

of progressive liberals and social conservatives alike: those arising from conditions of birth (sex, race, ethnicity, etc.) and disability due to accidents of life experience. These conflicts, along with ego conflicts around social status, will always plague us because we are human. We must, however, work to avoid institutionalization of responses to these conflicts that disadvantage any of the participants.

“Watershed Communities” identifies a list of criteria for the goals to be embraced that ought be non-controversial. They are:

- *equity* to all participants in the *economy*;
- *sustainability* for the *earth's* biosphere;
- disuse of *military* force, a condition known as *peace*;
- minimum *police-ing* in a context of maximum *freedom*;
- *government* by *democracy*;
- the *people* engaged in the *pursuit of happiness*;
- *education* engaged in the *pursuit of truth*;
- *religion* focused on the *spirituality* of the individual.

In other words, “We seek a world without war, led by democratic governments regulating a truly free market economy that puts a floor under poverty, with all people guaranteed full human and civil rights, so that people can lead meaningful, purposeful lives that avoid causing further environmental degradation.”

In order to accomplish this we propose no immediate change in the delicate web of the ongoing provisions of material goods and services, although this must evolve over time to a condition of sustainability. We propose, instead, a set of changes to the economy’s “operating systems” that—guided by the criteria outlined above—will achieve monetary reform, land reform, energy use and acquisition reform, the return to and enlargement of the commons, and the definition and implementation of a basic economy that satisfies the minimum needs of all citizens for a civilized life.

Further, “Watershed Communities” proposes a process by which local communities can work toward these goals without going head to head with all-powerful mega-corporations and the corrupt political system they control. We seek to energize democracy at the local level. We seek to avoid the imposition of laws whose establishment depends on government coercion. Although they will always be necessary, laws should be as few and simple as possible. They will be necessary in order to protect the institutions and practices that “Watershed Communities” proposes.

movements based on the ideas of “great men”. We are learning that major paradigm shifts grow from the ground up, not from the top down. That is not to say that thinkers and prophets are un-necessary or counter-productive, only that at any one time there will be many of them and that it is impossible to predict in advance which ones will go viral and which will be ignored. Martin Luther King’s found immense resonance where E. F. Schumacher’s have largely been ignored.

The paths that humans will choose, both as individuals and as societies, are one of the most volatile, fast-changing phenomena in all of Nature. Human cultures seem to me to be built on memes that shape our societies in a process similar to the way genes shape our organism except that the human intellect wedded to conceptual communication can accomplish cultural evolution in months on a scale that takes random mutations and natural selection centuries. The Internet has vastly accelerated the potential pace of rapid cultural change as we have seen recently in the Middle East.

It’s not so much comprehensive vision as it is a myriad of independent local actions that produce cultural evolution, but the *process* by which these either do or don’t become symbiotic. In his book “Collapse”, Jared Diamond shows how inflexible adherence to an entrenched worldview can disable any resilient process promising survival in the face of novel challenges.

In “Emergence”, Steven Johnson points out that a system where macrointelligence and adaptability derive from local intelligence requires adherence to five fundamental principles: More is different. Ignorance is useful. Encourage random encounters. Look for patterns in the signs. Pay attention to your neighbors.

I tout the need for a comprehensive viewpoint to inform those who would transform our society because it will be change agents at the local level who will be the neighbors who will most be paid attention to. The majority of people seek the comfort of the habitual. When this is threatened or disappears, their reaction is emotional: anger, denial, apathy, or stoicism. As we have seen in the Arab Spring, the result can be revolution involving greater or lesser degrees of violence. In Egypt and Tunisia we can see that the people were quite clear about what they wished to replace but divided about what they wish to replace it with. Moreover, those dispossessed survive to become potential counter-revolutionaries—the new “victims”—in the future.

As the population/resource equation becomes more unbalanced the delicate equilibrium of economic homeostasis will become more vulnerable to disruptions. It will be in everyone’s self-interest that the inevitably growing scarcity of fossil fuel energy not trigger social disruption. Making the working poor take the hit will guarantee disruptions affecting all levels of society.

