

New Work New Culture Reader

Prototype Edition

Second Printing

Forward to the Second Printing of the New Work/New Culture Reader—Prototype Edition

As a resource to attendees of the North American Solidarity Economics conference and others, we are pleased to reprint The New Work New Culture Reader—Prototype Edition. Since the first printing in the Fall of 2014 the conversation about a new model of work has intensified in theory and practice. A new edition of this Reader, now being prepared, will explore these developments. Yet this volume still serves as a compilation of the foundational thinking of Frithjof Bergmann and other pioneers, activists and thinkers in the New Work/New Culture movement.

We invite you to join the discussion and to learn more at:

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Preface to the NWNC Reader, Prototype Edition

By Frank Joyce

What makes a society prosperous? Is the society/system in which some people have a lot of stuff automatically the best? Is poverty for billions a necessary and permanent condition of human life on earth? New Work New Culture challenges these assumptions.

Actually, New Work New Culture challenges everything. In offering a different way to organize work it opens the door to new thinking about education, government, art and entertainment and our relationship with nature. It seeks to reframe the conversation to reflect the growing inability of late stage race-based capitalism to meet the needs of people or the planet.

At this stage of its evolution, New Work New Culture does not pretend to have all the answers. Or even all the questions. That is why there are sections in this prototype New Work New Culture Reader that have no entries. Yet.

This book is a work in progress and probably always will be. We reject doctrine. We welcome innovation and creative thinking. We are committed to creating and sustaining a dialogue of theory and practice as we find our way.

We join the search for better ways of working and better ways of being because we believe that humans are learning that work impacts culture and culture impacts work. The dominant way of organizing how we work now serves to produce, reinforce and reproduce destructive ways of being with one another and with other species.

A few hundred years of thinking and being as required by the slave trade, industrialization, factory farming and endless war have taken a worldwide toll. Our collective mental health and our humanity is damaged and compromised.

That said, humans do not emerge from this era empty. We are full of hope, plans and ideas. You will see that in this book.

We invite you not just to read this prototype edition of the New Work New Culture Reader. Please help us in writing many new chapters for the next edition.

We express our gratitude to all of our contributors and especially to Mary Anne Barnett and Rick Feldman for their work in pulling this material together and to Roger Robinson and Ulysses Newkirk for their guidance and support in printing this prototype edition.

Introduction:

A conversation about New Work New Culture

Grace Boggs, Frithjof Bergman, Kim Sherobbi, Barbara Stachowski, Rick Feldman and Frank Joyce.

In contemplating this book we held a conversation in early 2014 to think collectively about some of what we wanted it to cover. What transpired was a far ranging discussion that wound up focusing on the relationship between New Work and New Culture. Participants included Grace Boggs, Frithjof Bergman, Kim Sherobbi, Barbara Stachowski, Rick Feldman and Frank Joyce. Following is a lightly edited transcript:

Frank: Well we wanted to have a conversation that involved you and Frithjof especially to think about the introduction to the book and how we would frame what it is we're trying to say. So my thought about a question to get us started is "What time is it on the clock of New Work?" Where does New Work fit in where we are now?

Grace: I think we're at a watershed of civilization. I've been reading about the Neolithic period when people started farming and moved from hunting and gathering and began to live on the land. And I think that introduced a partnership relationship between men and women that most people don't know about. Riane Eisler wrote about it in her book *The Chalice and the Blade*, and I think to introduce that concept of how living on the land creates a possibility of partnership relationships between men and women and that every transition to a new society as Sylvia Federici points out in her book *Caliban and the Witch*, offers that possibility. The witch hunts were an attempt to drive women from the land and men also into the cities to become proletarians. And I think to bring that into this New Work thing would be very important.

Frank: Frithjof do you want to respond to the same question or ask a new one?

Frithjof: I would like to respond to the same question. I very much agree with, underscore what Grace just said.

Grace: Well I think the idea new culture has to include a partnership relationship with men and women, and how living on the land restores that possibility.

Frithjof: Well very much so.

Grace: Because women's ways of caring and thinking become so very important. Do you know the book by Riane Eisler, *The Chalice and the Blade*?

Frithjof: Yes, I do, I do I do I do. And Grace, forgive me, this is meant to be slightly humorous but I always like to emphasize I was a farmer three times in my life. So I have some idea what living on the land and actually making your living from the land is all about. Quite frankly because I've done it.

Frank: Would either of you want to say more about the idea of living on the land and relationships between men and women and the idea of community production?

Grace: I think the ecofeminist movement particularly has pointed out how women's ways of

caring do not count the hours. They're not like jobs, because there's something emotionally satisfying about caring, about women's work. And I think to bring in that aspect of women's work, and how new work makes that possible would be very important.

Frank: I find that very helpful, because one of my things is to contrast the J-O-B system with New Work. In that context the J-O-B system is all about counting the hours and it's all about keeping track and it's all about fighting over the hours and who's in charge of the counting and what is each hour worth.

Grace: Yes and the Job system is so dehumanizing that people compensate for it through higher wages and through greater production and that jeopardizes the earth.

Barb: You know when women do work, and some men too, you do what has to be done. You don't check in, you don't check out; you don't clock in, you don't clock out so I think that a difference in New Work and sort of the similarities between New Work and women's work is that you do what has to be done. There's no division of what kind of work-- all the work is sort of what needs to be done.

Frank: Well an extension of that, of course or maybe it's just a different way of saying the same thing, is that the J-O-B system controls how we spend our time, within a day and within a week and within a lifetime. The job of being a parent for example within the J-O-B system is to get the kid ready to get a J-O-B. So it controls how we think about parenting and how we think about education and what it is children need to know. And then of course the children grow up thinking that the purpose of life is to have a J-O-B or to have a career, which is kind of the same thing.

Frithjof: This is not the same thing but it relates to what we're talking about. I would like to emphasize in whatever we pull from here on in that community production is very like farming only on a different technological level. The overlap and the similarities between the life and the work of farming and the life and the work of community production, obviously but I think that can be pointed out and in some sense I always use the metaphor of a spiral. We are in some sense returning to what farming was like but on a higher level, on higher technological level.

Rick: I want to share a sense of what we've learned from other epochs: 1) It was not inevitable that capitalism emerged. People made choices, people lost battles; it was about power and that we're at a similar moment where ideas matter and technology has provided us with the basis to both take the best from that epoch before capitalism did what it did, but also the best that capitalism did in terms of technology and production, whether it would have happened another way or not we don't know, but technology provides the spaces for community production. So there's a new synthesis between technology that emerged, or begins to emerge, I guess it's always been there, but has clearly emerged an ability to decentralize but also in a global understanding. Because I think what we ought to show is that people can have a quality of life and we can create a quality of life that's both local that's also internationally understood and in relationship. We're not talking about going backwards, we're talking about going forward but taking those things that were destroyed for the last 4 or 5 hundred years and bring them forth: the women's way of knowing, the relationship to the land and so forth, so I appreciate what you're all saying.

Frithjof: I understand very well what you Richard are saying. I'm asking but at the same time proposing that the make up for a spiral is useful.

Grace: Well I think the Agrarian phase of society was almost like a fall of community production. Because we think of the Agrarian mainly in terms of slavery because that was the way this country developed but when you live on the land, whole families live on the land; it's a very different culture.

Frank: Well I have a question about that. If we go back to small family farms whether in England or Europe or the United States, two things occur to me. One is people made what they needed so if they needed a plow for example they figured out how to make a plow. They operated in communities, so if they needed to build a schoolhouse we all can think back to pictures of a barn raising for example. Mostly families gathered to do something that the community needed. It was small and it was local. Now I think we see as a result of fabrication technology and so on the chance to do that again in a localized comparable way. My question though is a question about technology. Fabrication is a high tech invention/evolution from manufacturing from computers from digital technology etc. etc. So fine, let's say I can make a television set in a garage. But what if I need copper to make that television set and to run that fabricator but we have exhausted the world's supply of copper? Then what happens?

Frithjof: That is your question? Can I say something before I answer your question? Namely, I would emphasize both. It's a duality if you want. It's dialectical in the sense that there are definitely are similarities to farming and of course we want to recover what has been buried about farming and that is what we're talking about. At the same time I would want to insist that there are differences. It's not simply going back to farming. I think that would be a disastrous mistake to attempt that. So technology does make a very big influence and yes a quick way to put it is we don't just make our own bread and our own salami and our own butter and our own eggs but to pick up on what Frank just said we are not that far from making our own television sets. We are very close to making our own electricity. I feel that has a sort of symbolic value that is high tech farming so to say. And I would not identify that only with fabricators; I think that's a big mistake. In what I'm writing I'm trying to break down community production into 10 items or 10 categories. There are 10 things that meaningfully can be done with the existence of technology and each one of those 10 things can make us less dependent on money and less dependence on jobs. Now back to what Frank was saying. For quite some time frankly, I have been saying that no we will not run out of electricity, that's ridiculous. In fact we are constantly inventing new ways of making electricity and there are now so many ways of making electricity that electricity, the scarcity of it, is almost no longer a problem. And I would say something like that about copper – that if we do run out of copper we're very smart. We'll find some other material that will do very well what copper did not as well. So we'll improve the outcome.

Grace: I think it's really important when we talk about additive manufacturing to realize that at one point we move from the Bronze Age, which was very rigid, to the Iron Age which was much more pliable so the additive manufacturing does not always have the same materials as previous, you can move, the materials used in the future will probably be not the same as, they will become paper but they will be different.

Frithjof: That's part of what I'm saying.

Rich: I want to go back to Kim's question. First, it is critical and that we're doing the New Work reader in Detroit even though it's a global conversation taking place. That has to do with the significance of community production in a city that has 50% unemployment among youth, and

that is a predominantly black city that emerges from the history of racism and capitalism. We believe through example and through theory that a new meaning of life can be given to that underclass, that outsider class that has historically evolved because of capitalist evolution over the last period. To struggle around community production is to negate seeing people as either parasites or predators but as contributing to humanity and to their community.

Grace: I think that what we need to show actually how the production takes place. To give some sense of you know, the same way in capital, you have the materials and you have the constant capital and the variable capital and we see changes taking place in the materials and all that. I think the introduction needs to give a sense what additive manufacturing really is like.

Kim: I can't help but speak to the culture and Frank's question about running out of copper or we run out of materials that were used previously. I understand that it's definitely a possibility and it may happen that we'll be using differently materials. But in the meantime as we're looking for best practices and things of that nature we still have our past. And one of the things that's happening right now in our present is we're destroying the earth. So yesterday I was at an event at EMEAC and some people from Africa came. They're doing a tour around the country and they're saying "We're being killed! And this has been happening for over 50 years and nobody said anything and its coming to a city near you! Our women are losing their babies. The oil has killed our crops. We are now starving." And some of the spillage and some of the garbage and the toxins are now traveling across the world. We have to deal with that right now. So I'm saying that speaks to a culture. If we don't get this culture together we're not going to be here to do any of it. We're not. The earth is going to be gone and we've got to look at how we're treating people, how we're interacting with each other. None of this will mean anything shortly. It will mean nothing. I mean we want to produce but if we don't really look at the culture it's going to even be hard to do anything with fabricators, with farming, with even doing things manually.

Rich: When you say culture what do you mean?

Kim: What I mean is how do we treat each other in terms of are we looking out for our brothers and sister, whether its locally, nationally or internationally. Are we really thinking about them? How do we shift to a more sharing type situation? How do we put in place systems and structures like mediation. We've been talking about that with the Peace Zones and what have you. But how do we put those things in place? How do we get our young people to focus in on values of compassion and being trustworthy and responsible and accountable? Not just our young people but all of us, but I think right now that's one of the things that we should be doing is really focusing on our young people because we've missed the boat. To help them, to have compassion for other people. So I'm saying that we, there needs to be a strong emphasis on the more human things that Grace talk about.

Grace: I think the introduction has to have some real anthropology in it and to give some sense of how society has developed; how materials have happened.

Barbara: I've really been thinking a lot that the conference might be called New Culture New Work. I'm really feeling the whole women's way of knowing and community and what I've just started thinking in the last couple days that we've talked about community production and I'm sure that a lot of people fabricators or 3D printers or a way of making a product or something

but it's also community production, what comes first the chicken or the egg? Is what we need to produce, community? I think Kim and I are kind of on the same place. We need to develop a culture, a mindset; working on community production in the production sense will produce community maybe by proximity. I always go back to the Hmong. I spent the last five days at a Hmong funeral and as soon as you walk into a space where there are a couple of Hmong people you enter in, it's almost like I can let out a breath of air because I know somebody has my back. I don't care what it is. People are paying attention to each other. You can't even reach for a glass of water. I think part of community production is creating a culture of community. And I really think the women's way of knowing as the Caliban and the Witch.

Grace: You know I almost feel this introduction is going to have to be like Capital.

Rich: Three volumes? Do we get three volumes Grace?

Grace: Go from manufacturing to industrial production to New Work and to trace the development of work. Not only the variable capital but the constant capital of the materials, all that will have to be in there. It will be a quite a work of art.

Frank: By definition then it will be a work in progress. But I'm not just agreeing with you, I think that we do have to capture the long view for one thing. Because let me say a word about old culture, or the current culture and how oppressive it is and let me try to frame this as a question. In a way it's almost a miracle that any kind of consciousness about New Work, New Culture, women's way of knowing is entering the public conversation and the movie and your book that preceded it - it is hard to exaggerate how encouraging that is because of how stifling and oppressive and encompassing the culture of the J-O-B system is. What see on television, what we're given is one false revolution after another. For example social media is revolutionary. No it's not. We can all think of a lot of examples like that. But I also think we are at a point where there's a disconnect between growing disenchantment with the J-O-B system and yet people not knowing how to connect to or make something better. Does anybody want to talk about that?

Kim: So the question is what is better? So now I'm thinking about what is better? We've been fed that better or good is having a lot of material things.

Frank: Yes, part of the J-O-B system, is that what is better is more. It's entirely quantitative.

Kim: I wouldn't even call it the J-O-B system as much as I would say you know, what America has framed and the American dream has been framed to be. The reason that people are in the J-O-B system is because they're trying to get a certain lifestyle. We've all been brainwashed or fed this certain way of being. I've been challenging myself and others to think about what is better? In my community is better for us having more things? What has been better for us is having our children safe, having community. So many in my community, in the African American community have said, we didn't even know we were poor. And now I ask the question, when did you find out? When did you decide you were poor? Who told you you were poor? And you know most of them said "when I went to college." A lot of people come back and say, "When I went to college and I..." or "When I was exposed to this" because they didn't have the things and that's when they felt poor. Prior to that when they didn't have money, when we didn't have money none of us felt poor because we had a richer life. So I'm challenging and saying ok well let's go back, let's just think about what is better. Is it because of these material things, and I think we got to re-frame that.

Grace: I can remember when before people thought things mattered -- what mattered was community. What mattered was not being an individual on your own. Rich: But people didn't know, and this is a question, and I can imagine Jimmy having this conversation about when people, even when I was a kid, you went to the store on a regular basis. So you saw your neighbors. Then people got the larger supermarket and that even started with refrigeration. So when we look at this we have to be very historical to know that people did not know that they were going to consciously give up all those relationships as they became more and more independent. So I didn't need my in-laws to babysit, I could pay a babysitter, right? I didn't need to live near my family because I could drive to my family. And if you don't do it historically it becomes nostalgia for the way life once was. And so the black community did what the American community did which was putting economic advancement, individual freedom above those relationships. And so we're dealing with this thing now about freedom and choice that we have a necessity that it's both out of necessity and choice we can create a new way of life. We're not saying that people should be you know just scratching their fingernails to grow an apple and share an apple. We're not saying that's the way, but there is this whole thing between needs and wants and what are the cultural values that are more important. So Jimmy said that in the next American Revolution we will be giving up things, right? That's a whole concept versus to get our humanity we have to give up things, right? That way people in Ghana or Bangladesh don't have to be the garbage dump for our way of life.

Kim: So I'm glad you said it because I've been saying we have to go through it to understand it. Now that we know what comes out of being materialistic, let's look at the best practices in our community, and let's create something else. So that's the way I've been framing it to people. Now that we know we have to go through what we didn't know, but now we know. I've also been saying as we talk to our children who are very angry, who are saying you all have not taken care of us. You've left us out here and we're angry at you. So our conversation with them is we didn't know. We thought too that it was going to be ok, but we can start from here. That's where we should be in our conversation with our children also.

Frithjof: Can I say a couple of things? One thing is that on the issue of creating community I would want to emphasize that working together, that community production, that making things in the community, a community making things, is a way of creating community. And maybe it's one of the most effective and powerful and feasible ways of creating community. I think working together does create community maybe more than all kinds of ethereal talk.

Frank: My second point is probably even more controversial and again I want to explicitly align myself with Kim here. Many times in my life I've said the best job I've ever had in my whole life was when I drove a fork lift in an auto factory many, many years ago. And I say that to say, yes workplaces create community. When I worked in a big factory, I very much was part of a community. We had a good time. And we socialized outside of the workplace. There was a connection there that was imposed on us because a factory is a system of enforced cooperation. It brings human beings together and it divides work in a certain way and it creates social as well as economic relationships. But I really think one of the things in this conversation that's been most valuable to me and I think Barbara said it is -- A part of creating community is the work of creating community. Of creating community for the sake of creating community, not treating it as it will be the byproduct of us doing something else. I think I'm understanding that this morning more clearly than I have understood it up to now. it. And I think that is what's missing from,

Marx thought the mode of production alone would recapacitate people and it didn't. It actually created more individuals.

Frithjof: Well I think the difference between what Marx was talking about and what we mean by community production is huge. I did visit any number of communist countries before I started working on New Work. And I started working on New Work after having spent time in communist countries because they struck me as inhuman. That there was very little compassion. There was no love of work and everyone seemed dreadfully depressed. So I have very little patience with Marx.

Frank: Well I don't think it's a question of being patient or impatient with Marx. I think this has been very rich conversation. One thing Frithjof I will say is I don't have a lot of experience with this but I will say I think Cuba is a pretty good place and in my brief times that I've spent there I think there's quite a bit of compassion and I think there's quite a bit of satisfaction in Cuba.

Grace: Community cannot grow out of the mode of production. The mode of production is important. We now have a community mode of production but it has to be a psychological, philosophical process taking place alongside of it.

Frank: We have to grow our souls, to coin a phrase. I think we all agree on that. I mean the fact of the matter is that forget whether we like or don't like Marx at the moment. By certain definitions, admittedly self-proclaimed definitions, I agree with all of those who say the world in the last 50 years has experienced an enormous amount of poverty reduction. But it has come at the expense of what we mean by community for one thing, and compassion and at the expense of the planet and of the resources of the planet. So this balance again between the consciousness of community, for lack of a better way to put it, and the stuff – the food, the objects, the material things that humans need to survive and thrive. If this introduction only makes one point my summation would be that the New Culture is at least as important if not more important than the New Work. Maybe we should seriously think about reversing the words we use here from New Work/New Culture to New Culture/New Work.

Grace: I think that I would recommend our rereading of Chapter 6, Dialectics and Revolution by Jimmy Boggs. He talks about how we've put so much effort and energy into production that we have forgotten what we have to do about ourselves.

Frank: OK. I think this is a good stopping point but if anybody wants a last word they should take it.

Grace: I think in the manifesto where Marx says the constant revolution in technology distinguished the bourgeoisie epoch and he ends it up by saying to face with sober senses our conditions of our life and our relations with our kind, we have to do that or face conditions of life but relationships with our kind. If we emphasize new work and not new culture we will be repeating mistakes of the 19th century, of Marx. By emphasizing production over culture.

Kim: When we say the word work first I think that people think about jobs. Work and jobs can be used simultaneously and I think some time people think about the work, I mean they switch the two. So I think if you say culture first it'll help people understand that the culture has to change in order for the jobs to, the kind of new work that we're looking for to take care of us to happen.

Rich: So my final comment is what new culture/new work/new work/new culture/mode of production/community production/community culture is all about is what we've historically

talked about as moving from dialectic materialism to dialectic materialism humanism. Where the role of consciousness and conscious choice and the values are as significant as what we have once called the material world. That there is a new unity being created at this moment in history because technology has advanced to the point where we can actually deal with that poverty in the deepest part of Africa that we've fucked for the last 500 years. But you can only do it if you deal with the sons of bitches that like to deal with luxury and greed, and be that 5%. So that's my final comment. I think we'll probably continue the rest of our lives with this conversation.

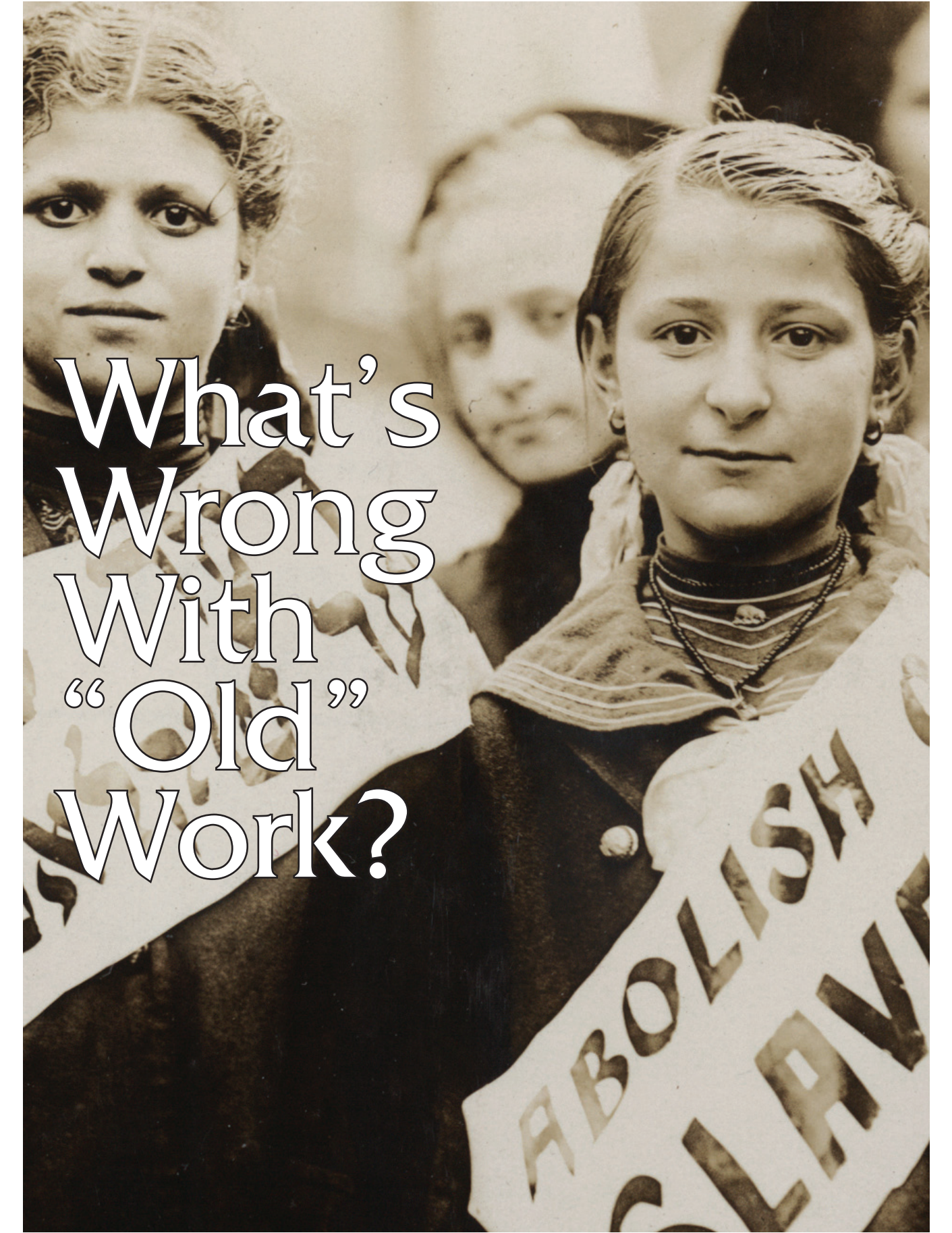
Frithjof: If somebody asks me Frithjof, what is it that you really address? What is the problem that you are really putting in the light? My answer is poverty... How much poverty has been reduced in the last few years? Don't go by the propaganda that's being told to you. If you look into India, if you look into Russia, if you look into Africa there's plenty of poverty. So we do have a difference between us that to some extent is a personal difference. I live a different lifestyle from the life you live. I respect what you're saying and what you're doing supposedly. But I'm saying what I'm wanting to do frankly is different because to my mind, there are also people who don't exactly hang onto my clothes but there are plenty of people who try to get some idea of where to go. So new work. My sense of it is that yes, production is crucial. I get this whole business of which comes first, the chicken or the egg, I find really I don't know. Should it be first production or first the souls or first the souls or first production? To my mind I find it extremely interconnected and interlinked. I do feel that's my last sentence. Whatever experience I have had that talking to very very poor people about changing their souls is really creating a situation where they put on their jackets and leave.

Grace: I think the mission of the human is to become fully human. And we need modes of production that make that possible. And now we have modes of production, jobs that make that impossible.

