

Possible Planet

Creating a Habitable Future (for Humans and Other Creatures)

An Invitation to Contribute — Summer 2023

Dear Colleague,

We find ourselves in a perilous moment in history. A series of missteps—some conscious, others inadvertent—have led our species to the brink of collapse if not outright extinction. Like any other population in overshoot, a correction is inevitable. We don't know exactly what form it will take, but since we have crossed over seven of nine planetary boundaries, we do know quite a lot about the risks we're taking. In the midst of collapse, we must find a way forward. Each step is a choice amongst unknown and indeed unknowable futures.

In *The Design Pathway for Regenerating Earth*, Joe Brewer argues that we are already in the midst of collapse, and the fact that we fail to recognize this is a significant part of the problem. Mike Meyer writes, "Where we thought we were going isn't there anymore." The question is, what's now possible? Some futures are already closed off. Others, however, are just opening up. What allows us to recognize them is the set of distinctions we bring to the discussion.

We're inviting submissions to a new volume of essays, principally from Earth Regenerators, to set out our best thinking at this moment in the many areas where humanity and the biosphere are most at risk, and in the many fewer ways forward. Specifically, we're inviting contributions in some of the following areas (though we're also open to new suggestions).

- The Water Crisis
- The Food and Farming Crisis
- The Crisis in the Oceans
- The Biodiversity Crisis
- The Climate Crisis
- Other Planetary Boundaries We've Crossed
 - Toxic Wastes
 - Habitat Destruction
- Nature-based Solutions
- Fossil Fuels and the Carbon-Capture Scam¹
- The Global Carbon Reward (aka "Carbon Coin")
- Bioregionalism
- Bioregional Activation
- Regenerative Land Management
- Regenerative Economies
- Collective Intelligence and Self-Awareness
- The nature of the predicament²
- Collaboration, Cooperation, Community, and the Commons
- A World that Works (draft available)
- Emerging from Trauma, Putting History Behind Us, & Building a Humane Future
- What's Needed Now
- Large Scale Systems Change
- Cultural Scaffolding for Societal Evolution

¹ See <https://www.counterpunch.org/2023/05/18/epas-dangerous-carbon-capture-gamble/> and

<https://www.foodandwaterwatch.org/the-carbon-capture-scam/>

² cf. Mike Meyer, Medium, 26 May 2023

A similar but ultimately quite different compilation was published in 2021 as *The New Possible: Visions of Our World Beyond Crisis*, edited by Philip Clayton, and with a foreword by science fiction author Kim Stanley Robinson. Robinson (who we will encounter later as a popularizer of “the Carbon Coin”) writes:

One thing that may help to start our thinking here is the simple principle that what can’t happen, won’t happen. This is to invoke the reality principle in the form of the facts of science that are incontrovertible. Magic doesn’t work, so magical thinking is not going to be sufficient; physically impossible things are not going to happen in this century or any other, and so we are not going to be conducting our civilization as we have been in the future, because that isn’t physically possible. The planet’s biosphere doesn’t produce the resources we need at the rate we are using them, nor is it capable of disposing of the toxic wastes we are producing at the rate we are producing them. So change will be coming, one way or another, and because the current situation is so very untenable, the changes coming are going to be profound. We are already in the time of change.

The question is, can we discern the nature of this change? The elements of the meta-crisis are increasingly well-understood. What’s not so clear is how we move through it. Human societies are already in turmoil, much of it already caused by, or at the very least exacerbated by, ecological collapse, climate migration, social disintegration and political conflict. Mass protest movements come and go, yet in the face of the military-industrial-consumer complex they seem powerless to effectuate real change. We are trapped by the cultures we have created, the economies we have bought into, the national boundaries and international alliances, the inexorable advances of technology, the limitations of our institutional systems, our outdated education, and even our language. We are imprisoned and immobilized by the colonization of our minds. Perhaps our only way out is developing “artificial wisdom” that will constrain our worst human impulses.

Many of the essays in *The New Possible*, written in the midst of COVID-19 pandemic, already seem outdated. For most of us, life has already returned to a simulacrum of “normal.” Far from teaching us how quickly the world can change, the pandemic has taught us how quickly it can revert to the norm. Perhaps the best we can strive for is creating islands of sanity in an increasingly insane world.

This does not mean that the essays in *The New Possible* are irrelevant to us now; on the contrary, they represent a broad range of the most important concerns of our historical period. Envisioning an ecological civilization. Realigning technology with humanity. Caring for people and nature first. The Commons as a new paradigm of economics, politics, and culture. More than two dozen essays in all, concluding with David Korten’s telling of “a new story,” a timely and timeless description of what we’re missing, which is the widespread recognition that “Human wellbeing depends on the wellbeing of the living Earth.”

Actually, I would argue that this *is* more widely understood than most of us realize but challenging for each of us to act on to preserve the health of the planet.

Moreover, the pandemic has had lasting impacts on the organization of society, from the mass migration to working from home to our expanded sense of what's possible when the whole of humanity is threatened.

My intention, then, is for us to stand on the shoulders of these and other authors to express what we Earth Regenerators see when we look out at the landscape of today's global civilization. Do we see flourishing bioregions? Or vast monocultures, oppressive working conditions, epidemics of loneliness and disconnection from the source of life?

What we need now is to face reality and take stock of where we are within the evolving patterns of corporate sclerosis and universal PTSD. We have allowed the pollution and depletion of our water, our soil, our air, and our attention. Can anything short of a global shift in consciousness even begin to make a difference? What is the future that we can allow ourselves to want or to envision? This is the invitation and the challenge that we are throwing out to Earth Regenerators and other planetary citizens. What is a plausible world that we can imagine?

—Jonathan Cloud
Updated 6/8/23

Further notes are available on specific topics but need not be the starting point for your submission. What we're looking for is a step forward in thinking about the right questions to be asking now. For a long time I considered trying to write the Possible Planet book on my own, until it became clear to me that this was meant to be a collaborative project and needed to belong to the community.