



What we must do

If we have not already set in train conditions that will mean our demise as a species, we must act fast to prevent that happening. The tip of the iceberg is global warming. It is not sufficient to simply focus on addressing climate change by halting and reversing current trends along with adaptation.

In order to ride through the crises we now face and to stabilise our position within nature, we must institutionalise sustainable practices, such as minimising energy and resource use. However, sustainable practices are impossible without wholesale change in the ways we live, the ways we relate to other people, and the ways we value and treat non-human nature.

The current focus on trying to make government activities, residents' homes, businesses and other areas of public space and private property more ecologically sustainable is not achieving the necessary changes quickly enough. Visions and strategies for establishing sustainable practices proliferate but are in conflict with economic prerogatives that still dominate decision-making and actions. Initiatives are too small and slow. Why is this so?

Market practices

We are trying to hang onto old unsustainable ways of living, namely capitalist practices, rather than establish sustainable ones. Capitalist practices are based on trade, exchanging goods and services for money, and producing goods and services for trade. Thus, the whole production process and decisions about how and what to produce are centred on the market.

This market logic uses monetary calculations. It is as if money is our common god, our central value, and provides the principles for all our main relationships and activities. Within this mainstream perspective, even sustainability initiatives must be 'economic', an example being the dominance of 'triple bottom line' approaches. Thus the world is still being seen through capitalist eyes: fragmented in units that are still judged in accord with economic criteria and credentials, i.e. profitability.

While capitalist businesses measure their success through profitability, capitalist states are structured around exponential growth. Yet over-consumption is at the very basis of unsustainable dynamics that threaten us with species extinction, collective suicide.

The main international intergovernmental institutions and governments support trade and production for trade. Thus the Kyoto Protocol and other international efforts avoid making fundamental agreements to address global warming and create the necessary foundations for global sustainability.

Non-monetary values: use-values

Current sustainability initiatives are failing because really sustainable practices require that non-monetary values, principles and relations rule our decision-making and activities. To be sustainable we need to treat everything according to their use-value and use-value efficiencies, i.e. minimising needs and environmental impacts, and use-values must include ecological values.

Thus we must dispense with the market requirement of monetary values and calculations, i.e. capitalist determinations and complications, structuring business around assets and flows, credits and debits. Ecological processes and dynamics are hard enough to understand and manage without overlaying needs to make production and exchange sensible in terms of markets.

The real social needs are that people have enough to sustain their existence and that we share responsibility for and the rewards of what we produce. In fact basic human needs are ignored in trade and production for trade, which centres on meeting demand, needs backed by money. So, use-value-based sustainable practices can better meet social as well as environmental needs.

Obviously we cannot reach this vision of a society based on social and environmental needs overnight. However, if we have a clear vision of the values, principles and relations we want to establish, and decide to follow rational strategies to achieve this common vision, we will get there quicker. First we will discuss the vision, then strategies for getting there. The discussion on strategies uses the example of carbon rationing to make certain points about transitional processes.

Vision: compacts and networks

Establishing a world that will successfully enable, embody and reproduce fairness, equity and sustainability will require money-free social relations, a 'compact society'. Why 'compact'? Compact means both 'an agreement' and 'small and efficient'.

In a compact society our everyday practices will be modest and effective, minimising resource and energy use to meet simple and basic needs. Formal collective agreements, compacts, will enable us to act in concert, to avoid certain people's activities undermining other people's efforts. Networks of compacts will form the basis of compact neighbourhoods, compact communities, compact regions and a planetary compact society.

The concept of 'compact' is akin to 'contract' but involves none of the monetary, financial, elements common in contracts. Compacts have the potential to provide the political and economic building blocks of a world without monetary relations and values. Compacts would commonly involve at least two parties that agree, for

instance, to share the use-rights and responsibilities of a resource base or to provide one another with goods and or services. In other words compacts would express agreements over the use and management of resources necessary to enable people to exist modestly and to share responsibilities as stewards of the earth and all its natural communities.

Compacts and networks offer viable forms for people to take and share direct power. Compacts involving formal agreements between individuals and groups will support all kinds of activities, including collective production and spheres of exchange. Such compacts would be organised locally and in local-to-local networks. Thus we can refer to a 'compact movement' as networks of socially fair compacts between groups and individuals, compacts that respect environmental sustainability and that will merge to form a dynamic path to rational, humane and sustainable livelihoods.

