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Weaving Diverse Strategies Contribution to GTI Forum [Which Future Are We Living In?](#)

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The forces and processes associated with the [scenarios](#) outlined in the 2002 [Great Transition essay](#) are playing out in ways that are complex and variegated, that look different from different perspectives, and that are certainly alarming but, in some views (including my own), still hopeful. Chaos and breakdown are increasing, sometimes in places we might not have expected. Fortresses are being built. Steps forward in policy or in efforts to reshape capitalism occur but are insufficient to address the crises we face. Learning and movement for empowerment at the local level, and a broader awareness of the needs of the age (backlash notwithstanding), offer signs of hope but have not turned the tide. The relative prevalence and impact, or summative upshot, of these developments will likely be clear only in hindsight.

But, as stated in the original essay, the purpose of considering the six scenarios was not to predict but to “support informed and rational action by providing insight into the scope of the possible.” At this point, twenty years later, we can hope that as it becomes more and more clear that the Conventional Worlds scenarios are not viable paths in and of themselves, and as the specter of [Breakdown](#) and [Fortress World](#) loom, a Great Transition will increasingly be recognized as a necessity rather than a utopian fancy.

Perhaps in this moment of flux and great complexity it is helpful to view destructive and constructive forces as interacting. We experience how advances in discourse or action of certain kinds are met with backlash. But the crises we are experiencing increase receptivity to new ideas and the will to pursue them. Similarly, with respect to strategy, perhaps efforts to work within the system, to dismantle it, and to build anew amidst the wreckage are not mutually

exclusive alternatives amongst which we must choose. There are synergies between them that we could reinforce by understanding how they relate to each other.

Learning generated within current systems could be applied to building new ones. Dismantling creates space for the new. Useful elements of the old can be carried forward into the new in ways that make the distinction between evolution and rupture unclear. Multiple strategies, multiple fronts of the battle can advance at the same time.

That said, when the failure of Conventional Worlds and the threat of Breakdown and Fortress World do bring us to a tipping point, the greatest need is to have the range of alternatives developed to the greatest extent possible. The more learning that has accrued, the more viable the alternatives have become, the greater the possibility that we can pull ourselves back up over the edge of the cliff that we are toppling over. So if our analysis of scenarios is to inform strategy, I would argue in favor of emphasizing the building of the new: new processes of empowerment, new practices of commoning, new ways of organizing local collaboration and mutual advancement, new technologies (or recovered traditional ones made newly valued and viable), new ways of conceiving our identity, new stories, all of which draw on our collective inheritance as a species but recast and refine and build upon them with a new intention. It does not matter that some of these explorations might be at odds or even incompatible with each other. The approaches discussed here express a common desire for justice broadly understood, and a sense of solidarity that encircles the planet. We will have to discover over time which solutions are most viable. How to build the capacity to make such decisions at a collective level, and to implement them, seems a more pressing question now than which particular vision is the right one.

About the Author



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About the Publication

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