engineers who didn't talk to each other built by a contractor who nevertheless pulled everything together by cutting every possible corner. Or a piece of music in which the melody didn't fit the chords, and the drums played in a different time signature. I love Charles Ives, but his music is meaningful only in the context of a musical tradition with tighter, simpler, more linear structures.

My focus on design has led me to the conclusion that Nature provides us with the ultimate and most dependable model for our innovations. An essential touchstone in all of my conceptualizing has been the realization that Nature has given all animals blood, bones, and brain; each with their separate functions and agendas balanced and integrated by our organism's need for harmonious unity. Human society is just as governed by Nature's structural patterns as individual humans are. The governing concepts of Watershed Communities seek to remedy those areas where certain human cultural memes that once served us well are now rapidly becoming de-evolutional.

importance of the *commons*, the centrality (and need for refocusing) of *education*, and ultimately, an examination and restructuring of our protocols of *land use* and *monetary exchange*.

The last three sections of the book describe an imagined emergent society based on land usership replacing land ownership, the institution of computerized work-hour barter for the precisely (but locally, democratically) defined necessities of civilized life, the retention of money as we know it for the exchange of goods and services not rationally accountable in work-hours, the retention and mindful use of the technology required to maintain adequate levels of food production, housing, clothing, communication, transportation, and medical care, and the prioritization of the needs of Nature over all human needs other than the basic survival needs outlined above. The Watershed Communities proposal consciously chooses to place itself at the midpoint between Luddism and faith in technological solutions.

Thus, Watershed Communities would have two immediate goals. First, to build a network of local organizations dedicated to helping their host communities cope with whatever comes down the pike while acquainting their neighbors with the notion of conceptualizing their neighborhoods as cooperative commons rather than seeing their goal as hoarding gains wrested from their fellows through competition for scarce dollars.

Second, to build a self-sustaining pilot community (or communities) to test the viability of a democratically governed work-hour-for-necessities-economy coupled with sustainable agriculture that leaves room for wild Nature.

Such a pilot community is most viable in those areas where certain environmental and technological preconditions are present. These are: a moderate climate, adequate fresh water, fertile soil, and a dependable supply of non-polluting renewable energy in being or under construction together with the infrastructure to distribute it.

Revision of basic, historically established ways of relating to each other and the earth naturally arouses suspicions. But what if those ways that shape our operative values and compromise our morality are the cause of our present ominous trajectory? And what if the scholars and activists are too consumed by their special concerns, or too concerned with peer credibility, or too focused on understanding the past or righting past wrongs, or too addicted to sucking on the corporate or NGO teat, to craft a comprehensive vision of a better future? The present world situation requires such a vision to counter the stranglehold of the militarily-enforced market-fundamentalist monetarist monolith. What is not needed is an un-focused rebellion or another rigid ideology. These fail to answer the real need.

The elements of such a vision—environmentalism, technological ephemeralization, renewable energy, etc.—started to be crafted in the '70s but have yet to find a common platform not compromised by nationalism, corporatism, or militarism. The Watershed Communities vision seeks to provide such a platform and add to it a fundamental re-

## REVOLUTION OR WATERSHED COMMUNITIES--3/11

I avoid predicting the world's future explicitly, because—stated baldly—my view comes across as hopelessly pessimistic. Our future is held (with near-perfect invulnerability) in the hands of those grappling for short term advantage in the competition for wealth and power in a world characterized by diminishing resources and increasing population. See “The Death of the Liberal Class” by Chris Hedges (2010). The long term result will be what Richard Heinberg characterizes as “last man standing”—the grim dystopia of endless warfare, mass starvation, and a general retreat from civilization into barbarism. My book proposes a way for those who see themselves as swimming upstream with the roar of the falls at their back to organize in order to determine and then sustainably maintain the best aspects of our civilization.

As I write, I see in the developing rebellions in the Middle East a precursor of what may well occur here as the present system creates more and more surplus people. Chris Hedges sees rebellion as the only answer. He may be right. In my view, that only kicks the can down the road, opens the doors to jack-booted thugs, and does nothing to solve the underlying problem of too little resources for too many people in a system where people gain their sustenance from exploiting each other rather than directly from Nature. In the long run a market-dominated economic system can only endure without devolving into conflict if cooperation replaces exploitation, and scarce resources are shared. Our survival at present population levels requires the renunciation of, not only nuclear, but all technological warfare. But more than that, it requires global cooperation to replace international competition as the norm. Ayn Rand and Fox News to the contrary, we're all in this together. “We'll all go together when we go.”

My proposal does not seek to address specifically the problems faced by ordinary people today as they face the challenges of joblessness, foreclosures, and civic disintegration. The Watershed Communities concept seeks the organic growth of a new sense of *neighborhood community* based on the *public school* district integrated with a new sense of *geographic place* around the *watershed*. These concepts should be non-threatening to the present popular positions shaped by the corporate media, even though they undermine the conventional wisdom of corporate market fundamentalism. People will be more open to these viewpoints as their worsening situation causes them to realize that their local communities, neighbors, and civic amenities are their only real allies. They will come to acknowledge the drain of their real wealth to corporate profits, foreign wars, and financial speculation; all to be accompanied by the deterioration of the level of security provided by increasingly cash-starved local governments. One must add to this the pain of living with the devastation wrought by the ongoing rape of Mother Nature.

Those already onboard and active in sustainability and local community efforts could find a supportive home in a Watershed Communities social network. Its central websites would not only stress support for ongoing activities but promote the establishment of *local Watershed Stewards* and work toward secure provision of *basic needs* to all residents of the local community. The Watershed Communities focus on the synergetic implementation of these objectives should lead to the revival and amplification of the