Many people have some relationships and practices consistent with a vision of compact communities. A 'compact movement' is already apparent in individual acts and voluntary associations as people place humane and environmental principles and values above monetary, capitalist ones. Generalising such values and formalising them in compacts will create alternative forms of governance, ultimately a global compact society.

This vision is not wholly new: many liberation philosophies point in the direction of a planetary compact society. Anarchism, permaculture, humanism and communism give priority to equity and fairness between people along with living in modest and sustainable ways, respecting nature. Associated principles and values have been expressed in the writings and actions of many philosophers and activists.

However, a key distinction of the compact vision is that production and exchange on the basis of people's and planetary (ecological) needs will take place without using money, or monetary values, principles and relationships.

Networks refer to the internal communications and relations between members within compacts as well as external connections comprising further compacts and other kinds of relations supporting compacts. For instance, a household would be organised by way of a compact which, in turn, would be a member of other compacts specifically formed to sustain the household and to help its members to sustain other people within their neighbourhood comprising people and the local natural and built environment.

Once appropriate principles and values have the force of common rights and normal responsibilities, compacts and networks have the potential to constitute societies alternative to capitalist ones. Current capitalist practices contradict universal human rights to basic needs such as food, clothing, shelter, safety and care. Every activity involves monetary considerations at some level, shackling direct and sensible responses to human and environmental needs. Non-monetary compacts and networks would work directly with available human skills and effort, and energy and materials assessed in terms of their use-values.

Every human being would have a right to basic needs and would be a member of compacts designed to fulfil those needs at the same time as belonging to networks that would make them responsible for fulfilling other people's basic needs and care for the local environment. Planning and distribution formalised in compacts would be

facilitated using electronic communication, which would link households with neighbourhood precincts and broader, sub-bioregional communities and bioregional networks.

Compacts and networks would be diverse, fulfilling a variety of purposes for numerous members. As basic ways of organising, formal compacts would offer robust and stable forms for local to global organisation of all kinds of activities, from those directed at fulfilling basic needs and wants to cultural and recreational ones.

The principles of simplicity, local, and small would guide efficient and effective techniques for fulfilling basic needs to ensure more socially and environmentally friendly developments all over our planet. Permaculture and alternative, appropriate, technologies for generating energy and extracting and processing resources offer ready-made and trialled ways to proceed.

Catchments and ‘whole’ people

Sustainability requires that exchanges involving energy-intensive transport be reduced to a minimum. Therefore self-sufficiency and collective sufficiency must be the main aims of local organisations of environmentally sustainable units, comprising households within catchment areas based on bioregional rationalities.

Some people would need to resettle according to the natural opportunities and limits of local and regional environments. Even so, place-based living would allow for mobility outside local groups, especially for members with skills and knowledge to share.

Non-monetary exchange has always relied on customary rights and responsibilities with local and personal variations associated with social and environmental circumstances and developments. Non-monetary exchange will involve compacts and networks that allow groups to have access to basic needs and wants from outside the local area when necessary.

The deficiencies of local collective self-sufficiency and production for direct use-values can be overcome through low levels of exchange enabled by e-communication, negotiated on terms specific to the potential and limits of the people and landscape in question. Thus spheres of exchange would be minimal and formal and either of mutual advantage to two exchanging individuals or communities or involve multilateral benefits to many individuals or communities.

Agreements would be formalised and dissolved by official independent mediating parties. Most importantly these exchange networks would complement communities living simply on production for direct use-values, exercising independence as well as benefiting from efficiencies evolving from collective self-sufficiency, by offering complementary and supplementary goods and services in exchange for the same.

To achieve local collective sufficiency, inhabitants will have use-rights and responsibilities for landscapes in the water catchments that substantially support them. Local, community-based forms of living, producing and exchanging that emphasise communal sufficiency are the most environmentally friendly because they

minimise energy and resources otherwise wasted on transport and economise through providing directly for most daily needs.

In as much as local regions develop in communally sufficient ways they are socially and environmentally semi-autonomous, robust and resilient. Communal sufficiency overcomes limitations of self-sufficiency by economising on effort and by making use of economies of scale through the use of resources, including energy. Subsistence activities include collecting, growing, harvesting, storing and preserving foods in as environmentally friendly ways as possible, exercising principles such as those developed by permaculture and the slow-food movement.

