

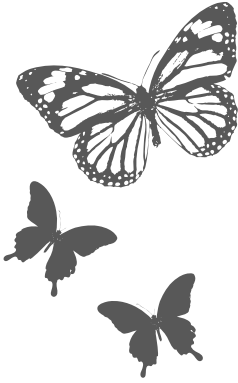


Resistance • Resilience • Restoration • Reimagining

# FROM BANKS AND TANKS TO COOPERATION AND CARING

**A Strategic Framework for a Just Transition**





***Liberate the Soil  
Undam the Rivers  
Free the People  
Unplug the Empire***



*Movement Generation Justice & Ecology Project inspires and engages in transformative action towards the liberation and restoration of land, labor, and culture. We are rooted in vibrant social movements led by low-income communities and communities of color committed to a Just Transition away from profit and pollution and towards healthy, resilient and life-affirming local economies.*



*We offer this booklet as a humble point of departure for folks interested in building a collective vision and strategy framework for Ecological Justice that does not separate humans from nature or social equity from ecological integrity. The evolution of our thinking has been an ongoing journey with hundreds of folks over many years from diverse movements. And we know that the politic will continue to develop and evolve. We invite you share you thoughts, feedback, experience, models and more.*

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***[movementgeneration.org](http://movementgeneration.org)***



# “Wage Love!”

*Movement Generation dedicates this little booklet to **Charity Mahouna Hicks**, born into this world June 30, 1969, who joined the ancestors on July 8, 2014. Charity was a healer, a water warrior, and a movement weaver rooted in her African ancestry and committed to total liberation. She worked deeply for justice at home in Detroit, and connected that struggle in true and deep solidarity with peoples the world over. Charity called on all of us to be our best selves in the struggle for justice. Her spirit and presence continues to inspire and guide our work. ¡Charity Mahouna Hicks, Presente!*

# WHAT IS JUST TRANSITION?

*The rights of human beings and the rights of nature are two names of the same dignity.*

—EDUARDO GALEANO



Just Transition is a framework for a fair shift to an economy that is ecologically sustainable, equitable and just for all its members. After centuries of global plunder, the profit-driven, growth-dependent, industrial economy is severely undermining the life support systems of the planet. *An economy based on extracting from a finite system faster than the capacity of the system to regenerate will eventually come to an end—either through collapse or through our intentional re-organization. Transition is inevitable. Justice is not.*

Just Transition strategies were first forged by labor unions and environmental justice groups who saw the need to phase out the industries that were harming workers, community health and the planet, while also providing just pathways for workers into new livelihoods. This original concept of Just Transition was rooted in building alliances between workers in polluting industries and fence-line and frontline communities. Building on that history, Just Transition to us represents a set of aligned strategies to transition whole communities toward thriving economies that provide dignified, productive and ecologically sustainable livelihoods that are governed directly by workers and communities.

A Just Transition requires us to build a visionary economy for life in a way that is very different than the economy we are in now. Constructing a visionary economy for life calls for strategies that **democratize, decentralize** and **diversify** economic activity while we **dampen down** consumption, and **(re)distribute** resources and power.<sup>1</sup> Just Transition initiatives shift the economy from dirty energy to energy democracy, from funding highways to expanding public transit, from incinerators and landfills to zero waste, from industrial food systems to food sovereignty, from gentrification to community land rights, and from rampant destructive development to ecosystem restoration. Core to a Just Transition is deep democracy in which workers and communities have control over the decisions that affect their daily lives.

The work of Just Transition is not easy. Transition is the process of navigating contradiction. So for transition to be just, we must have a clear vision of where we are heading and a well-tuned moral compass to help us get there. We will make mistakes. We will have setbacks. We will struggle. We will advance. We must accompany each other with a fierce love through this process.

## THE MEANING OF HOME

**ECO MEANS HOME:** ‘eco’ comes from the greek word *oikos*, meaning ‘home’

### **ECO SYSTEM (“HOME” + “TOGETHER”)**

Ecosystem means all the relationships in a home—from microorganisms, plants, animals and people to water, soil and air. An Ecosystem includes the terrain and the climate. An Ecosystem is not simply a catalogue of all the things that exist in a place; it more importantly references the complex of relationships. An ecosystem can be as small as a drop of rain or as large as the whole planet. It all depends on where you draw the boundaries of home.

### **ECO LOGY (“HOME” + “KNOWLEDGE”)**

Ecology means knowing, reading and understanding home—and by definition, the relationships of home.

### **ECO NOMY (“HOME” + “MANAGEMENT”)**

Economy means management of home. How we organize our relationships in a place, ideally, to take care of the place and each other. But “management of home” can be good or bad, depending on how you do it and to what ends. The purpose of our economy could be turning land, life and labor into property for a few, or returning land, life and labor into a balanced web of stable relationships.

Economy does not mean money, or exchange or financial markets, or trading or Gross Domestic Product. These are simply elements or tools of specific economies. Economies (“how we manage our home”) can be measured in many ways: How healthy are the soil, people, water, animals? How much wealth is generated? Who owns the wealth? What even constitutes wealth? Is it money? Well-being? Happiness?

All economic activity has ecological consequences. That doesn't mean that those consequences are always bad. The economic activity of peoples who have developed long relationships with the ecosystems they are a part of have tended towards balance. This traditional evolved knowledge of place is held in language, food, culture and story.



Other human communities have mismanaged home, and have created ecological consequences that are not beneficial to a sustainable relationship with the web of life. But when a people outstrip their resource base, or create damage to an ecosystem in such a way that it can no longer sustain them, they move on or die off—hopefully learning some lessons. Mother Earth has been sufficiently resilient to recover from these paper-cuts. But...

If you globalize the economy, you globalize the ecosystem. The scale and pace of globalization combined with the power imbalance in decision-making has made it virtually impossible for people to read and respond to the changes fast enough—and in fact, we have not. If you globalize the ecosystem and you have a destructive economy (mismanagement of home) then the consequences can be big. Very Big.

The current globalized economy is compromising the life support systems of the planet: destroying biodiversity, exploiting labor, killing cultures, polluting water and disrupting the atmospheric-hydrologic cycle.

### **ECOLOGICAL JUSTICE (JUSTICE BASED ON APPLIED KNOWLEDGE OF HOME)**

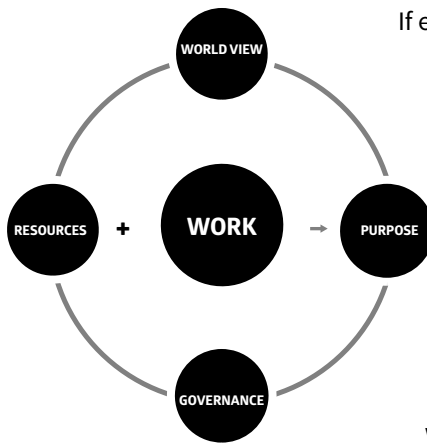
Ecological Justice is the state of balance between human communities and healthy ecosystems based on thriving, mutually beneficial relationships and participatory self-governance. We see Ecological Justice as the key frame to capture our holistic vision of a better way forward.

