

Chapter Three: Tell Me a Better Story: Regenerative Economics

You never change things by fighting the existing reality. To change something, build a new model that makes the existing model obsolete.

Buckminster Fuller

Is it possible to change the system and avoid collapse?

Yes.

There is no silver bullet, but we sure have plenty of silver buckshot. To use it effectively, we need a new story.

The cultural historian Thomas Berry said:

“We are in trouble just now because we do not have a good story....

The old story—the account of how the world came to be and how we fit into it...sustained us for a long period of time. It shaped our emotional attitudes, provided us with a life purpose, energized action. It consecrated suffering, integrated knowledge, guided education....

We need a (new) story that will educate man, heal him, guide him.”ⁱ

The neoliberal narrative profiled in Chapter Two, above, brought humanity to the verge of ruin. But the Keynesian narrative of government stimulation and regulation of the economy to ensure growth, if allowed to continue, would drive to much the same outcome, if slower and more humanely. So would socialism. Both lessened inequality but drove equally hard for growth and the overuse of resources. Communism, similarly, resulted in ecologicalⁱⁱ and human mayhem. One account estimates that communist regimes were responsible for 94 million deaths between 1900 and 2000, more than three times the number killed by fascist regimes.ⁱⁱⁱ

The economy of consumption has not delivered the quality of life promised. Instead, people struggle to make ends meet and find purpose in their lives. The annual Gallup Healthways survey of global work place satisfaction^{iv} warns that workers are unhappier than at any time since Gallup began taking such polls. They feel worse about their jobs than before, with 87 percent saying that they are disengaged from their work.^v Good Company, estimates that this dissatisfaction costs U.S. companies up to \$550 billion every year in lost productivity.^{vi}

In addition, there are the truly disaffected people that J.D. Vance writes about in *Hillbilly Elegy*.^{vii} Even conservative commentator David Brooks acknowledged that such people are in pain, and that the failure of the system to hear this has led to the rise of extremist politics. He, too, calls for a new story.^{viii}

I don’t know what the new national story will be. But maybe it will be less individualistic and more redemptive. Maybe it will be a story about communities that heal those who

suffer from addiction, broken homes, trauma, prison and loss, a story of those who triumph over the isolation, social instability and dislocation so common today.

This isn't an ideology of the right or the left, it is a matter of the survival of modern human civilization as we know it.

History shows that the construction of a new story or narrative is the critical first step to achieving system change. If we know where we want to get to, then we can make it happen.

Dana Meadows said of visioning:^{ix}

Vision is the most vital step in the policy process. If we don't know where we want to go, it makes little difference that we make great progress. Yet vision is not only missing almost entirely from policy discussions; it is missing from our whole culture. We talk about our fears, frustrations, and doubts endlessly, but we talk only rarely and with embarrassment about our dreams. Environmentalists have been especially ineffective in creating any shared vision of the world they are working toward -- a sustainable world in which people live within nature in a way that meets human needs while not degrading natural systems. Hardly anyone can imagine that world, especially not as a world they'd actively like to live in. The process of building a responsible vision of a sustainable world is not a rational one. It comes from values, not logic.

In the absence of positive vision, voices of fear fill the vacuum. Populist politicians blame economic migrants, refugees, trade from other countries, the 'other'—the 'outsider'—and build stories based on taking back control and making their country great again. History shows us that this is a dangerous path. Protectionism, iron curtains and walls, and populist nationalism have all caused massive harm in the much less inter-connected world of the twentieth century. In this new century where so many of our problems are global in scope, where our technologies and communication systems are similarly global and where we face huge population and resource pressures, the consequences are likely to be disastrous.

Failure to ensure that the billions of people who feel left behind by the system can not only find a sense of self-worth, but also support themselves and their families, will have severe political consequences.^x

Populist, authoritarian agitators speak to the pain of feeling unwanted, threatened by modernity, technological change and issue-based politics. The mass of increasingly unemployed blue-collar workers was especially receptive to the anti-establishment movement in the U.S. but the phenomenon is global. From Brexit in the U.K. to the Austrian and Italian referenda, Orban in Hungary, Duterte in the Philippines to the U.S, nationalist populism is on the rise. The predictable rise in populism, racism, xenophobia and nativism portrays migrants as threats to jobs, and a source of crime, drugs and rising welfare costs.

As the books of novelist Alan Furst show, fringe movements of such disaffected people in "near history" have the capacity to wreak real havoc.^{xi}

No one knows how close we are to collapse, although historical scientist, Dr. Peter Turchin, claims that it will happen within the decade.^{xii} Many people are feeling on edge, wondering what shock might tip the global system into an unstoppable slide to dissolution.

Abundant evidence shows that it IS possible to avoid collapse, that it IS possible to shift to a better economic system without collapse. But unless people believe this, and act as if this is true, we'll get to find out just how close to collapse we really are.

Let's not go there. We have all of the technologies we need to make a good start at solving the challenges facing humanity. Chapters Nine and Ten detail some of the exciting opportunities to slow, then reverse, climate change. They show how doing this will create delightful cities, meet our needs for energy and food in ways that generate jobs and build community. The best of these are market based, and more profitable than what we are doing now. The question is whether we can find the political will to implement the solutions in time?