Kim: When I talk about education now, I ask people what kind of education are you talking about, and who's your audience? So I'll say, because we use education so general. So I'll say are you talking about an education about being a parent, are you talking about a street education, are you talking about a formal education? Because we use it so broadly. We paint with this broad brush so when I'm talking to a person they might say, oh well that doesn't fit me. So I'm glad you said what you said because what I'm talking about when I'm talking about growing our souls, I'm not talking about poor people in countries who have never had any money. I'm talking about those of us who've had resources who have not considered others or maybe who actually need to change so we can help the people who haven't had any resources at all. This is not a one-size-fits-all. So I know what you're talking about when you talk about people who have never had economic security at all. I've had conversations with people who've told me, I've never had it and I want it! And you're not going to take it away from me. You're not going to take that opportunity away from me, you've had it before Kim and I want that. So to have conversations with folks and explain to them that I have their best interests at heart and I can just share what my experience has been having some of those things. It's a challenge to do that but for the record I'm not talking about everybody, only if it fits.

Rich: Thank you. Party's over! We love you Frithjof, thanks! Long live mode of production, the end of poverty and the revolution to grow our souls! Long live dialectics!

Frithjof: We need more conversations like this.



What's Wrong With "Old" Work?

ABOLISH
SLAVERY

The JOB System

The J-O-B system organizes the work of the world in a certain way.

- It offers too much to some and little or none to others.
- It depends on production for the sake of production and consumption for the sake of consumption.
- It compels unequal relationships between employers and the employed.
- It is cruel to the unemployed.
- It drives the insatiable destruction of precious natural resources.
- It is hostile to the creation of community.
- It is inherently stressful to individuals, families and society. It deforms the entire process of education.
- It politically empowers some to the unnecessary disadvantage of others.
- It reproduces entrenched racial and global disparities.
- It promotes conflict rather than cooperation.
- It requires dishonesty and deceit at every turn, especially in the marketing of everything
- As currently structured, the global J-O-B system is not only failing - it is a menace to life on the planet. It is a system whose time is past.

Is Progress Good for Humanity?

By Jeremy Caradonna

The Atlantic Magazine

The stock narrative of the Industrial Revolution is one of moral and economic progress. Indeed, economic progress is cast as moral progress. The story tends to go something like this: Inventors, economists, and statesmen in Western Europe dreamed up a new industrialized world. Fueled by the optimism and scientific know-how of the Enlightenment, a series of heroic men—James Watt, Adam Smith, William Huskisson, and so on—fought back against the stultifying effects of regulated economies, irrational laws and customs, and a traditional guild structure that quashed innovation. By the mid-19th century, they had managed to implement *laissez-faire* (“free”) economy that ran on new machines and was centered around modern factories and an urban working class. It was a long and difficult process, but this revolution eventually brought Europeans to a new plateau of civilization. In the end, Europeans lived in a new world based on wage labor, easy mobility, and the consumption of sparkling products.

Europe had rescued itself from the pre-industrial misery that had hampered humankind since the dawn of time. Cheap and abundant fossil fuel powered the trains and other steam engines that drove humankind into this brave new future. Later, around the time that Europeans decided that colonial slavery wasn’t such a good idea, they exported this revolution to other parts of the world, so that everyone could participate in freedom and industrialized modernity. They did this, in part, by “opening up markets” in primitive agrarian societies. The net result has been increased human happiness, wealth, and productivity—the attainment of our true potential as a species.

Sadly, this saccharine story still sweetens our societal self-image. Indeed, it is deeply ingrained in the collective identity of the industrialized world. The narrative has gotten more complex but remains *à la base* a triumphalist story. Consider, for instance, the closing lines of Joel Mokyr’s 2009 *The Enlightened Economy: An Economic History of Britain, 1700–1850*: “Material life in Britain and in the industrialized world that followed it is far better today than could have been imagined by the most wildest optimistic 18th-century philosophe—and whereas this outcome may have been an unforeseen consequence, most economists, at least, would regard it as an undivided blessing.”

The idea that the Industrial Revolution has made us not only more technologically advanced and materially furnished but also better for it is a powerful narrative and one that’s hard to shake. It makes it difficult to dissent from the idea that new technologies, economic growth, and a consumer society are absolutely necessary. To criticize industrial modernity is somehow to criticize the moral advancement of humankind, since a central theme in this narrative is the idea that industrialization revolutionized our humanity, too. Those who criticize industrial society are often met with defensive snarkiness: “So you’d like us to go back to living in caves, would ya?” or “you can’t stop progress!”

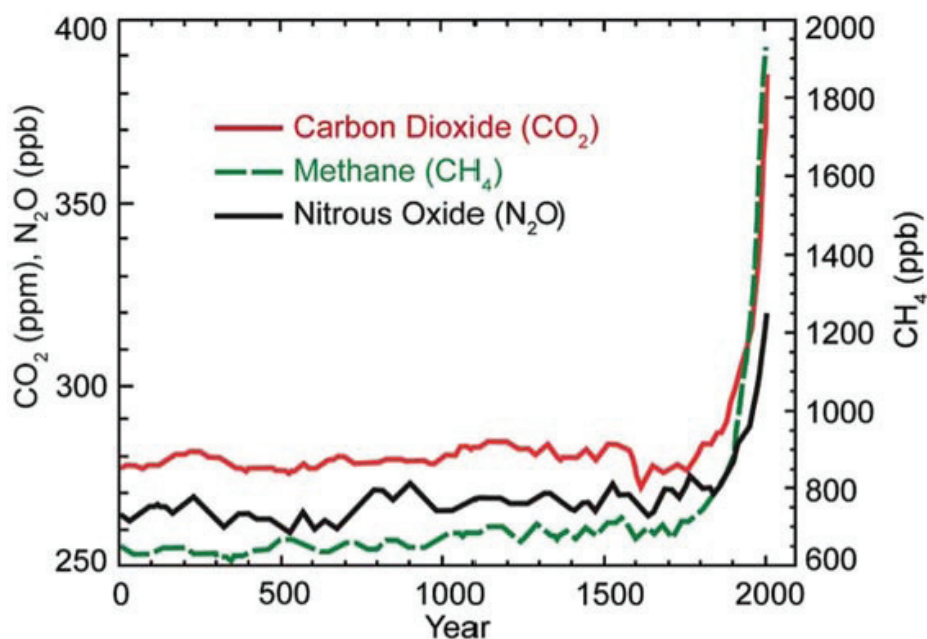
Narratives are inevitably moralistic; they are never created spontaneously from “the facts” but are rather stories imposed upon a range of phenomena that always include implicit ideas about what’s right and what’s wrong. The proponents of the Industrial Revolution inherited from

the philosophers of the Enlightenment the narrative of human (read: European) progress over time but placed technological advancement and economic liberalization at the center of their conception of progress. This narrative remains today an ingrained operating principle that propels us in a seemingly unstoppable way toward more growth and more technology, because the assumption is that these things are ultimately beneficial for humanity.

Advocates of sustainability are not opposed to industrialization per se, and don't seek a return to the Stone Age. But what they do oppose is the dubious narrative of progress caricatured above. Along with Jean-Jacques Rousseau, they acknowledge the objective advancement of technology, but they don't necessarily think that it has made us more virtuous, and they don't assume that the key values of the Industrial Revolution are beyond reproach: social inequality for the sake of private wealth; economic growth at the expense of everything, including the integrity of the environment; and the assumption that mechanized newness is always a positive thing. Above all, sustainability-minded thinkers question whether the Industrial Revolution has jeopardized humankind's ability to live happily and sustainably upon the Earth. Have the fossil-fueled good times put future generations at risk of returning to the same misery that industrialists were in such a rush to leave behind?

But what if we rethink the narrative of progress? What if we believe that the inventions in and after the Industrial Revolution have made some things better and some things worse? What if we adopt a more critical and skeptical attitude toward the values we've inherited from the past? Moreover, what if we write environmental factors back in to the story of progress? Suddenly, things begin to seem less rosy. Indeed, in many ways, the ecological crisis of the present day has roots in the Industrial Revolution. For instance, consider the growth of greenhouse gases (GHGs) in the atmosphere since 1750. Every respectable body that studies climate science, including NASA, the National Atmospheric and Oceanic Administration, and the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), has been able to correlate GHG concentrations with the pollutants

that machines have been spewing into the atmosphere since the late- 18th century. These scientific bodies also correlate GHGs with other human activities, such as the clearing of forests (which releases a lot of carbon dioxide and removes a crucial carbon sink from the planet), and the breeding of methane-farting cows. But fossil fuels are the main culprit (coal, gas, and oil) and account for much of the increase in



Carbon dioxide (PPM), methane (PPB), and nitrous oxide (PPM) in the atmosphere since 1750. Before the Industrial Revolution, CO₂ levels had long been stable at about 280 PPM. Now they're above 400 PPM. CO₂ levels have not been this high for at least 2 million years. (USGCRP 2009)

the parts per million of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere.

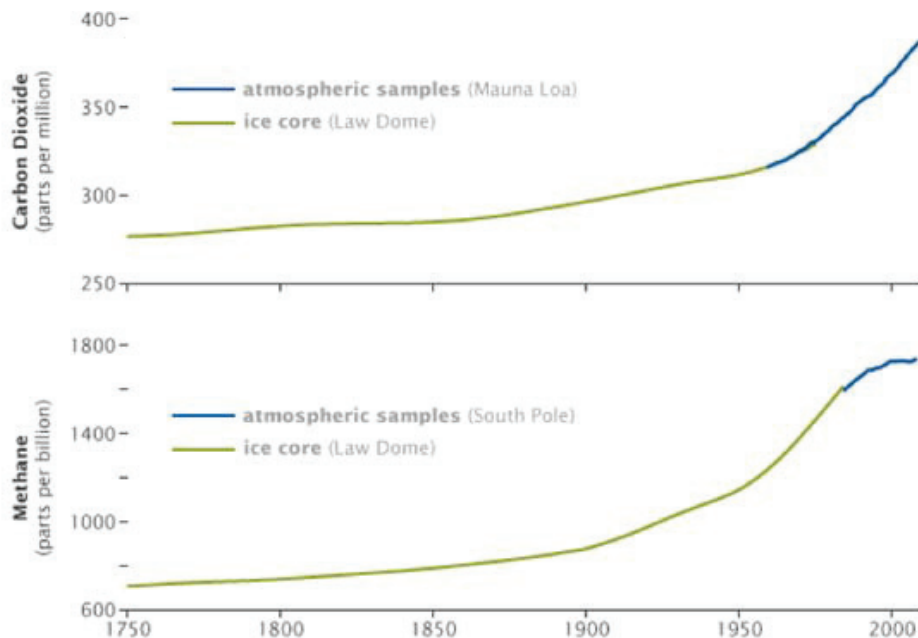
The main GHGs, to be sure, are carbon dioxide (CO₂), methane (CH₄), nitrous oxide (N₂O), and a few others, many of which can be charted over time by analyzing the chemistry of long-frozen ice cores. More recent GHG levels are identified from direct atmospheric measurements.

What we learn from these scientific analyses is that the Industrial Revolution ushered in a veritable Age of Pollution, which has resulted in filthy cities, toxic industrial sites (and human bodies), contaminated soils, polluted and acidified oceans, and a “blanket” of air pollution that traps heat in the Earth’s atmosphere, which then destabilizes climate systems and ultimately heats the overall surface temperature of the planet. The EPA is quite blunt about it: “Increases in

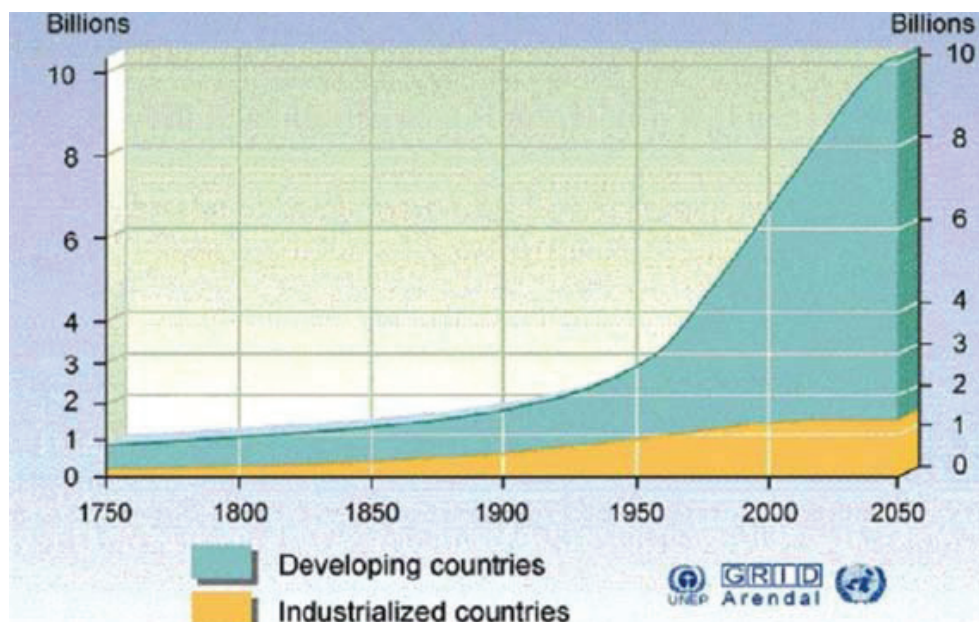
concentrations of these gases since 1750 are due to human activities in the industrial era.”

It’s worth noting, too, that the population of the world only began to take off during the Industrial Revolution. For millennia, the population of homo sapiens was well below the 1 billion mark, until that number was surpassed around 1800. The world now has 7 billion people and counting. That’s a lot of people who require food, energy, and housing and who place great strains upon global ecosystems. Consider the following figures:

When we take these trajectories into consideration, the Industrial Revolution starts to look like something less than an “undivided blessing.” It begins to look like, at best, a mixed blessing—one that resulted in technologies that have allowed many people to live longer, safer lives, but that



Carbon dioxide and methane levels in the atmosphere since 1750. (NASA, based on data from the NOAA Paleoclimatology and Earth System Research Laboratory)



Population levels in developing and industrialized countries over time, with future projections. (Philippe Rekacewicz, UNEP/GRIDArendal)

has, simultaneously, destroyed global ecosystems, caused the extinction of many living species, facilitated rampant population growth, and wreaked havoc on climate systems, the effects of which will be an increase in droughts, floods, storms, and erratic weather patterns that threaten most global societies. All of this is to say that the simple-minded narrative of progress needs to be rethought. This is not a new idea: In fact, critics of industrialization lived throughout the Industrial Revolution, even if their message was often drowned out by the clanking sounds of primitive engines. In their own particular ways, thinkers and activists as diverse as Thomas Malthus, Friedrich Engels, the Luddites, John Stuart Mill, Henry David Thoreau, William Wordsworth, and John Muir criticized some or all aspects of the Industrial Revolution. The narrative of industrial-growth-as-progress that became the story of the period occurred despite their varied protestations. The Luddites questioned the necessity of machines that put so many people out of work. Engels questioned the horrendous living and working conditions experienced by the working classes and drew links between economic changes, social inequality, and environmental destruction. Thoreau questioned the need for modern luxuries. Mill questioned the logic of an economic system that spurred endless growth. Muir revalorized the natural world, which had been seen as little more than a hindrance to wealth creation and the spread of European settler societies around the globe.

These figures have provided wisdom and intellectual inspiration to the sustainability movement. John Stuart Mill and John Muir, for instance, have each been “rediscovered” in recent decades, respectively, by ecological economists and environmentalists in search of a historical lineage. For the sustainability-minded thinkers of the present day, it was these figures, and others like them, who were the true visionaries of the age.

This post has been adapted from Jeremy Caradonna's new book, *Sustainability: A History*.
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4 Calamities Destroying America's Economy Being Ignored by Elites



AlterNet [1] / By Frithjof Bergmann [2]

Published on Alternet (<http://www.alternet.org>)

The world's current economic and political structures are proving incapable of fixing the global crisis of poverty, unemployment, and dislocation from a viable way of life for the majority of the world's population. Why? Let us begin with one present-day example: Larry Summers, former Secretary of the Treasury and also former chair of the Board of Economic Advisors, recently was the principal guest of the national radio broadcast "On Point." The topic of the hour-long dialogue was growing "inequality."

Summers posited that we are in an oddly slow recovery. He gave some reasons for the slowness but maintained that the measures instigated by the government (the Federal Reserve pumping funds into the economy, and the like) were fundamentally correct, and that with patience and persistence the recovery would solve the problems we have.

This basically is the position of Obama and importantly, by no means only his. Every government in every country subscribes essentially to this same apostolic faith. That faith is pathetic and even grotesquely mistaken. It ignores the four "Tsunami" causes for the globally increasing inequality:

1. Automation: The number of jobs that have been automated out of existence in the last 30 years is astronomical. Any effort to enumerate them would be silly. Useful, on the contrary, are perhaps a few hints of the kinds of automation that are still in the future, but nonetheless just around the corner. Observe what is happening in retail – Amazon.com [3], and more generally in the service sector, in banks and offices; but beyond that consider the near future of robotics, and close to that the potential of self-driving cars, and of course the galloping field of fabricators. Automation so far has only been the first breeze of an approaching hurricane.

2. A second colossal cause is globalization. Despite the nonstop discussion of that topic its basic significance is still largely misunderstood. That factory work is outsourced to lower wage countries is a belittling phrase; more accurate is the contrast between the former monopoly of a very few colonial powers and the now prevailing condition where all countries everywhere — even the Central African Republic and Borneo and Mongolia — are in development. In other words, in all countries people are looking for jobs. Thus the supply of labor has burst through all bounds! This in turn means that the value of unskilled work has plummeted beyond human sustainability much less economic growth.

3. Environmental degradation is growing. The depletion of natural resources is directly caused by fruitless efforts to stem unemployment. Unemployment threatens to grow continuously and the only response we have so far marshaled is economic growth, which self-evidently is coupled to the depletion of our resources.

4. The fourth mega-force that escalates inequality everywhere is the industrialization of farming. Throughout the millennia of the Agricultural epoch approximately 75% of the population lived and worked on farms. That percentage only started to gallop away from this ratio when farming

became mechanized. However, in the brief period of less than 200 years a breathtaking transformation has taken place. Worldwide 70% of farmers have been driven from their work and their land. In country after country the percentage of people still working and living on farms has thundered downwards so that it is now in some countries only about 4%. On some continents that human migration is still in its headlong tilt: but as villages die, the former farmers do not find work; they are absorbed in slums and sink down in the morass of extreme poverty, violence, crime, prostitution and drugs.

The really foul and grotesque dimension of this lies in its cognitive segregation, for the worldwide migration away from the farms is hardly mentioned when the deficit of jobs and the rise of inequality are discussed. In sheer numbers, this is obviously the most gargantuan cause.

It is stunning that there are whole shelves of books about the job-problem, but the reality of the loss of working on farms has rarely been included in the workforce calculations. In essence it means that 75% of the total working population have been cut off from their work and that the need to find re-employment for that huge number is part of the monster-problem that we are failing to even identify let alone solve.

If one adds these four Tsunamis together —automation, globalization, destruction of natural resources and the industrialization of farming — then it becomes obvious that the remedies now applied — stimulation of the economy, raising the minimum wage, more education and the rest — are laughably inadequate. It also becomes evident that we are emphatically not in a recovery, somnambulant or otherwise.

None of these causes are “circular,” or as it is sometimes expressed cyclical, which recoveries by definition are. All four are linear: automation, globalization, destruction of the environment and the migration away from the land will grow, far beyond where they are now, and will multiply. The inequality will become even more monstrous and more dangerous than it is now. The contrast between slums and the palaces of the superrich is already surreal and fantastic, but it will grow further and beyond our worst imaginings. The faith that we are in a circular turning wheel situation, and that automatically, obedient to the laws of economics, we move towards equilibrium, is totally unfounded. It is just a misguided medieval superstition.

We are not turning in a circle; on the contrary we are undergoing a gigantic linear transformation that is as all changing as the shift from agriculture to industrialization.

Why is this a gigantic linear transformation? Because there is no circling back to a former “better” time. The mega-factors listed have produced an enormous rift or a bifurcation. It is a split between the 20%, Oasis people (the rich) and the 80%, Desert people (the poor.) Other groups have of course a greater liking for describing the division as between 1% and 99% but that seems too exaggerated.

New Work New Culture is a new way of looking at and actualizing how people can live in peace and prosperity, working together to provide what is needed not just for survival but for joyous fulfillment. People of good will must stop looking back, yearning for the good old days.

New Work New Culture gives us a roadmap to take on the task to articulate a ladder that defines

a practical, performable sequence of steps in detail that is realistic and manageable. By doing so we will not just alleviate the four Tsunami Calamities but give life to a rise, an ascent that has become possible with the technology that we now have.

(Frithjof Bergmann is a retired Professor of Philosophy from the University of Michigan. He has been writing, teaching and organizing for the ideas of New Work for more than 3 decades. He has authored many works, including *On Being Free* (1977). He is a principal organizer of the New Work New Culture conference [4] in Detroit, Michigan from October 18-20. #NWNC2014 [4]) [5]

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COMMUNITY PRODUCTION: HOW COMMUNITY PRODUCTION CAN REDUCE THE COST OF “LIFE NECESSITIES”

By Frithjof Bergmann

1. FOOD
2. HABITAT/RENT
3. UTILITIES
4. TRANSPORTATION
5. CLOTHES AND SHOES
6. FURNITURE
7. INSURANCE
8. MEDICAL EXPENSES
9. EDUCATION
10. CHILDCARE

Through a great deal of observation, experimentation and testing we eventually arrived at this list of 10 “Life Necessities.” Nothing was ironclad nor universally hard and fast. Individuations and exceptions appeared at every turn. Nonetheless, slowly, a fairly consistent pattern emerged. Regardless even of the continent on which we were examining the lives of people in extreme poverty, despite the multispangled variety, as it were, throughout it, poverty to our surprise seemed relatively coherent and similar everywhere.

Everything depends of course on what one means by this. A first glimmer of specificity enters the picture the minute we say that food is of course the first and most demanding of these “Life-Necessities.” Not surprisingly, some high beam thoughts that connect food with the New Work framework arise at once. How possible is it to reduce or terminate the buying of food and substitute it with growing one’s own. It is interesting, I think, that the hard as nails resistance to this, on its face, so obvious a proposal is a cultural objection. The people that we call “Desert People” do not want to “go back” to the growing of their own food. That was the plight of their ancestors, and returning to it spells defeat and capitulation instead of the positive connotations that well-meaning development workers intend.

Dealing with this is naturally only a first basic step. The reference to or the introduction of advanced hitherto unknown technologies helps to undercut any notion of a “going back” and in that way proves decisively helpful in this as in hosts of other contexts.

In the case of Urban Gardening what is needed for the all-important transition of genuine “Desert People” from the economy of buying to the economy of self-making is that the technologies used for self-making must be fairly advanced and should if possible not resemble too closely

the technologies that these people may have used before. That thought is of course shocking to some, especially if one is used to the context of middle class people who add to their luxury and to the burnishing of their self-image the vegetables they have grown on their balcony. Among the examples that illustrate vividly this break from the past in our manifold experience are the “vertical containers” that are by now one of the emblems of New Work. To call them an advanced technology would of course be comical, but that misses the point. They constitute a obvious difference from the gardening of the past and that is what counts. Parallel thoughts apply to greenhouses and most especially to the raising of algae where New Work has emphasized that it is possible to make from algae virtually everything, such as plastics and nylons, for which now we rely on oil.

For the cardinally important transition from the economy of buying to the economy of selfmaking, for that to begin even in baby-steps our list of the ten “life-necessities” is of considerable value. The point has some resemblance to our point about technology. To stress that ten “lifeneccessities” constitute a unit that is in a serious sense “complete” has great impact on Desert People. It means that these ten are all that you firmly need, but still more importantly that all you need can be partly made by yourself and need not be purchased, at least not completely. That makes the idea of an alternative economy of selfmaking far more graspable and realistic than it was before. Instead of floundering in a slippery fish-tank of possibilities we can now nail to the wall exactly what we mean: attain a condition where these ten are self-produced and not entirely purchased and a new and different economy has been reached.

No matter how shabby and dilapidated their habitat is, for virtually all Desert People it commonly is their greatest monthly expense. Therefore the chain that ties them most tightly to the incomemaking life is the “rent” (even if they own their habitat there are costs) they must pay. How very much slum-dwellers often know about the absurdities of normal building is by itself enough to raise one’s estimate of their intelligence. That is one of the many reasons for New Work’s long and determined interest in unconventional, not well-known ways of building, and there again the fascination with previously not encountered technologies asserts itself.

A CRITIQUE OF MASS MANUFACTURING

as a first step towards New Manufacturing

By Frithjof Bergmann

Few of our convictions are any firmer than our belief that mass manufacturing cannot be surpassed. We have seen countless video clips of cigarettes gushing in something resembling a waterfall from the end of a line, or coke-bottles moving like toy-trains rapidly around curves between small wire fences. So we are dead sure that nothing could be cheaper, or more efficient and modern than that way of manufacturing the products we like. It hits us therefore as an almost shocking surprise that this is not necessarily so.

There is an alternative that is cheaper, more efficient and above all more modern – and vastly more **ecologically conserving of nature**.

The decisive argument for all this is almost insultingly simple: In a banal way it just highlights the additional costs that on second thought are not external at all.