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*“Justice is what love looks like in public.”*

—CORNEL WEST

# PILLARS OF ECONOMY



If economy is “the management of home,” then what are the basic foundations of an economy? All economies can be thought of as built from a common set of pillars. At the heart of any economy is a deceptively simple set of relationships: we take **natural resources**, which we combine with **human work** (a particularly precious natural resource) towards some **purpose**. All wealth is generated through the work of the living world, because all wealth requires a material basis. The combined labor of microbes and earthworms and plants and people and so much more create the collective basis of survival.

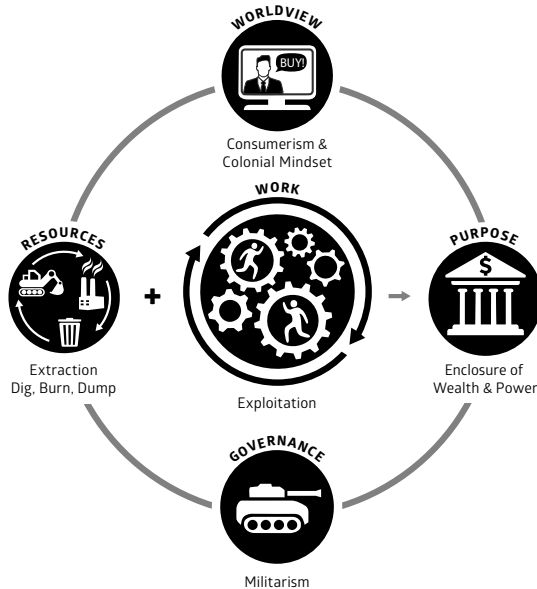
There must also be a **culture / worldview** that makes the economy make sense to the people who participate in it and that sets the limits of what is acceptable and what is not. In fact, that culture and worldview—the languages, stories, practices, rituals—evolve in dynamic relationship with the all the other pillars. Finally, there is **governance**, which is the organization and facilitation of the smooth (ideally) functioning of the economy towards its purpose.

We consider **culture** and **governance** to be Pillars of Economy and not separate from it. Form follows function, and the form of governance is determined by the purpose (i.e. function) of the economy. Governance, of course, looks different at different scales and for different parts of the economy we seek to govern. There are many diverse ways to govern and many diverse dimensions of governance, from decision-making and rule-making to how we enforce the limits, to the pursuit of the purpose. Governance and culture are also woven together, both in service of the purpose of the economy.

# PILLARS OF THE EXTRACTIVE ECONOMY

*It is not an investment if it is destroying the planet.*

—VANDANA SHIVA



The primary **purpose** of the dominant economy—what we call the Extractive Economy—is the accumulation, concentration and enclosure of wealth and power. While those who control these enclosures—namely the global 1%, their corporations and government lapdogs—may claim (and even believe) that the purpose of the economy is to “lift all boats,” or “eliminate poverty,” or “create opportunity,” the simple fact is that these ambitions have not been the result of the basic formula of the economy. Therefore these claims do not define the purpose of the economy—regardless of intentions, ambitions or pretenses. The purpose of a system can only be determined by what it actually does. Therefore, we must reasonably conclude that the purpose of the dominant economy is the concentration and enclosure of wealth and power, regardless of consequence. Some of the consequences of the Extractive Economy are chattel slavery, genocide, dispossession of peoples of their land and the wholesale erosion of the biological and cultural diversity upon which our collective survival depends.





***“The announcement of an oil discovery in any territory is comparable to the declaration of war against the territory. Oil destroys the environment, contaminates water and air, and it also contaminates the social structure, destroys forests, destroys life and livelihoods and holds nothing sacred.”***

—NNIMMO BASSEY, OF ENVIRONMENTAL RIGHTS ACTION NIGERIA  
& CHAIR OF OILWATCH AFRICA

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This economy is fueled by **natural resources**<sup>2</sup> acquired through extraction, the forced removal of resources from their rightful place in living systems. Bio-diverse intact forests—the lungs of the planet, breathing in carbon dioxide and breathing out oxygen—are clear-cut and carved up for everything from timber to tar-sands, from cattle to coal. Mountains—the skeletal system upon which the planet’s organs suspend (rivers and forests, lakes and landscapes)—are blown-up and flattened. Rivers are dammed, clogging the arteries that carry nutrients through the body of an ecosystem. Oil, what the U’wa of the Cloud Forests of the Amazon call “the blood of our mother,” is sucked out to be spent and spilled. All this in the service of a singular primary purpose: the concentration, control and enclosure of wealth and power.

**Work**, specifically human labor, is a particularly precious renewable resource.



Work can be thought of as one of the key features that define all living things.

All life takes energy from the sun, converts it into power to do work. As

humans, when our work is in right relationship with the living world—in *dynamic balance* with the ecosystems upon which we depend—it remains a renewable resource. It is through exploitation that our work is converted

from a renewable resource into a non-renewable resource, just as a forest is a

renewable resource that is converted into a non-renewable resource through clear-cutting.

An Extractive Economy must organize human labor—our work—through coercion and exploitation. Exploitation has taken many forms from chattel slavery to waged labor, from child labor to devaluing the labor of care. In the Extractive Economy today, we are expected to

***Q: What are the most extractive activities in your community? (don’t forget to consider Walmart and Pay Day lending)***

divorce our values—our deepest sense of what is right and wrong—from our labor. We work for the paycheck that puts a roof over our heads and food on our plates, if we are lucky. To meet these needs, under this system, we will do almost anything. This is why we say that human exploitation enables ecological erosion.

The combination of resource extraction and labor exploitation creates a system of industrial production we call **dig-burn-dump**. We dig up resources, primarily energy, burn it and then dump the waste. **Dig-burn-dump** plays out in many ways: we dig up oil, burn it in cars and dump the waste everywhere—into the water, the atmosphere and even the lungs of our children. In the same way, we do not *grow* food in the Extractive Economy, instead, we *mine for calories*. The industrial food system depletes soil rather than regenerating it, converting a renewable resource into a non-renewable one. To make all that industrially processed food, and to make seasons irrelevant to culture and diet, requires an enormous amount of energy input, which comes primarily from exploited human labor and extracted fossil fuels. As Vandana Shiva says, “We eat oil, not soil.”