For these necessary shifts to occur, there must be a powerful new story, one that resonates with our definition of who we are as people, and with our aspirations of how we want to live. The task is to create a narrative of human well-being. Recent history has shown that it is not enough to publish scientific reports or amass data. Humans have always learned from story. Brexit won in the UK because the Leave advocates told a better story. In the U.S. the President told a story of how he would improve the lives of those feeling left behind. Mrs. Clinton only asked her supporters to avow, "I'm With Her."

The best stories are never about you. They are about your audience. People must see themselves in the new story and want to live it. Then they must demand that their governments create policies and practices to give it to them.

Rethinking Economic Theory

Humanity's collision with planetary boundaries requires a radical rethink of economic theory and practice. Economics as taught and used by politicians is littered with myths and half-truths. This is not a failure unique to economics as a discipline. But the power of the dismal discipline compels politicians and other economic actors to base political decisions on these 'half-baked' theories. As Milton Keynes, one of the most famous economists, stated, "Practical men who believe themselves exempt from any intellectual influences are usually the slaves of some defunct economist."^{xiii} The myths and half-truths to which politicians frequently fall prey include the beliefs that:

- We can have infinite growth on a finite planet;
- Markets are fair;
- Prices tell the truth;
- More income equals more happiness.

These are particularly acute in neoliberalism, but pervade all of conventional economics, where they contribute significantly to the malfunctioning of the current economic system.

Dr. Robert Nadeau^{xiv} makes clear the extent to which the current economic narrative is not only unsuited to our needs, it is based on fantasy:

Neoclassical economic theory is predicated on unscientific assumptions that massively frustrate or effectively undermine efforts to implement scientifically viable economic policies and solutions....The strategy used by the creators of neoclassical economics was as simple as it was absurd—the economists copied the physics equations and changed the names of the variables. In the resulting mathematical formalism, utility becomes synonymous with the amorphous field of energy described in the equations taken from the physics, and the sum of utility and expenditure, like the sum of potential and kinetic energy in the physical equations, is conserved. Forces associated with the field of utility (or, in physics, energy) allegedly determine prices, and spatial coordinates correspond with quantities of goods.

Thomas Piketty, author of *Capital In the 21st Century* agrees that such “physics envy” by the economics profession had driven its “immoderate use of mathematical models, which are frequently no more than an excuse for occupying the terrain and masking the vacuity of the content.”

Even Piketty underestimates the magnitude of the failing, however. Nowhere in the production functions and prices of the mathematical models beloved by economists is the value of ecological resources and human well-being counted. Infinite growth is assumed to be possible even when based on non-renewable resources. Economists routinely assign what they call a “discount rate” to their calculations of the future worth of a project, to reflect their belief that you would rather have a reward today than tomorrow. But under this highly questionable practice, any future becomes worthless.

Stewart Wallis, in his chapter in the recently published “Why Love Matters—Values in Governance”^{xv} adds:

These problems are exacerbated by the fact that economics is now treated as a science where outcomes are predicted mathematically. Just some of the reasons why this is not the case are: the fact that most economists don’t recognise that the economy is a subset of the eco-system; economic theory is not based on explicit values, it mixes means and ends (GDP is a means and not an end); it is not focused on meeting human needs (physical and psychological); the theory is insufficiently focused on economic inequality, and there is a lack of an explicit power analysis. In addition, neoclassical economics is based on a number of dangerously simplistic assumptions that distort reality. These include: that humans are rational utility maximising actors; that markets tend toward equilibrium and market failures are exceptional; and that sufficient money is always provided when there is demand. I could go on, but I believe that neo-classical and neo-liberal economics, in many ways, are practically, intellectually and morally bankrupt.

The old narrative, also called the “economistic paradigm,”^{xvi} tells us that people are essentially greedy. The framers of neoliberal ideology saw humans as uncaring, and narrowly self-interested. And to them, that was OK. It was the genius of the market that such people pursuing their individual desires would aggregate to deliver the greatest good for the greatest number.

People like that exist. Science tells us that about one percent of the population accurately fits the description of neoliberal perfection. Psychologists label such people psychopaths.

Dr. Robert Hare, a leading researcher on psychopathy describes them as:

...social predators who charm, manipulate, and ruthlessly plow their way through life, leaving a broad trail of broken hearts, shattered expectations, and empty wallets. Completely lacking in conscience and in feelings for others, they selfishly take what they want and do as they please, violating social norms and expectations without the slightest sense of guilt or regret.^{xvii}

Most of us, however, are not like that. We yearn for more than just money.

The economistic narrative of the economy extols competition, perfect markets and unfettered growth in a world in which the rugged individual is seen as the economic epitome. This view of human nature, and how to achieve success is dogmatically taught in most economics courses and in business schools around the world.^{xviii} John Harvey, writing in Forbes Magazine goes so far as to blame this version of economic theory for the problems facing the world today. He says:

...the fault lies not with the rich, not with corporations, not with China, not with the Illuminati, not with Al Qaeda, but with the economics discipline. Bad ideas have done at least as much damage to our world as anyone’s bad intentions. Decades of misguided policy from both political parties and in other nations has critically weakened the core of our economy and left us in a situation where, despite our tremendous level of technological achievement, we seem to be regressing. Just as in the Great Depression, we have the ability to solve these problems practically overnight. What we lack is sound theory to guide our actions.

The result of professional economists getting social science wrong is an economy that doesn’t work for most people on earth. We have created a society that seeks to meet non-material needs with material things, celebrating consumerism. It’s called “shopping therapy” and “He who dies with the most toys wins.” We have huge inequality. Too big to fail crushes local self-determination and millions of people hate their jobs.