First and most blatant among these are of course the costs for transportation. If the manufacturing is centralized it occurs in one limited place and then inevitably built into this system the products must be dispersed, and the more extreme the centralization and the wider the distribution the more complex and the more costly the transportation will become. But the sheer movement from the place of production to the place of consumption is just the beginning. The minute that part is recognized and acknowledged the clamor from all the other surrounding costs rises higher and higher. This is a situation where opening the door to the one most insistent and closest factor means that a quickly growing crowd elbow themselves into ever more prominent view. After the variety of modes of transportation, and some might be by truck, others by rail, and still others by boat, there appear inescapably the host of additional arrangements that need to be put into place close to the point of use or consumption. These include the acts of unloading but beginning from those snakes an interminable chain of further provisions from renting the space, and training and paying the salespeople to the great number of precautions and safety assurances that must be arranged, to the lighting that needs to be paid for and not least the food. All of these and still many more, numbers that it would be too tedious to list, are all enmeshed in the far flung network which centralized mass-production requires in order to function.

Now imagine the contrast as decisive and sharp as it can be conjured up, imagine a mode of production that has dispensed with the whole of this clutter, that has thrown the totality of these auxiliaries overboard; a way of producing where one machine, but one of so far utterly unimagined flexibility and capacities for modulation and adjustment, stands as alone as a flagpole and makes a seemingly endless and unlimited variety of products so that the people near it can amble up to it, casually one by one and first describe what they want and then, only a little while later pick it up the new product and start immediately to put it to use. Juxtapose these two ways of making and you have the first glimmer of an idea, of course so far caricatured, simplified, and exaggerated of what New Manufacturing as the next way of producing things will be magnificently superior to mass manufacturing.

There is a second very different, sweeping development that also played a large role in shaping the gradual growth of what we more and more call **New Manufacturing, the other forward motion is “miniaturization.”** The single most graphic and to us most palpable instance of what is happening in the world of the smaller and smaller is the “I –phone” in our pockets, to which week by week if not daily new functions and apps are added into their miniature space. As most of us know, that same shrinking has also occurred with computers, where computers not that long ago filled the space of a room while they now fit snugly into our pockets and beyond that are no larger than a button or even the head of a pin.

The contours of the changes in this direction, not towards the more gigantic and centralized but towards the opposite, the smaller and more dispersed extend of course very much further. It rather recently has taken by storm large parts of the domain of education. The number of the top universities that offer their best courses more or less for free over the Internet is growing by leaps and bounds. This means that one solitary person anywhere, in a valley or on a mountain top, can study everything that has ever been written or choreographed or composed. No need for libraries, or professors, or infrastructure of any kind. I hope you notice the striking similarity to the “exaggerated” “caricatured” picture of a possible future mode of manufacturing I described before.

We do realize that we are technologically many miles from achieving in manufacturing the equivalent to the reality that we already have attained in the kingdom of information: something like full-fledged small factories in individual houses, so widely dispersed that manufacturing could take place virtually anywhere with only the most minimal infrastructure, and in a fashion that would be as autonomous as not long ago was farming.

To articulate this more fully: The New Work Communities’ panoramic picture of where the world now is stresses (as we have said before) four overpowering tsunami-like threats that mountainously roll in from the ocean and descend towards us. The spell-binding contrast is the paralyzing collision between these four mortal dangers and our impotent and witless helplessness in the face of them. We stare at them like a deer blinded at an onrushing car. It is precisely this blindness and this helplessness that in the eyes of New Work is its great challenge and task. This has been our conviction for a very long time, in truth not just for years but for decades. In this long time we have scanned the horizon but also left no stone unturned to find serious, workable, realistic ways in which the four tsunami threats could be not just slowed down, but halted and indeed reversed.

Of course we are eagerly ready to admit that our New Work proposals are often extraordinarily futuristic (which does not mean utopian but just years from where we are now) but that they put forward this one now discussed claim: that just possibly they are the only game in town, that nothing else at all on the table comes even close to having the power. The power to just close the split between the Desert and the Oasis people, let alone avert the other threats, the changing of our climate, the exhaustion of our resources, and the burning out of our culture.

If we now return to the rapidly increasing monster inequality from which we started then we have to admit that the means which we currently employ to heal that bifurcation are lamentably inadequate. We encourage growth, quicker upwards spiraling to still greater productivity, to the making of still more goods. But the fact is that in spite of the occasional talk about the millions in China that have been moved out of poverty, the picture taken as a whole, if one does not allow

oneself to be distracted by a bright spot here or there, but insists on assembling out of all the pieces a coherent whole, is dismal. We maintain that the overall picture speaks in any case in glaring colors, and this comprehensive picture leaves no doubt that an approach wholly different from those so far applied is needed with alarm-ringing urgency.

The need for a different approach to production is as plain as the difference between large and small. **Mass Manufacturing has become ever more centralized** and in line with this ever larger and more massive. **The leading conception as an antidote to this is in the context of New Work's community production and its smallness and associated benefits.**

Looking Deeper. Thinking Bigger.



By Frank Joyce

Published on AlterNet (<http://www.alternet.org>)

(Note: This article is adapted from “We Are in the Middle of Transformational Change: It’s Time the Debate Matches up with the Huge Challenges Ahead of Us,” published at AltNet.org. in January of 2010.)

A better world is possible. So is a worse one. Which will we get? Finding the proper focus is itself a challenge.

For example, much of the conversation these days is about what the President (or somebody) ought to do about jobs. But isn’t that the wrong conversation altogether?

As it always has been and always will be, there is plenty of Work that needs doing - growing food, moving people and goods around, teaching young people, manufacturing various kinds of stuff, curing sick people and so on. But the 20th century “jobs” method of connecting those needs to individuals, families and communities has been seriously out of whack for quite some time.

What was once mostly a W-2 economy is now a mashed up “system” of W-2, 1099, underground and prison-industrial “employment.” It produces and requires an exorbitant rate of incarceration, massive school dropout numbers, high crime rates and perpetually high unemployment. Further evidence of systemic breakdown is revealed by recent “revelations” that more education does not truly bestow immunity to income stagnation and recurring unemployment. Like it or not, absent a radically different approach, job elimination will continue to outpace the trend toward job creation in good times and bad.

Truth be told, just about all of the systems that sort-of, kind-of solved various problems for the last 200-300 years don’t work all that well anymore. They are out of alignment with current reality.

- **Economic globalization** under the domination of supranational corporations which incorporates and drives massive changes in science and technology and in the role of nation-states.
- **Climate change.**
- **The collapse of the cold war nuclear balance of power.** The possible use of nuclear weapons by countries that possess them, most notably the United States, remains a threat. But now, so does the possibility of their use by nonstate actors like Al Qaeda.
- **Changes in the species homo sapiens:** human reproduction no longer requires intercourse; neuroscience and pharmacology are increasingly used to modify human behavior, longevity has increased dramatically; our diet is very different; the status of women is drastically altered.

These forces are rocking our planet as it has never been rocked before. All are fast moving. Each is significant. And each one powerfully impacts the others. By way of illustration, consider the nature and role of nation states. “Old” nations such as China are profoundly different than they were less than 50 years ago--never mind 300 or 1200 years ago. The same is true of “middle-aged” nations such as the United States. (The United Nations had 51 members when it was founded in 1945. Today it has 192. Thirty-three nations have come into existence just

since 1990. It's that dynamic that makes even a relatively new kid on the block such as the US middle aged.) But be they ancient or newborns, all nations today are struggling to define their relationship to global corporations loyal to no nation-state whatsoever. For the time being, governments are not effectively regulating the behavior and setting the rules of the road for corporations. The BP oil blowout is but one dramatic example.

Yes, the American Revolution created an effective alternative to the tyranny of the British throne. But more than 200 years later our system of government is conspicuously not up to the test of offsetting the tyranny of Big Finance, Big Energy, and Big Health Care.

Naturally, such dramatic change creates noise and confusion. How could it be otherwise? Much of the twentieth-century world order was explained and even predicted by Adam Smith, John Maynard Keynes, Karl Marx, Sigmund Freud, CLR James, Albert Einstein, Franz Fanon, and others. But that has yet to happen for the emerging world order of the 21st century.

There are some exceptions, but mostly what we have instead are "cutting the foot to fit the shoe" efforts by neo cons, neo liberals and neo Marxists alike. None of their theories entirely anticipate or fully contend with the forces of massive change underway.

So, in the U.S. we hear calls from all points of the ideological spectrum to take America back, recapture the American dream, restore America's place in the world, "save" this and "defend" that. Elsewhere Al Qaeda, the Taliban and other organizations are also dedicated to restoring a long-gone-and-never-to-return economic, political and social order.

But can the new reality be crammed back into the old assumptions and structures? Is "left to right" the immutable and permanent way of defining the political positions that humans can adopt? Yes, the left-right spectrum retains some descriptive power. But as a genuinely useful tool of analysis, let alone the source for envisioning better ways to organize human activity-not so much.

That is not to say that efforts to start from today's reality are not underway. Bruce Lipton and Steve Bhaerman in their book, Spontaneous Evolution: Our Positive Future and How to get There from Here; Grace Boggs drawing on the foundation laid with the late James Boggs; Naomi Klein, Jeremy Rifkin in his new book The Empathetic Civilization: The Race to Global Consciousness in World Crisis; the editors and writers at Monthly Review and many others are working to understand, describe and define the forces in play. It is not an easy task. The new reality is extremely complex and the pace of change adds a whole other level of difficulty. That said, perhaps a breakthrough is right around the corner.

Based on what is already understandable, however, one fundamental choice is already crystal clear. **Every minute we spend grieving over the loss of the old world order is time we are not spending on imagining and creating the new one.**

Does imagining a new world order mean we should give up our struggles to end wars, fight current injustices, and so on? Not necessarily. But the times do call for activists to rethink our collective and our individual commitment of time and other resources. Be it health reform, reinventing unions, improving labor law, ending this or that war-you name it-our problem is that we that we are thinking too small, not too big. In our personal lives, if we are lucky enough to have a car, there are times to devote resources to fixing it as it ages. And then there comes a time to get new one. That is the kind of time we are in now.

Another world is already happening. Consequently, another world is not only possible, another world is necessary. The quest of the World Social Forum and the US Social Forum is one prominent manifestation of the search for new solutions and new forms of organization. There are others. Many are turning down the daily noise to focus on the potential for all humans, above and beyond present divisions within and between various nation states, ideologies, tribes, political parties, single issue causes, social or economic classes and religions.

All over the world, some are already reflecting the comprehensive vision expressed by the late peace activist Lillian Genser: "I pledge allegiance to the world, to care for earth and sea and air, to cherish every living thing, with peace and justice everywhere."

Is It Possible to Build An Economy Without Jobs?



By Frank Joyce

AlterNet | April 29, 2012

Suppose that something caused iTunes, Sony Music, “American Idol,” SiriusXM and every other commercial music entity were to disappear. Would humans still make music? Of course we would. Although capitalists would prefer we think otherwise, human ingenuity created capitalism—not the other way around. And work long precedes the existence of the capitalist system of jobs. Like music and art, work is intrinsic to the human condition. It is essential not just to our survival but to our progress as a species. It is something we do naturally, regardless of the economic and political systems in place at any given time or place in human history.

Of all the systems that contain and define our lives, perhaps the most opaque is the job system. While it is common for us to think about our individual job—or the lack thereof—it is rare that we consider the job system itself. It seems to us that humans have always been either employers or employees -- and we always will be. It’s the ultimate TINA (There Is No Alternative).

Who do you work for and what do you do are interchangeable questions in daily social discourse. Parents spend many of their waking hours thinking about how to best raise and position their children so they will be attractive to the person or entity that will “hire” them. From Dlibert to National Secretaries Day, we assume that the job-based system of organizing what gets done, who does what and how our effort is compensated is an immutable component of human existence—almost like air, water and food.

For many, the day-to-day management of the job system is a full-time job of its own. Unions, educators, “human relations” professionals, and many others spend their “working” hours preoccupied with the nitty-gritty of who gets hired, who gets fired, who gets “disciplined,” who gets trained, who gets a raise, who gets overtime, who is entitled to unemployment payments and who isn’t.

Our political discourse is dominated by mostly empty rhetoric of vigorous promises that certain government “policies” will deliver jobs, jobs, jobs. Whatever the question, there is always someone available to say the answer is jobs.

Really? What if jobs are the problem, not the solution? What if the survival of the species homo sapiens depends on imagining and creating a different way of organizing work? What if the job system is inseparable from the tyranny of the 1 percent and the incredibly stubborn persistence of racial inequality?

How did we get this system? What are its benefits? What are its costs? How does the whole system operate to make itself invisible?

Invisibility started with a proclamation disguised as a principle. Adam Smith defined the invisible hand of the market” as “an unseen force or mechanism that guides individuals to unwittingly benefit society through the pursuit of their private interests.”

In other words: it's supposed to be invisible. So don't even bother looking or trying to figure it out. What you're supposed to be focusing on is the visible but prominent "achievement" of the invisible hand. Affluence. Prosperity. Technological innovation. Wealth. Men on the moon. Smart phones. Two cars in every garage. Medical miracles. "American Idol." Mass obesity—oh, wait, that's off-message.

Truth be told, the job system does coincide with much progress. Many aspects of human existence are enormously better for vastly more people than was the case under feudalism. Over just a few hundred years, millions have come to live longer, eat better, have more leisure time, experience more individual freedom, and become less subject to violence. And that is to name just a few areas of extraordinary development.

At an individual level, millions are satisfied not just with their jobs at the moment, but also with the arc of careers that offered meaningful work and sufficient compensation to afford a lifetime of workplace gratification, affluence and economic security. Presumably those who are content with their place in the job system are inclined to defend it rather than question it.

Of course, there are those who, while pleased with their own situation, recognize that the system does not work so well for many others. Even those who have had satisfying careers have seen or experienced some of the downsides of the job system: arbitrary and abusive bosses; the fear of losing a job, made all the more intense by the realization that this also usually means losing health insurance; the day-to-day monotony or stress associated with a dysfunctional workplace; the sense that the work being done is unethical or otherwise destructive to the general well-being; brutal and demoralizing competition and conflict with co-workers; the constant pressure to stay "attractive" to the employer; long hours; low pay; and finally, getting laid-off or fired. Very few of us are exempt.

Put that all aside. (Nothing is perfect.) Presume that the job system has been a net "success." Is that success sustainable? No, it isn't. And even if in the big-picture scheme of things it has been beneficial for 300 years, does that mean it's the best we can do? No, it doesn't. Is this system sustainable? There are two questions here. First, has the job-based system of organizing human effort already peaked? (Even a well-maintained car outlives its usefulness after several hundred thousand miles—or less). Many seem to think so. Political discourse in the US these days is dominated by left-wing and right-wing versions of "we want our America back." Implicit in both positions is the view the system once worked better than it's working now.

But can either Move-On.org or the Tea Party get us back to 1957? In my view, no. A tipping point has been reached, a line crossed. To stay with the car analogy, the job system has already replaced the engine, the transmission, the windshield wipers, and just about every other part -- and it still isn't running well.

What repairs have been tried? For purposes of discussion, let's say that the golden years of the system were roughly from 1950-1980. Income for males (at least, white males) was rising along with productivity. Many single-income households not only got by, they prospered. Starting about 1980, there came a growing consensus across the mainstream ideological spectrum, from Charles Murray to Paul Krugman, that the economic engine was sputtering. Various repairs and adjustments have been attempted. Simultaneously, significant economic and

demographic changes were taking place. Women entered the workforce in large numbers, driven in part by the threat to living standards represented by stagnant wages for men. Some barriers to better jobs for African Americans were removed. The amount of education necessary to find a willing employer increased, and young people stayed out of the workforce longer and longer while they got the required credentials.

Over the last 30 years the forms of employment have also changed quite dramatically. What was once a predominantly private sector W-2 economy shifted to include many more workers in the public sector. Much W-2 employment was converted into 1099 “independent contractor” relationships. The underground off-the-books economy also exploded. A protracted and successful campaign was launched by increasingly powerful corporations to diminish the capacity of workers to use unions as a means of protecting their own economic interests. In addition to using education as means to delay the entry of young people into the full-time mainstream workforce, capitalism in the US created its own kind of gulag, designed to remove millions from the workforce altogether for very long periods. That gulag is known as the prison industrial system. In a way, this atrocity tells us all we need to know about the “unfixability” of the job system.

In an earlier capitalist crisis, the Great Depression, we got the Works Progress Administration. It used government funds to pay artists and unemployed workers to create murals and symphonies and libraries and bridges and roads.

What do we get in the 21st century? Government funds are used to channel millions of working age adults, mostly people of color, into the prison-industrial system. More than two million are incarcerated. Millions more are on parole or probation, awaiting trial, or are convicted felons easily excluded from employment. It is the job of millions more to process them.

Does that perpetuate the system of racial and social control? Yes, it does. But put that aside for a moment. Consider just the economics of it. Today, there are approximately 14 million workers in the US who are “officially” unemployed. Eliminate the prison-industrial complex and that number would instantly go up by at least five million.

Then, consider the post-1980 education-industrial system. One of the great myths of our time is that unemployment is caused by a lack of education. It is true that education itself has become a significant cause of employment. From junior college through graduate school, the education business has exploded. There was a time when education was considered valuable in its own right. Not these days.

Now all you ever hear is that education is the key to getting a job. Really? As with the prison system, keeping people in school longer does keep some out of the workforce and therefore technically off of the unemployment rolls. At the same time, the growth in secondary school enrollment and the corresponding construction needs created some employment.

But here’s the thing: by any measure, the US population is more educated than ever. And yet unemployment and the underemployment rates are still astronomical. So much for education somehow being the cause of jobs.

Like the education boom, here's another "make-work" program: Millions in the labor force are "hired" to fight and supply endless and meaningless wars. Once again, this "employment" is funded by taxpayers—not by the exalted private-sector.

Simultaneously, the job system has bought time—and made some more jobs for itself by increasing debt. Public debt went up. So did credit card debt, student loan debt and housing debt. We now live in massive, pervasive debt -- all of which enslaves us still more. But debt has served an economic purpose. It has kept the job system going in two ways, First, it drove the production of cars, TVs, gadgets, furniture, military equipment, and other stuff. Stagnant wages obviously cannot drive increased consumption. But debt can, and it did. Second, a greatly expanded financial disservice industry was created to process and manipulate all the credit sloshing through the system. That, too, added jobs.

The truth is, if you took debt out of the economy over the last 30 years, the bankruptcy of both the theory and the practice of the job system would have become obvious that much sooner. And finally, there's the true role of government spending in the economy. Actions speak louder than words. Ignore the bloviation about small government and the purity of the private sector. In the last 30 years the job system has grown local, state and federal government well beyond what would be required simply by the growth of the population or the addition of new services.

Contrary to the claims of the 1 percent noise machine, little of the growth in the size of government has been to provide additional services to the poor or economically marginalized. But even if that were the case, would it not be an admission the capitalism does not all by itself provide for all of the people all of the time?

What the growth of government and its spending does do is help corporations like Halliburton get fat government contracts while claiming that only the private sector creates jobs. It saves mega banks and insurance companies from their own mistakes. And increasing government employment offsets some of the decline in private sector employment. But what have all these fixes, repairs and constant rebuilding of the capitalist engine accomplished? The unemployment rate is enormous. And the rewards, financial and otherwise, of getting and keeping a job are diminishing for millions who can find employment. Students, families and government are carrying staggering debt.

Can anyone seriously look at the job landscape and argue that capitalism is some organic job creating machine that just needs to be left alone? Is there really some magical new policy or law that can or will make the whole machine hum again? And even if there were, what is the cost of this system? To our ecosystem? To the idea of democracy? To our dignity? To our potential as humans? Just what is so great about a system in which some humans get to be the bosses and most of us get to be the bossed? Is this the best humans can do?

Perhaps most urgently, can the job system grow its way back to health, as so many advocate, when growth itself accelerates and intensifies the threat to the sustainability of life on earth? To many it is increasingly clear that it cannot, will not and should not.

Fortunately, all over the world people are hard at work making a better economy. As Bruce Springsteen sings on his brilliant new album Wrecking Ball:

There's a new world coming
I can see the light
I'm a Jack of all trades
We'll be alright
So you use what you've got
And you learn to make do
You take the old, you make it new

Necessity is the mother of invention. So it's not surprising that Detroit is one of the places where there is both a lot of thinking and a lot of doing in the "reimagining work" department. It is hard to envision a place where the breakdown of the old system is more advanced or more obvious. Snazzy new sports stadiums and gambling casinos sit amidst tens of thousands of vacant residential and commercial property and mile after mile of empty lots where buildings once stood. Business friendly mayors like Dave Bing do no better at "fixing" Detroit than charismatic crooks like Kwame Kilpatrick. Hundreds of millions spent in recent years by major foundations haven't saved Detroit either.

The governance of Detroit's schools was taken over by the state years ago. The schools got worse. Still more parents and students abandoned the schools and the city in droves. Soon, the state government will take de facto control of the city government too. The Kool-Aid theory of the powers-that-be says that better "governance" will fix Detroit's problems. The code is that the black people have screwed everything up, despite the best efforts of the white establishment to help them.

The stark reality is that the problems are structural and cumulative. The old job system isn't coming back to Detroit. Ever. The stark reality is that Detroit is not some one-off fluke. Detroit is just the canary in the coal mine. Virtually every dynamic that was in play in Detroit over the last several decades is now at work planet wide. Paralyzed "leadership"; persistent racism; and growing inequalities of wealth, income and power and shrinking democracy aren't just features of Detroit. They apply to the nation and many other places throughout the world.

Help from the system that is failing is definitely not on the way. All the superficial debates about high taxes or low taxes, individual mandates or no individual mandates, big government or small government, contraception or no contraception will not put Humpty Dumpty together again. For many this is understandably both depressing and disorienting. But for others it is liberating. "Solutionaries" are creating a different kind of economy. There may be no jobs, but there's plenty of work to be done. Victimology is not welcome here.

Since a Reimagining Work conference [3] held in Detroit last fall, new economy energy and enthusiasm have intensified. There are growing efforts in food production and distribution, education, media, supporting the formerly incarcerated, transportation, community policing and manufacturing.

Longtime new work and new culture advocate [4] and philosopher Frithjof Bergman is bringing new manufacturing and new construction technologies developed in Europe, India and Africa to the attention of Detroit's new economy pioneers. Julia Putnam, an alumna of the pioneering Bogg's Center Detroit Summer Project, which started in 1992, is leading a Bogg's Center school

[5] in a former Detroit public school building. The Urban Network founded by Yusef Shakur [6], a former felon, does groundbreaking work reintegrating former prisoners into the community and to supporting the children of those still incarcerated. A growing network of meetings, conferences and Web sites allows Detroit's many projects and initiatives to cross-fertilize.

Detroit however is but one place where reimagining work is underway. As Gar Alperovitz, a speaker at the Reimagining Work conference said in a widely discussed New York Times oped last December, "...something different has been quietly brewing in recent decades: more and more Americans are involved in co-ops, worker-owned companies and other alternatives to the traditional capitalist model. We may, in fact, be moving toward a hybrid system, something different from both traditional capitalism and socialism, without anyone even noticing [7]."

In Cleveland, Alperovitz has been involved in launching the Evergreen Laundry [8], a worker owned commercial laundry. Evergreen Laundry was developed in part with the Mondragon Cooperatives, a 50-year-old business based in Spain that now has more than 125,000 worker members around the world. Mondragon is now also working with the United Steel Workers (USW) to foster ventures in the US. Emmanuel Pratt, another presenter at the Reimagining Work conference, is now expanding his Milwaukee-founded Sweetwater Foundation [9] urban agriculture and aquaculture model to Chicago.

This May in Grand Rapids, Michigan the Business Alliance for Local Living (BALLE) [10], will convene its 10th annual conference of new economy businesses. More than 1,000 delegates are expected to attend.

Vandana Shiva, who addressed the Reimagining Work conference via video, is another activist/thinker bringing new work ideas to her largely women-initiated projects in India. There is no one template that is guiding these rapidly growing worldwide efforts. The writings and videos of the people named above, plus Matthew Fox, David and Fran Korten, Ahrundati Roy, Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, Paul Gilding and others are resources for many new economy innovators.

What all have in common is the realization that the old system is breaking down. Within the distinction made by Grace Boggs between protest organizing and visionary organizing, they fall on the visionary side. Many believe that small and local are best, especially at this stage. All tend to be non-dogmatic and inclusive rather than exclusive and rigidly ideological. All are committed to fair treatment of all stakeholders involved. Cooperation and community are valued over competition and individualism. Genuine leadership is valued and respected. Hierarchy for its own sake is not.

All share a sense of urgency driven by the growing waste of human potential, and the race to avoid ecosystem catastrophe.

What stands out most of all? A sense of optimism and hope. Job system not working? That's OK. We'll make music anyway.

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In the Name of Love

by Miya Tokumitsu

“Do what you love” is the mantra for today’s worker. Why should we assert our class interests if, according to DWYL elites like Steve Jobs, there’s no such thing as work?

“Do what you love. Love what you do.” The commands are framed and perched in a living room that can only be described as “well-curated.” A picture of this room appeared first on a popular design blog, but has been pinned, tumbld, and liked thousands of times by now.

Lovingly lit and photographed, this room is styled to inspire Sehnsucht, roughly translatable from German as a pleasurable yearning for some utopian thing or place. Despite the fact that it introduces exhortations to labor into a space of leisure, the “do what you love” living room - where artful tchotchkes abound and work is not drudgery but love - is precisely the place all those pinners and likers long to be. The diptych arrangement suggests a secular version of a medieval house altar.