The only way to create the level of concentration of wealth and power that exists in the dominant economy is through extraction and exploitation. It is not possible to acquire so many resources any other way. It is important to always remember that the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade, colonization of the Americas, the creation of ‘underdeveloped peoples,’ and the genocide of Indigenous Peoples was absolutely fundamental to the expansion and ‘success’ of our modern-day Extractive Economy. The mass enslavement of African peoples was the great input of energy into the system that enabled unprecedented extraction and created the American industrial empire as well as its extractive capital markets such as Wall Street.<sup>3</sup> It stands as one of the largest single attacks on living systems unleashed by this Extractive Economy, without which we would likely not be in the crisis we are in today.

The **culture** of the Extractive Economy is a culture of “life without limits,” couched in the rhetoric of freedom. But only a certain kind of freedom. The freedom to choose between dozens of types of toilet paper or between one of two political parties, but not the freedom to control our own livelihoods. It is a culture based on *consumerism*. If the purpose of the economy is the accumulation and enclosure of wealth and power, then consumerism is the paradigm that justifies this purpose by getting us to “buy into” the idea that the measure of our own worth is our mini-accumulations. The only way to be happy is to buy happy; we should be content to consume, rather than create.



The underlying assumption of this paradigm is that infinite growth is possible. This assumption maintains that we can continue to expand and grow the economy, always creating more and more wealth and stuff, with no regard for ecological or social limits. It further presumes that there are endless frontiers to be explored and exploited. Some of the mythologies<sup>4</sup> that give this worldview meaning are “the invisible hand of the market,” our “dominion over nature,” “manifest destiny,” “pull yourself up by your bootstraps,” “a woman’s place is in the home,” and “the self-made millionaire.”

Our roles and positions in the hierarchies of the Extractive Economy are justified by a host of interlocking paradigms of radical individualism, white supremacy and hetero-patriarchy.

While it is a culture without limits—whether it is limitless economic growth or limitless consumption—there are *nominal* limits. By *nominal*, we do not mean “minimal,” we mean, literally, *in name only*. There are many limits that supposedly constrain what can and cannot be done. However, the limits are routinely ignored or their violations explained away when they are in conflict with pursuit of the primary purpose of the economy.

For example, we have international conventions on human rights and against such obvious violations of those rights as child labor or the use of children as soldiers in war. But for even the most commonplace conveniences of “modern life,” like the computer with which these words were typed, countless violations of human rights and disregard for common decency are committed in every aspect of production.

Take rare-earth elements, such as Coltan, as a case in point. These are used in nearly every electronic device, from smart phones and blenders to laptops and electric

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***“Dominator culture has tried to keep us all afraid, to make us choose safety instead of risk, sameness instead of diversity. Moving through that fear, finding out what connects us, reveling in our differences; this is the process that brings us closer, that gives us a world of shared values, of meaningful community.”***

—bell hooks

# CULTURE OF CONTROL

## Radical Individualism, White Supremacy and Hetero-Patriarchy

**Radical Individualism** is the falsehood that we are a society made up of individuals (rather than relationships) and that the conditions of our lives is a function and reflection of our individual merit, rather than systems, structures and patterns. Mythologies such as, “The self-made man,” or “Pull yourself up by your bootstraps,” or, “Poor people are lazy,” give this paradigm meaning in our culture.

**White Supremacy** is the idea that white people are inherently superior to all other people of the planet. White Supremacy rests on the pseudo-science of race and eugenics and was created by a small group of elite Europeans as a way to justify unprecedented violence and destruction of entire ecosystems and peoples, most acutely those of African descent. The racial hierarchy that places African peoples and peoples of African descent as the “inferior,” results in an Anti-Blackness that can and does infect the culture and consciousness, along with white supremacy, of peoples across the planet—even the colonized. White supremacy elevates “white mindedness” and European culture over all the other diverse ways of knowing on the planet.

**Hetero-patriarchy** is a key foundation for a worldview that is rooted in hierarchy and binaries: Man over nature, men over women, parents over children. Patriarchy is rooted in socio-economic and political systems that assert the heterosexual nuclear family as the only correct way to organize home, where it is the ‘divine right’ of the father-figure to rule over ‘his’ wife/wives and children. This system of gender-based hierarchy and oppression plays out in the broader economy in the structures and cultural forms that give power and control to men, maleness, and masculinity and subjugate women, female bodies, femininity, gender non-conformance and queerness.

***Q: What are the control mythologies that are told about you and your people? What are the stories that justify your exploitation, your power, your privilege or your place in the system?***

cars. These hard-to-extract materials were primarily sourced from the Congo for decades, where the market for these minerals led to massive resource-driven conflict involving generations of child soldiers engaged in brutal war. The primary beneficiaries of this devastation are the financiers who profit off of the movement of money and the high-tech corporations whose materials are subsidized by death and destruction. And while we can shift where these resources come from, we cannot escape the violence necessary to extract them. We can, and often have, decried the horrors of war and the violence of environmental devastation; but rarely do we recognize that these are the necessary costs of resource-intensive industrial production, particularly under capitalism.

*The horrors of resource-intensive industrial production are true under capitalism but will also play out under any other economic system that engages in a Dig-Burn-Dump industrial production process, such as was the case under socialism in the Soviet Union. We must remember that a critique of capitalism is necessary, but not sufficient, to address the crisis we face. We must also transform our very relationship to living systems from an extractive one to a regenerative one.*



Finally, we come to **governance**. We cannot separate governance from economy. As the system of rules and their enforcement, governance will always be subordinate to serving the purpose of the economy. To govern is literally, “to steer.” To steer what? The management of home. For whom? *For those who continue to accumulate and enclose wealth and power.* Form follows function, so the form of governance is determined by the purpose of the economy. If the acquisition of resources, including labor, are through extraction, then the ultimate mechanism of governance must be militarism: structural, well-organized, systematic violence—diverse in forms and methods—but always brutal.