Ellen Goodman puts it,

“Normal is getting dressed in clothes that you buy for work and driving through traffic in a car that you are still paying for in order to get to the job that you need to pay for the

clothes and the car and the house that you leave vacant all day so you can afford to live in it."

And we grow lonelier.

Pope Francis warned that, "The external deserts in the world are growing, because the internal deserts have become so vast."^{xix} He quotes the Earth Charter^{xx} that challenges humanity to do better:

"As never before in history, common destiny beckons us to seek a new beginning... Let ours be a time remembered for the awakening of a new reverence for life, the firm resolve to achieve sustainability, the quickening of the struggle for justice and peace, and the joyful celebration of life."

The brilliant scholar, Dr. Elinor Ostrom, became the first woman to win the Economics Nobel,^{xxi} in part because she so adroitly debunked the shortcomings of economics. The fact that her doctorate is in political science may have enabled her to become an effective critic of economics. Her friend, David Sloan Wilson described the profound nature of her challenge:^{xxii}

The mathematical empire [of economics] was founded on the assumption that self-interest automatically leads to collective wellbeing. Lin's work was founded upon a stubborn fact of life: self-interest often leads to the overexploitation of resources and other problems that make life worse for everyone, not better. When everyone was allowed to suck as much water out of the ground as they pleased, there was no invisible hand to rescue the situation.... the import of the Nobel Prize going to Lin Ostrom...signaled that something was rotten about the mathematical empire and that a new paradigm needs to begin from a different starting point. But what would the new paradigm look like and what would be its theoretical foundation?

An Economy in Service to Finance

The current economy is exceptionally efficient at doing what it is designed to do. In the language of finance, it "optimizes the risk adjusted return to capital." This means that the system facilitates the accumulation of money and flows it to those with who had money to start with. As Thomas Piketty proved,^{xxiii} access to money is what enables you to make more money and drives the finance sector that manipulates that money.

In other words, more than bad or greedy capitalists being "at fault," the fault lies in the system we have designed, which delivers the outcomes we are experiencing. We're in a prosperous dilemma of our own making.^{xxiv} We, the people and the planet, are in service to the economy, which is in service to finance. This is precisely the wrong way around.



As described in Chapter One, this system is a clear and present danger to our collective well-being and even our survival.

Finance should be a nested sub-system of the economy, not its purpose. It should serve as a tool to deliver essential productive investments and liquidity (money) to the real economy, which should function in such a way as to be in service to life.

What Do We Want?

The new narrative must tell us how to:

1. Achieve a flourishing life within ecological limits
2. Deliver universal well-being as we meet the basic needs of all humans; and
3. Deliver sufficient equality to maintain social stability and provide the basis for genuine security.^{xxv}

The first step in turning away from the threat of collapse is to imagine an alternative economic system.

Try it.

It's not easy. William Allen, former Chancellor of the Delaware Court of Chancery, notes, "One of the marks of a truly dominant intellectual paradigm is the difficulty people have in even imagining an alternative view."

Dana Meadows^{xxvi} argued:

Vision is not only missing almost entirely from policy discussions; it is missing from our whole culture. We talk about our fears, frustrations, and doubts endlessly, but we talk only rarely and with embarrassment about our dreams. Environmentalists have been especially ineffective in creating any shared vision of the world they are working toward -- a sustainable world in which people live within nature in a way that meets human

needs while not degrading natural systems. Hardly anyone can imagine that world, especially not as a world they'd actively like to live in.... Environmentalists have failed perhaps more than any other set of advocates to project vision. Most people associate environmentalism with restriction, prohibition, regulation, and sacrifice.... The best goal most of us who work toward sustainability offer is the avoidance of catastrophe. We promise survival and not much more. That is a failure of vision.

We are limited by our belief that the current system is all that is possible. Bernard Lietaer points out that Homo Sapiens is an interesting species,

We have incredible power to transform our environment to meet our needs. And yet we have this odd tendency to create a world, forget that we have created it, and then throw up our hands and proclaim our inability to change the system. Capitalism (and socialism for that matter, which is equally unsustainable) is not a set of natural laws that Adam Smith discovered. It is our creation, constantly evolving and changing—consciously or unconsciously.

Creating that different reality is the purpose of the rest of the book.

The second step is to realize that we are all in this together, that no one approach will definitively be the right one, and that a lot of experimentation will be needed. Only by working together, by appreciating our diversity and differences, and still working collaboratively will we find our way forward.

[Ladder to a better world.](#)

Imagine a pool of muck.

That's not far wrong from the situation in which humanity now resides. The pool has been created by the old narrative, and the resulting excesses of a degenerative economy practicing business-as-usual.^{xxvii}

Imagine that rising from this sewage lagoon is a ladder. On the foundational rungs are activists seeking to stop some of the destruction facing us: the scientists,^{xxviii} businesspeople,^{xxix} professors,^{xxx} calling for a new approach, and the young people^{xxxi} willing to get arrested to stop the mining of tar sands—the massive carving away of the earth to mine Canadian bitumen—and opposing the pipelines to ship tar sands sludge or fracked oil.^{xxxii} Students and clergy^{xxxiii} demand that their universities and churches divest from ownership in fossil fuels, and human rights activists^{xxxiv} fight inhumane conditions in Bangladeshi factories or biopiracy in India^{xxxv} on similar rungs.