There’s little doubt that “do what you love” (DWYL) is now the unofficial work mantra for our time. The problem is that it leads not to salvation, but to the devaluation of actual work, including the very work it pretends to elevate - and more importantly, the dehumanization of the vast majority of laborers.

Superficially, DWYL is an uplifting piece of advice, urging us to ponder what it is we most enjoy doing and then turn that activity into a wage-generating enterprise. But why should our pleasure be for profit? Who is the audience for this dictum? Who is not?

By keeping us focused on ourselves and our individual happiness, DWYL distracts us from the working conditions of others while validating our own choices and relieving us from obligations to all who labor, whether or not they love it. It is the secret handshake of the privileged and a worldview that disguises its elitism as noble self-betterment. According to this way of thinking, labor is not something one does for compensation, but an act of self-love. If profit doesn’t happen to follow, it is because the worker’s passion and determination were insufficient. Its real achievement is making workers believe their labor serves the self and not the marketplace.

Aphorisms have numerous origins and incarnations, but the generic and hackneyed nature of DWYL confounds precise attribution. Oxford Reference links the phrase and variants of it to Martina Navratilova and François Rabelais, among others. The internet frequently attributes it to Confucius, locating it in a misty, Orientalized past. Oprah Winfrey and other peddlers of positivity have included it in their repertoires for decades, but the most important recent evangelist of the DWYL creed is deceased Apple CEO Steve Jobs.

His graduation speech to the Stanford University class of 2005 provides as good an origin myth as any, especially since Jobs had already been beatified as the patron saint of aestheticized work

well before his early death. In the speech, Jobs recounts the creation of Apple, and inserts this reflection: Many academics like to think they have avoided a corporate work environment and its attendant values, but Marc Bousquet notes in his essay “We Work” that academia may actually provide a model for corporate management:

How to emulate the academic workplace and get people to work at a high level of intellectual and emotional intensity for fifty or sixty hours a week for bartenders’ wages or less? Is there any way we can get our employees to swoon over their desks, murmuring “I love what I do” in response to greater workloads and smaller paychecks? How can we get our workers to be like faculty and deny that they work at all? How can we adjust our corporate culture to resemble campus culture, so that our workforce will fall in love with their work too?

No one is arguing that enjoyable work should be less so. But emotionally satisfying work is still work, and acknowledging it as such doesn’t undermine it in any way. Refusing to acknowledge it, on the other hand, opens the door to the most vicious exploitation and harms all workers.

Ironically, DWYL reinforces exploitation even within the so-called lovable professions where off-the-clock, underpaid, or unpaid labor is the new norm: reporters required to do the work of their laid-off photographers, publicists expected to Pin and Tweet on weekends, the 46 percent of the workforce expected to check their work email on sick days. Nothing makes exploitation go down easier than convincing workers that they are doing what they love. Instead of crafting a nation of self-fulfilled, happy workers, our DWYL era has seen the rise of the adjunct professor and the unpaid intern - people persuaded to work for cheap or free, or even for a net loss of wealth. This has certainly been the case for all those interns working for college credit or those who actually purchase ultra-desirable fashion-house internships at auction. (Valentino and Balenciaga are among a handful of houses that auctioned off month-long internships. For charity, of course.) The latter is worker exploitation taken to its most extreme, and as an ongoing Pro Publica investigation reveals, the unpaid intern is an ever larger presence in the American workforce.

It should be no surprise that unpaid interns abound in fields that are highly socially desirable, including fashion, media, and the arts. These industries have long been accustomed to masses of employees willing to work for social currency instead of actual wages, all in the name of love. Excluded from these opportunities, of course, is the overwhelming majority of the population: those who need to work for wages. This exclusion not only calcifies economic and professional immobility, but insulates these industries from the full diversity of voices society has to offer.

And it’s no coincidence that the industries that rely heavily on interns - fashion, media, and the arts - just happen to be the feminized ones, as Madeleine Schwartz wrote in *Dissent*. Yet another damaging consequence of DWYL is how ruthlessly it works to extract female labor for little or no compensation. Women comprise the majority of the low-wage or unpaid workforce~ as care workers, adjunct faculty, and unpaid interns, they outnumber men. What unites all of this work, whether performed by GEDs or PhDs, is the belief that wages shouldn’t be the primary motivation for doing it. Women are supposed to do work because they are natural nurturers and are eager to please; after all they’ve been doing uncompensated childcare, elder care, and housework since time immemorial. And talking money is unladylike anyway. The DWYL dream is, true to its American mythology, superficially democratic. PhDs can do what they love, making

careers that indulge their love of the Victorian novel and writing thoughtful essays in the New York Review of Books. High school grads can also do it, building prepared food empires out of their Aunt Pearl's jam recipe. The hallowed path of the entrepreneur always offers this way out of disadvantaged beginnings, excusing the rest of us for allowing those beginnings to be as miserable as they are. In America, everyone has the opportunity to do what he or she loves and get rich.

Do what you love and you'll never work a day in your life! Before succumbing to the intoxicating warmth of that promise, it's critical to ask, "Who, exactly, benefits from making work feel like non-work?" "Why should workers feel as if they aren't working when they are?" Historian Mario Liverani reminds us that "ideology has the function of presenting exploitation in a favorable light to the exploited, as advantageous to the disadvantaged."

In masking the very exploitative mechanisms of labor that it fuels, DWYL is, in fact, the most perfect ideological tool of capitalism. It shunts aside the labor of others and disguises our own labor to ourselves. It hides the fact that if we acknowledged all of our work as work, we could set appropriate limits for it, demanding fair compensation and humane schedules that allow for family and leisure time. And if we did that, more of us could get around to doing what it is we really love

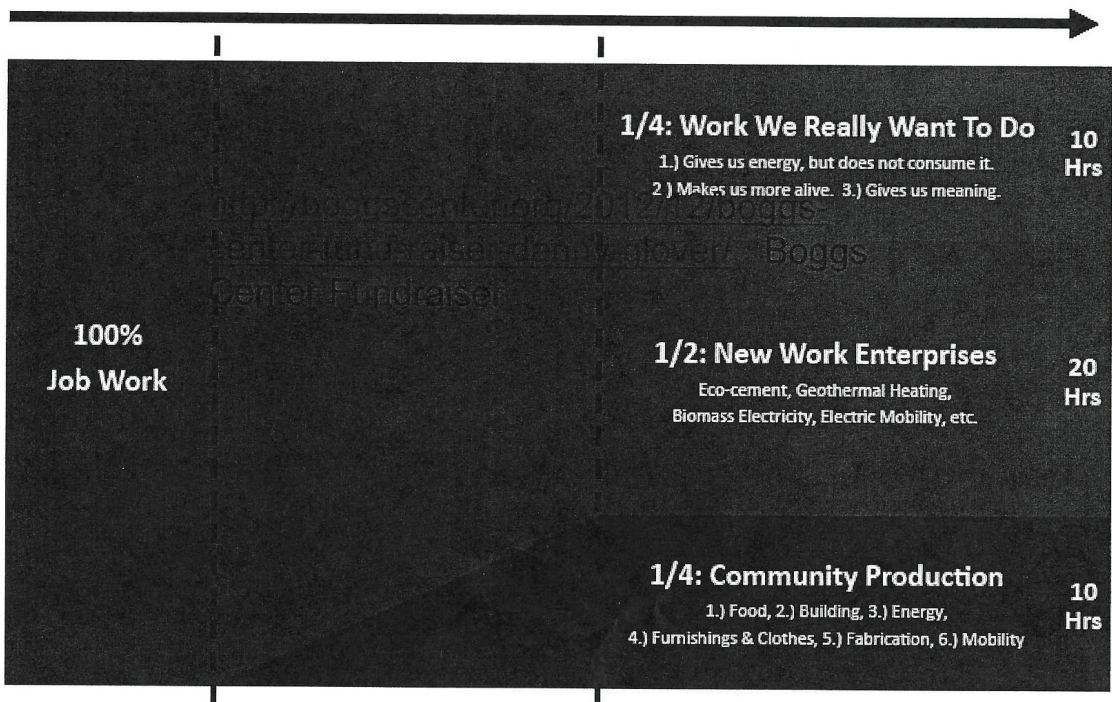


What
is
New
Work?

New Work

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After the Jobs Disappear

By JULIET B. SCHOR

New York Times | October 14, 2013

BOSTON — In Somerville, Massachusetts, just across the line from Cambridge, is an institution called Artisan's Asylum. At 40,000 square feet, it says it's one of the largest "makerspaces," or community craft studios, on the East Coast of the United States. A nonprofit group, it hosts craftspeople, artists and entrepreneurs, analog and digital alike. In addition to classes in traditional fields like woodworking, fiber arts and metalworking, it offers coveted rental space for creative types.

At one end of the space, tech whizzes are building Stompy, a 4,000-pound hexapod — a sixlegged robot. At the other is a "bike hacking" collective that repurposes old bicycle frames. In between are the folks who invented a 3Doodler, the three-dimensional pen — it extrudes heated plastic that can be formed into just about any shape. The 3Doodler raised \$2.3 million on Kickstarter (far outpacing its \$30,000 goal) and is on track to be the next must-have gift item. Community fabrication spaces like Artisan's Asylum are becoming popular across the United States and Europe. For many, they represent an appealing vision of the future of work. Unlike in the classic industrial setting, where the manual and mental aspects of work are separated between blue- and white-collar employees, those tasks are integrated in these "makerspaces." There's a commitment to ecological sustainability. There are no bosses or even "jobs," in the traditional sense. Value is generated, for sure, but as "livelihood" or, in the case of the start-ups, worker/creator ownership.

This shift from employment to livelihood, while far from prevalent, has become a necessity for many in the wake of the 2008 global financial collapse, which led to the loss of more than 8 million jobs in the United States. At the time, I and other observers predicted that these jobs - a victim of labor-saving technical change, globalization and financialization — were unlikely to return. Five years later, the employment-to-population ratio in the United States, 58.6 percent, is at its lowest since 1983. In much of Europe, unemployment has soared, especially for youth, even as aging populations place pressure on pension and other social welfare programs.

As jobs disappear, people have begun to carve out new ways to gain access to income, goods and services. This is evident not only in the "makerspaces," but also in what has come to be called the "sharing economy," which encompasses activities as diverse as car-pooling, ridesharing, opening one's home to strangers via Web-based services like Couchsurfing or Airbnb, sharing office space and working in community gardens and food co-ops.

Like "makerspaces," the sharing economy is refashioning work, giving people new opportunities to earn money or to have access to goods and services. People are joining "time banks," through which members trade services like baby-sitting, carpentry or tutoring. They are selling their labor for cash on platforms like Task Rabbit and Zaarly. They are renting out their cars, homes and durable goods, from appliances to lawn mowers. They are also giving away their stuff, via Web sites like Yerdle and reecycle, rather than throwing it away.

The potential for the sharing economy to give work more meaning, autonomy and social impact is considerable. It has begun to reallocate value along the production chain, by cutting out middlemen, like hoteliers and landlords. What's revolutionary is not the sharing — people have engaged in nonmonetary transactions for millennia — but that the transactions are occurring among strangers. Digital reputations, including ratings systems on sites like TripAdvisor and Amazon, make such interactions safer than they were in the past. Many sharers also aim to reduce the carbon footprints of production and consumption, and stimulate local economies, though these effects are, so far, more hypothetical than proved. In the sharing economy, people are returning, in a sense, to modes of independent production and self-provisioning that preceded (and persevered through) the industrial revolution. Technology — the growing availability of relatively cheap, small-scale 3-D printers, laser cutters and other fabrication tools — has made the sharing of equipment more affordable. Internet tools have significantly reduced the transaction costs associated with peer-to-peer sharing. More generally, digital technologies are likely to be one reason small and medium-size enterprises have become key sources of employment job creation.

Like most economic innovations, these trends promise their share of pain. New products like the 3Doodler take away market share from established sellers. Traditional service jobs in hospitality and transportation are threatened by services like Airbnb and Uber. Sites where people bid to perform tasks have the potential to create a race to the bottom, particularly in times like now, when the supply of labor in wealthy countries is abundant, and the demand is limited.

These trends won't solve the most urgent economic afflictions facing the West — a shortage of jobs, soaring inequality and a fraying of the welfare state — but they represent one significant response to it. Low-income people don't typically have the kinds of homes one can rent out on Airbnb. But they can participate in urban food growing, an increasingly popular phenomenon, and in collective initiatives like Growing Power, in the Midwest, and Co-op Power, in the Northeast, which provide participants with income, food and energy. As in the maker movement, the work in such projects is tactile, connecting creativity with the handling of materials.

If some of this seems fanciful, even naïve, consider the alternatives. Large corporations are more profitable than ever, partly because of the consolidation in industries from banking to aviation to book publishing, and a neoliberal political ideology, in the United States, Britain and parts of Western Europe, that continues to favor deregulation — even though it was deregulation that brought about the financial crisis.

So while they are no panacea, the emergent trends of community fabrication, self-provisioning and the sharing economy collectively suggest a future for work in wealthy countries that involves more making, sharing and self-organizing. There may be fewer formal jobs — but a more entrepreneurial approach to making money, one that emphasizes smallscale companies and collectively owned enterprises, more sharing, and less spending. As painful as the years since the crash have been, a more resilient, satisfying and sustainable way to work and live could be one beneficial consequence.

Juliet B. Schor, professor of sociology at Boston College, is the author of “True Wealth: How and Why Millions of Americans Are Creating a Time- Rich, Ecologically Light, Small-Scale, High-Satisfaction Economy” and a member of the MacArthur Foundation Research Network on Connected Learning.

Detroit: Building Community and the New American Revolution

A Sermon at Unitarian Universalist Church West, Milwaukee, WI

Peggy Kwisuk Hong,

“We are at a stage in human history that is as monumental as changing from a hunter/gatherer society to an agricultural society and from an agricultural society to an industrial society. Where we’re headed now will be different because we have exhausted planetary space and human space for us to continue to look at things through the Cartesian measurement of material things. We need to face the way we used the world for our gains, pleasures, satisfactions. This is the way we evolve to a higher stage of humanity. And unless we want to live in terror for the rest of our lives, we need to change our view about acquiring things. We have the opportunity to take a great leap forward in these very challenging times. We need to change our institutions and ourselves. We need to seize opportunities. We need to launch our imaginations beyond the thinking of the past. We need to discern who we are and expand on our humanness and sacredness. That’s how we change the world, which happens because WE will be the change.”

Grace Lee Boggs, 98, long-time Detroit activist, author, and philosopher

DETROIT: 6 WORD POSTCARDS

39 cent blueberries
spontaneous houseful sharing

monday morning email
house concert
tonight!

circling strangers
pound drums
breathe together

crystal bowl
so resonant
it shatters

dumpster dived
organic lemons
calla lillies

dumpster chocolate
passed around
holy communion

urban sheer dark
cycling pothole patches

shattered glass
every curb
ride wide

loosen grip
on handlebars
and float

new moon
broken streetlights
brighter stars

It was almost exactly a year ago when the idea of moving to Detroit swept over me. After 25 years in Milwaukee, I began entertaining the notion of a major life change. Feeling a need for a sabbatical, after years of full time yoga teaching, mentoring, writing, and community organizing, Detroit called to me as a place I could be more student than teacher, a place that had much to teach me. The vision unfolded within minutes. Almost immediately I began telling people, and the vision started to become reality. A friend lined up rent-free housing for me as house manager in an intentional community, I connected with Iyengar Yoga teachers and community organizers, and off I went, back in February of this year.

“Why Detroit?” many asked, followed by, “In the suburbs, right?” or “Downtown?” Actually I live in the heart of Detroit’s near east side, an area of grand, early 20th century houses, formerly occupied by executives and professionals, but now riddled with empty, crumbling houses and lots. Detroit is about 85% African American, and my neighborhood is almost all Black.

I love my neighborhood, where folks wave hello even through car windows, elders sit on front porches for hours watching the comings and goings, and kids set up basketball hoops in the street. We had a block party like I have never seen, complete with a DJ and a Soul Train line where grandmas danced with grandbabies.

The mainstream media embedded in racism/white supremacy would have us believe Detroit is dangerous, no place for a 50 year old Korean American lady. In fact, for months my neighbors had no idea what to make of me-that little Chinese lady, or man, or whatever, down the street. But as I got to know more and more of my neighbors, and invited them to the yoga class at my house, as well as potlucks, drum circles, and more, they started to open up. The house has become a gathering place: for neighborhood teens, the ex-offenders at the halfway house around the corner, block club meetings, artists, and organizers.

But Detroit needn’t be romanticized. Like Harambee/Riverwest where I lived in Milwaukee, I sometimes hear gunshots. My neighbor’s car was stolen. We’ve had a few things go missing from our house. Shit happens, and wherever desperation and disparities of privilege exist, so does potential for distrust, resentment, and harm. In my neighborhood, multi-generational poverty exists side by side with middle class Chrysler retirees, with a smattering of drug dealers.

So why am I here?

Like tens of thousands of Wisconsinites, I participated in the demonstrations for union rights in 2011. Our numbers grew, but those in power still managed to plow over us with their corporate agenda of privatization. We tried to effect change through the state house and senate, then through the courts, and finally staged a recall of Governor Walker, only to see him re-elected, largely due to a media co-opted by big money and a miseducated public manipulated into resignation.

At this point I began an email conversation with some organizers in Detroit, wondering what they might have to advise about resistance and social change in Wisconsin. A group of us started a study group at People's Books Cooperative on Grace Lee Boggs' book, NEXT AMERICAN REVOLUTION: SUSTAINABLE ACTIVISM FOR THE 21 ST CENTURY.

We took to heart Grace's recommendation of 90% pro-action, and only 10% reaction. Instead of our habit of resistance, we started to imagine a future of our own creation, not at the mercy of governments and institutions.

So what is happening in Detroit? On one hand, it's as dire as it's ever been. Most recently the city declared bankruptcy. The people's vote was nullified when, against the wishes of the citizens, the governor began appointing emergency managers in just about every majority Black city in Michigan, including Detroit. Gentrification and land grabs are not the answer, as houses and lots get purchased by investors from New York City to Singapore, long-time residents get displaced, and wealth is concentrated in fewer hands.

How do we respond? At the Boggs Center, down the street from where I live, we have a project we call New Work/New Culture/New Economy. We are building a post-capitalist, post-oil, post-industrial, post-jobs life and culture. We strive not only to make a living, but to make a life, embracing true sustainability with the earth and all its inhabitants.

For people of color and the poor, who have always felt like outsiders, none of this is surprising or particularly upsetting. Just as the circumstances of Trayvon Martin's murder and Zimmerman's verdict represented just one more incident of centuries of white supremacy, many people of color and poor folks may feel like the system never served us anyway. Good riddance to the false securities sold to us. But for people who have benefited from capitalism for generations, and who enjoy the comforts and perks, this sermon may be hard to swallow.

As I grow my soul, I have been shedding middle class privileges one by one. My car and bicycle are now shared among a group of friends and roommates. I've slashed my grocery budget from about \$150/month to about \$50/month. I may never buy organic food again, which is not to say I won't find some in a dumpster or grow it myself. I may never pay for a hotel room again and instead surf on couches everywhere I go. I can't remember the last time I shopped for clothes, and instead wear funky hand-me-downs or sew what I need from repurposed materials. Recently I made the promise to myself that I will never purchase sweatshop underwear again. What's the alternative? Sew it myself from old t-shirts! The revolution is made by our own hands, from the cast-offs of capitalism. We have time to create, because we have thrown off the shackles of jobs to embrace our true human work.

No change is possible without inner evolution. I ask you to consider with me what it would take for everyone in the community, which includes the inner city, to have their basic needs of shelter, food, and safety met, and to experience a sense of interconnection and purpose. Capitalism may be based on vertical growth and stratification, but New Work requires horizontal growth and democratization. Instead of charity, solidarity. Instead of service, mutual interdependence.

Detroit writer and activist Adrienne Maree Brown says we need, "Joy powerful enough to provide authentic resistance in the face of hopelessness." Joy, inspired by lifelong learning, generated by friendship and interdependence, and sustained by continual giving and receiving, is our resistance.

When we refuse to participate in structures that rely on oppression and exploitation-systems of capitalism, patriarchy, and white supremacy-we make ourselves vulnerable. We have to ask for help. We place ourselves at the mercy of our communities and of strangers. But like the stars shining brighter in Detroit because of streetlights the city refuses to turn on, we can shine our own inner light by defying systems that oppress us, while growing stronger through interdependence. After all, this is what makes our struggle sacred. This is what it means to grow our souls.

Look within yourself to ask: What holds you back from living your magnificent gift? What contradictions are you no longer willing to uphold? In what ways will you replace consumption with creation and interdependence? How will you generate joy powerful enough to resist despair? Namaste.

ADDENDUM NOVEMBER 2013:

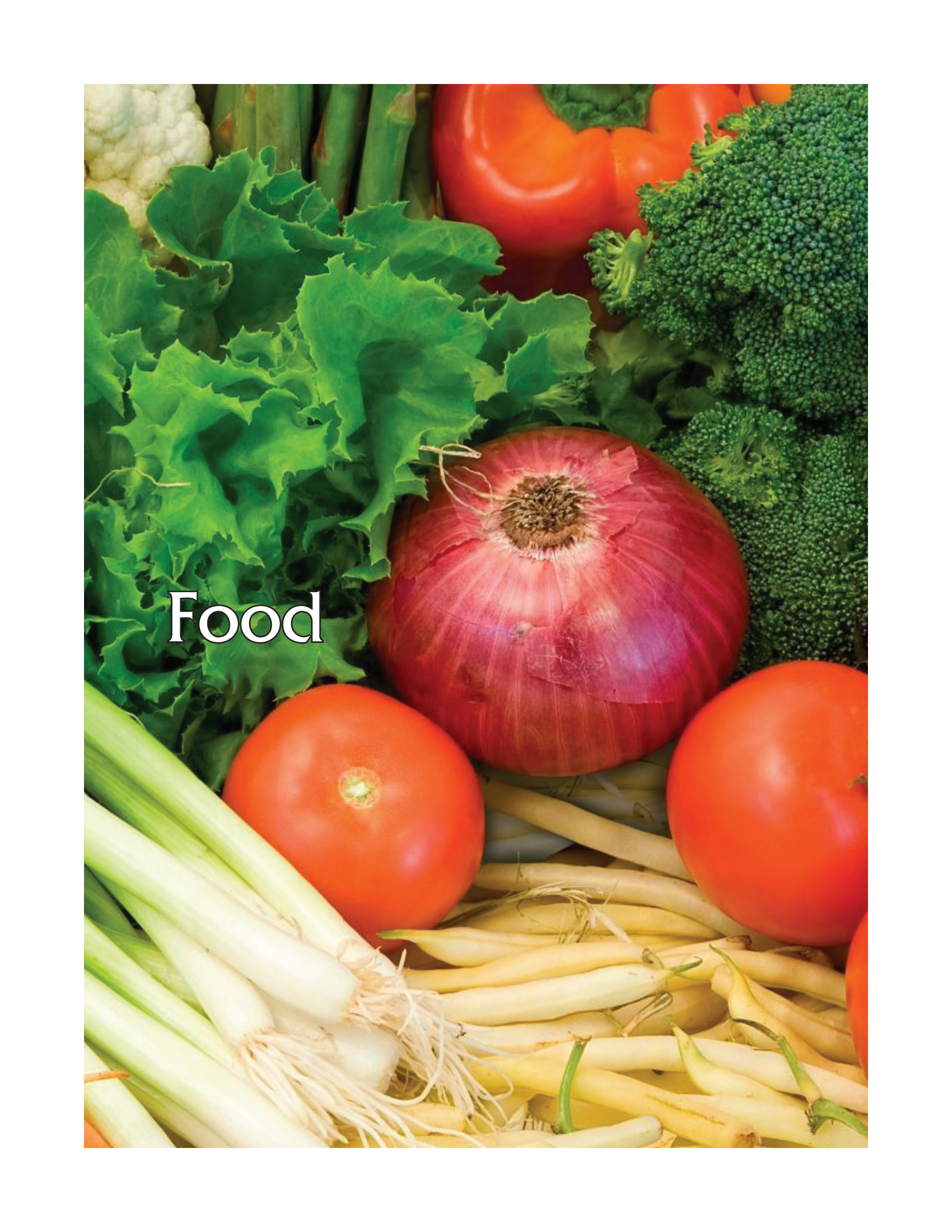
We moved into New Work Field street Collective on 1 August 2013. It was in the process of establishing electricity at that point, with no running water, no heat, no doorknobs, no stove, no refrigerator, crumbling plaster, and asbestos-covered pipes. Over the months, we have acquired most of these amenities and completed many repairs.

I sit in the house this Thanksgiving morning leaning against the living room radiator, a turkey slow-roasting in the oven. This afternoon a dozen or so friends will come over to eat. We will go to a nearby park, Belle Isle, for a ceremony to honor our ancestors and the native people of this land.

Through patience and persistence of the eight people of the collective, and the support and generosity of the greater community, we have created a budding New Work center. Community production includes leather belts, kombucha (probiotic fermented tea), dried apples, yoga classes, massages, cloth menstrual pads, scarves, soups, and more. We have an "Open Door Dinner," every third Saturday evening of the month, when all are invited to partake in a community meal. We have a community New Work study group on the second Monday of each month. Once a month we host "Hustle Night," where we invite handworkers (people who sew, knit, weave, crochet, and do other kinds of handwork) to come and create.