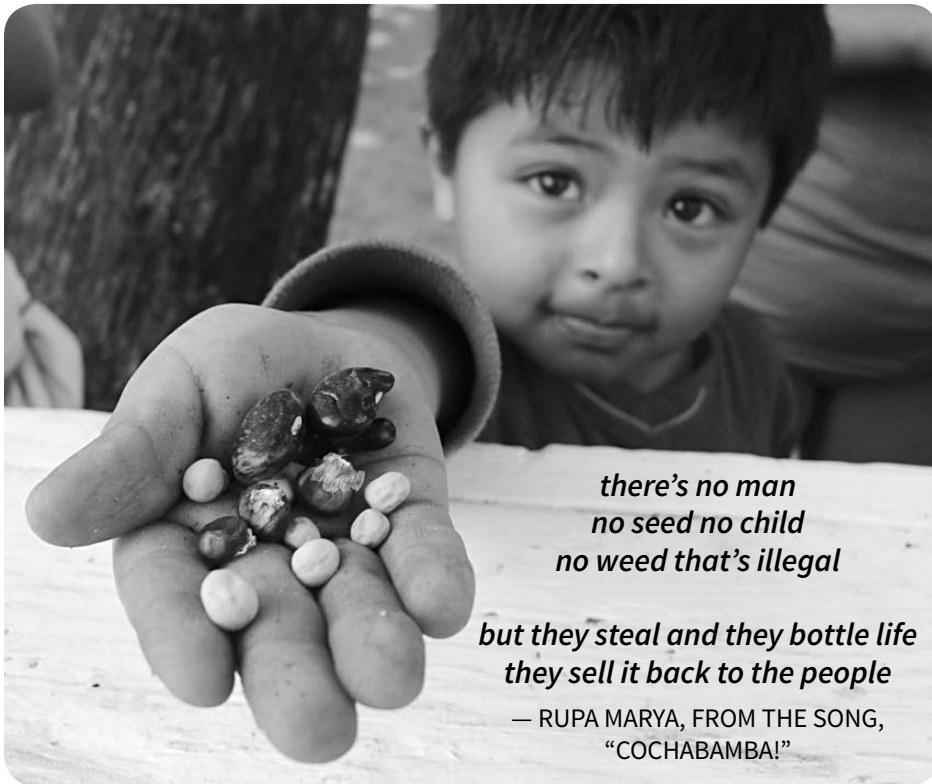
We do not live in a democracy with a problem of militarism. Rather, militarism is the defining feature of governance in an Extractive Economy. While a culture of complicity, comfort, conformity and consumerism can go a long way to ensuring the tacit participation of peoples, there are always limits to mind-control, and so, at some point, very early on, force is required to maintain an Extractive Economy. Peoples have always

resisted the dispossession of their land and the destruction of their lifeways. Indigenous Peoples from the Niger Delta to the Arctic Circle to Standing Rock have organized to protect their sacred lands, and have always been met with violence.

An Extractive Economy also demands Imperialism. Imperialism can be understood as the ever-expanding concentration and control of seed, soil and story, of land, labor and life-ways. Because extractivism is an inherently depleting ideology, the continued existence of an economy based on it requires endless new frontiers of resources to extract, labor to exploit, and captives to be consumers (markets). The endless growth economy requires armies and empire to insure its continuity. So when you think of governance in this economy, think *systematic and well organized violence*.

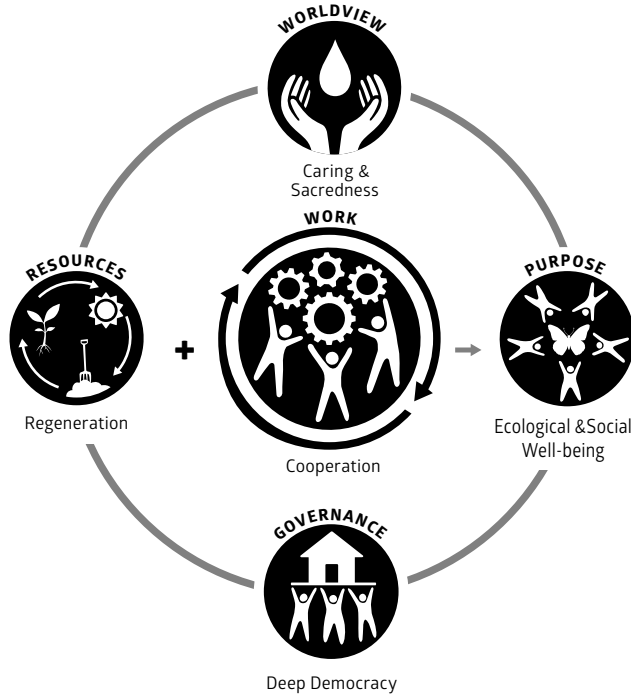
“Democracy” (or at least its pretense) is the icing on the brick so you think it’s a cake.

Photo credit: Jonathan McIntosh used under creative commons



*Young farmer from South Central Farm in Los Angeles in 2006. The struggle to protect this land for food and farming from destructive development continues today.*

# PILLARS OF THE REGENERATIVE ECONOMY



*“The money king is only an illusion. Capitalism is blind and barbaric. It buys consciences, governments, peoples, and nations. It poisons the water and the air. It destroys everything. And to the U’wa, it says that we are crazy, but we want to continue being crazy if it means we can continue to exist on our dear mother EARTH. Brothers and sisters of the world, the U’wa will continue defending mother earth.*

*We invite you to continue accompanying us.*

*Thank you for believing in us. “*

—U’WA VICTORY COMMUNIQUÉ MAY 7, 2002

Given the scale, pace and implications of ecological erosion and the consequent collapse of the biological and cultural diversity upon which our collective well-being depends, we must realign the purpose of the economy with the healing powers of Mother Earth. We must fundamentally remake the **purpose** towards *ecological restoration, community resilience and social equity*. These three elements are the necessary ingredients of a Regenerative Economy. **Ecological restoration** is the process by which we engage our labor towards the preservation and promotion of bio-cultural diversity. **Community resilience** is the process by which we create the conditions for the maintenance of that diversity in the face of disruption. We must make **social equity** a primary purpose of the economy if we are to address the existential threat posed by the ecological crisis. *Social inequity is a form of ecological imbalance and will, therefore, inherently lead to ecological erosion, as we have seen in the Extractive Economy. What you do to the land, you do to the people and what you do to the people, you do to the land.* This is why we cannot separate social equity from ecological restoration. Luckily, these three key purposes align very nicely.



If the purpose of the Regenerative Economy is ecological restoration, community resilience and, social equity, then **resources** must be acquired through **regeneration**. We must build rather than deplete soil. We must engage forests and rivers in ways that provide for our needs, but at a scale and pace that is aligned with living systems (the water cycle, the soil cycle, composition and decomposition, etc.).



To do this, resources, labor, culture and governance must be aligned with basic principles of ecology:

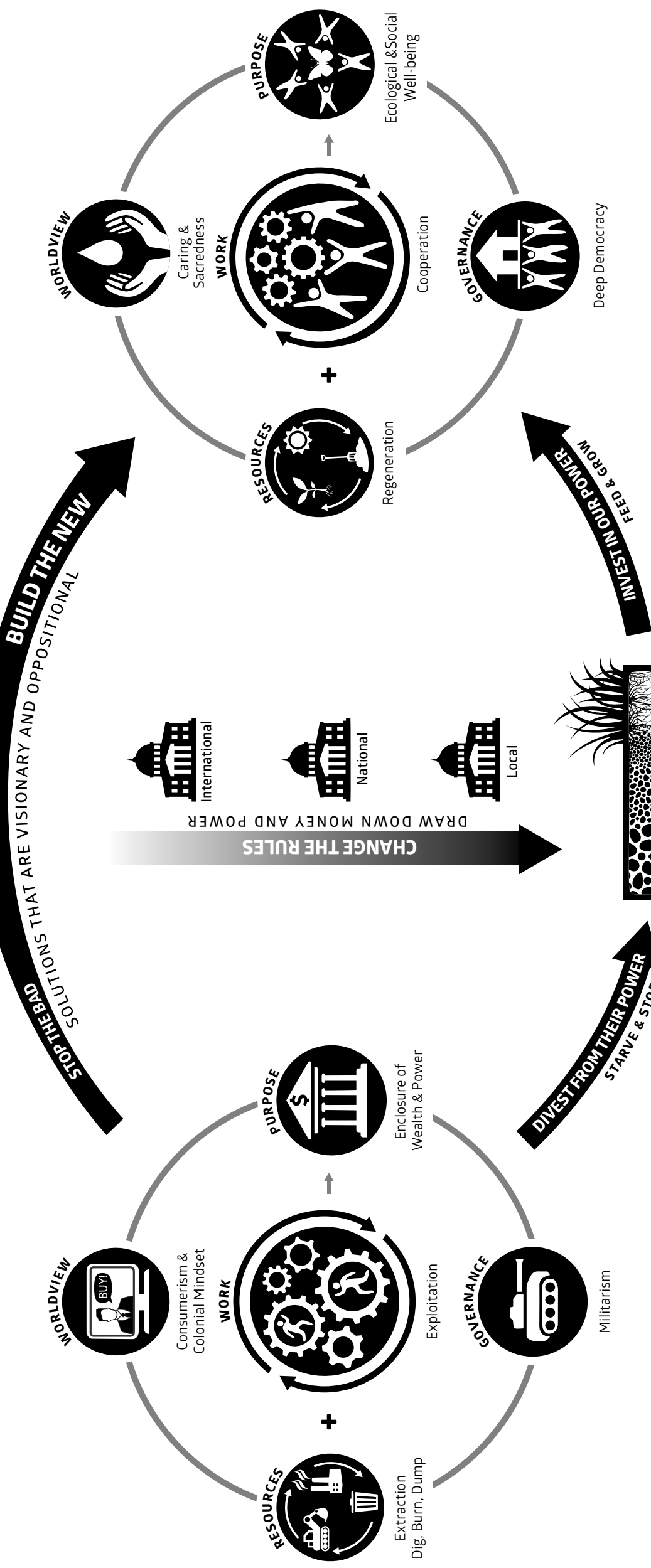
- zero-waste (everything has a purpose and a place in the living world, there is no “trash” or “away”)
- mutually beneficial relationships (interdependence is the defining feature of living systems, not selfish competition)
- dynamic balance (change is constant, but extremes are avoided)
- nested cycles, networks, patterns and scales (everything is connected to everything else through diversity of scale, pace, cycle, relationships)
- bio-cultural diversity (diversity creates resilience and is therefore our best defense against disruption)<sup>5</sup>



# A STRATEGY FRAMEWORK FOR JUST TRANSITION

## Extractive Economy

## Regenerative Economy



**STOP THE BAD**  
SOLUTIONS THAT ARE VISIONARY AND OPPOSITIONAL  
**BUILD THE NEW**

**CHANGE THE RULES**  
DRAW DOWN MONEY AND POWER

**DIVEST FROM THEIR POWER**  
STARVE & STOP

**FEED & GROW**  
INVEST IN OUR POWER

**VALUES FILTER**

- A JUST TRANSITION MUST:**
- ▶ Shift economic control to communities
  - ▶ Democratize wealth and the workplace
  - ▶ Advance ecological restoration
  - ▶ Drive racial justice and social equity
  - ▶ Relocalize most production and consumption
  - ▶ Retain and restore cultures and traditions

Developed by Movement Generation  
with **OUR POWER CAMPAIGN**  
COMMUNITIES UNITED FOR A JUST TRANSITION



Our **work** must be organized through democratic and voluntary cooperation, rather than coercion and exploitation. When we freely apply our labor together to solve our problems and meet our needs, we will both liberate the soil from the physical concrete that paves over life, and liberate our spirits from the cognitive concrete that has paved over our imaginations.

It is important to understand that the meaning of work, as we are describing it, is not “jobs.” Our work is not only producing goods, growing food, building homes or providing services. We must remember our work as so much more than the narrow, dominant definition. Our work is everything we do—from our loving embrace of children and the caring for our communities, to how we intervene in harm and hurting. It includes the very beating of our hearts. Our work includes all the roles we play, from caregivers to carpenters to healers to plumbers to artists to farmers to elders to sweethearts to warriors. We can no longer afford to indulge in the crude reduction of the great power of our work simply to a job.

The **culture** of a Regenerative Economy must be one based on caring and sacredness of relationships to each other and the world upon which we depend. This is a culture where love, humility and mystery guide us instead of avarice, entitlement and arrogance. This is a culture of constraint. One in which we see ourselves as a part of and not apart from the living world. This also demands, as the Zapatistas proclaim, “A world where many worlds fit.”



What are the essential features of **governance** for such an economy? First, there must be “deep democracy.” “Deep democracy” will be diverse in forms across place, but at the core, people are in control of the decisions that affect their daily lives; from where they work to how they collectively manage shared resources across scales. Another feature of “deep democracy,” is that primary decision-making happens at the smallest scale appropriate to the arena we are trying to govern. Different arenas of governance demand different boundaries. Water should be governed at the watershed scale—where all the

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*“Power is not brute force and money; power is in your spirit. Power is in your soul. It is what your ancestors, your old people gave you. Power is in the earth; it is in your relationship to the earth.”*

—WINONA LADUKE

peoples impacted in a watershed and by the care of the watershed are involved. Trade should be governed in a much different way than the workplace or foodshed.

The rigid, arbitrary borders that fragment ecosystems and communities must give way to ecological boundaries: permeable, flexible, socially and ecologically defined. Reimagining and realigning the very shape of governance with living systems is a key feature of a Just Transition toward the “deep democracy” needed for a Regenerative Economy.

Humans are now, and have been for some time, a keystone species of the biosphere. Our role, now, is not to shrink. We cannot resign ourselves to having “a smaller footprint,” or having “less of an impact.” We have missed the opportunity for such an easy out. We must now have a greater impact on the planet in the next 100 years than we have had over the past 500 or more, but towards a completely different purpose. In humble cooperation with the rest of the living world we must rip out concrete and build soil; we must undam rivers and cap oil wells like our lives depend on it. There is no other living thing that can do it faster and more effectively.