On adjacent rungs are conservationists saving remnants of intact ecosystems,^{xxxvi} and agency personnel enforcing pollution regulations.^{xxxvii} Several rungs later are the business leaders implementing corporate social responsibility, driving enhanced profits by shifting business practices^{xxxviii} and ensuring that workers and communities are treated decently.^{xxxix}

Organizations like CDP^{xl} and the Global Reporting Initiative^{xli} set standards, measure reduction of impacts and occupy neighboring rungs. New accounting systems like the International

Integrated Reporting Committee,^{xlii} the Sustainability Accounting Standards Board^{xliii} and other metrics sit on rungs proving the business case for more responsible behavior. The Sustainable Development Goals^{xliv} call o all of humanity to deliver basic quality of life in ways that can endure.

In the same area are green developers creating less wasteful, more delightful structures that offer higher productivity because employees are happier, healthier and perform better in cleaner, more natural environments.^{xlv} A few rungs on are the architects of Platinum LEED buildings, and Living Buildings,^{xlvi} and the Well Building Standard.^{xlvii}

These servants of what is known as “sustainability” are bringing the system back to neutral—able, unlike now, to endure indefinitely without destroying itself. All of this work to achieve what we have been calling sustainability or sustainable development is essential to getting our noses above the muck.

Such activism is more than noble. It brings the world back towards balance, mitigating the destruction of life on this little planet our activities are causing. But it will never achieve the balance we seek.

Increasingly, there is a palpable change afoot. Even those doing this important work sense that it is not enough. It is failing to meet the crises accelerating around us. It is essential, necessary, and insufficient.

It has become fashionable to denigrate sustainability because it is only “less bad.” Some fault “green” activities as being “uninspiring.” This is facile, and as the founder of the modern environmental movement, David Brower^{xlviii} warned, such circular firing squads deliver only despair. He observed if you are standing on the edge of a cliff, the only progressive move is to turn around and then step forward, what he called the ecological U-turn. A bus speeding towards the cliff’s edge must first slow down before it picks a new heading. The foundational rungs of the ladder are as crucial as those above them. Cut the legs off the ladder and we sink further into the mire. Break too many of the rungs and the integrity of the ladder collapses.

The turf squabbles engaged in by change agents confuse people facing a world skidding into catastrophe. As Jo Confino, Executive Editor of Huffington Post puts it:

“The status quo is a huge beast with claws sharpened and teeth bared. All the new models that people are pushing, because they aren’t working together are just like little mice running around bumping into each other.”^{xlix}

The disparate efforts for change are essential foundations, the vital hard work on the ground to place “sustainability” as a necessary mid-point of the climb. Humanity is hungry for “a vision all living things can share.”^l But what is above the middle rung of the ladder? What can unite all of the disparate efforts into a new narrative?

An Economy in Service to Life

We haven’t got all of the answers, but the ladder’s destination might better be described not as sustainability, but as a Regenerative Economy: an economy in service to life.

Viewed from the vast potential that exists but is not yet manifest in the present economic system, sustainability is an outcome, not the objective. Looking to natural systems as the model, it is obvious that nature didn't set out to be sustainable. It achieves that only because it is regenerative. The essence of life and the evolutionary process of all life is regeneration.

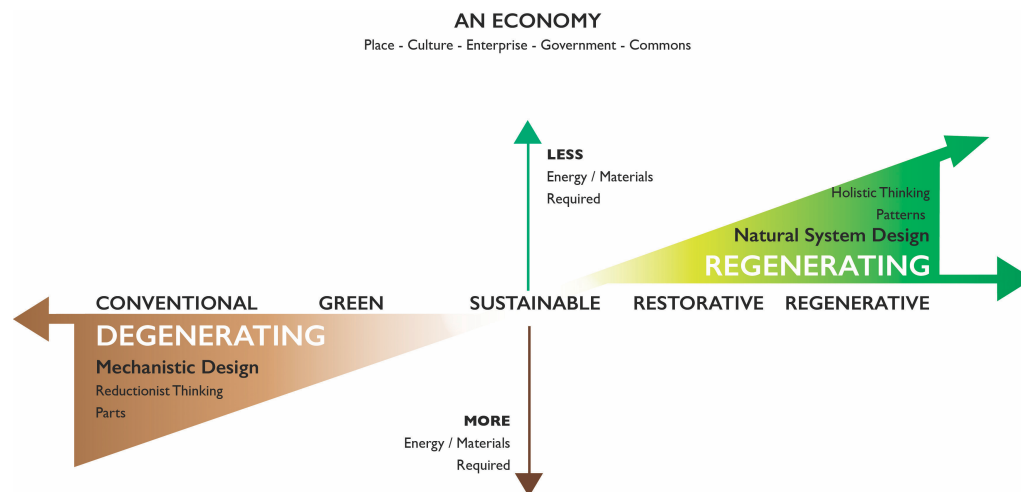
This vision of an economy aligned with how the universe works can supply missing clarity of vision needed to inspire the commitment that will enable change groups to work together transformatively, in a dynamic, creative mosaic.

If we combine what is known about how transformations occur with the best science of what is necessary and who we are as human beings, the outline of a way to avoid collapse emerges.

The new story begins with the principles of living systems.

It includes the equitable distribution of scarce resources to maximize wellbeing for all within planetary limits.