We have a long way to go. We are working through inevitable communication and interpersonal issues to create healthy, safe community for all. We are creating a multicultural household of African Americans, Asian Americans, and White folks, and developing a common language and culture. We are coming up with creative ways to bathe as we strive to complete build-out of the house. No one ever claimed New Work/New Culture/New Economy would be easy, but we reap the rewards daily.

Everyday we make healthy meals, make music, and laugh until our egos soften and our hearts warm. No one in our house works a 9 to 5 job. We all engage in community production, leaving us time for creativity and social engagement. Have we solved the world's problems? Not yet, but we're learning everyday, meeting our own basic needs. and living joyfully and meaningfully.

A close-up photograph of a variety of fresh vegetables. In the center is a large, whole red onion with its papery skin. To its left is a head of green lettuce with ruffled leaves. Above the onion are several bright red tomatoes. To the right of the onion is a head of green broccoli. In the foreground, there are several long green beans and a bunch of green onions with their white roots. The vegetables are arranged in a dense, overlapping pile, showcasing their natural colors and textures.

Food

How To Turn a Vacant Building into an Urban Farm

By Bryan Smith
Chicago Magazine

Name: Emmanuel Pratt

Age: 35

Founder: Mycelia Project

Cofounder: Sweet Water Foundation

“Welcome to the best-kept secret on the South Side,” says Emmanuel Pratt, gesturing toward the vast open space inside a former shoe factory at 96th Street and Cottage Grove Avenue. Today this low-slung building houses an aquaponic wonderland in which nitrogen-rich waste from tilapia-filled tanks fertilizes a variety of vegetables and herbs planted overhead. The fish and veggies will be sold to area restaurants such as MK and Wishbone—but not before this Chicago State University professor has used them to teach an important lesson about sustainability, repurposing, and urban renewal. While aquaponics itself is the real green achievement, Pratt has accomplished much more: turning a deteriorating building into a means to educate everyone from kindergartners to graduate students about urban agriculture. After Chicago State oversaw the purchase of the old factory, Pratt began to assemble the Mycelia Project, the overarching name for his hybrid art-meets-agriculture experiment. “When you take the concept of blight and flip it on its head using fish and vegetables, you can show that there’s new life in spaces that have been idle for 20, 30 years,” he says.

Pratt has expanded the program to 50 schools in Chicago, Milwaukee, and Detroit through his Sweet Water Foundation. He hopes that, by teaching basic concepts like soil chemistry and fishery management, he can groom generations of urban farmers. That’s why Julie Simpson, director of nonprofit services for New York-based TCC group, calls Pratt a true innovator who “moves the needle in our society for the better.”

His motto—a play on a derisive description of areas in decay—sums up what he hopes the passersby outside the former shoe factory will one day say: “There grows the neighborhood.”

Emmanuel Pratt is one of five winners of Chicago magazine’s 2013 Green Awards. Each year, we honor unsung locals whose innovations are putting Chicago on the national map and doing something good for the earth.

Feedom Freedom

By Wayne and Myrtle Curtis

“Grow a garden, grow a community.”

We want to show people that you can have something sustainable that you’ve built with your own hands. (http://feedomfreedom.wordpress.com/about/wayne_myrtle/)

Facebook Page (<http://www.facebook.com/FeedomFreedom>)

Creating healthy, productive, life affirming communities begins with a collective of people who are giving their work and time to make a difference. We understand that we have to create for ourselves the conditions that are best for us, and that by educating our minds and hearts we can take control of what goes into our bodies and what comes out of our pockets and purses. We started growing our own produce to put us back in harmony with the earth and to nourish our bodies and our souls. It keeps us physically active and frees our minds from the stresses around us.

“Grow a garden, grow a community,” is our tag line and that is exactly what is happening on Manistique. We are looking forward to be one of many farms in our city. It is our dream to be an inspiration to others who want to make a difference in eating to love and becoming aware of where and how our grows and where it comes from. We also want to become socially and economically a part of what is good in the city. As a small community we decided to study together and put into practice the words and deeds of social thinkers who can help us develop a humanistic ideology. Instead of always striving for money, we are challenging ourselves to develop relationships and practices that will sustain us spiritually and physically. We realize most jobs are not coming back to Detroit. And those we once had didn’t satisfy our needs. We desire work that matters and doesn’t threaten our very existence. We believe that living in harmony with all life is more desirable than dollars.

Change is what we choose to be, not a thing we are waiting on to happen.

The garden is not just a garden, it is a gathering place for meetings of minds, a place where history lessons and education about all things connected to life are shared. We live in neighborhoods that are rich in history and resources. The Feedom/Freedom Growers are one of these resources helping to develop a community that works for the people.

Address: 866 Manistique St, Detroit, MI 48215
Follow “Feedom Freedom Blog”

Finance

Manufacturing



RE-imagining Work: Another Production is Possible

By Richard Feldman, Boggs Center

In 1963, in his first book, *The American Revolution Pages from a Negro worker's Notebook*, "Chrysler worker Jimmy Boggs challenged labor and rights activists to recognize that the elimination of jobs by Hi-Tech was not only creating a permanent underclass in our cities but requiring workers to redefine them/ourselves as citizens, making a life and not just a living.

In 1970, after graduating from the University of Michigan, I started working at the Ford Truck plant. Year after year I experienced the replacement of thousands of workers by robots and technology described by Jimmy. So In 1988, I co-edited an oral history book entitled, *End of the Line: Auto Workers and the American Dream* which essentially concluded with the recognition that the 20th Century American Dream was over and it was time to create a new dream for our country.

In 2012 the whole world needs this new dream. From Greece to Italy, from Detroit, Michigan, to Bessemer, Alabama, more than 1 billion people are unemployed, So everyone, everywhere, needs to know whether another kind of production, which provides Work for everyone, is possible.

Fortunately, Frithjof Bergmann, who had been my philosophy professor at the University of Michigan, has been grappling with this question, and has discovered that HiTech is not only the problem; it is the solution. It is both negative and positive. It eliminates Jobs; but it also enables local communities to produce for their own needs instead of purchasing these in the market.

With new advances in technology, we can manufacture anything and everything we need in community workshops with the same ease with which community gardeners now produce their own food, writers publish their own books, and filmmakers produce their own films. In small places, small rooms, on every block, we can produce clothes, shoes, musical instruments, electricity, even refrigerators, microwave ovens, computers, motor cycles, or bikes. This means that community people can decide our particular needs and then do the Work to meet these needs in the quantities needed.

In the process we will be producing not only products but new, vibrant self-reliant local cultures. We will no longer need large capital investment to create value adding manufacturing processes in Detroit or any city.

In Detroit, with more than 1600 Community Gardens that bring the country back into the city, we can now produce enough food to feed people across our city and region. In the next decade, using advanced technology in community workshops, we can produce most of the things that our communities, our city or our region need!

A new mode of local, workshop production is emerging in our city and our world, which is as profound and far-reaching as the transition from hunting and gathering to agriculture 11,000

years ago and from agriculture to industry a few - hundred years ago. It is not only the urban gardening movement; there is an aquaponics movement and an urban fish farming movement. And, just as growing our own food is giving birth to local manufacturing of agricultural tools and machinery, new forms of food distribution, new restaurants, and training young people in the culinary arts, this new workshop production will grow new crafts, skills and trades in our communities instead of profits for multinational corporations.

New technology producing for local needs can help us move toward beloved and diverse communities where our commitments are to each other and not to the \$\$\$\$ bill or to some job that is rapidly being eliminated. The market economy will be replaced by this emerging community economy. Technology can help us produce for our security and well-being rather than for the faceless markets of big box stores.

Brightmoor Youth Entrepreneurship Project,

excerpt of transcript of “Detroit Rising”

Dateline SBS, aired Nov. 19, 2013

Most of the world seems to view today’s Detroit as one giant scrapyard but for people like Tim Alexander, that scrap is just the beginning. I meet Tim when he pedals by on an industrial tricycle that he has just refurbished. Soon this will be the platform for a micro coffee shop on wheels. There just aren’t that many jobs in Detroit, so Tim is learning to make gainful work out of what’s at hand, taking pieces of Detroit’s wreckage and refashioning them into something new.

TIM ALEXANDER: I started it up in the summertime and we fixed this bike before it had all this great stuff on it...it’s great.

Tim is learning his trade from the Brightmoor Youth Entrepreneurship Project. A youth trade skills training program conceived and supervised by Bart Eddy.

BART EDDY: Many people would say, oh there’s no work in Detroit. Detroit, on the contrary, there is an endless amount of possibilities in this city. For the restoration and reclaiming of the city.

Bart calls this curb-side economics. No task too small to galvanize industrious thinking. The first products Bart’s trainees made were simple wooden signs like these.

BART EDDY: The great thing about this is he’s learned the basic woodworking skills and so he is getting paid for this job he’s working on. He can make approximately \$10 a letter. So he’s got himself \$60 right here he can work on.

Beyond the woodworking and the bike repair, there’s also a community gardens project. And even a fashion micro brand called DCH Apparel and produced just down the hall.

YOUNG MAN: Just trying to do something right for the city, pretty much.

REPORTER: And how is making T-shirts doing something good for the city?

YOUNG MAN: Keeping the kids out of trouble.

BART EDDY: We have to awaken young people to a larger dream. That’s the dream of the transformation of their community and what their city might become, could become. I love these kids, they’re the only reason I walk through this door every morning. In the midst of the old institutions crumbling and falling apart, there’s only one reason that I come through here - it’s when I see the kids every morning and you know, yes I do - I love them deeply.

Love is not a word that I expected to hear constantly in a place with as many rough edges as Detroit. But I heard the words ‘love’ and ‘Detroit’ together a lot. Even here where Tim lives in one of the poorest postcodes in America.

TIM ALEXANDER: I love this place. It ain't all bad.

What it takes me a while to realize is where I see a burned out building, Tim sees opportunity. He believes that the people that love Detroit can restore it.

TIM ALEXANDER: I really think they can if they actually put their effort into it and put their everything into it. The money into it. The heart into it. Because, I mean, it's worth it. Back in the day, everybody used to love Detroit.

model D

On the Ground: Youth entrepreneurship in action

By MATTHEW LEWIS

Many big things got started in garages -- companies like Hewlett Packard, Apple Computers, Amazon.com all launched from the place where most Americans store their cars. Henry Ford, perhaps the world's most famous garage tinkerer, built his first horseless carriage, which he called the quadricycle, over the course of two years in the garage (carriage house, to be precise) behind his Detroit home at 58 Bagley Street. What he made there was the prototype he showed to investors to convince them to finance the Ford Motor Company, a manufacturing concern that would revolutionize modern existence in the 20th century.



The Brightmoor Woodworkers, a 21st century manufacturing concern, also grew out of a garage. A few years ago, a group of Brightmoor youth were engaged in a summer employment program that was tasked with the creation of Johannes Treedome Park on Dacosta Street when some of the students noticed an abandoned garage next to the work site.

Kyle Baker Jr., Mariah Davis, Lashay Pearson, and Tanay Floyd (all students at Detroit Community High School at the time) decided to transform the garage into a workshop. Bart Eddy, founder and community liaison at Detroit Community Schools, helped guide the youth and establish a formal group, the Brightmoor Woodworkers, which became a student-run business specializing in making hand-carved wooden signs customized to order. Their signs, which can be found at businesses and public spaces around Brightmoor (and now around Detroit), cost about \$10 per hand-chiseled letter -- and the money goes directly into the pockets of the student workers.

The Woodworkers quickly outgrew their original garage space and moved operations inside of Detroit Community High School's art studio, which they utilize on Saturdays when school is not in session. In recent years, other student-run businesses have popped up within Detroit Community Schools under the umbrella of a program called "Entrepreneurship in Action."

Brightmoor Bikes and Trailers is the moniker under which students build and repair bicycles for sale using salvaged materials. Lately, this group has begun repurposing and customising industrial tricycles donated by the Ford Motor Company after being used on their factory floors. Bart Eddy tells us they have just received a donation of 100 tricycles from Ford. A recent order

called for a customized trike coffee cart that will soon be servicing downtown Detroit. DCS Apparel is another student-run business that specializes in creating customized silk-screened apparel.

The Brightmoor Woodworkers, Brightmoor Bikes and Trailers, DCS Apparel and Detroit Community Market Gardens are part of Youth Entrepreneurship in Action, programs that are based out of Detroit Community High School and operate throughout the year.

With all of these businesses sharing the same space, the time has come for an upgrade of facilities. Detroit Community Schools are located within the repurposed factory of the Kux Graphic Company on Burt Road in Brightmoor. On the grounds exists a 3,200 square foot garage that has not been utilized for years. Now the Brightmoor Woodworkers and other student-run businesses at the Detroit Community Schools are looking to take things back to the garage (though a much bigger one) by renovating the facility at Detroit Community Schools. A sign reading “The Bagley Quad Shop” already hangs over the door, referencing the garage where Henry Ford got his start in automotive manufacturing.

But the garage is not yet a functional workspace. Today, the Detroit Community Schools are launching a Kickstarter campaign in partnership with TechTown’s SWOT City program to raise the funds necessary to renovate the garage so that it can become the Detroit Community’s entrepreneurial incubator -- a single roof under which several student-run businesses can work and grow together.

The goal is ambitious -- to raise \$50,000 to add to funds given to Detroit Community Schools by the Ford Motor Fund and the United Auto Workers. The Ford money paid for the rebuilding of a wall and asbestos remediation within the garage. The money from the crowdfunding campaign will pay for a new garage door, insulation, a heating system, new plumbing, and new electrical wiring.

New Work and Community Production: The Eyes of the World are on Detroit

By: Barbara A. Stachowski,
Boggs Center to Nurture Community Leadership and Detroit New Work Center

Jimmy Boggs liked to encourage people to “make a way out of no way.” Detroiters have a long history of perseverance and this has been exemplified as Detroiters find ways to face the economic devastation of the post industrial reality and begin to reimagine our lives anew.

A tsunami of economic destruction hit Detroit decades ago when automation began replacing human beings on the assembly lines and in factories. Resilient Detroiters, however, have become keenly aware that, to avoid the catastrophe of another tsunami, we must move to ‘higher ground’ and a new way of life, a new way of working. We call this New Work.

What is New Work and how does it promote New Cultures and New Economies? How is it different from the old culture?

Frithjof Bergmann, the international philosopher activist of New Work, New Culture, explains: “First we must realize that the current jobs system is only about 200 years old and obviously doesn’t work. Everything connected to the jobs economy has been reduced, diminished and made worse. NewWork is an effort to turn the whole thing around from the bottom to the top.”

Frithjof warns that in the next relatively few months or years, we will experience a calamity on the level of six or eight tsunamis if we do not find an alternative to the current jobs economy. “These tsunamis are rolling in from the ocean towards us and if we do not do anything very intelligent and imaginative, they will destroy us and we will be drowned.

“New Work from the start was conceived as a possible staircase up to a new culture that will be more humane, more intelligent and more cheerful than the one we are leaving beneath and behind us.”

Specifically, New Work makes use of new technologies to become independent and self-reliant and NOT depend on a boss to get a job.

Bergmann reassures us that, “A quantum leap is now possible, and it is important to understand that this is not just a fantasy, not something that people in some ways just dream about, and that Detroit is the place where this is becoming more real, more substantial, more graspable, more graphic than maybe any other place in the world.”

This quantum leap has to do with an astounding technological development called miniaturization or micronization. An iPhone is an example of this technology. Like smartphones, miniaturization applies to manufacturing and factories.

“It is now possible to manufacture anything from houses to electricity, to computers, to electric cargo bikes. Almost anything can be produced almost anywhere, and that means in remote villages, in blighted neighborhoods in Detroit. Community production is what makes the

quantum leap up to New Culture, a new way of life, a new experience of the spiritual possible.” Community production has an enormous advantage over archaic attempts to build an economy of meaningless jobs because it allows people to focus on doing work that they really, really want to do to make things that we really, really need. We can now move into a New Culture that, as Grace Lee Boggs says, concentrates on developing people and growing our souls. When we do work we really, really want to do we realize a sense of strength and not exhaustion, we begin to feel that we are living, we begin to feel that our lives have meaning.

As the waters of the economic tsunami continue to recede, leaving behind fertile ground, Detroiters are creating a New Culture based on Community Production. Grassroots community based centers of work and culture are emerging in the Brightmoor and Birwood neighborhoods, the MakrSpace in the Church of the Messiah, and Freedom Freedom Growers’ Manistique Garden project.

Bergmann believes, “The fact that Detroit has a tradition that goes over generations makes it plausible that Detroit could become the model for no end of other cities that will come here how to study how this is accomplished and what it looks like.”

A Brave New ‘Work’ World

By Larry Gabriel
Metro Times

Mention new work to most folks and they think you’re looking for a job, or getting trained for new skills after your old skills became obsolete. Those are fair assumptions, but the new work I’m addressing refers to the philosophy and practices championed by Frithjof Bergman, a retired University of Michigan philosophy professor. Bergman has focused on the sea change in the world economy brought on by technology, and how that affects both how and why people will work in coming years.

New work is definitely a philosophy, which makes it somewhat ephemeral and ahead of the curve for most folks, but there are people in Detroit, and around the world, dedicated to developing the concepts of new work into practical, useful strategies for everyday living.

New works starts from the proposition that the way the economy is organized has changed drastically over the last few decades. Very few things are done the same way they used to get done.

For instance, in the 1940s, the Ford River Rouge Plant employed 100,000 workers - a population that would have counted as one of the 10 biggest cities in Michigan back then (and now). The Rouge compound had its own glassmaking facility and an electrical generation plant; rubber was shipped directly there from Henry Ford’s rubber plantation in South America. Everything necessary to build an automobile was right there. Now, due to technology, the place runs with fewer than 5,000 workers. It didn’t get bigger; it shrank.

The same thing is happening throughout the world of work; it takes fewer people to do almost anything. In the world of newspapers, typesetters, librarians — and even the paperboy who delivers it to your door — have become obsolete. It looks like the paper, itself, is destined to disappear.

Formerly good paying jobs have been offshored to cheap labor markets; pensions and benefits are disappearing — and, for many, work is a series of temporary jobs with little security. The situation becomes exacerbated in a system that pits workers against each other to win steadily diminishing compensation. The result is a great recession that seems more and more permanent, a mortgage crisis that allows banks to be bailed out while families are thrown out in the street, and food has become a commodity for profit-making while the idea of proper nutrition is eliminated from the equation.

“What’s happening in the current economy amounts to things that you could call the Egyptian plagues from the Old Testament,” Bergman says. “We have what I call the butcher split. [It’s] a division between the people who are super-duper well off — more wealthy, more spoiled and more wasteful. At the opposite extreme right now there are about 80 percent of people. I don’t call them poor; I call them desert people. They don’t know where they’re going to sleep and they have to invent what they’re going to do next.”

Bergman and others focused on new work are busy trying to figure out what that next thing will be. There are new work centers in Africa, Europe, the Indian subcontinent and North America. One idea they have developed is how to deal with disappearing jobs. Rather than have people competing with each other for scarce jobs — therefore creating the haves and have nots — they believe that people should work fewer hours and there will be more jobs to go around.

In this scenario, people spend about one-third of their time producing food, energy and the like; one-third doing enterprising things for compensation, and one-third doing what enthuses and energizes them. “There will be no living from weekend to weekend,” says Blair Evans, director of Incite Focus, a new work lab on Detroit’s east side. “People will engage in energizing rituals.”

Evans is describing an idea that, rather than doing demeaning, dehumanizing tasks all week and waiting for the weekend to do things that really matter to you, new work will engage your mind and spirit on a daily basis.

Incite Focus is a fabricating laboratory, or Fab Lab, with a 3-D printer. These facilities are at the center of how new work promoters expect to create new kinds of community. 3-D printers, or fabricators, make things. In the same way that a printer can produce two-dimensional images on paper, fabricators are programmed to make functional objects out of plastic and cornstarch. It takes a moment to get your head around the idea that you can “print” a bowl or a cabinet, but it is entirely possible. Recently, the technology made news when someone posted directions online for how to use a fabricator to make a plastic gun that could pass through a metal detector. Also, a Fab Lab in Austria recently demonstrated that it is possible to fabricate the parts for an easily assembled electric motorcycle.

The fabricator isn’t practical for mass production, but it makes sense for short runs of things without having to retool a factory for it. And it also lends itself to people who want to customize objects for their wants or needs. There are 130 Fab Labs in the world now. Evans says the numbers are doubling every 18 months. At that rate, there will be about 1,400 of them dotting the globe in five years.

The fabricator is but one aspect of the new work vision. Much of the rest of it is less about hightech applications and more on the humanistic side. New work envisions intentional communities incorporating ecology, agriculture, architecture, appropriate technology, innovative education and other features of human culture. Among the attributes is the development of an affordable 400-square-foot house that is appropriate because there will be community centers where social activities take place. And there is a focus on how people interact.

“People need to shift the way they think and the way they act toward each other,” says Kim Sherrobi, a new-work adherent. “Without that, it’s kind of challenging to do the rest.”

New work is a fairly new thing and its advocates know that they need to start showing people how it works — take it from the world of envisioning and into practical application. That should be coming along soon enough.

Evans says that folks at the Detroit Center for New Work have already procured property for 15-acre and 20-acre developments in Detroit. They are engaging in discussions with residents

in the area to determine what is wanted and needed. The idea is to be flexible and tailor specific communities to the people. Evans says each one will have the capacity to fabricate, generate energy and use only the water that falls on the property. “Almost anything that anybody needs can be produced in the community,” Bergman says, “all of that on a much more human scale.”

I guess we’ll find out soon enough how practical new work is. What we usually see are efforts to patch up an ailing and failing system. It’s a difficult thing to let go of what you know and what has sustained you in the past. The new-work thinkers are ready to let the old ways go and start out anew. That’s something like what the founders of our nation did. They left behind the old to try something new.

Larry Gabriel is a writer, musician and former editor of Metro Times. Send comments to letters@metrotimes.com.

Create Anything Anywhere

Many people are innocently, and some unsuspectingly, participating in a great democratizing transformation. Using available technologies, we are redefining our personal time, job relationships, consumption patterns and relationship to the environment. This is creating different pathways for participating in our society and economy while also preserving our personal opportunities to thrive and become our best selves.

Massachusetts Institute of Technology's Neil Gershenfeld poses a deep question to all of us: "How will we live, learn, work and play when anyone can make anything, anywhere?"

In community shops we call Fab Labs, we have built utility items that support basic needs, including furniture, 150- square-foot structures and control systems for energy and food production. Community members across generations are raising the bar, building items with a huge impact on expenses that we normally toil many hours a month to support: housing near 1,000 square feet that supports zero utility bills, concentrated solar power (CSP) energy harvesting systems and communityscale food production using aquaponics and permaculture techniques. These are built with digital fabrication tools and permaculture design techniques available to everyone in the community. Community-level production can be very effective in allowing fundamental lifestyle changes for people who are looking to live within limits, but not poorly, and who want to have time for high quality-of-life experiences. In the words of professor, philosopher and practitioner Frithjof Bergmann, to live within a community "that would foster the development of impressive, splendid, admirable human



beings." These personal, triple-bottom-line outcomes (people, planet, profit) are impactful now. As sociologist and trend watcher Juliet B. Schor said, "Work and spend less, create and connect more," in turn leading to "ecological benefits — emit and degrade less — and human ones — enjoy and thrive more."

What's important to note is that this is all being done with technology that is rapidly increasing in both power and accessibility, to the extent that what we use today will be considered laughably crude within a decade or two. What is happening today is powerful, but the impact of this advancing technology is only embryonic at present. The opportunity for us to genuinely participate in this future is, amazingly, available to all right now. The relevant skills and perspectives can and are being learned today. Those with a true understanding — who are immersed in that life - will create this future. And the profound question posed by Gershenfeld that I stated earlier can be, and more importantly needs to be, answered with deep contributions from all of us.

WHAT'S THE FAB LAB?

Created by a group of dedicated professionals at MIT, Fab Lab is a place where ideas become reality. Anyone with any level of experience can create anything. And through the online Fab Lab community, you can then share those ideas and collaborate with people half a world away. <http://fab.cba.mit.edu/about/labs/>



BLAIR EVANS is founder and director of Incite Focus, a program that uses digital fabrication, agroecology and appropriate technology to empower communities. His project work and centers of community production can be found in the U.S., South Africa and Ethiopia, among other locations. He is a guru with the Fab Academy, a permaculture practitioner and instructor, and a superintendent of a group of charter schools using these technologies in place-based education.

Green City Diaries: Fab Lab and the Language of Nature

What can we learn from observing the self sustaining ecosystems of the natural world? And with that knowledge, how can we design systems of our own, systems of all kinds, that mimic the intrinsic balance of ecosystems, with their capacity for diversity, renewal, and the transformation of waste into energy? These are the kinds of big questions posed by practitioners of permaculture, an approach to systems design with deep roots in agriculture but implications for, well, just about everything.

Permaculture (the word is a portmanteau of “permanent” and “agriculture,” as well as “permanent” and “culture”) was developed in the 1970s by Tasmanians Bill Mollison and David Holmgren. Reacting against industrial agricultural practices they found both wasteful and harmful, Mollison and Holmgren articulated an agricultural philosophy and practice inspired by natural systems.