**Q: What are regenerative approaches to the challenges in your community? What is a regenerative approach to harm and hurting, for example?**

PHOTO: GRASSROOTS INTERNATIONAL




Founded in 1984, the landless workers movement of Brazil, **Movimento dos Trabalhadores Sem Terra**, the **MST**, is a powerful example of a movement that practices deep democracy and self-governance at scale. The MST represents over 1.5 million people living in nearly 30 thousand autonomous settlements

across 23 of 26 states that were established through direct occupation of underutilized land, formerly held by large land owners. Some of the mottos of the MST over the years have been, “Land is for Those Who Work It,” “Without Land Reform, there will be no democracy & land occupation is the only solution,” and “Occupy, Produce, Resist!” The MST combines visionary productive labor (agroecology), the daily practice of self-governance, the exercising of rights (the right to access land as commons) and deep cultural and spiritual practice.

Learn more about the MST at [www.mst.org.br](http://www.mst.org.br) , or [www.mstbrazil.org](http://www.mstbrazil.org).

# REMEMBERING AND REALIGNING THE ECONOMY TO THE BIOREGION

## The Example of “The Salmon Nation”



Prior to European colonization the eco-region—and the peoples—of the Pacific North West from Alaska to the San Francisco Bay Area, were tied together by the shared experience of the Pacific Salmon runs. Salmon Nation is an example of a “bioregional” identity defined not by rigid and arbitrary borders that fragment cultures and ecosystems, but by permeable and flexible boundaries that are defined by culture, landscape, geographic features, such as watershed, living systems and the lived experience of the peoples of that place. Salmon are a keystone species, a totemic species, for the indigenous peoples of the region. Salmon are more than just a source of food. The salmon bring the nutrients of the ocean up the rivers to build the soil and all that depends upon it, from Oaks and Pines to bears and people.

The salmon are deeply integrated into the culture, and they are recognized for what they are, an indicator of the health of the environment and the community, and so, they are held as sacred, as teachers, as kin.

***“Salmon were the first to teach us of wealth. In the Longhouse the host family offers gifts in honor of loved ones in birth, naming, achievement and, finally, in death. It is called a Giveaway. The salmon honor future generations by their last Giveaway at spawning. Their die-off generated the most biologically diverse forest on earth. For millions of years salmon came and left this way. For eons, this monumental Giveaway brought us health and renewal.”***

—Liz Wooley, Navajo / Warm Springs / Wasco / Yakama, and member of the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs<sup>7</sup>

The bioregion defined by the salmon also helped define the contours of governance and trade prior to colonialism and globalization. While the vast diversity of peoples, with unique languages and customs, all shared a profound relationship to the salmon, they also shared much more. They exchanged goods, songs, stories, prayers and much more all along this region and beyond.

Using watershed boundaries—from the headwaters where the water flow begins to the mouth, where it empties into the ocean—helps us realign our governance, culture and sense of selves to the living world upon which we depend.

**Q: What is your watershed? What is your bioregion?**

# GETTING THERE FROM HERE: A THEORY OF REVOLUTION

*People are aware that they cannot continue in the same old way but are immobilized because they cannot imagine an alternative. We need a vision that recognizes that we are at one of the great turning points in human history when the survival of our planet and the restoration of our humanity require a great sea change in our ecological, economic, political, and spiritual values.*

—GRACE LEE BOGGS



The following are a set of principles that, when aligned together, can help us craft strategic interventions to realize a Just Transition. The transition will not be smooth or without conflict. But the time has come to organize ourselves towards predicting and provoking crises, rather than simply responding to those that are thrust upon us by the inevitable implosion of a death-dependent economic order.

## ➔ WHAT THE HANDS DO THE HEART LEARNS.

*If all we do is fight against what we don't want, we learn to love the fight and have nothing left for our vision but longing. But longing isn't good enough. We must live into the vision by creating it and defending it. We must "Build the New" as a way to "Stop the Bad" —we must be both visionary and oppositional. This doesn't mean we don't resist, but we have to organize ourselves into applying our labor to meet our needs rooted in our cultures and visions.*

This strategic principle is derived from the recognition that the first rule of ecological restoration is the restoration of human labor. We are like all other living things—what we bring to the world is our work. In order to restore ecosystems at the scale required, we must restore our labor back into the web of life and liberate it from the chains of extractive capital markets. Again, when we say work, we are not talking about “jobs,” we are talking about all the ways we apply our labor.

## ➔ IF IT IS THE RIGHT THING TO DO, WE HAVE EVERY RIGHT TO DO IT.

*This is the principle that the basis of revolution is not simply a struggle for power; the basis of revolution is rights. It is when a people are organized enough to assert their rights, or new rights (such as the Rights of Mother Earth) that the legitimacy of existing authority is tested. And the only way to assert rights is to exercise them. The only way to test whether we have the right to free speech is to exercise it. We can say that we have the right to housing, but it is only when we exercise that right and it butts up against the rules that infringe upon those rights in order to protect the enclosure of land do we challenge the legitimacy of existing authority to govern.*

Remember that rights are not given and rights cannot be taken away. Rights are inherent and are exercised. Rights are never taken away, they are only ever violated. The greater the infringement upon rights, the greater the violence. Colonialism and slavery infringe upon every possible right and freedom and therefore, require maximal violence. Rights also only need to be articulated when they are violated or threatened with violence. Until then they are understood and customary. You only need to articulate the right to breath when it is being infringed upon.

We believe that a Just Transition must be based on two deeply related sets of collective rights: the Rights of Mother Earth and the peoples' right to the resources required to create productive, dignified, and ecologically sustainable livelihoods. The Rights of Mother Earth concept recognizes that the whole of the living world—the biosphere and ethnosphere—have inherent rights. Related to the Rights of Mother Earth is the right of peoples to have access to the resources required to create productive, dignified and ecologically sustainable livelihoods. In order to exercise these rights, those necessary resources must be governed as commons. Key among them is land, which must be restored to the commons. And *in this moment of transition*, financial capital is also one of the necessary resources, and therefore we must create a new commons of capital, confronting the very organization of finance as a mechanism of enclosure.

***Q: What are the ways you can imagine exercising rights?  
How could it provoke a crisis with existing authority?***

# TO ACHIEVE A JUST TRANSITION, WE MUST PRIORITIZE REPARATIONS.

We must drive towards reparations for over 500 years of colonialism and slavery upon which every bit of wealth accumulated since then has been derived. Reparations must mean more than restitution for past harm. True reparations means repairing our relations. We must not only make amends for past harm, but reorganize the very nature of our economy so as to create new relationships going forward. Reparation demands a total reorganization of the economy. The measure of the success of that reorganization is the well-being of those upon whose lands, bodies and legacies the Extractive Economy was built. And to achieve that, our movements must center the vision and leadership of those communities.