The narrative shows how humanity can ascend out of the degenerative world in which we have sunk. It goes beyond "sustainability" to a world that is regenerative of life.



To avoid collapse, for example, it is helpful but insufficient to construct greener buildings, and build various metrics that detail our progress towards a less wasteful world. Each of these measures are rungs on the ladder, but without the potential represented from the "regenerative" vision, humanity is unlikely to avoid collapse

"Regenerative," as a phrase, is cropping up everywhere, now. Its first known use in a design context was by Buckminster Fuller. More recently, the financier John Fullerton, applied it to economics. After an 18-year career at JP Morgan, Fullerton walked away. During the ensuing decade of deep study and awakening, he learned that the essence of life and the evolutionary process is regeneration. Fullerton, inspired by his learnings in the fields of regenerative agriculture, systems science and ecological economics, sought to extend the principles from

agricultural systems to economic systems. As a result, we are now experiencing the birth of “Regenerative Economics.”

He realized that sustainability is the result, not the means of getting the system right.

In 2010, Fullerton created Capital Institute to “seek a more just and sustainable way of living on this earth through the transformation of finance.”^{li} His 2015 landmark paper, *Regenerative Capitalism: How Universal Principles and Patterns Will Shape the New Economy*,^{lii} is an articulation of what an economy aligned with living systems principles and the laws (not theories) of physics would look like. He points out that, according to leading evolutionary theorists,^{liii} there are patterns and principles that nature (living and non-living alike) uses to build stable, healthy and sustainable systems throughout the world.

Capital Institute defines Regenerative Economics as “the application of nature’s laws and patterns of systemic health, self-organization, self-renewal and regenerative vitality to socio-economic systems. In his paper, Fullerton set forth eight principles:

1. Right Relationship:^{liv} This principle holds the continuation of life sacred and recognizes that the human economy is embedded in human culture, which is itself embedded in the biosphere.^{lv} All systems—from molecular scale all the way to cosmic scale—are nested, interconnected, and defined by overarching relationships of mutualism,^{lvi} within which day-to-day exchanges take place.

2. Innovative, Adaptive and Responsive: Drawing on the innate ability of human beings to innovate and “create anew” across all sectors of society. Humans are innately creative and entrepreneurial.^{lvii} Even in failure, we “begin again.”

3. Views Wealth Holistically: True wealth is not money in the bank. It is defined in terms of the well-being of the “whole,” achieved through the harmonization of the multiple forms of capital, with systemic health only as strong as the weakest link. Well-being depends on belonging, on community and on an array of community stewarded assets.^{lviii}

4. Empowered Participation: All participants in a system must be empowered to participate in and contribute to the health of the whole.^{lix} As people, we long to be part of something bigger than ourselves.^{lx} Therefore, beyond whatever moral beliefs one may hold, financial and non-financial wealth must be equitably (although not necessarily equally) distributed in the context of an expanded understanding of systemic health.

5. Robust Circulatory Flow: Like the metabolism of any healthy system, resources (material and non-material) must circulate up and down the system efficiently and effectively.^{lxi} Circular economy concepts for material and energy described in Chapters Four and Ten are one important aspect of this principle at work.

6. “Edge Effect” Abundance: In nature the most abundant ecosystems are where two come together: where a river meets the ocean in an estuary, because there is diversity. Similarly, creative collaborations across sectors of the economy increase value-adding wealth creation through a diversity of relationships, exchanges, and resiliency.^{lxii}

7. Seeks Balance: This balances resilience, the long run ability to learn and grow stronger from shocks, with efficiency, which while more dynamic, can create brittle concentrations of power.^{lxiii} Living within planetary boundaries, without collapse, requires economic systems that are designed for a balance of efficiency and resilience and are built on patterns and principles that mirror those found in healthy, resilient natural systems.^{lxiv}

8. Honors Community and Place: There can be a dynamic, global economy so long as it ensures that every place, every ecosystem has integrity. This principle nurtures healthy, stable communities and regions, both real and virtual, in a connected mosaic of place-centered economies.^{lxv}

Fullerton's principles are not absolutes. They are part of a rapidly emerging field of holistic thinking. They are interconnected and necessarily work together. They are a limited description of a complex pattern that is beyond linear description. But as a start, they guide us in creating an economy that operates in accordance with the rest of the world, creating conditions conducive to life.^{lxvi}

They are the essential first step to grounding this new field of Regenerative Economics. They draw from the best thinking in evolutionary biology,^{lxvii} ecological economics,^{lxviii} positive psychology,^{lxix} economic democracy,^{lxx} and the emerging discipline of Humanistic Management^{lxxi} to offer a new story of who we are as human beings, and how we can craft a Finer Future.

Who are we as human beings?

Neoliberal ideology arose at a time in which economists, seeking to be seen as legitimate scientists, tied their thinking to the social fashions of the day: physics and Darwinian evolution. David Sloan Wilson observes:

Evolutionary theory's individualistic turn coincided with individualistic turns in other areas of thought. Economics in the postwar decades was dominated by rational choice theory, which used individual self-interest as a grand explanatory principle. The social sciences were dominated by a position known as methodological individualism, which treated all social phenomena as reducible to individual-level phenomena, as if groups were not legitimate units of analysis in their own right (Campbell 1990). And UK Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher became notorious for saying during a speech in 1987 that "there is no such thing as society; only individuals and families." It was as if the entire culture had become individualistic and the formal scientific theories were obediently following suit.^{lxxii}

People who subscribe to the view that the world is a nasty, brutish, competitive place are quick to cite Charles Darwin's frequently mis-quoted "survival of the fittest." By which they mean that the strongest, toughest, meanest individuals will triumph, and that this is the way the way of nature.