Based on three fundamental values -- care for the Earth, care for people, and return of surplus -- Mollison and Holmgren’s ethic emphasizes mutually sustaining relationships between living things and the intentional design of agricultural space to encourage such relationships. In essence, it’s farming that works with nature, rather than against it, seeking to eliminate both waste and external “inputs” like pesticides, herbicides, water, and fertilizers. (Similar agricultural systems, called by different names, were developed around the same time by Sepp Holzer in Austria and Masanobu Fukuoka in Japan.)

As its adherents have grown in number and diversity over the decades, permaculture has been applied to systems outside agriculture, as well, including landscape design, planning, and architecture. But as a way of understanding and living in the world, its potential applications are even broader. “Everyone,” as Detroit permaculturalist Kate Devlin puts it, “can incorporate some permaculture into their lives.”

Kate, who’s managed the Spirit of Hope church’s permaculture farm since 2007, believes that Detroit is in the midst of a permaculture “awakening.”

“Urban permaculture hasn’t been around that long, so we’re still in the trial and error phase,” she says. “Detroit’s kind of a test spot for how it could work.”

Permaculture initiatives are indeed popping up throughout the city -- including the Chiwara development in Highland Park that Dennis Archambault covered in Model D a few weeks ago. My search for other noteworthy projects led me to Blair Evans, whose organization Incite Focus, a “platform for community production,” demonstrates the revolutionary potential of applying permaculture principles in the context of Detroit’s DIY maker culture. I meet Blair at Incite Focus’s east side fab lab, a fabrication studio located inside the Blanche Kelso Bruce Academy charter school. There’s a garden outside, but inside, it’s decidedly hightech, complete with laser cutters, large CNC milling machines, a water jet cutter capable of cutting titanium and steel, and 3D print-

ers that can print fully articulated mechanisms made of multiple materials. How, I wonder, does all this work together, and what in the world does it have to do with natural farming?

“Permaculture,” Blair says, “is based in systems thinking. But it’s hard to understand systems in general unless you understand one system well that you can abstract from. Unfortunately, in communities that are disenfranchised or under-resourced, there aren’t a whole lot of opportunities to get experience with well-functioning systems. Everybody can get some tomato plants and some worms and some soil, though, and have an extraordinarily complex system to work with and then scale up from.” Students at Kelso, as well as members of the surrounding community who learn, design, and build at Incite Focus, often begin their permaculture education, then, in the garden, where they first learn how to operate effectively within the natural environment.

“On the one hand, the gardening projects our students work on are deep and rich enough to allow them to really understand what permaculture means and why it’s useful,” Blair says. “On the other hand, we’re in an environment in Detroit where people in very large numbers have been displaced from the position in the economy they had previously occupied and planned on continuing to occupy, and that’s because of a structural shift, not a temporary change. So how can we use permaculture to imagine what the future of Detroit for Detroiters could look like?”

That’s where the fab lab comes in. Blair believes that advances in digital production technology have reached the point at which, with an ecological approach to design and building in mind, people are now truly capable of producing most of the things they need. “Shelter, water, food, energy -- these are all things that we can actually harvest and produce. They’re all around us; we’re just not properly utilizing them.”

Economically displaced Detroiters, Blair believes, should not wait for new industries to come along and absorb them into the workforce. Even if that were to happen, which he thinks unlikely, it would only return them to the fundamentally unhealthy, imbalanced system from which they were ejected in the first place.

“In permaculture,” he says, “you’re not a slave to the process. You’re a participant in the process. Behind a lot of this work is the idea of allowing people to have the opportunity to actually spend a reasonable portion of their time, a third of it, producing the things they need to live (furniture, for example, tools, even houses) themselves. Then you can spend a third of your time using the same tools to produce things that are useful for other people: community-based enterprises. Then you have another third left to do the things that make you want to get up in the morning, usually the things your high school guidance counselor talked you out of.”

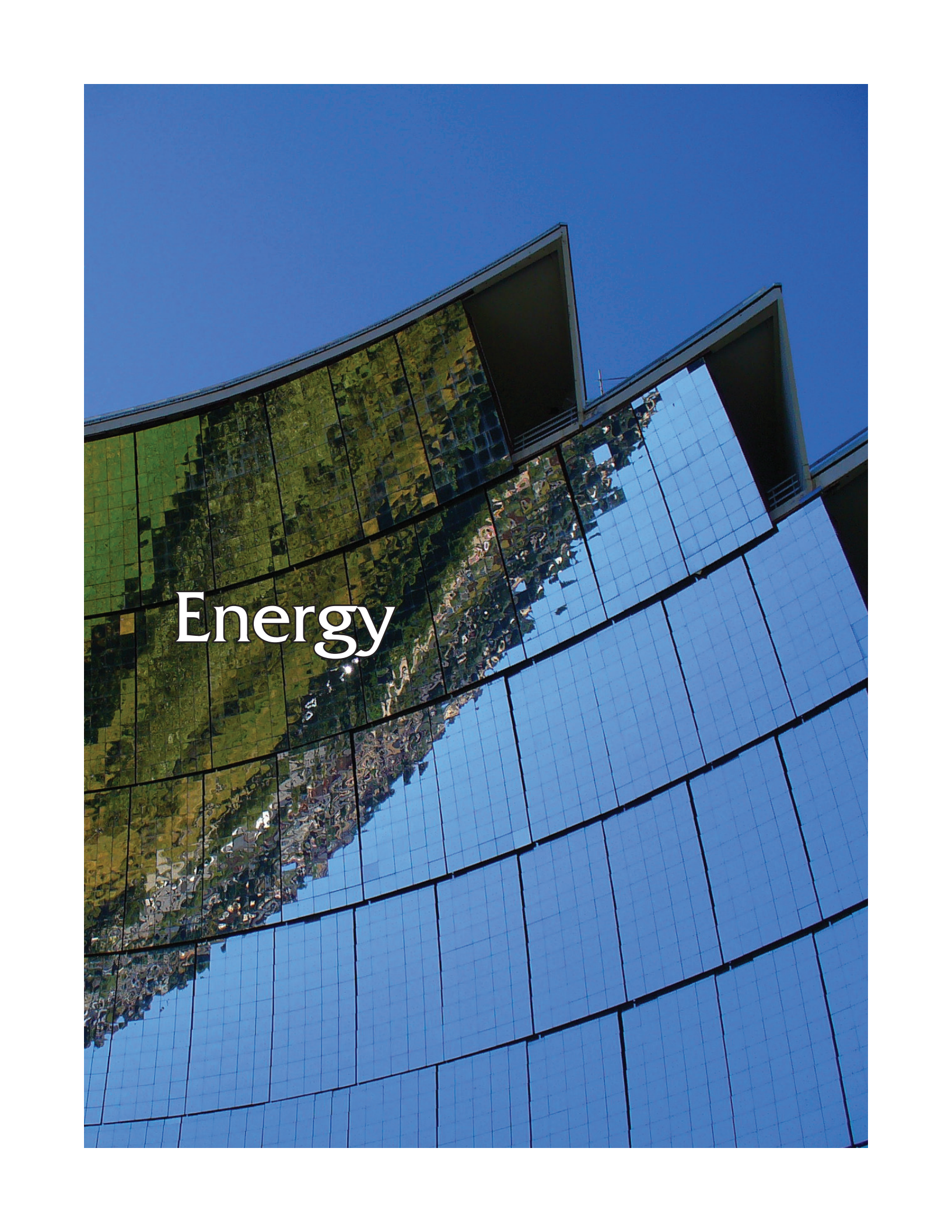
“If you’re not engaged in the rituals that touch your passions,” he says, “you’re not in a position to bring the best of yourself to anything that you do. In a large sense, then, this all comes down to creating an environment and cultural context in which people in Detroit are able to truly maximize our capacity as people.”

An ambitious and revolutionary goal, to be sure, but one rooted in a principle of the utmost simplicity: balance. Balance between consumption and production, between needs and wants, between individual and community.

Blair's work exists at a crossroads that's distinctly Detroit: it's where the pursuits of designing, making, growing, community building, and imagining new and better futures all come together. Inspired by the close study of natural systems, it's something else, too: a glimpse of what's possible when we learn to understand and speak the language of nature.

Green City Diaries is a co-production of Model D and the Green Garage Urban Sustainability Library.

Services



Energy

Community Electricity Lights Up Spain

By Inés Benítez
Tierramerica

MÁLAGA, Spain , May 6 2014 (IPS) - Until recently it was inconceivable for small groups of organised citizens in fully electrified industrialised countries like Spain to generate their own power from clean sources of energy, challenging the prevailing energy model. But now anyone who wants to become an “agent of change” can be a co-owner of community projects that promote renewable energy, such as the Huerta Solar Amigos de la Tierra, a 20-kW solar energy plant in the municipality of Sisante in southeast Spain. Friends of the Earth Spain and the non-profit company Ecooo are behind the creation of the plant. “We have to change the 20th century paradigm, where energy equals fossil fuels, and citizens are seen as mere consumers,” Héctor de Prado, head of energy and climate in Friends of the Earth Spain, told Tierramérica.

“Buying shares, starting at 100 euros, people become co-owners, and receive profits,” Ecooo spokesman José Vicente Barcia explained to Tierramérica. Ecooo has 65 collective solar installations placed on rooftops in rural and urban communities around Spain.

Ecooo, which forms part of the Platform for a new energy model, made up of over 300 organisations, also installs and maintains solar panels for private individuals and carries out energy audits to analyse consumption.

“Installed capacity is higher than what is needed, to the profit of the energy corporations,” said Barcia. “What is needed is a culture of energy savings, because the most ecological and economical kilowatt is the one that isn’t consumed.”

Another possibility for energy consumers who want to support clean energy collectives is to switch from a traditional power utility to one of several “green” cooperatives operating in Spain, such as Zencer in the southern region of Andalucía, Som Energia in Catalonia in the east, or GoiEner and Nosa Enerxia in Galicia in the northwest.

“We want to make consumers participants in managing the energy they consume,” architect Francisco Javier Porras, founder and president of Zencer, told Tierramérica.

Zencer has been supplying electricity generated by renewable sources at a national level since January 2013.

The cooperatives can purchase electricity from the traditional utilities, but they guarantee that all of the energy they sell comes from clean sources, by granting renewable energy certificates to producers of clean energy

According to Porras, between 30 and 40 percent of the energy produced in Spain now comes from renewable sources.

In his office in Fuengirola in the southern region of Málaga, Porras said consumers “are

reluctant to accept changes in terms of energy supply” even though their electricity bills have soared in recent years.

The cost of electricity for the members of the cooperatives is no higher than what consumers pay for power from the big corporations like Iberdrola, Gas Natural Fenosa, Endesa, HC and E.On, and it can even be lower, while users have the satisfaction of knowing they are helping to support clean energy, say advocates of the cooperatives.

In this southern European country, where unemployment stands at 25 percent and the cost of electricity continues to climb, there is a new phenomenon: energy poverty.

The number of people who are finding it hard to pay their electricity bills grew by two million from 2010 to 2012 in this country of more than 47 million people, according to a report by the Association of Environmental Sciences (ACA).

The study found that the proportion of households affected by energy poverty has risen to more than 10 percent – or more than four million people.

José Luis López, who led the study, believes that collective energy management initiatives can have “a certain influence” on reducing energy poverty when they are able to bring down the costs of the members’ energy bills, although he said “there is no immediate short-term effect.”

Promoting renewable, independent energy production also reduces dependence on fossil fuels, thus bringing about a reduction in the millions of euros in fixed costs for the state coffers, López added.

Friends of the Earth Spain complains that the government is standing in the way of the progress of renewable energy in this country, whose enormous potential is not being harnessed, it says, while other European Union countries see green energy as a way to combat emissions of greenhouse gases.

“The government has some nerve to do what it is doing,” said Marc Roselló of Som Energia, referring to the government’s energy policies, which privilege large corporations that use fossil fuels.

In July, the centre-right government introduced an energy reform, and in December it approved an amendment to the electricity sector law, which was opposed by the hundreds of members of the Platform and 14 opposition parties.

Roselló told Tierramérica that in late 2010, a year after the energy market was liberalised, Som Energia transferred to Spain the solid experience of companies like Ecopower in Belgium or Enercoop in France.

“We don’t only sell energy; we also produce energy through our own projects,” he said. The cooperative’s bills provide the more than 14,000 members with details on the origin of the electricity it distributes. In 2013, for example, the energy distributed by the cooperative came from solar, wind and biogas plants.

Zencer's Porras also sees "the big objective" for the 600-member cooperative, which is accredited to distribute energy throughout Spain, as producing energy through small-scale electricity generation projects using its own funds.

Although a few years ago social participation in the energy system was not possible, thousands of people from all walks of life – investors concerned about the environment, ecologists and others – are now taking part or investing in clean energy projects, like Viure de l'aire, a community wind energy project in Catalonia.

"Each green kWh that you add to the energy grid is one kWh less from burnt fossil fuels," said Héctor de Prado.

<http://www.ipsnews.net/2014/05/community-electricity-lights-spain/>
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Old World Meets New

By Linda M. Erbele



Carlos Nielbock builds C.A.N.Art Handworks into company that makes history relevant today and wins Top Job awards while doing it.

Carlos Nielbock came to the United States almost 30 years ago with \$50 in his pocket and the training he had acquired in an old-world apprenticeship. He fell in love with the country and the American dream.

Learning the trade

In 1984, at the age of 24, Nielbock came to Detroit from Germany to search for his father, whom he had not seen since he was two. The young man was born in the northern German town of Celle, the son of an African-American G.I. and a German girl.

“My dad was sent back to the U.S. in 1962 or 1963,” Nielbock said. “I never really got to know him.”

As a young man, Carlos found some letters that his father had written his mother, and decided to come to the U.S. to find his father. The return address on an old envelope was all he had to go on. While his father was no longer at the old address, he still lived on that street. The address on the envelope belonged to an abandoned house, but the man who answered the door of the house next to it knew Carlos’ father’s brother, and within a few hours, his father himself came walking in the door, thrilled to see his son.

Nielbock stayed with his father the three months his tourist visa allowed, then returned to Germany just long enough to pack his things and get the proper paperwork to come to the United States. “I didn’t know anything about American culture other than what I saw on TV. But I loved it,” he said.

The young man moved in with his father and quickly set about learning the country and making a living. He first learned metalworking from the Catholic school he attended during his teen years in Germany, at which monks taught a whole line of skilled trades, including book-binding, housepainting, woodworking, carpentry, and metal working.

“Out of all of those, I liked the fire, the sparks and the action in the forge,” Nielbock said. “You can’t learn blacksmithing, forging, and metalsmithing from a book. It’s got to be hands-on. I was fortunate to get that. It gave me the foundation for what I am doing now.”

After he finished school, he apprenticed with metalworkers in Germany, but by his early 20’s, found himself ready for a change.

“I was disappointed in Germany, actually,” Nielbock said. “I already knew I was pretty good. I wanted to work on those castles and beautiful churches, the exciting places. But you have to

work in the system, work with the guilds and reach a certain amount of maturity.’

The guilds in Germany were fairly structured. In America, he found employment at a Detroit metalworking shop, where his old-world training was well utilized. He learned the language and his way around in less than a year.

In 1986, he was working for a NOMMA member who created window bars. Nielbock says he dusted off an old anvil, got the forge together and started making creative things. His creation of a life-sized seagull in flight won the NOMMA member a Gold award in sculpture back in the 1980s. “I proudly got a raise to \$5 an hour,” Nielbock says. From there, he discovered the Small Business Administration. He attended seminars about responding to government RFPs and learned how to approach clients. He also learned the basics of being in business.

“Before you know it, I was bidding to restore ornaments at the Library of Congress,” he said. Although he didn’t get that job, it showed him the size and body of work that was out there. In a short time, he started his own business, working out of his father’s home until he could afford a building of his own.

Finding customers - making the business successful

Railings were among his new company’s first projects. “Levi Stokes, from the Motown music group The Four Tops, was one of my first jobs,” Nielbock says. “It went pretty good and I made a few other things.” When Mike and Marion Illitch, owners of the Detroit Tigers, bought the old Fox Theater in Detroit and began to restore it, Nielbock saw opportunity. “I walked in there and said, ‘I’m the guy who can do the work;’” he says. And he got the job. “It was just like I learned it. All that ornamental detail was what the old guys did as a gift for themselves after they had finished work.”

The old theater opened in 1928, designed by C. Howard Crane with a blend of Burmese, Chinese, Indian and Persian motifs. Its renovation led to a renewed interest in other historic buildings in the area, and Nielbock says he is still drawing from that market of architectural and ornamental requirements for downtown canopies, bronze doors, and light fixtures.

Additionally, he’s found a market in the affluent Detroit suburbs of Bloomfield and Grosse Pointe, where executives want “top shelf” artistic touches for their estates.

He hired his son as lead fabricator, his daughter as administrator and customer contact and his father as the property manager. He named the business using his initials CAN. Art Handworks. He has three welders, a cold -saw, a hand fortress and a large layout table inside the shop and a large layout table outside.

He works with any metal, he says, including iron, steel, pewter and bronze. “We look for challenging jobs,” he said. “The more exotic the metal and the job, the better.” In addition to his son as a fabricator, he has had two apprentices, but the business stays fairly lean. “When a big project comes up, we bring in human resources to gear up for it,” Nielbock said.

Vision and dreams

Nielbock is passionate about his adopted hometown. He believes that in many ways, Detroit epitomizes the pioneering spirit of America. He is confident that the “can-do” outlook that marked America’s beginning is one of the things that the country will persevere through

its hard times. “The Henry Ford Museum is one of the greatest institutions to preserve the industrial revolution in all its nuances,” Nielbock says. “A lot of things around the museum encompass the whole story of America.” He was excited about the opportunity to repair the historic balconies on the front of the museum.

Winning two golds is a family affair and not without inspiration. One gold medal winning NOMMA member has combined a passion for the old ways with modern technology to both create business and give back to the community. C.A.N. Art Handworks of Detroit earned two Top Job Gold awards at the NOMMA METAL fab1013 in Albuquerque last March. One was for the restoration of the 1934 balconies on the Henry Ford Museum in Detroit. The other was for a wind turbine, made completely of recycled materials.

The Henry Ford Museum in Detroit showcases the history of the U.S. automobile in this country and inspires visitors with the American traditions of ingenuity, resourcefulness, and innovation. Over the decades since the museum opened, the exposed wrought-iron railings of the balconies had become delaminated and extensively corroded. “Rust and all this stuff would rain down on the pedestrians,”

Carlos Nielbock, owner and founder of C.A.N. Art Handworks, says. “The whole building is a replica. In particular the balconies of the building represent the balconies of Independence Hall in Philadelphia.”

The four old balconies were stripped of all coating and that needed replacement and amount of corrosion proved to requiring chiseling down to patience and effort, it was elements were replaced with balcony was restored, it was given a black pewter patina.

“We need those skilled trades,” Nielbock says. “If you want to rebuild the country, you must have the skills that originally built it.”

carefully removed and corrosion to identify elements repair. The tremendous be the biggest challenge, the solid material, but with removed. Missing wrought iron new wrought iron. After each hot-dip, zinc galvanized and

The Henry Ford Museum is also the site of the Maker Faire-Detroit, an annual two-day extravaganza of ideas and inventions, where some 400 entrants display their experiential gadgets. C.A.N. Art Handworks created a low-altitude wind turbine from recycled materials and automotive parts obtained within an eight-mile radius of the company. It was entered in the Faire. “A couple of years ago when the economy just didn’t want to recover, I had to find a new way to put my skills to use. Green energy was the only thing that kind of sparkled,” Nielbock says.

So the fabricator created the windmill, using the best ideas from European and American windmills. Nielbock designed all the components and used galvanized sheet metal, steel piping for stabilization, as well as other reused materials, all from within an 8-mile radius of his shop. The most difficult challenge was designing a low-altitude windmill that could withstand extreme high winds (40+mph). Anchored beneath the ground using structural steel and masonry, it took about two years to get the wind turbine electrically functional and able to withstand the weather. It won four blue ribbons at the Maker Faire and an Unusual Ornamental Fabrication - Gold at METALfab2013.

“The Henry is one of the great Colonial Revival buildings of our time.” says Christian Overland, executive vice-president of the Henry Ford Museum. “The front side is a copy of Independence Hall The balconies are very ornate. It was very important work. [Nielbock] was the only blacksmith and ironworker artist that could do it. As a national historic landmark, the work had to be in concert with the Department of Interiors standards for historic preservation.” “Over the years I had built up my portfolio,” Nielbock says. “It all came together right there.” Nielbock says many of the exhibits at the museum were created by skilled craftsmen.

“We need those skilled trades,” Nielbock says. “If you want to rebuild the country, you must have the skills that originally built it.”

He has worked with both the University of Michigan and Lawrence Technical University to help develop a curriculum that will administer technical know-how and deliver hands-on experience. That kind of education, he says, will provide young people the opportunity and ability to do anything, including forging their future.

His passion for history led him to a study of the old Detroit city hall, which was demolished in 1961.

Built as Detroit’s showpiece in 1871, the building towered over the city at 180 feet tall. It was topped with a clock tower that housed the largest (at the time) clock in the United States, guarded by four 14-foot tall sandstone statues representing Art, Commerce, Industry, and Justice. Later, four more statues of Detroit pioneers were added. “The building was built with sculptures - things that make you humble,” Nielbock says.

Pieces of the old building, including the statues, are now scattered throughout Detroit, some in various departments belonging to the city. He set to work on the problem of putting it back together. “I came up with a plan to take charge of those pieces and appropriate them for the city,” Nielbock says. “Now we must find a consensus with the different city departments and all the different owners:’ Joel Stone, curator of the Detroit Historic Commission is very supportive.

“You have to capture people’s imaginations. . . to motivate them. When you are working on a real-life project of significance, you give them a challenge and an experience to last a lifetime,”

Carlos Nielbock

“He approached us about recreating the cupola from Detroit’s old city hall,” Stone says. “The pieces are not in very good shape. They were taken down roughly and stored roughly. Nielbock is developing financial backing for it. He seems to have a good plan.” It will take a lot of volunteer effort and community work to accomplish the project. Nielbock believes that restoring some of the grandeur from the old city hall will not only serve as a history lesson, it will utilize and train young people in the skilled trades that will enable them to create a future. “You have



to capture people's imaginations in order to motivate them. When you are working on a real-life project of significance, you give them a challenge and an experience to last a lifetime," Nielbock said.

In addition to the statues, there are cannons and a number of other artifacts in need of restoration. "Cannons and all kinds of stuff that built this country are just waiting for skilled hands to put them back together so they can be on view for another generation," he added. C.A.N. Art Handworks consists of Nielbock, his daughter Belinda Nielbock, who serves as the administrative manager, his son Keenan Nielbock, lead fabricator and his father Clarence Cheeks, who does facility management and maintenance. Shiray Cottingham, currently an apprentice, will be graduating to journeyman shortly.

Training philosophy

Nielbock trains apprentices by putting them to work on projects at a beginners level and gradually increasing the complexity as they learn. He observes and assists as needed. He believes that direct involvement in real projects is meaningful and makes for the best learning experience. The company is in a 10,000 square foot three-story building. The production line, located on the first floor, can be geared to whatever project needs to be worked on. The top level is Nielbock's apartment and design studio.

C.A.N. Art Handworks used to do everything down to the finish and installation of a project, but since becoming a member of NOMMA, Nielbock says they have enjoyed having access to the variety of suppliers, "You can use a prefabricated component and connect it to your hand-made component," he says. "This is a big thing in making it easier for the fabricator to realize complex design."

Enthusiastic about 3D

In spite of his love of history and his old-world training, Nielbock is not stuck in the past. He does his best to stay current with technology. "In the last five years I've opened myself up to everything that is new," he says. The company uses TechShop to develop a CAD print of some projects. For a monthly membership, TechShop offers the use of a variety of equipment, including 3D software and printers, CNC routers, milling machines, plasma cutters, and metal lathes. "I'm very enthused about 3D scanning and printing with virtual assembly," Nielbock says. He has attended seminars on 3D scanning and likes the use of it for large projects.

He used the technology when he created smaller bronze replicas of Detroit's famous Spirit of Detroit to be used to raise money for its restoration. The spirit is a 26-foot bronze sculpture created by Marshall Frederick for the city in 1955. Nielbock used the scanning function to calculate dimensions so he could create to-scale miniatures of the statue.

Although he sees a division between the old ways and the new high-tech, he is excited by the possibilities and believes that with good communications, miracles can come from a partnership of the new and old.