***Q: Who are the communities and peoples upon whose lands, bodies and legacies the Extractive Economy was built? What are the specific contours for these communities and people? What does reparations look like for them?***

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***What white brethren must yet understand is that every drop of black blood extracted by a slave-master's whip outweighs the present corporate wealth of America. Those myriad drops, those cascading rivers of blood, have saturated our culture; and the "damned spots" won't "out" until repentance brings reparation, and reparation works full restitution.***

—THE REV. MR. ROBERT C. CHAPMAN, DIRECTOR FOR RACIAL JUSTICE, THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF CHURCHES, JUNE 1969

The right to the resources required for productive, dignified and ecologically sustainable livelihoods is not the same as the right to a living wage, or the right to healthcare, or the right to housing. *This is not the right to have our needs met, but instead the right to meet our needs.* It is the right to apply our labor to the living world to create, for ourselves, shelter, food and health. *We must exercise these rights at every scale in order to provoke a crisis over the question, “Who has the right to define our economy and govern our communities?” In other words, we are asserting the very right to self-determination.*

## ⇒ IF WE ARE NOT PREPARED TO GOVERN, WE ARE NOT PREPARED TO WIN.

*We must engage in the daily practice of self-governance, from the workplace to the statehouse. And we must not just govern under the existing structures; rather we must remake the shape of governance to be more democratic and ecologically responsive. This is how, when we organize to scale, we can perform civil disobedience at the scale of governance. We must make the rules we need. And break the rules that serve the rulers. And, ideally, we must make rules that break rules to assert deep democracy.*

We must demonstrate that our ability to self-govern is better at meeting our needs than the corporations’ or state’s supposed mandate to govern. By implementing Transformative Justice approaches to harm and hurting, we break our dependence on policing and prisons. By building worker- and community-owned enterprises and land-trust housing, we break our dependence on bosses and landlords.<sup>6</sup>

## ⇒ IF IT IS NOT SOULFUL, IT IS NOT STRATEGIC.

*Our vision should nurture our cultures, souls and spirits, through song and ceremony, through practice and play. Our movements must be irresistible and rooted in the wisdom of our ancestries. We should aim to create the culture that can hold us through both the best and hardest times—so that as we struggle, we do not need to seek respite via the trappings of consumerisms and the privileges of empire. This is how we heal from the crisis of disconnection. This is what it means to decolonize.*

While the collapse of biological and cultural diversity is the crisis at hand, it is important to remember that we are not losing that diverse ecological knowledge and ancestral wisdom—we are lost from it. The knowledge resides in the relationship to soil, song and story. If we engage our hands in the soil and our voices in the songs we will begin to find our way home. We will remember our way forward.



# TO ACHIEVE A JUST TRANSITION, WE MUST QUEER OUR MOVEMENTS.

Queer, trans, and gender non-conforming folks live the daily, active embodied resistance to enclosure by refusing to conform to the violently-enforced binaries that dictate that everyone is either man or woman, and that these identities are mutually exclusive and come with a universal set of behaviors, temperaments and roles. By exercising the right to be free in body and spirit, queer and trans people confront the foundational myth of the heteropatriarchal gender binary, a system that disconnects people from a right relationship with their bodies. This system defines not just the experiences of Queer and Trans folks, but of all of us, demanding either our subordination to or complicity with the violence. Queerness is an explicit rejection and questioning of this normalized violence, offering up opportunities for us to ally in rejecting these foundational systems of the extractive economy.

Trans folks, particularly poor, trans people of color, experience overlapping systems of oppression, putting them at the frontlines of incarceration, deportation, violence, land dispossession, and vulnerability to climate change. Yet, as with other frontline communities, this vulnerability is also a critical vantage point that provides insights that we must uplift if we are to strive for total liberation. For instance, Two-Spirit communities embody resistance to the colonization of both land and body, and are reclaiming their unique ecological knowledge. As we imagine navigating the large economic and cultural transition with a vision of justice, we must honor this wisdom and uplift those whose lived experience is one of the struggle for a just transition for their own lives and bodies, against the system of hetero-patriarchy. We have an opportunity to learn from the leadership of this community that transition is a process that is not linear and not entirely predictable, but is one that can be made with fierce love, pride and justice.

To achieve a Just Transition, we must also queer our movement theory. Intersectionality, complexity, fluidity, multiplicity, non-linearity, emergence, transformation and love beyond borders are critical contributions of radical queer analysis and leadership. If the crisis of our times is the eradication of biological and cultural diversity, and diversity is our best defense, then in this moment we must embrace queer and trans liberation as a key frontline struggle to advance a radical rejection of conformity and uplift diversity as necessary for our collective survival and liberation.

***Q: What does queering our relationship to land look like?***



# HOW TO USE THE JUST TRANSITION FRAMEWORK AS A TOOL FOR DEVELOPING STRATEGY

*“Our strategy should be not only to confront empire, but to lay siege to it. To deprive it of oxygen with our stubbornness, our joy, our brilliance, our sheer relentlessness—and our ability to tell our own stories. Stories that are different from the ones we’re being brainwashed to believe. The corporate revolution will collapse if we refuse to buy what they are selling—their ideas, their version of history, their wars, their weapons, their notion of inevitability.”*

—ARUNDHATI ROY

The Just Transition Framework was developed with various purposes in mind. The framework serves as a political education tool to unpack the economy and its relationship to living systems. The framework also helps us imagine what vision and strategies for a better world could look like. It can also be used to develop specific campaigns and to align different strategies towards advancing our agenda. In addition to the “paper-point” presentation and a digital version, we have also developed some supplemental guides and worksheets to help extend the usefulness of the framework. Through our ongoing learning and engagement with partners, we will continue to innovate and add tools and resources.

*Find resources to go with this booklet at  
<http://movementgeneration.org/justtransition/>*

## HERE ARE SOME OF THE WAYS THAT YOU CAN USE THE FRAMEWORK:

After presenting the framework with a group, The Pillars of Economy can be used to unpack the specific ways extractive economics play out in a certain industry or around a certain issue. We can also use it to develop our vision for how we would reorganize specific sectors (food, energy, health) or solve specific issue (how do we address harm and hurting without policing and prisons).

Taking the Fast Food Industry as an example,

1. What are the specific ways **resources** and **work** are organized in the Fast Food Industry?
2. Who benefits and how do they wield their power through governance? What are the specific rules that serve the interests of the owners and the specific forms of violence used to enforce those rules?
3. What are the underlying **cultural** assumptions: How do white supremacy, consumerism, and patriarchy, for example, play out in this industry? How do other specific cultural assumptions prop-up the system?
4. And most importantly, using the Pillars of a Regenerative Economy as a guide: ***What would the food system we want look like?***

After unpacking The Pillars of Economy (both what we are against and what we want), we can start planning and aligning strategies and campaigns to intervene and move us from extraction to regeneration. We have used the Just Transition Framework to guide the Reinvest in Our Power collaboration between fossil fuel divestment, frontline communities impacted by those investments and movement organizations working to build community controlled democratic projects that advance a Just Transition. It can help us see how our work relates together and moves us towards our vision.<sup>8</sup>

The Just Transition Framework can also be used more broadly for a community visioning process. In Richmond, California, local organizations, including Asian Pacific Environmental Network, Communities for a Better Environment and Urban Tilth, have used the Just Transition Framework to vision and coordinate a host of activities and interventions to help redefine the Richmond economy and build political power.