A 'whole person' exercises skills and develops knowledge in a range of activities. Compact communities would nurture people, and be nurtured by people, who had a range of skills and applied them regularly in various ways, namely: subsistence, sharing, caring, learning and teaching.

Work time would be divided between these activities so that, ideally, every person would participate, say one day a week, in production and exchange of the provision of subsistence goods and services, including food, clothing, houses, furniture, equipment and buildings for households and neighbourhoods, and all the goods and services involved with electronic communications. Another day would be spent in caring activities: caring for children, sick and aged people, in a range of duties, including exercising the skills of 'barefoot doctors' complemented by highly skilled practitioners. Yet another day would be spent on decision-making and communicating with compact partners and in the activities of networks. Continuous training would characterise compact communities.

Spheres of production and exchange would focus on the local, regional and global. These spheres would follow ecological as well as social rationales with local economies based on the scale of catchments, along bioregional lines. Households would develop, say biannually, lists of basic needs and work out to what extent they could fulfil their needs through self-sufficiency, such as through their household gardens, kitchen baking, preserving and storing, and milk, meat and other products from domesticated animals, including fowls and goats. Households would grow and create according to appropriate principles and technology, such as giving priority to indigenous vegetation and animals and sustainable practices infused with permaculture approaches.

Neighbourhood farming and industrial facilities would complement the needs of households and provide workspaces for householders to exercise a wider sphere of activities related to collective sufficiency. Each neighbourhood would identify the potential specific to their landscape for easily producing surpluses that met deficiencies in other neighbourhoods, or offering use-rights for specific purposes to their pockets of forest or marine areas for other local neighbourhoods to meet their subsistence needs. Neighbourhood audits would estimate production to account for accidental shortfalls and unpredictable losses but also coordinate with wider catchment-based networks so that such surpluses could act as a wider safety store to avoid waste.

Strategies: strengthen and weaken

The transition to a world without money – which is only to say that the conditions are laid for humans to establish communities based on social justice and environmental sustainability – would be created by, on the one hand, diminishing production and exchange based on a monetary, capitalist rationale and, on the other hand, progressively taking over production and exchange using non-monetary compacts. Collectively, our actions would *weaken* a reliance on capitalist practices and *strengthen* networks of compacts as alternative forms of governance, production and exchange.

How to synthesise tactics within mainstream structures and strategies pursued outside them and create a bridge, a continuum, between reforms and revolution is the greatest challenge. It will only be possible by adopting a common strategy of instituting non-monetary forms of political, social and cultural relations within a vision of a money-free society to enable people to produce and exchange transparently on the basis of use-values, i.e. directly expressing principles related to social justice, and enabling the establishment of environmentally sustainable practices. Thus we must decide on compromises regarding the best possible way forward to achieve the ultimate vision as quickly and as permanently as possible.

Our strategies to attain sustainability as a species need to be guided by modest, effective activities. However, these strategies are impossible under current forms of governance and if we keep using money and prices to produce and exchange. Thus, for instance, the transition would focus on cutting workloads for all, to work for money at the most only part-time and progressively less. We would deprive the market of labour to rely more and more on non-monetary production and exchange. The defence for our stand would be a simple ethical principle, instituting of substantive democracy for human wellbeing and the protection of a living planet.

Over the last half century many people have not only become active participants in organisations to promote social justice and environmental sustainability but a minority have devoted their lives to this movement, including focusing on time-consuming experimental activities such as establishing eco-villages, permaculture ventures, organic and biodynamic farming, and applying alternative small technologies to produce quality goods and services. As such, existing activities, structures, organisations and movements contribute models and experiential knowledge and skills to inform positive strategies towards a compact society.

Monetary exchanges and production for the market must be remodelled into exchanges that focus not only on the use-values of the produced and exchanged goods and services but also on the parties to such exchanges. Thus production and exchanges would be formally planned, centre on collective sufficiency based on bioregions managed for environmental sustainability and would only marginally involve production and exchange for identified, specific, external groups and environments.

The now international movement known as permaculture (permanent, sustainable agricultural practices and principles of designing sustainable livelihoods) offers ways to think about, plan, strategise and act to create a world that is socially just as well as environmentally sustainable. Permaculture emphasises self-reliance, production

for direct use, minimising exchanges and concentrating them in the local area, working collectively and with nature rather than competitively and to control nature.