This position ignores the fact that Darwin actually wrote about the "survival of the best adaptive." In 1909 he stated:

...that any animal whatever, endowed with well-marked social instincts, the parental and filial affections being here included, would inevitably acquire a moral sense or conscience, as soon as its intellectual powers had become as well, or nearly as well developed, as in man. For, firstly, the social instincts lead an animal to take pleasure in the society of its fellows, to feel a certain amount of sympathy with them, and to perform various services for them.”^{lxxiii}

Darwin also observed:

The small strength and speed of man, his want of natural weapons, etc., are more than counterbalanced by his *intellectual powers*, through which he has formed himself weapons, tools, etc., and secondly by his *social qualities* which lead him to give and receive aid from his fellow-men.^{lxxiv}

Since then biologists have discovered that nature is much more about cooperation than it is about competition.^{lxxv} Evolutionary biologists, anthropologists, psychologists, and social scientists have studied what makes humans unique as a species. The best of modern science now tells us that the neoliberal narrative is fatally incomplete.

In his 2010 book, *Driven to Lead: Good, Bad, and Misguided Leadership*,^{lxxvi} Dr. Paul Lawrence sets forth what he calls Renewed Darwinism, a correction to the neoliberal belief that the rugged individual is all that matters, that people just want to acquire money, and that the job of government is solely to defend their ability to do this. Yes, Lawrence says, there is a human drive to acquire and defend, but, he adds, what distinguishes us from many other animals that share these drives is that, as Darwin noted, humans have an equally powerful drive to bond. They also have a drive to comprehend, to create, to innovate. To be happy, says Lawrence, to be truly fulfilled, humans need to meet each and all of these drives.

This suite of drives, say the evolutionary biologists, is baked into what enabled pre-humans to survive. When the first hominids came down out of the trees in Africa we were naked. Our claws were pretty inadequate, our teeth puny. Anthropologists theorize, based on fossil record, that the earliest humans were not fearsome warriors, but rather were prey animals, dependent for their survival on working together creatively. “Lacking size or weapons, this early human species most likely used brains, agility, and social skills to escape from predators,” says Dr. Robert Susman, author of *Man, the Hunted*.^{lxxvii}

Our ancestors kind and moral, more prone to empathy and collaboration than the neoliberal narrative believes.

We faced species extinction on at least several occasions, with the number of humans reduced to a breeding population of perhaps 18,000, fewer than the endangered population of gorillas today.^{lxxviii} Yet we survived lions, bear-sized hyenas, volcanic eruptions, and ice ages. We survived because we formed tribes, we worked together, and we were creative, entrepreneurial creatures.^{lxxix} We’re story-tellers, meaning-makers. We’re puzzle-solvers and communitarians. Today, the fascination with Facebook and Pokemon Go are just as much a part

of what makes us happy as are acquisitions of new Porsches and the ability to thump our chests at rivals.

Dr. E.O. Wilson, one of the planet's most famous biologists, states that early human prehistory supports this thesis. He makes clear that we are the dominant species on earth now only because we are inherently social beings, "super-cooperators, groupies of the group, willing to set aside our small, selfish desires and I-minded drive to join forces and seize opportunity as a self-sacrificing, hive-minded tribe."^{lxxx}

Wilson's book, *The Social Conquest of Earth*,^{lxxxi} argues that the dominant species that inhabited earth prior to the emergence of the human species were what he calls "eusocial," or truly social, like ants and bees. He compares vertebrates' and invertebrates' ways of spreading across the planet, showing that both were successful to the extent that they collaborated. To Ed Wilson, group and tribe formation is a fundamental human trait.^{lxxxii}

The emotions that economists are fond of saying only cloud the mind of rational, utility maximizing homo economicus, are actually, says Wilson, traits hard-wired into us as decision-making tools. These emotions guide us towards the sorts of cooperative outcomes we call "morality." We behave in ways that are genuinely altruistic because it is in our genes to benefit the group, not the individual.

So, then, why aren't we all kind and loving? Wilson argues that these behaviors are "prepared" and ready to be developed as part of our genetic make-up, but that the implementation of them needs to be learned.^{lxxxiii}

Economists have sought for decades to school such caring out of us, to convince us that normal humans seek only to maximize and defend their possessions, that wealth is the only measure of worth. But in so doing they are denying half of what makes us human. Education and socialization can make us more like the economic model of perfection but doing that is making us miserable. What has for millennia been critical for human survival is also essential to making us happy.