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Detroit Historical Society

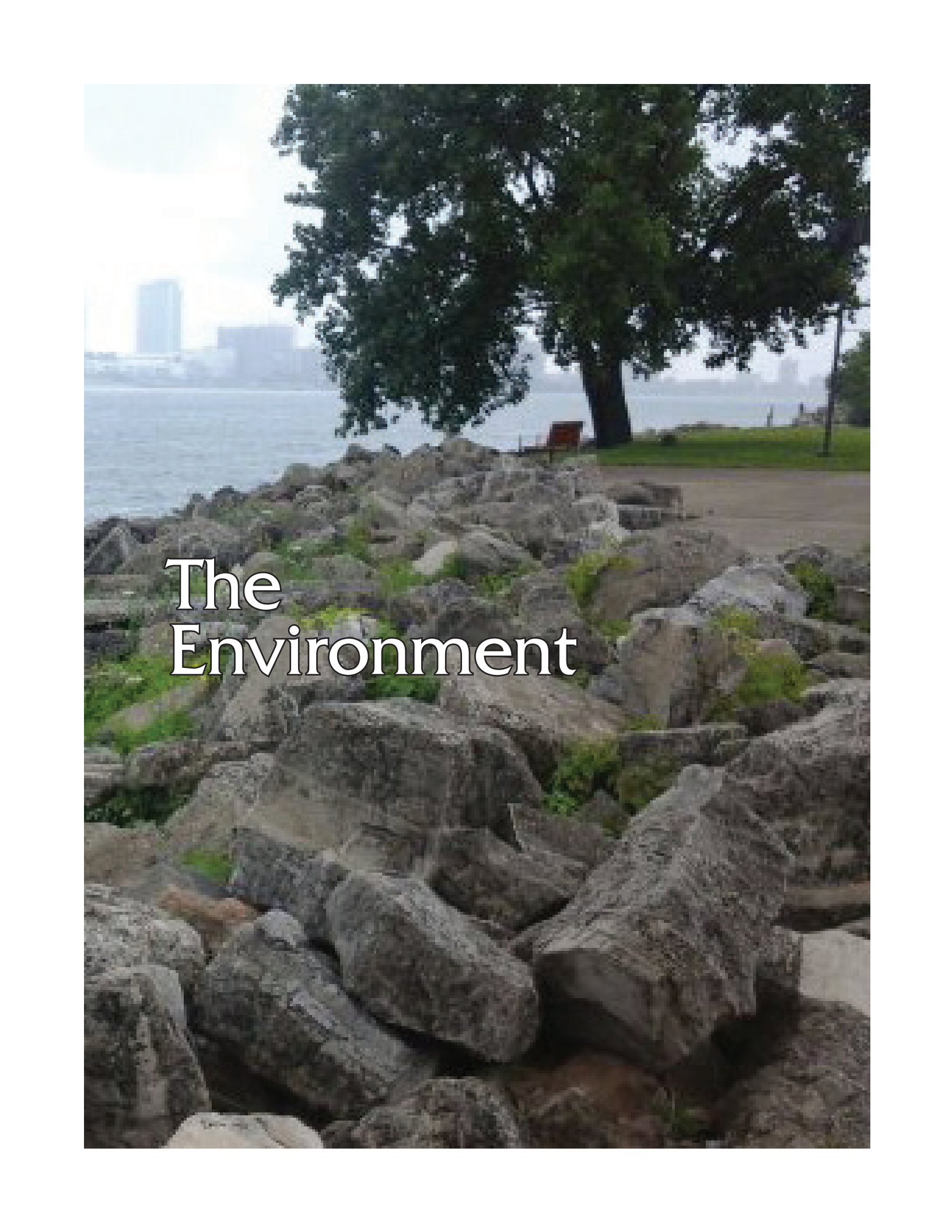
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About the author

Linda M Erbele is an Atlanta based writer. She spent 20 years in the communications industry before going back to school to get a degree in journalism. She spent a few years working for a newspaper and has been a free-lance .” writer specializing in business and travel since 2003.

NEW Culture



A scenic photograph of a coastal environment. In the foreground, a large pile of grey, jagged rocks is covered with patches of green moss or algae. Behind the rocks, a paved path leads towards a large, leafy green tree. In the background, a body of water stretches towards a distant city skyline under a cloudy sky. The text "The Environment" is overlaid in a white, serif font on the left side of the image.

The Environment

self evident truths in environmental justice

Emmanuel Pratt

- Water is one of the most (if not the most) valuable assets to human existence on the planet
- Water highlights and exposes the complexity and contradictions inherent in the current economic system and paradigm... as reinforced by the diamond/water paradox of value
- Water is the key component of food production and all forms of agriculture (healthy ecosystems for that matter) to support the continuation of all life on the planet... particularly human
- Land is an invaluable resource; fertile soil is worth more than any 'money'
- The biologically regenerative design and formula of seeds + healthy soil+ water + light + basic nutrients = high yields of edible plants by nature's design and changes per variation of climate with respect to what can be produced outside seasonally; the same goes with respect to the biological design of fish and the exponentially regenerative nature of their reproduction in the cycle of life
- The principles of organic gardening (not the label organic but truly organic farming in the natural way of being) and aquaponics are completely scalable if attention is paid to the carrying capacity of the ecosystem
- Aquaponics, as a biologically informed and sensitive method of sustainable food production, uses 80-90% less water than traditional 'farming' practices because it is a recirculating water ecosystem whereby your nutrient source and water source are more controlled.
- When designed and cared for appropriately, the fertilized waste of the fish provides a nutrient source for our plants which, in turn (with the proper support and cultivation of microbial and beneficial bacteria in the system) filter the water to return to the fish in a balanced, symbiotic ecosystem.
- 'The Commons' are the space where we exercise common rights and common responsibilities; the commons is not a place where one solely extracts... you also have to give; the commons are spaces to welcome people to learn, reflect, and share
- Ecological and social commons are about a return to nature and a return to society
- The entire 'rights' model that came out of the model of capital accumulation and industrialization is based on rights of appropriation not of giving back ; Commons cannot survive without a giving back
- The earth is generously saying take everything from me as long as you give back
- The old rights paradigm based on privatization has to be transcended for a new rights paradigm based on responsibility and giving
- The common rights of the earth, the common rights of the sea, the common rights of the rivers, the common rights to the people to have water/food/air/seed/land, and the right of the land are all now converging in a new way given the global economic crisis and collapse
- Nature's economy is the first economy which consists of the production of goods and services by nature – the water recycled and distributed through the hydrological cycle, the soil fertilized by microorganisms, the plants fertilized by pollinators; the work of farmers is the art

of working with internal inputs that soil and provide

- The current economic model, as measured by growth, is intimately related to increased, poverty, hunger, and thirst; ecological disasters and the number of displaced, destitute, and disposable people increase in direct proportion to economic growth.
- The ecological destruction associated with uncontrolled exploitation of natural resources for commercial gains is symptomatic of the conflict over how wealth is generated in the market and in nature
- In the sustenance economy, people work to directly provide the conditions necessary to maintain their lives; in this economy humans produce in balance with nature and reproduce societies through partnerships, mutuality, and reciprocity.
- The real work continues to be the work of defending the earth, the rights of the earth, the defense of the commons, and building alternative economies based on commons, sharing, and caring... not on taking and destroying
- Ecological and bio diverse systems can and will always produce an abundance of food within ecological balance
- Seeds embody the basic principles of renewal, generosity, multiplicity , and diversity
- Elders are the link from the past to the future; every regeneration of caring grandmothers bring the relevant past into the present and handed it over to the future
- The seed contains the ecological and cultural memory and livelihood of society
- Natural resources are produced and reproduced through a complex network of ecological processes
- life is extremely complex and has a complex self organizing capacity which needs to be supported by the complex traits celebrating multiple genes, the creation and support the positive property of yield and resilience to the environment and , culture
- Justice and sustainability demand that we do not use more resources than we need

A young woman with light brown hair and blue eyes is the central figure. She is wearing a white t-shirt with a large green recycling symbol (three chasing arrows) and a white cap. She has a serious expression. The background is a crowded outdoor event with other people, including a woman in a black vest with patches and a man in a red shirt. The word "Governance" is overlaid in white serif font on the left side of the image.

Governance

Detroit's Grassroots Economies

Behind the doom-and-gloom headlines, a collective response to the city's problems is already happening.



The D-Town Farm, a four-acre organic farm located in Detroit's Rouge Park, hosted a harvest festival in December 2010, during which residents met to learn about urban agriculture. (Photo via Detroit Food Justice Task Force's Facebook page.)

BY JENNY LEE AND PAUL ABOWD

Detroiters are redefining “economy.” Throughout the 20th century, companies comprising Detroit’s industrial economy provided jobs to people who bought things and paid taxes to government, which provided services. In Detroit’s grassroots economy, which has evolved over many decades, people are creating their own jobs and exchanging local resources directly. Communities are solving basic economic and human problems collectively. At the same time, they are producing new knowledge and resources, restoring relationships across generations, and healing neighborhoods.

In contrast to community-driven efforts, last fall Mayor Dave Bing kicked off the Detroit In These Times · <http://www.inthesetimes.com> Works Project (DWP) with a series of town hall meetings to discuss the city’s future. According to its website, the project is “an evolving roadmap designed to make Detroit work for

you by creating a shared, achievable vision for our future.” The effort began with a series of town hall meetings that many residents felt were designed not to foster their participation but rather to mask the fact that the Detroit Works Project is led by urban renewal “experts” and philanthropic leaders unaccountable to community concerns and visions.

The town hall meetings produced a set of data that the DWP team says will instruct the city on how to proceed. Yes, citizens were given the chance to speak at the meetings, but overall the project’s strategy reduces Detroiters to numbers that get crunched and fed to a planning and development team, instead of fostering their participation in making Detroit “work.” For all the attention it has raised, DWP isn’t the only current effort to solve some of the city’s problems. Dozens of networks of community organizers crisscross the city and have long been advancing solutions to

community problems. These networks constitute a collective process of social transformation that encompasses education, food security, communications infrastructure, community safety and health, environmental justice, immigrant rights, arts and culture, and many other issues. An authentic Detroit Works Project would begin by listening to the visions and organizing models already functioning at the grassroots.

In particular, two citywide networks exemplify the grassroots' ability to do what the city, the corporate sector and philanthropic community cannot: create a vision for economic development that includes all Detroiters, and organize to make that vision real. The Detroit Digital Justice Coalition (DDJC) and the Detroit Food Justice Task Force both formed out of visions for healthy communities, where all people not only have access to healthy food and media, but also have the ability to create and distribute their own food and media. (Full disclosure: Jenny Lee codirects a member organization of the DDJC.)

These two networks are using food and media production as a means of social transformation. They are creating new economies that are increasingly inseparable from the health and self determination of Detroit communities.

Participatory democracy through media

The DDJC formed after a strategy session at the 2009 Allied Media Conference, in which community media groups from around the country met to discuss the funding opportunities created by the 2009 American Recovery and Reinvestment Act's Broadband Technology Opportunities Program (BTOP). Members of the Detroit organizations who attended the first meetings of the coalition that fall saw BTOP funding as a tremendous opportunity to actualize a vision for community media and technology in Detroit. But they quickly realized that their vision for digital justice went beyond the parameters of the federal stimulus grant. They made a commitment to work together to implement the vision whether or not they received funding from Washington. The DDJC turned the process of applying for the grant into a community-organizing process so that no matter what the outcome, the coalition could be successful.

But the DDJC's collaborative, vision-driven grant-writing did yield a \$2 million federal award in 2010. It is now in the process of launching a multi-layered program called the Detroit Media Economy Collaborative, which involves digital media training for trainers, teaching professional development, youth-led media cooperatives and the launch of 12 community media labs. In these labs, the DDJC will offer workshops on everything from computer literacy 101 to oral history radio production to media-based organizing for environmental justice.

DDJC is building the capacity of educators, community organizers, artists, technologists and small businesses to build a just and creative economy in Detroit. Its goal is not simply to give residents the ability to apply online for jobs at Wal-Mart. Instead, coalition programs will teach people how to use digital media to solve community problems; help the city's emerging small businesses become sustainable; infuse digital media arts into schools; and change young people's perception of Detroit to see it as a place of hope, not abandonment.

Growing food--and the movement

The Detroit Food Justice Task Force formed out of a need among farmers and environmental justice organizers in the city to network smaller, localized efforts and to assert a community-led

vision for Detroit's future, specifically with regard to urban agriculture. At the time of its formation in late 2009, national media were fixated on images of Detroit's prairie-like open space.

Very few stories acknowledged the decades-long movement of urban farming or the fact that Detroit is home to more than 1,000 small farms and community gardens. Rather, national media portrayed Detroit as a "blank canvas." As a result, Detroit has attracted people from near and far with bold urban agriculture proposals to supposedly save the city.

The most controversial of these proposals came from local businessman John Hantz, who wants to appropriate as much of Detroit's vacant land as possible for commercial food production and agro-tourism, slotting Detroit's "chronically unemployed" into menial farm labor jobs. The proposal, announced in spring 2009, stems from Hantz's belief that "the majority of the city does not have community," a remark he made at the Business of Urban Agriculture Summit last April. It is also grounded in an outdated view of economic health in which simply having a job is the end goal.

The FJTC offers a very different vision of urban agriculture in Detroit, a vision grounded in all the ways food production and food access in the city is about more than creating jobs. The network of food producers and distributors, culinary artists and environmental justice educators designed a strategic movement-building model for food justice that supports the city's Food Policy Council--established to develop a food secure city--and the Food Security Policy for Detroit while bringing grassroots efforts to a larger scale.

Detroit's Food Security Policy, adopted unanimously by City Council in March 2008, is concerned with access to quality food in Detroit, hunger and malnutrition, the impacts of an inadequate diet, citizen education, economic injustice in the food system, urban agriculture, and the role of schools, public institutions, and emergency response in creating food justice in Detroit. The Task Force is engaging hundreds of community members in programs that will put the policy into practice. Programs include the creation of food justice hubs in neighborhood centers throughout the city, constructive public dialogue to address racial inequities in the Detroit food system, and food literacy programs to educate community members about healthy food choices and culturally appropriate food preparation. It's not just about better food, it's about changing the conditions that makes good food so rare in Detroit.

There are many examples of small farms in Detroit distributing produce to local businesses. From his one acre farm in the North Corktown neighborhood, Greg Willerer runs Brother Nature Produce, a farm that sells food at local markets and distributes to a growing list of Detroit restaurants that prefer the taste and freshness of his greens to that of warehouse produce. "This is a way of decolonizing ourselves from the corporate food structure and doing something better at the same time," Willerer explains.

A real Detroit Works Project

In his first State of the City address in April 2010, Mayor Bing proposed to "right-size" Detroit by shutting off city services to portions. But most Detroiters have been living without many services, like street lights, snow removal, libraries, schools and rec centers, for years. Many of those who have survived the system's failures have found solutions and built relationships that they couldn't have dreamed of otherwise. In addition to food and media, there are local efforts to transform

education, community safety, manufacturing and transportation -- all of the basic structures of existence in the city.

Detroit's grassroots economies revolve around much more than an exchange of goods and services. Whereas the watchword of the city's (and country's) established economy is "jobs," Detroit's new economies are grounded in "work." For years, Grace Lee Boggs has been drawing out this distinction in her weekly columns in the Michigan Citizen, advocating for an economic development strategy that provides meaningful work in the process of creating our city anew, rather than jobs at companies which often leave as fast as they arrived.

Boggs says, "Until the emergence of capitalism a few hundred years ago, Jobs or Labor that you did for a paycheck did not exist. People worked to provide goods and services for their communities and to exercise and develop their skills. As we enter the 21st century, we are in the middle of a great transformation or reversal: from increasingly unavailable Jobs to meaningful Work." The deepening cuts in government services--long a fact of life in Detroit, but now increasingly the case for towns, cities and states across the country--force us to confront the reversal Boggs describes. In the coming months, we will see the culmination of two contrasting visions playing out in Detroit: One, top-down and led by Mayor Bing and big foundations, will attempt to relocate residents and attract new corporate investment. The other, led by long-time Detroiters, will attempt to build a new economy with the resources and relationships that have survived the rough decades of Detroit's recent past.

Jenny Lee is a co-director of Allied Media Projects, which is a member of the Detroit Digital Justice Coalition and the Detroit Summer Collective.

Paul Abowd lives in Detroit, where he writes for Critical Moment magazine. His work has also appeared in Labor Notes, Z Magazine, Monthly Review, Truthout, Counterpunch and The Electronic Intifada.

More information about Jenny Lee and Paul Abowd How we define Detroit's economy will determine whether our work only provides for basic survival needs, or allows us to be active participants in the narrative of our present and future.

Cities In Revolt: Detroit

By Shea Howell | Posted on October 3, 2014

praxis

Welcome to the Praxis Center, an online resource center for scholars, activists and artists hosted by the Arcus Center for Social Justice Leadership at Kalamazoo College. From action research and radical scholarship to engaged teaching and grassroots activism to community and cultural organizing, and revelatory art practice, we make visible imperative social justice work being done today. 

Shea Howell, an educator, activist and founding member of the Boggs Center, shares her remarks from a plenary session at the recently convened With/Out – Borders conference hosted by the Arcus Center for Social Justice Leadership at Kalamazoo College. This is the first in a three-part series on “Cities in Revolt.”

The battle for the kind of country we are becoming is being fought in our cities. Cities, especially those shaped in the traditions of African American and progressive struggles, are under assault. Corporate forces committed to the protection of the power and privilege of an increasingly smaller, whiter, and wealthier elite are attacking cities in an effort to turn them into centers of profit and play.

Central to this attack is the displacement and removal of people who have been in the forefront of developing new ways of living in places long abandoned by capital. Now, as resources are becoming increasingly scarce, finance capital is finding new ways to extract wealth from urban centers.

These efforts require a direct denial of cities as political entities. Across the country, through a series of financial and legal maneuvers, cities are stripped of political identity and power, reduced to mere administrative units of state governments.

Detroit is ground zero in this struggle. We are in a state of emergency. This is evident in three critical areas: land, water, and the diminishment of the public sphere.

Land

Detroit is 139 square miles, or large enough to hold all of Manhattan, Boston, and San Francisco with land left over. We have lost more than half our population since 1950 and more than 25% since 2000. Nearly one-third of the land in the city is open space.

After decades of abandonment by capital, Detroit is experiencing increased development. Almost all of this development is concentrated in a little more than seven square miles in the downtown area, leaving most of the city untouched. Efforts are underway to create a business-entertainment complex in the core of the city that is becoming a wealthy enclave, surrounded by poorer neighborhoods. Much of this development, removed from public scrutiny by emergency management and bankruptcy, is at public expenses.

For example, last week, Mike Ilitch’s Olympia Development Corporation broke ground for a new Red Wings Hockey Stadium. This will be the third stadium, all within walking distance of each other, in the downtown corridor. Olympia Development got 39 parcels of land for \$1. The overall

project will cost \$650 million; it includes a large housing and commercial complex. The stadium alone will cost more than \$480 million and will be 58% publicly funded along with generous tax breaks. This includes \$285 million from school funds.

Meanwhile over 300 people—mostly elderly, African American, and lower income have been displaced—to make room for the new complex.

In the neighborhoods, the story is similar. Under the guise of a new foundation funded strategic plan, some neighborhoods are marked for development, others designated to stagnate and crumble. Efforts are underway to put nearly 45,000 city owned parcels into a special development land bank, giving the city the opportunity for development without any public accountability. Meanwhile African American homeowners are rapidly losing homes to foreclosures. The recent mortgage figures for the city reflect a dismal picture. In 2013 there were only 550 mortgages written for the entire city. From 2006 to 2012 mortgages for African Americans in the region fell 79%, contrasted to whites who fell 11%.

Water

The water crisis began when the Detroit Department of Water and Sewerage (DWSD) announced that 90,000 households, nearly half the city, were behind in their water bills. To deal with the problem DWSD began an aggressive shut off campaign of 1,000 to 3,000 households per week. This past June close to 20,000 homes had been shut off. The haphazard and crude program led to a massive public outcry and international condemnation, including a finding by the United Nations that the effort constituted a human rights abuse.

Prompted by the bankruptcy and the desire of the Emergency Manager to make the DWSD a more attractive sale item, a critical element of the shut off program, was the decision to shut off home owners only rather than major corporate clients, many of whom owed hundreds of thousands of dollars in past due water bills. Outstanding corporate debtors included the Red Wings, golf courses, Chrysler, and the State of Michigan. Nearly one-half of the unpaid bills were owed by only 45 corporations. Had the Emergency Manager only been concerned about generating revenue, it seems reasonable that he would go after these corporate clients. Instead he hired outside contractors for \$5.7 million to shut off anyone owing \$150.

Resistance to these shut offs included informal efforts to turn water back on; setting up emergency water stations in churches and community centers; civil disobedience; and court challenges. This continues to be an ongoing battle, as a broadly based coalition stresses the importance of adopting a People's Water Affordability Plan that would guarantee water to all, with a fee structure that supports a sustainable water system.

Last week, political commentator Glen Ford summed up the situation saying,

The city's water department is more beholden to the rich individuals and institutions that hold the bonds than it is to its own citizens, even in the case of a vital life-giving resource such as water.

And that really, I think, is where the battle line has been drawn, and not just in Detroit, but across the nation and across the entire planet in this late stage of capitalism that some people call neoliberalism, in which the corporations are trying to swallow up all the resources of the world, public and private, for their own use.

And so this story goes beyond the basic inequities in Detroit regarding water. The fact that although thousands—and tens of thousands, in fact—of poor households have been targeted for cutoff of their water, mainly businesses have been left alone, businesses that own millions of dollars in back water bills. But they're not threatened. And I think what we're actually seeing in the guise of defending the bottom line of the Detroit water department is a continuation of the ethnic cleansing of Detroit, the ethnic and economic cleansing of the city, trying to get rid of all these poor people in Detroit so that a better business environment can be created.

The Public Sphere

The land giveaways, development, and water fiasco are all being done under the guise of a financial necessity, demanded by the bankruptcy process. An Emergency Manager, Kevyn Orr, appointed by the governor is running this process and has complete authority over every function of the city. The Mayor and City Council have no power, except what he gives them. The City Charter is set aside. All contracts are void and open to renegotiation. All decisions about the disposal of city assets and financial responsibilities are his alone.

Over the course of the year, the Emergency Manager has consistently favored banks at the expense of people in the city. For example, his first plan to deal with bankruptcy offered banks 75 cents on the dollar, and pensioners 10 cents.

Decisions are made behind closed doors within the context of a legal framework that has allowed the give away of public lands, the privatization of city assets, the cutting of city workers, the slashing of salaries and medical benefits, the cutting of pensions, and the reshaping of the city.

This assault on Detroit is not because of the failure of the city; nor is it because of corruption and mismanagement. This assault is because of the success of the city in developing progressive practices that embody the contours of a new, compassionate, and sustainable urban life. As a city steeped in the African American traditions and progressive labor organizing, and artistic visions, Detroit is emerging from industrial devastation as a new kind of city. We are actively reimagining urban life on principles of sustainability, cooperation, productivity and joy. There is wide spread recognition that cities will never again be developed by large-scale industrial production. Instead we have to develop new forms of work and a new life affirming culture.

Signs of this are everywhere. We are a global leader in urban agriculture. We have thriving small craft, art, and local services evolving with concerns toward sustainability and social responsibility. We are developing forms of place based education that engages young people as “solutionaries,” learning and growing as they build and restore community. We are developing new ways of local production for local consumption.

Detroit is evolving with a vision that challenges the corporate view of cities and their people. It is a vision that understands cities as places for all people to thrive and develop in caring, sustainable, and just ways.

This vision threatens the foundations of corporate America. It says not only that other ways of development are possible, but they are actually happening.

Detroit is part of an emerging movement of cities globally, that are becoming centers of progressive thoughts and actions. In Detroit we have long understood the distinction between rebellion and revolution. Rebellions are the righteous standing up against dehumanization and oppression. Revolution, however, is not just standing against something. It is for the advancement of our humanity and the development of our human capacities. Thus, our task today is to find the forms of critical resistance to the assault on our cities that move all of us toward a life affirming future.

As I was preparing this, I asked philosopher activist Grace Lee Boggs what I should share. She said: "Tell people we are in the midst of an international movement to redesign cities on the basis of new work and new culture. So much of that movement is the movement among young people, especially, who are a generation that can remake the world. They are more aware of the changes happening in the world than any previous generation. They need more conversations about this so they can unleash their imaginations."

For all of us, the challenge of critical resistance in our cities is an invitation to conversation and imagination.

Shea Howell is an educator, activist, and founding member and board member of the Boggs Center, a space to nurture the development of visionary organizing rooted in place and history. She is also a co-founder of DETROIT SUMMER, a multicultural, intergenerational youth leadership program that engages the talents and energies of young people to rebuild and redefine Detroit. She is a professor at Oakland University in Rochester, Michigan where she teaches courses on communication theory and multicultural and political communication.

Beloved Community

Tawana Petty

I was asked to talk about community but the word community in itself is not specific enough because there are many types of communities. Therefore, I want to be very clear that I will be speaking about the Beloved Community today.

The Beloved Community is not a specific destination or place The Beloved Community is made up of everyday people like you, me or us. This community starts with thoughts inside an individual that radiates outside to create a loving environment. Beloved Community members are committed solutionaries and healers who believe in collaboration, compassion, inclusion and other human qualities that build and nurture people and the earth.

I would like to provide an example of a Beloved Community member. Her name was / is Charity Hicks. Her funeral was last Saturday and people from around the world acknowledged her because she inspired so many people through her friendship, environmental work and knowledge sharing. Charity was / is a person who tried to wage love where ever she went.

I want to emphasize the word tried as it relates to Charity's efforts of love because being a member of the Beloved Community does not mean that one is perfect or without struggle but is a work in progress. Like Charity, members of the Beloved Community try to consciously model love and good will with the hope that their actions will inspired others to do the same.

Love is an action word and the Beloved Community is Love in action.