While permaculture offers ways to empower people and to support ourselves materially in more environmentally sustainable ways, and its principles have a communal focus, most applications have been at an individual or small grassroots level. Yet permaculture principles offer ways for generalising such practices to achieve planetary sustainability.

Social change

Radical activist organisations, such as the women's liberation movement, have experimented with and developed useful processes for catalysing and incorporating behaviour and social change. Many discussions within this movement focused on how women could most effectively initiate, facilitate and support change. Many did not want what men had but wanted a new world where men and women would relate differently.

Many women took seriously the implications of making this kind of revolutionary demand, especially that 'the personal is the political'. They clustered in 'consciousness raising groups', which replicated aspects of age-old political resistance cells in terms of solidarity and discussion, but were infused with specifically feminine qualities of sharing, self-disclosure and mutual support.

Such groups – typically comprising several women meeting regularly – enabled discussion about everyday challenges and strategic options to effect change in close relationships with relatives, partners, male and female friends and colleagues. Emphasising the importance of these informal groups, which were not accountable or formal in mainstream ways and centred on 'private' rather than public change, was itself an act embodying social change.

Other characteristics of the women's liberation movement were demonstrated in its more action-oriented 'public' structure. There was no formal membership. If you identified with and supported the women's liberation movement then you belonged. Equally, in an effort to preserve diversity within unity and sidestep time-consuming decisions over numerous issues, workshops or collectives evolved around issues and events. Contacts were nominated but again these groups took a flat non-hierarchical form based on direct decision-making and initiatives by immediate participants. As such to be an effective member you had to participate directly.

Women's liberation developed forms appropriate to mass mobilisation, and effective and substantive democracy. Some of these forms of organisation have been adopted by and aspects shared with environmental organisations, especially those that typify its most radical wings, such as Friends of the Earth and the social and environmental NonViolence Network. Women's liberationists questioned working as a not necessarily desirable state of being, while feminists fought for training and jobs.

The organisational forms developed, refined and used by women's liberationists and environmental and nonviolence activists typify effective ways of achieving change with the potential to leap beyond simple reforms. These forms, and the social skills that they nurture, naturally complement the development of structures and

processes through which communities living with environmental uncertainties and damage can effect mass mobilisation and rapid changes in values and relations necessary to institute social justice and environmental sustainability. Through involvement in such social and environmental organisations many people have been slowly and surely building experiential learning in terms of skills and tacit knowledge about how social and environmental change can be effectively and efficiently achieved.

Nonviolent action

Although advanced capitalist societies are characterised more by formal than substantive democracy, the threat of losing elections has pressured many parties and politicians to respond to vocal and disruptive opposition in semi-conciliatory ways. At the same time the easier response has been to demonise such groups and enhance the state's powers to curb such actions, the publicity emanating from them, and the terms and conditions allowing for protest in public spaces.

Right through the 20th century, certain groups and individuals have objected to wars, to conscription, and to anti-social and anti-environmental policies, practices and programs developed and implemented by various states. Their campaigns have included political lobbying, media publicity, peaceful rallies and sit-ins. Key strategic issues have revolved around the potential for protesters to interfere with, intervene in or frustrate business-as-usual enough to gain the attention of those whose practices or positions they wish to change or power holders in a position to regulate or restrain them.

Facing physical power, armed guards and riot police, many environmental and social protesters have implemented nonviolent actions, resistance and non-compliance to defoliate mainstream authorities' reasons and ways of enforcing law and order. Nonviolent actions, such as sitting in trees threatened with felling in ecologically valuable areas, have various benefits. Such actions: enable protesters to express otherwise often relatively defensive positions in lively collective ways involving solidarity, commitment and courage; generally directly express the social and environmental ethics of the protesters; represent low-level causes for state powers of law and order to be enforced; and usually attract media, publicity and encourage debate on the issue, event or cause. For instance, nonviolence principles and tactics have been applied regularly during the last few decades in Australia's forests.

The importance of nonviolence philosophies and activities includes: giving people experience of direct action over their lives and deepest concerns; empowering participants to act in a way that expresses that the personal is the political; and developing people's skills and knowledge about ways to defend themselves and the environments that they deeply value in nonviolent ways. While state authorities responded to such well-meant activities with brute, legal and political force – fining, jailing, intimidating and injuring protesters – they also moved to restrict opportunities for people to protest, for instance, by reducing public spaces and the regulation and definition of behaviours tolerated in public spaces.