Dr. Michael Pirson, founder of the Humanistic Management Network,^{lxxxiv} a global network of scientists and academics states:

One can make more sense of this by looking at daily experience in which humans find that they care about each other (in family, work and friendship circles) and about society at large (reading the news, checking in with "friends" on social media, etc.). A life devoid of care leads to misery in many ways. Humans have long determined that isolation is the cruelest punishment, whether physical isolation on a remote island (exiled like Napoleon), in a solitary confinement cell, or psychologically isolated through feelings of shame. Being alone is considered a tragedy and leads many to depression, dysfunction, or even suicide, rendering isolation crueler than death.^{lxxxv}

Pirson's discipline, Humanistic Management, emphasizes the importance of respect for human dignity and the scientific evidence that humans only survived when they organized for the

common good. This approach envisions organizations as caring communities that converge to produce wider benefits.^{lxxxvi} Based on the best of modern science^{lxxxvii} it says:

- Most people are happy.
- Happiness is a cause of good things in life. People who are satisfied with life eventually have even more reason to be satisfied, because happiness leads to desirable outcomes.
- Most people are resilient.
- Happiness, strengths of character, and good social relationships are buffers against the damaging effects of disappointments and setbacks.
- Crisis reveals character.
- Other people matter mightily if we want to understand what makes life most worth living.
- Religion matters.
- Work matters as well if it engages the worker and provides meaning and purpose.
- Money makes an ever-diminishing contribution to well-being, but money can buy happiness if it is spent on other people.
- As a route to a satisfying life, well-being is superior to hedonism.
- The "heart" matters more than the "head." Schools explicitly teach critical thinking; they should also teach unconditional caring.
- Good days have common features: feeling autonomous, competent, and connected to others.
- The good life can be taught.

This approach is spreading. Positive Psychology practitioners^{lxxxviii} study what makes people happy, fully functioning humans, not what makes them neurotic and self-destructive. Leading business thinkers (see Chapter Eight for more) speak of flourishing,^{lxxxix} and of Conscious Capitalism,^{xc} Natural Capitalism,^{xc} Regenerative Capitalism,^{xcii} and the need for a Big Pivot.^{xciii} Biologists explore the "wood-wide web,"^{xciv} the notion that in nature organisms communicate and cooperate more than they engage in cut-throat competition. Policy officials at OECD and in various national governments develop Better Life Initiatives,^{xcv} move beyond GDP,^{xcvi} and create happiness indexes.^{xcvii}

People hunger for a sense of who they are, where they belong and what they believe in. Think about it. You are here because your distant ancestors cared more for the good of the whole, than any one of them cared for himself. It's literally in your DNA to care, and to act to create a greater good.

The "Zero Draft Narrative"

The proponents of neoliberalism worked for more than 30 years to achieve dominance for their narrative. As described in Chapter Two, they found only limited success until the U.S. Chamber of Commerce commissioned the Powell memorandum. It then took less than a decade for neoliberalism to become the dominant global ideology.

Many advocates of human survival have tried to overcome the juggernaut of neoliberalism. But without a compelling alternative narrative, none of the organizing, agitating, lobbying litigation

and legislation has succeeded. Progress has been achieved, but as the Alt-Right movement in the U.S., the forces backing Brexit in the UK, the various anti-immigrant parties across Europe have shown, the desire to turn the clock back is strong. Meanwhile, the rending of the social fabric wrought by inequality, and the havoc of climate change is upon us. Going back won't work. It simply is not an option.

As David Brooks put it, the future of the U.S. (and many other countries):

...is not going to be found in protecting jobs that are long gone or in catering to the fears of aging whites. There is a raging need for a movement that embraces economic dynamism, global engagement and social support....^{xcviii}

An international consortium, the Wellbeing Alliance^{xcix} (WE-All) has stepped up to do just that. It seeks to replicate the process that brought neoliberalism to power. Through gatherings on diverse continents, it is framing a new narrative for a world that works for all of humanity. It is developing a strategy to bring it into being the following narrative:

True freedom and success depend on creating a world where we all prosper and flourish. Institutions serve humanity best when they recognize our individual dignity and enhance our interconnectedness. To thrive, businesses and society must pivot toward a new purpose: shared well-being on a healthy planet.^c

The Wellbeing Alliance stands for...

- The possibility that institutions can evolve and transform; that revolution/ tearing down the entire system and building new structures from scratch should only be a last resort. We honor those who resist degenerative practices, but seek to build bridges where possible, and create opportunities for our movement to experiment and learn together;
- Amplifying, supporting, building upon, and bringing greater coherence to efforts already in motion: a “movement of movements” even if it lacks a single name;
- Being constructive; building a wide and strong foundation;
- Recognizing the value of individual entrepreneurship and human creativity;
- A strategy that understands complex adaptive systems, versus command and control;
- Working iteratively, guided by a long-term vision of what is possible/ necessary;
- Channeling resources towards what is working, or what we sense should be tested.

This narrative starts from the recognition that people are basically good, that what all of us want is to be happy. It understands that we derive the greatest happiness from being in service to something greater than ourselves. What it takes to be happy is not especially costly, either in financial terms or ecological destruction. It turns out that good lives do not have to cost the earth.^{ci}

The “Zero Draft Strategy”

To achieve a Finer Future, we need a strategy.

WE-All has set forth a draft strategy. To answer the Powell Memorandum, it proposes the Meadows Memorandum, named in honor of the gentle Vermont farmer, great scientist and writer, Dana Meadows.^{cii}

The strategy will...

- Accelerate the decline of the dominant neoliberal narrative, particularly in western economic thought;
- Connect the millions of people pursuing a Finer Future and let them know that they're not alone.

It proposes to shift the world's major institutions, including governments, but especially businesses, so that they operate in service to the well-being of all. This will reliably increase human health and productivity, as it fosters sustainability. It will give change agents a vision of the future we want, a definition of who we are as humans, and a route to implement well-being at work and in society. It will shift businesses, governments and the institutions of cultural creation to be part of the solution, not a cause of problems.