“Watershed Communities” attempts to paint in broad strokes how local communities linked by the Internet might weather the storm of a contracting real economy (as distinct from the fictitious financial economy) with the least amount of social disruption. It purports comprehensiveness at the expense of neglecting controversies dear to the hearts

Henry George, (Progress and Poverty), George, proposed land-value taxation as the sole deus ex machina to all problems.

Georgescu-Roegen, Nicholas, Energy and Economic Myths, Southern

Thomas H. Greco Jr., (Money and Debt: A Solution to the Global Crisis), (Money—Understanding and Creating Alternatives to Legal Tender), (The End of Money and the Future of Civilization), proposes clearing houses for barter between economic entities and the institution of a single international currency not tied to any nation.

Richard Heinberg, (Powerdown), (Peak Everything), nails the necessity of using less fossil energy without saying how.

Jaron Lanier, (You Are Not a Gadget), poses a humanist critique of the Internet.

Jerry Mander, (In the Absence of the Sacred), A Luddite response to the evils of corporate advertising.

Robert W. McChesney, (The Problem of the Media), outlines corporate media's threat to democracy, the general welfare.

Milo Mesarovic & Eduard Pestel, (The Limits to Growth), (Mankind at the Turning Point), a ground-breaking 70s neo-Malthusian analysis of the intersection of population and resources.

Kirkpatrick Sale, (Dwellers in the Land), a humanist plea for Nature.

Douglas Schuler, (New Community Networks), an early local empowerment vision for the Internet.

E.F. Schumacher, (A Guide for the Perplexed), 1st popular downsizer.

These books, along with others of which I'm unaware, together with magazine articles, videos, op-eds, documentaries, and other media modalities make an invaluable contribution to the individual's understanding of the objective reality that lies beyond the horizon of our personal experience.

There is a more or less coherent vision among scientists, humanist scholars, and spiritual teachers about what is wrong, and even the direction of the path that should be taken, but no comprehensive vision about what we must do to change in that direction that doesn't sacrifice one or more of our treasured values.

The misdirection and tragic outcomes of the grand designs and rigid ideologies of the 19th and 20th centuries from Marxism to neo-conservatism bear testimony to the folly of social

WATERSHED COMMUNITIES GOALS IN A NUTSHELL—7/22/11

My predictions are based on specialist's extrapolations, treasured values, the progress of culture and technology, and my own intuition.

Specialist's predictions—made by those who are unwilling to risk their credibility and professional status by gambling on uncertain future outcomes—shrink from making proposals, especially comprehensive ones.

The future is my over-riding concern. The past is unalterable. The alterability of the present is limited to the reach of my local action.

My knowledge of the past is broad, objectively generalized, but non-scholarly. My knowledge of the present is personally specific, but subjective; socially media-mediated; globally highly generalized. My predictions of the future are based on specialist's extrapolations of present trends, the theories of those who wish to retain treasured values that are exemplified by the progress of culture and technology over the last five hundred years, and my own intuition.

The problem I have with what I know about that's out there is that no coherent guidance to a viable *comprehensive* alternative to the disaster we are now embarked upon—grown from the ground up by the cumulative efforts of individuals as they become aware of the doomed path we have chosen—has yet been formulated. Even though global in scope, our thinkers are scholarly specialists—beholden to their professional reputations with their peers—who are unwilling to risk their credibility, either with their colleagues

or the public, by stepping out of their narrow fields of expertise into the domains of their intellectual and spiritual neighbors with prescriptions for meeting problems not yet fully manifested in a future that never turns out like anyone predicted.

Here is a sample distilled from the bibliography of “Watershed Communities” that illustrates my point.

Lester R. Brown, et al, (Saving the Planet), monitors trends in the health of the global biosphere.

Herman E. Daly, (Steady-State Economics), proposes economic homeostasis without currency reform.

T. B. Edsall, (The New Politics of Inequality), democracy that's trumped by the power of wealth in the hands of the few needs progressive taxation.

Buckminster Fuller, (Operating Manual for Spaceship Earth), the quintessential comprehensive 20th century futurist outmoded for the 21st by his technocentric bias.