Much of the apathy and demoralisation felt in contemporary society is associated with knowing that the naked and hidden powers of states the world over are all too ready to aggressively support capitalism. At the same time, participants in nonviolent

actions have developed positions and skills to assist 'power to the people'. Resistance to the development, establishment and use of nuclear power and policies to curb the use and storing of guns increases as people watch machinery and technologies amplifying the power of public authorities, who even privately contract out security activities and have always relied on companies producing military hardware, for use as an armour against their own people and peoples with inferior potential weaponry.

Nonviolent assertion and defence will be crucial strategies for protecting, expanding and intensifying the compact movement into a global society. A long tradition of grassroots nonviolent activities offer experiential learning to inform the defence of communities establishing non-monetary ways of working, living, sustaining and expressing ourselves. Nonviolence is a philosophy, a political and economic way of life, offering tactics and techniques for effectively dealing with force without resorting to violence. These principles and processes contribute model approaches and institutions for pursuing and defending the transition to a compact society.

Carbon rationing

From a compact perspective, reducing consumption and production to simply meet basic needs, reversing population growth, restoring natural environments and recovering other environments damaged by capitalist activities is the only way to reverse the growth of greenhouse gas emissions in the atmosphere and to establish really sustainable practices over the planet.

The most significant strategy will be reducing consumption by not purchasing any more than is absolutely necessary. Without demand, by its own laws, capitalist production cannot exist. We must try to fulfil our own needs directly, or arrange to source such needs locally, share, hand on goods and services, reuse, recycle and treat waste. These *weakening* and *strengthening* strategies must be conducted in unison.

To address the current global warming challenge we must unite with others who are calling for carbon rationing by applying the principles of small and efficient at every level. However, we must beware of commodifying carbon emission allowances. The best aspect of rationing is the collective cap that is reduced over time. However, this limit on carbon emitting activities can be achieved directly through regulation.

Let's view joining a carbon rationing action group (CRAG) as a possible tactic to move from where we are now to our vision of sustainable compact communities. A CRAG has elements of a consciousness-raising group, a support network and a carbon management unit (see: www.carbonrationing.org.uk).

The good thing about a CRAG is that it is a grassroots initiative, taking direct collective action for our personal greenhouse emissions. Thus it can be seen as *strengthening*, i.e. improving, skills, will and knowledge towards compact communities. But these groups are voluntary and will achieve little unless personal carbon allowances are mandatory.

A CRAG shares some critical failings of plans to reduce carbon emissions, such as incorporating trading, which undermines the best aspects of rationing. This means

that rich, flagrant carbon polluters can buy their way out of carbon efficient living and simply extend behaviour associated with the main source of unsustainable practices – trade and production for trade (money). Trade in allowances means we are unlikely to collectively reduce much more than the limit, because there is a monetary incentive to trade unused allowances. Some case studies comparing water restrictions and water trading show this as well as other forms of more sustainable behaviour with restrictions.

National and mandatory measures, such as Carbon Equity Project proposals (www.carbonequity.info) are stronger but still incorporate trade. This line is not credible at this critical point in history unless it is a stop-gap measure. All resorts to trade must be bounded in time and space as quickly disappearing steps.

A more useful scheme, in terms of providing a direct and quick route to sustainable living, is to set personal rations and disallow any trade in them. Credits and debts could accrue in an accounting system specifically for carbon and, while penalties for debtors would focus on forfeit of property, creditors might receive non-monetary rewards.

It is not clear that a standard level of personal allowance is fair if I work at home, for example, as many people do. Addressing these kinds of basic equity issues makes the scheme more cumbersome. If the retort to this challenge is that trading provides for such flexibility, it really means trading submerges concrete problems with the plan.

Further, complementary tactics need to be provided for the two-thirds of emissions caused outside households. Providing businesses with allowances is appropriate but non-tradable permits are necessary along with the statement that we will not be continuing with 'business as usual'. From this point of view state regulation of a dying practice is a direct measure and current political structures allow for pressure, i.e. input, in deciding which industries receive how much in the way of carbon allowances. We must discuss clear proposals for state policies, backed by marching on the streets to achieve them.

Sustainability requires the end of the market, production for trade and trade. Instead, we must care for the earth, care for people, and share the surplus.



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