New Work Field Street Collective's New Paradigm

By Larry Gabriel
Metro Times

Just making it through the winter of 2014 could mark a major victory for the members of the New Work Field Street Collective. The group, now numbering about 10 members — six of whom live together in the house on the corner of Field and Vernor streets — moved into the three-floor, 17-room edifice on Aug. 1. At that time, the house didn't have pipes or wiring, or a furnace.

"We had been in survival mode there — not trying to develop," says member Blair Anderson. "Just to get through a very harsh winter for us under challenging circumstances."



The house had formerly been vacant. The owner had gone through financial issues with the bank and was out of it for a while. During that homeowner's sojourn away from the house, urban miners stripped all the metal out of the place. The owner came home to an unlivable house.

At a neighborhood meeting, some Field Street Collective members spoke about looking for a place in the neighborhood. The home's owner had one.

"It was like a magical moment," says Peggy Hong, another collective member. It was at least a convergent moment for the owner, who now lives on the third floor, and the Field Street Collective (FSC) members, who inhabit the first and second floors. Members of the FSC had been active in the neighborhood around issues such as home foreclosure and gardening. Hong — who had come to town about a year ago to cook for Grace Lee Boggs — and other collective members were looking for a space to establish a project based on New Work principles. Hong and Anderson participate in a New Work discussion group at the Boggs Center with, among others, retired U-M philosophy professor Frithjoff Bergmann, who developed the principles around 1980.

In short, New Work says that, due to technology, we are going through a major change in the way we work. We've already seen examples of that in the shrinking of the workforce and higher unemployment. The greater vision is building a culture around community production, made possible by the 3-D printer and other technologies. Instead of requiring giant factories, many things can be produced in small rooms inside a community. This new world will not only create new kinds of jobs, but our relationship to them will be different. One of the changes would be that people work for pay about a third of their waking hours, another third would be doing personally uplifting work (possibly creative in some way), and the other third would involve work that aids the community, such as working in the garden. There's more to it.

"We're trying to apply New Work principles every step of the way," Hong says. "At the same

time, we're taking liberties with the New Work philosophy in how we apply it. Most New Work communities begin with investors; some have investors with deep pockets. We do have backers but, even so, we didn't have any major investors. Our project is really slower than many Frithjoff is working with because we don't have major investors."

Bergmann is involved with projects as far off as South Africa and Austria. A recent project in Europe built an electric motorcycle with parts made in 3-D printers. In Detroit, the project reflects the situation here. The collective got the house wired up, got the water running, and bought a new furnace through the help of small donations and loans from community members. "The house basically took up all of our time and energy this fall," Hong says. "Now I think we can apply ourselves more earnestly to New Work projects. Up till now it's been kind of just creating the stability in terms of our living environment. We're just now getting enterprises off the ground. The house took up much more time and energy than any of us anticipated."

The businesses incubating there right now include New Work Leather, which makes bags, wallets, belts and more; Homespun Hustle, which uses sewing, knitting and fiber work to produce articles of clothing; Healing House, which offers yoga, massage, meditation, capoeira and food-as-medicine practice and classes; and Food2Gather, an ongoing series of donation-based community meals. All of the enterprises are run by qualified individuals. The massage program has a licensed masseur. Hong ran a nonprofit yoga studio in Milwaukee for 25 years.

This month, Milwaukee-based quilter Rosy Ricks is artist-in-residence with the collective. Her goal for the month is to complete five quilts. One is a gift to the household. The others are offered through Homespun Hustle.

They're getting help with planning from Lisa Stolarski, a community economic development consultant who specializes in cooperative business planning. She works at Church of the Messiah and participates in the New Work discussion group.

"I can see their productivity being greatly increased with a little bit of awareness of what their capacity is for production and marketing," Stolarski says. "They'll be able to make a great improvement in the profitability of their micro-enterprises. ... It's unusual in that it's a group of people who are thinking about more than one aspect of their economic sustainability together. Usually people share in only one aspect of econ sustainability, such as a cooperative house or a cooperative business. We have these partnerships throughout our lives. With New Work they're being intentional about those relationships. Most people don't even know the people they share their retirement fund with."

Collective member Anderson isn't a resident of the house; he lives with his wife elsewhere. He's trying to re-establish himself in the community after 23 years in prison for robbery. While incarcerated, he learned leather craft and made money making belts and other things. Now he's using those skills for the betterment of the community. Not only has he established New Work Leather, he's teaching youth how to do it as part of the project.

"I've trained two people to do leather craft," he says. "I anticipate that when we can purchase more tools and supplies there are two people from the community who want to train with us."

There is also a retired neighbor who wants to start a landscaping business, not so much to make a profit but to create work for youth in the neighborhood. That's part of the whole idea, basing enterprises in the neighborhood and having buy-in from the neighbors. Collective members and others expect to have a community garden soon, and they're working on a renewable-energy project using biomass to generate electricity.

It's a very down-to-earth response to something that can seem very abstract and beyond your grasp. Talking about the end of work as we know it and new paradigms sometimes doesn't speak to you where you live. Community gardens, quilts and belts are something you can get your arms and head around. It can be very basic. Like the way the Field Street residence took shape. "There was a space," says Anderson. "We had a need and a vision."

Education

New Work/New Culture Education (From the ‘Inside-Out’)

By Bart Eddy

The purpose of education must be to guide our children and young adults to discover their immense potential for becoming creative and exceptional human beings. Our challenge is to assist them in the unfolding of their sense of self-worth and moral value in a high speed, ever changing world.

For this reason, we must come to understand that a child’s future is not embodied in a ‘test score’, nor is it to be found in the cultural pressures of finding a “job”. The truest aim of education is to allow every child and young adult to blossom into his or her individual sense of meaning and purpose in life and to help them to find out what it is that they are “called upon” to do as their work in the world.

In this regard, we must look upon education as a developmental process with milestones or signposts along the way. These milestones are not achievable if our children are imprisoned in an educational system that only addresses academic performance while disregarding the social/ artistic and the practical/hands-on training that is so pertinent and vital to the education of the whole child.

As an educator and social entrepreneur, it is my responsibility to recognize that every child has his or her own unique pathway into this world, and that it is my aim to awaken every person to their “calling” in life. It is the teacher who will help the child to bring their dreams into reality and their vision into action. The central question becomes: “How do we bring the gifts of the developing human being into this world?”

For parents and educators the answer to this question resides in their understanding that the developing child must be helped to find the proper balance between their thinking, feeling and willing: the thinking as it relates to the academic; the feeling life as it relates to the artistic and social; and the development of the forces of the will as exemplified by learning to do practical, ‘hands-on’ work in the world. When these three forces (thinking, feeling and willing) are brought into a harmonious relationship, then it becomes possible to mentor the child into the awakening of his or her own very special gifts.

In truth, this system of education will allow the child to develop a moral conscience while discovering the world in all of its manifold possibilities. In the broadest possible interpretation of ‘finding one’s place and purpose in the world’, the young adult will aspire to an inner pathway of self-development, while simultaneously being prepared to take on their work in the world.

For more than thirty years, I have had the opportunity to work with hundreds of young people in both a traditional classroom setting and in studio/craft workshops. And during this time, many youth have appeared who have been deeply troubled and whose life circumstances are indicative of post-traumatic stress syndrome. Never once has it occurred to me that these

children are unreachable or that their deepest soul healing is impossible; never once has it occurred to me that these young people cannot be reached at the deepest level of their being.

But sadly, I have watched throughout the years an educational system that rarely meets the needs of our youth, and this is not due to the fact that there are uncaring educators who do not want the best for the children, but it is more to the point that the system is frozen into patterns of operation and performance that are insufficient to effectively teach the children under its care. What I am referring to is the complete institutional and cultural failure to reform, reshape and redesign the educational experience so as to open the youth to their own inner sense for the Truth, the Beauty and the Goodness.

There is no child in the world today that is not experiencing some form of abandonment at the hands of its culture, and this is most often expressed through boredom and disengagement in the classroom. This must change!

Over the years, I have observed how the power of craftwork, artistic work and project-based learning, especially as it relates to the community building social arts, has a powerful affect on the psyche of our youth. Learning to work with the hands in a competent and caring way not only counteracts the boredom and disengagement, but it also reduces the tendency to violent and disruptive behavior and fosters the capacity for creative and imaginative thinking. To work with the hands gives dignity to self-expression which in turn can be transformed into the power of making real and lasting social change in communities and institutions.

At the highest level, craftwork allows us to think creatively, and the skills and competencies that are learned through the “doing” are transferable to any situation that a person may encounter in their life, because they learn to incorporate problem solving, critical thinking and strategic planning in a living way.

As a craft-worker, when I stand next to a young person, it is my obligation to encourage them and to demonstrate my confidence in their ability to perform the highest quality work. The transference of encouragement occurs at the heart level and is made possible by the one-to-one relationship that the teacher develops with the student while standing by their side in a studio workshop. And the effectiveness of the studio/work-space can also be witnessed through the development and enhancement of the following qualities: resilience, focus and concentration, work ethic and innovation.

The most telling moments come when our youth take on major leadership roles in our craft workshops and become emissaries for our work through public speaking engagements.

In the USA (Detroit) and most recently in China, I have been working through the Sunbridge International Collaborative to find the appropriate avenues by which to bring a new form of education to the child that provides a balance to the “top down” approach to learning. As social entrepreneurs, my co-workers and I are implementing an educational approach that rises from the ‘ground up’ as opposed to the ‘top down’. We are exploring ways to train the imagination and creativity of our youth while teaching them how to train their “will” for action in the world.

Our practice is experiential learning or “learning by doing”, and our program is called

“Entrepreneurship in Action”. The unique feature of our work is that we have tied these forms of learning into four small businesses that provide our youth with the opportunity to develop an entrepreneurial “skill-set”/“mind-set”. Our youth are introduced to the world of work and have an opportunity to sell products that they have made back into the community and at the same time explore the world of social entrepreneurship by directing their efforts towards the improvement of the community and neighborhoods from where they come.

Our four businesses are the Brightmoor Woodworkers, Brightmoor Bikes and Trikes, DCH-Apparel (silk-screening) and Detroit Community Market Garden. In the training of the next generation of social entrepreneurs, we are making the claim that by learning to work with the hands and to think creatively in the process that young people will become motivated to expand their horizons and to view the challenges of the world in a different light. Out of this, they begin to recognize the ‘signs of the times’ in which they live and to determine ways to take effective action in the world.

So in our training, we take the youth worker through a process that emulates the Apprentice, Journeyman, Master and Entrepreneur. The Apprentice: Students must first commit themselves to doing the physical work and demonstrate the personal effort/discipline in creating something. The Journeyman: Students must learn how to work skillfully with the tools and the materials that will be needed to accomplish the work and to accept the guidance of the teacher. The Master: Once the student has mastered the work, he or she becomes the teacher and instructs others in the techniques and processes. The Entrepreneur: At this level, the student becomes an innovator, creating new solutions and businesses designed to solve social, economic and environmental problems in their community. As a team worker, they will come to the recognition that entrepreneurship finds its place and purpose in the community as part of a broader collective effort.

Our work through the Sunbridge International Collaborative is undergoing a major transition and expansion as we reach out to a broader constituency in the city, establish national connections and open our Asian counterpart in Beijing. As I have stated at the beginning of this article, our mission is to awaken each and every young person and adult to their ‘calling’ and place and purpose in the world. In essence, we are creating a ‘sanctuary’ whereby the workbench becomes the altar for New Work in the world.

We have a long way to go to get there, but we cannot be stopped! This is Vision evolving into Action.

Conflict Resolution



Detroit Coalition Against Police Brutality

Ron Scott and Sandra Hines

“Peace Zones for Life”

Detroit is under attack. Much of the violence is the result of the increased police presence inside and outside our city. The latest victim of these attacks was 7 year old Aiyana Jones who was shot to death in the early morning hours on May 17, 2010 while asleep on her grandmother’s couch. In the two weeks before this tragedy, a teenage boy had been gunned down for the way he looked at another young man, a police officer was killed responding to a 911 call and, as people gathered at Aiyana’s funeral, another man was shot to death fleeing police after a high speed chase. In response to this escalating violence, the Mayor said he had no idea how to respond.

Violence is not limited to the police. Violence happens among us every day. The day after the death resulting from the high speed chase, a 12 year old boy was shot by accident in the midst of a domestic argument. Such deaths are common in a city where our relationships are often strained, bruising and brittle.

We know that in an atmosphere of casual and deadly violence we have to find ways to transform ourselves and the institutions that surround us. That is why we are calling for transforming war zones to peace zones for life where we take charge of our own safety, security and relationships. Only by acknowledging the violence within our community can we move toward creating real peace.

For the past year we have been working to create this kind of healing space in response to an earlier tragedy. On Good Friday of 2009, 15-year-old Detroiters Robert “Tazzy” Mitchell was tased and killed by Warren, Michigan police officers during a routine stop. This case is not an isolated incident. In fact, Robert Mitchell had been afraid to venture into Warren—literally across the street from his northeast Detroit neighborhood—because he and others in the area had personally witnessed Warren police chasing Detroit young people back across the border.

Working with Robert’s mother Cora Mitchell and many community partners we held a march between Detroit and Warren, believing we had to go beyond mere public protest to:

- provide the facts around Mitchell’s death in the face of Warren police officials’ efforts to criminalize him
- reflect family/community rage and pain
- demand justice
- de-escalate conflict between Warren and Detroit citizens/governments
- promote a joint plan to build peace across segregated and separated communities.

We believe that the march, and our organizing activities made significant inroads in moving the communities forward. The Warren City Council members, and members of the city’s Crime Commission, and even some Warren police officers talked about the need to evaluate some of the long-standing grievances of Detroit youth vis-à-vis the Warren Police Department.

This openness to look at ourselves, to reflect on who we are and what we have been doing is the kind of transformation we are seeking. During the people chanted the familiar call, “No justice no peace”; but as time went on, people began to chant “Peace zones for life.” As the group crossed over into Warren, many of the marchers asked Warren residents to join in a combined fight for justice and to promote unification of the two communities...even in the face of some austere Warren police officers, who seemed to cringe as the marchers passed by.

The energy and sense of community built from this march has energized youth in the neighborhoods. Many of them no longer see themselves as victims, but instead as capable of fighting to humanize an otherwise inhuman situation. This is the kind of

holistic approach that restores relationships and our humanity. It is the source of real security.

“Peace Zones for Life” are critical to our efforts to address community violence and to address the root causes of police violence. We know that fights inside the walls of our home often become the basis for death outside of them at the hands of police. As we rebuild ties in our neighborhoods and struggle to turn our pain into programs of transformation we are concerned with:

- The de-escalation of hostility between residents in a community, community members and public/private institutions; and the de-escalation of randomized violence in communities.
- The development of independent self-sustaining economic/social institutions that will serve to define geographical areas and undergird the re-creation of community.

Creating peace step by step

Creation of conflict resolution centers—These will be community places where people can come to resolve their differences in the presence of trained conflict mediators. The Coalition has already begun this work informally with two volunteer centers. One is in a church in the Puritan/Livernois area, and the other in a vacant field at Montgomery and Holmur in Detroit.

Creation of a “Detroit Peace Officials Association” (DPOA)—The Coalition is working with young people to keep peace in their communities by setting up neighborhood watches and participating in the conflict resolution centers.

Artistic efforts that both portray neighborhood challenges and celebrate all those who have worked tirelessly to create a better community—Telling our stories to one another through visual and performing arts, music, rap, plays, dance, posters, paintings, and sculpture moves us through pain to a deeper understanding of ourselves, our responsibilities to one another and our visions for the future.

The Coalition is working toward a holistic neighborhood effort that encompasses economic, religious, government and citizen institutions.

2010-2011

Restoring the Neighbor back to the 'Hood' Pledge

Yusef Shakur

i pledge allegiance to do my part in restoring the neighbor back to the hood.
i pledge to develop myself, my family & my household to the greatest extent possible of being a shining example of being a husband, father, son, brotha, wife, mother, daughter & sister in my neighborhood.

i will learn all that i can in order to give my best to improve the quality of my neighborhood. i will work diligently to honor my family in my neighborhood with good deeds, & treat my neighbors as my extended family.

i will keep myself mentally sound, spiritually grounded & physically fit; building a strong body, mind & spirit that will exemplify positivity & productivity in my neighborhood.

i will unselfishly share my time, knowledge, resources & wisdom with my neighbors (young & old) in order to build & maintain a healthy neighborhood. i will do my part to keep my neighborhood clean & safe.
i will discipline myself to direct my energies thoughtfully & constructively to maintain peace, harmony & love in my neighborhood.

i will train myself to never hurt or allow anyone to harm someone in my neighborhood for an injustice cause or through negative behaviors of stealing, gun violence, verbal abuse, police brutality, selling drugs, rape or any other social ill that works to destroy my neighborhood.

This is my pledge to do my part by being a caring neighbor in my neighborhood by working to keep my neighborhood a peace zone instead of a warzone.



Art

Garage Cultural is expanding consciousness and horizons for kids in Southwest Detroit

By Mike Ross
Metro Times

To drive down Livernois Avenue south of Six Mile, past the “Avenue of Fashion,” is to realize that Detroit’s ongoing revitalization is not a reality for many neighborhoods in the city. Even the ubiquitous liquor stores and car washes — for many stretches, the only establishments still in business — have a postapocalyptic quality about them, covered in graffiti (not street art) and tangled in litter. But by the time you hit Michigan Avenue, it starts looking a little livelier — occasional gardens and shops are reminders that there are people who live here, people who take pride in their neighborhoods.



At 3439 Livernois, you’ll find a tidy entryway of antique wooden doors and bright hand-painted signs proclaiming “music, painting, break dancing,” among other things. When you walk inside this old tortilla factory, you’re certainly not expecting a beautiful kitchen, grass-hut classrooms, art everywhere, and the sound of music being learned floating over the air.

Sitting at his desk, likely greeting a family and shuffling through paperwork, you’ll find Ismael Duran, the seemingly tireless founder and proprietor of Garage Cultural. For three years, he’s been running this nonprofit cultural center. A musician, Duran got his start organizing cultural centers in his native Chile. “I could see that I could do a lot of music, performing and traveling all over, but what did you leave? What else do you do? So the idea to do this work, music and art for the community - especially kids - is something that I thought was important to do. A more lasting, direct impact to families, to kids, to the community.”

“When I started the cultural centers in Southwest Detroit, it was very exciting. I mean, you see what happens here every day ... especially in a community like ours. These kids don’t have other possibilities to do this. They don’t have the money to pay other places. And whatever you teach them, whatever you show them, it’s new for them, and they really appreciate it.” (Full disclosure: I’ve been teaching art and skateboard-building classes at Garage Cultural for the last two years.)

But let’s back up. If you know your Latin American history, you’ll remember the 1973 (U.S.-backed) coup d’état in which Chilean military and police overthrew socialist civilian president Salvador Allende, replacing his administration with a rightwing junta government, which brutally oppressed left-wing political activity. “I was not political,” Duran says. “But I had to get out. Music was not allowed, books were not allowed. If you were a musician, or an artist ... I don’t remember how many times I had to go to the cemeteries to visit friends, people in the arts. They’d just eliminate you.” And leaving voluntarily was better than exile (or worse).

After meeting his wife in Paris in 1973, then living in the United States for nearly 10 years, Duran returned to his home country. “In ‘84, I said I needed to be in Latin America. I said to my wife,

'Let's go to Mexico,' and from there we jumped to Chile. Because I wanted my kids to be fluent in Spanish, and I think it was important for them to not only speak the language, but to know my country, know my family." There Duran aligned with the Solidarity movement, a human rights organization founded by Pope Paul VI to halt ill treatment of Chilean citizens by the government, and got involved with a fledgling cultural center. "That was my first glimpse into how you run a cultural center," he says. "It was very self-sufficient, it was very community-driven. A lot of artists, printers, sculptors — doing work for the people, for the community, for kids, for families." Duran returned to the United States in the early '90s, drawn to the Hispanic community in Southwest Detroit, and determined to create opportunities for the kids he saw here. He worked with several other cultural centers, but ultimately found them too restricting. His vision was a center where kids could decide on their own what they wanted to learn, with no limitations as to subject matter. In 2012, with the support of Hacienda Mexican Foods owner Lydia Gutierrez — and a little help from his friends — Duran converted the 18,000-square-foot tortilla factory into the bustling hub of arts and learning that it is today.

Duran does receive some grant money for Garage Cultural, but he feels the system is skewed:

"They just give us the crumbs," he says. "An organization in a poor neighborhood like this, they give us a little money, and the big money to big universities, museums. If we feed the local organizations, then the kids will know about the museums. If you don't teach kids and families about the DIA, the African American Museum, the Center for Creative Studies ... we have all those institutions here, but how are they gonna know? How will these kids know they can get involved in the arts? Nobody's asking for \$200,000 for a big executive director's salary. Just the money to start, to buy more instruments, some paint or materials, and to pay our instructors."

Much of the support comes from Gutierrez, who allows Duran to use the building free of charge. The remainder comes from the small sum he charges families for their kids to come and learn at the center. Forty dollars per family for a 10-week program, no matter how many kids they've got. And each kid can take up to three classes. But in Southwest Detroit, sometimes families can't even afford that. Duran often gets paid in trays of enchiladas or a helping hand around the building. But it's worth it. With 15 arts programs and 120 kids, Duran feels that Garage Cultural is picking up where, due to constant budget cuts, the Detroit Public Schools dropped off long ago.

"The school system doesn't have any of these things," he says. "My work is to get more kids involved in the arts. I feel that we have a gift - musicians, painters - and I feel that we should share that with people.

"In my interviews with the families, mostly I talk to the kids. The parents want the kids to do one thing, but I want to know what the kid wants to do. The key thing is to find what their interest is. You find out what they really like, and they will be committed, they will be focused. You not only teach them and train them, but you have to expose them. They're learning something - and they feel good about it - so they will continue."

Part of that includes taking the kids on field trips. The DIA, the Henry Ford Museum, and an annual camping trip are all part of the program. "A lot of these kids have never seen any of this. A lot of their parents don't have a driver's license, or they don't feel comfortable [leaving Southwest Detroit]. And that's sad because they're missing so many things."

Besides adding to the existing variety of programs offered, such as a mechanic shop and a dance studio, Duran's plans for the future of the Garage are as ambitious as they are varied — including a retail shop for kids to rent or purchase musical instruments at prices they can afford, and purchasing a bus for mobile art and music projects. Duran and Gutierrez have also sponsored several murals around the city, including the iconic Hijo del Maiz (Man of Corn) by artist Dasic Fernandez.

"If you want to do something," Duran says, "you find a way to do it. Especially if you have the support of a family, a community. "I feel very proud about it. And very humble. Because we've done it because we love our community, we love what we do. I'm not depressed that we don't have a \$100,000 budget. We work with what we have, and it's fine. And I think it's because I come from a country where we did miracles with no money, under pressure, risking your life. Risking your life. Here, it's a piece of cake, man!"

Mike Ross is an artist, writer, teacher, and skateboard maker in and around Detroit. He was featured in the Sept. 3 issue of MT.

History of the Heidelberg Project



Twenty-seven years ago, artist Tyree Guyton returned to Heidelberg, the street where he grew up on Detroit's East Side, and found it in shambles, riddled with drugs and deepening poverty. Bruised by the loss of three brothers to the streets, Guyton was encouraged by his grandfather to pick up a paintbrush instead of a weapon and look for a solution.

Armed with a paintbrush, a broom and neighborhood children, Guyton and Grandpa began by cleaning up vacant lots on Heidelberg Street. From the refuse they collected, Guyton transformed the street into a massive art environment. Vacant lots literally became "lots of art" and abandoned houses became "gigantic art sculptures." Guyton not only transformed vacant houses and lots, he integrated the street, sidewalks and trees into his mammoth installation and called the work, the Heidelberg Project ("HP").

In 1988, supporters of Guyton helped to organize his effort and the Heidelberg Project was officially incorporated. The Heidelberg Project's mission is to inspire people to appreciate and use artistic expression to enrich their lives and to improve the social and economic health of the greater community. The HP was born out of Guyton's own experiences and hardships growing up in a community that had experienced devastating changes. What used to be a diverse, working class neighborhood over the years became a community characterized by violence, racism, abandonment, despair and poverty. Such conditions became the pretext for the birth of what is known today as the HP.

The existing neighborhood is described as one of the most economically depressed zip codes in the country (48207, US Census, 2005) with unemployment rates of 75% and over 90% of people living below the poverty level.

Much like conducting a symphony, Guyton systematically re-arranged the existing landscape on

Heidelberg Street by incorporating found objects, the street, the trees, the sidewalks, abandoned houses, vacant lots, nature and even the people! To this end, Guyton's work was met, by some, with fierce disdain and in the first 18 years became the subject of great controversy and heated debates. Guyton claimed that his art was a medicine—a bitter pill to swallow—for the people and that the pros and cons were part of the process.

The medicine appears to have had a healing effect. In our 27-year existence no serious crimes have been reported on Heidelberg Street. Residents who would never visit the Detroit Institute of Arts or the Detroit Symphony Orchestra have become educated about art and participate in HP programs, festivals and forums. We provide modest jobs and an outdoor space in which members of the community can come together to reflect, play, create and interact with people from around the world. This practice builds a sense of self-worth and pride.

This pride, then, becomes the protection of the Heidelberg Project and is a demonstration of its success. This practice explains how the Heidelberg Project site remains undisrupted in a community that is quite literally desecrated. Twenty-seven years of renewing the human spirit can now successfully translate into rebuilding the community.