The strategy:

- Reframes the economic narrative around how we achieve wellbeing, dignity and a healthy planet;
- Invites diverse groups of people and organizations from all parts of society to co-create, adapt, and interpret the narrative;
- Maps key stakeholders and gatekeepers who shape our current economic narrative;
- Convenes stakeholders and collaboratively serves the movement's ability to find coherence;
- Crowd sources strategies that change agents around the globe can use to frame locally appropriate strategies to take their work to scale;
- Shifts corporate behavior to implement the new narrative;
- Shifts flows of capital to companies and organizations behaving in ways that enhance well-being;
- Identifies and connects institutions and leaders for whom well-being is a core mission:
 - Amplify their stories by showcasing successes and helping them pay it forward;
 - Build on their strengths and bring their work to scale;
- Agrees on key qualitative/quantitative measures of well-being that institutions can leverage;
- Designs and executes on a plan to:
 - Make that new narrative the default in our institutions so that choices that promote well-being (i.e., prosperity and flourishing)—in people's lives, in business, and in government and systems—flow naturally;
- Combines the story of who we are as humans with how we can organize to solve the challenges facing us. This details how businesses and all organizations can better manage people. It shifts our purpose from exploitation for short-term profit to delivering holistic well-being as the basis for sustainable returns AND a healthier society.

Objectives:

- Spread the new narrative to inspire people and empower institutions to pursue an economy in service to life;
- Replace incentives for exploitation for short-term profit with rewards for long-lasting, regenerative wealth creation;
- Use the new narrative to shape the policies needed at all levels of government, including corporate reporting, investor oversight, and rewards for behavior that serves us all;
- Shift flows of capital to organizations behaving in ways that enhance well-being, by moving money from harm to healing;
- Change our consciousness (our deeper level understanding of who we are and the world we live in) through practices and positive routines that connect us to individual purpose, to each other, and to the natural environment;
- Enlist young people, business leaders, teachers, civil society leaders, communities of faith, regulators, policy makers, scientists, economists and economic thought leaders, storytellers, marketers, the media, advertisers and cultural icons to refine and spread the new narrative.

The neoliberal ideology's storyteller was Ayn Rand.^{ciii} While the *Finer Future* yet lacks a novelist, it has found voice in the work of renegade economist, Kate Raworth. Kate Raworth. Her book, *Doughnut Economics*,^{civ} has taken the economics world by storm. It quantifies a social foundation for the human economy based on meeting the basic needs of all humans.^{cv} She lays out how humanity must operate below the planetary boundaries but above the minimum foundation needed to ensure human wellbeing and dignity. She calls this the sweet spot, the "safe and just operating space for humanity."^{cvi}



To supplement the book, Kate produced a series of videos^{cvii} that detail her Seven Ways to Think Like a 21st Century Economist:^{cviii}

- Change the Goal: From GDP to the Doughnut:
- Tell a New Story: From the neoliberal narrative to a story fit for our times
- Nurture Human Nature: From rational economic man to social adaptable human
- Get Savvy with Systems: From mechanical equilibrium to dynamic complexity
- Design to Distribute: From 'growth will even it up again' to distributive by design
- Create to Regenerate: From 'growth will clean it up again' to regenerative by design
- Be Agnostic about Growth: From growth addicted to growth agnostic
- And now...It's Time for Planetary Economics: Why it's time to think big about the economy

Kate calls on us to tell a new story about a sweeter view of economics. The neoliberal narrative is based on assumptions that scientists now reject. Psychologists, evolutionary biologists and anthropologists and others find that most people are not greedy, rugged individualists.^{cix} We seek to meet our needs, yes, but more, people seek goodness, connection, and caring.^{cx} We desire to be rewarded for meaningful contributions with a decent living,^{cxii} but are not primarily motivated by acquiring wealth.

Unlike neoliberalism, which is based on an incomplete view of what it means to be human,^{cxiii} the new economic model must balance our innate entrepreneurialism and individualism with a more holistic view that recognizes the human instinct for fairness and our desire to bond with others.

There is a business case for this view: purpose-driven organizations^{cxiiii} that respect dignity and implement more sustainable practices better engage all stakeholders and enjoy increasing productivity. More sustainable brands and ethical investments deliver higher profitability.^{cxv}

There is a quality of life reason, as well. Science now tells us that life itself is not separate, competitive, or based on random chance,^{cxvi} but interconnected^{cxvii} and mutualistic. Implementing more regenerative practices drawn from natural systems is a better way to achieve both the true freedom that the original neoliberals cherished, as well as a world that works for everyone.

That inclination you feel to help, that yearning to be part of something bigger than yourself is not a flaw. More than language, more than the fact that you stand tall, this is what makes you human. YOU are the descendent of those who survived. Ever wanted to get the call to be a superhero? That's not a foolish fantasy. The world needs you. Answer that call.

It's literally in your blood.

George Bernard Shaw once said:

This is the true joy in life, the being used for a purpose recognized by yourself as a mighty one the being a force of nature instead of a feverish selfish little clod of ailments and grievances complaining that the world will not devote itself to making you happy.

I am of the opinion that my life belongs to the whole community and as long as I live it is my privilege to do for it whatever I can. I want to be thoroughly used up when I die for the harder I work the more I live. I rejoice in life for its own sake. Life is no "brief candle" for me. It is a sort of splendid torch which I have got hold of for the moment and I want to make it burn as brightly as possible before handing it on to future generations.

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