## **SOME GUIDING QUESTIONS THAT CAN HELP IN DEVELOPING STRATEGY:**

The strategic principles outlined in the section, “Getting there from here” are practiced daily in our movement, though often not aligned well. For example, the cooperative movement has been very strong at developing models for workplace democracy and mission-based enterprises, but often is not connected to a larger set of strategies to support a stronger movement that can combine community wealth building with political power building. At the same time, many of our movement organizations have built real political power, but haven’t engaged as much with building transformative economic infrastructure. This Framework could help to facilitate our capacity to identify and build across different organizing tendencies and see the necessity to connect and coordinate efforts—all towards successfully sprouting the Regenerative Economy. Everywhere.

1. How do the four strategic principles play out in our campaigns?
2. What are the rights we seek to exercise? What is the crisis we seek to provoke? What kinds of ‘civil disobedience at the scale of governance’ could we advance to provoke that crisis?
3. How can we use local tools of governance, such as Energy and Climate Action Planning or local ordinances, such as Rights of Nature, to provoke a crisis that creates the conditions for a structural shift in our favor? How would winning such new rules create opportunities to implement our vision directly with our labor?
4. How can we practice self-governance in how we move our specific campaign or intervention forward?

# GLOSSARY

Here are some of the terms we use throughout for which we thought definitions would be helpful.

**Biodiversity:** The totality of genes, species, and ecosystems of a region. Can be used interchangeably with “biological diversity.” Vandana Shiva uses the term to describe the rich diversity of life forms on the planet: “Biodiversity is the very fabric of life which provides the conditions for life’s emergence and maintenance, and the many different ways in which that life is expressed.”

**Cultural Diversity:** From evolved knowledge and relationship to place, the human species has developed a multitude of different cultures including world-views, cosmology, ritual, language, social organizational forms, and other practices. Diversity in human populations results from humans having co-evolved with other species in the diverse ecosystems of the world. As biodiversity is essential to the long-term survival of life on earth, cultural diversity is vital for the long-term survival of humanity. The protection, preservation and promotion of Indigenous cultures is as important to the human species as the protection, preservation and promotion of species and ecosystems is to life in general.

**Bioregionalism:** A term used to describe an approach to political, cultural, and environmental issues based on naturally-defined regional areas, consistent with the concept of bioregions, or ecoregions.

Bioregions are usually based on a combination of physical and environmental features, including watershed boundaries and soil and terrain characteristics. Bioregionalism stresses that the determination of a bioregion is also a cultural phenomenon, with socially described boundaries, as well as physical. Bioregional thinking places an emphasis on local populations, resources, knowledge and solutions. The bioregionalist perspective opposes a homogeneous economy and consumer culture because that culture ignores a dependency on the natural world.

**Biosphere:** The sum of all the planet’s ecosystems. The biosphere occupies a very thin layer on the earth—less than the thickness of an eggshell to an egg. The biosphere extends terrestrially (on land) below from the depths of a few meters and aquatically (oceans) from the depths of a few kilometers, to atmospherically to the height of a few kilometers. That is all that life has to work with on this planet!

**Capital:** A factor of production (land and its resources, financial assets, labor, ideas, etc.) that is not wanted for itself but for its ability to help in producing other goods or services. This definition can be applied to “natural capital,” or “financial capital.” In this view, capital is not good or bad, it is the resources required to achieve a purpose. Capital can be governed as commons/communalized, or enclosed as private property.

Financial Capital in the Extractive Economy is wealth employed to generate more wealth through enclosures. Since all wealth is generated through the work of the living world, you cannot “make money off the ownership of money” without the extraction of wealth from the living world (including, of course, human labor). The origins of US financial markets is in slavery.

**Extractive Economy:** An economy based on the removal of wealth from communities through the depletion and degradation of natural resources, the exploitation of human labor (a particularly precious natural resource) and the accumulation of wealth by interests outside the community (i.e. big banks, big oil and big box stores). The purpose of the Extractive Economy is the accumulation of wealth and power in the hands of a few, enforced through the violent enclosure of land, labor and capital. The violence of enclosure can only result in the erosion of biological and cultural diversity.

**Regenerative Economy:** An economy based on reflective, responsive, reciprocal relationships of interdependence between human communities and the living world upon which we depend. The purpose of a Regenerative Economy must be social and ecological well-being.

**Commons:** Resources that are collectively owned (or not owned by anyone). This can include everything from land to ideas. Commons is one key way to ensure that everyone has access to the basic resources of life such as clean air, water, food, land, housing and healthcare. Education, culture, and information can also be made part of the commons.

**Enclosure:** The process by which the commons are transformed into private property. Enclosures require violence. While enclosure is primarily used to talk about land as private property, the process of enclosure has expanded to all domains of life. There are physical enclosures (fences, borders and prisons), intellectual enclosures (intellectual property rights and authorship as a way of claiming ownership of knowledge), financial enclosures (Wall St.), enclosures of identity (gender and gender binary), etc.

# ENDNOTES

1. Adapted from Vandana Shiva's principles of Earth Democracy.
2. If you are triggered by the word "resources" to define the living world around us, you are not alone. We do not mean to suggest that we should have a transactional relationship with the living world, as the Extractive Economy does, but instead mean to recognize that we depend on it. The origins of the word resource is "rise again, or recover."
3. For an excellent deeper dive into this point, read: "The Half Has Never Been Told: Slavery and the Making of American Capitalism" by Edward E. Baptist.
4. To go deeper into control mythologies, underlying assumptions and the power of story, check out Center for Story-based Strategy, [www.storybasedstrategy.org](http://www.storybasedstrategy.org), and read "Re:imagining Change," which you can get from the website.
5. Read more about diversity and resilience in, "Redefining Resilience," a paper written by Movement Generation.
6. The Zapatistas and the MST are two current examples where this willingness to self-govern and win have allowed beautiful movement models to grow to scale.
7. \*Liz Wooley is quoted from her piece, "Simple Customs of Salmon Nation," written for Ecotrust, on whose board she sits. Visit [ecotrust.org](http://ecotrust.org) to learn more. You can also learn more at: "Native Perspectives on Sustainability: Voices of the Salmon Nation," [www.nativeperspectives.net](http://www.nativeperspectives.net)
8. To learn more about reinvest in our power, go to [www.ourpowercampaign.org/reinvest](http://www.ourpowercampaign.org/reinvest)

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Send your feedback to [JTFeedback@movementgeneration.org](mailto:JTFeedback@movementgeneration.org)

You can find more resources to go with this booklet (strategy tools, curriculum, etc.) at <http://movementgeneration.org/justtransition>

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