

- Nobody can predict the future with unfailing accuracy
- But, however, we can look at contemporary process and think about what those MIGHT lead to going forward.

Great Transition Initiative (GTI)

<https://greattransition.org>

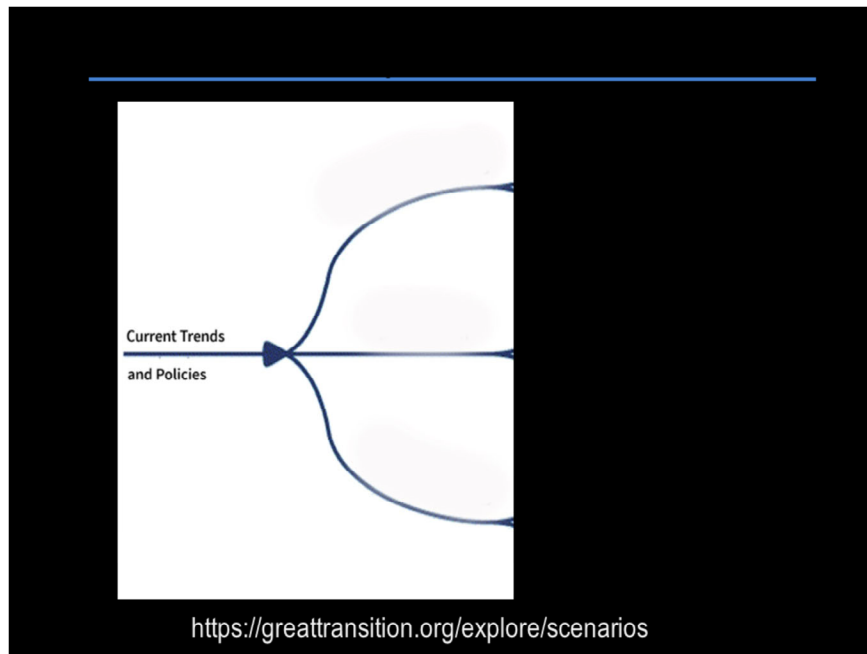
Scenarios

“From the branch point of the present, contrasting paths into the future are possible. . . Although deep uncertainties — and human choices not yet made — undercut our capacity to predict what WILL be, scenarios help us to imagine what COULD be.”

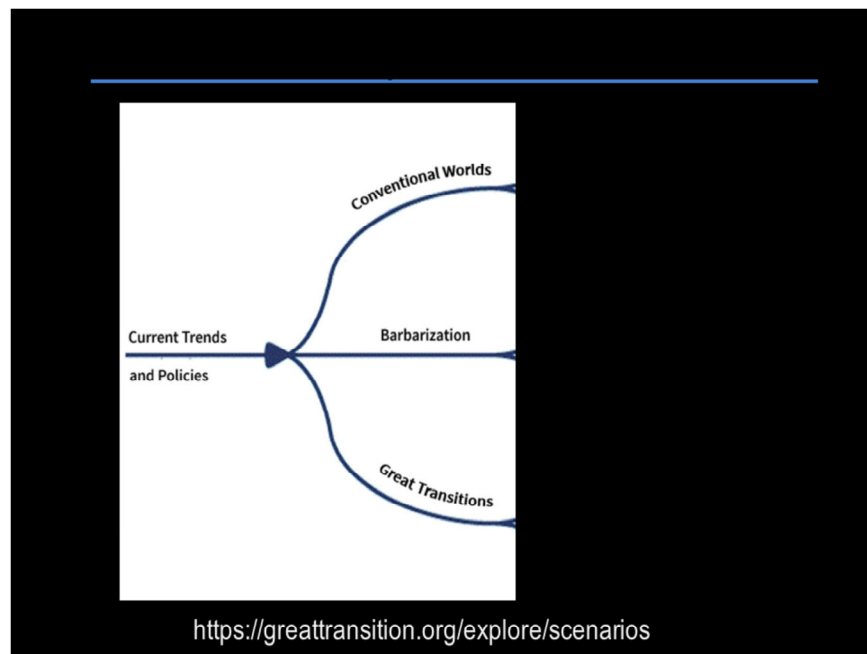
- An organization called the Great Transition Initiative (GTI) has developed what are known as “scenarios.”
- These scenarios help us to imagine what COULD be while not predicting what WILL be.
- As defined by Webster, a scenario is an account or synopsis of a possible course of action or events, and such is exactly what these GTI scenarios do.
- Scenario development is a method that combines known facts in the present such as demographics: geography; mineral reserves: other information of various types; and key driving forces with social, technical, economic, environmental, and political ("STEEP") trends (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scenario_planning)



- Scenarios start with the present – the current trends and policies

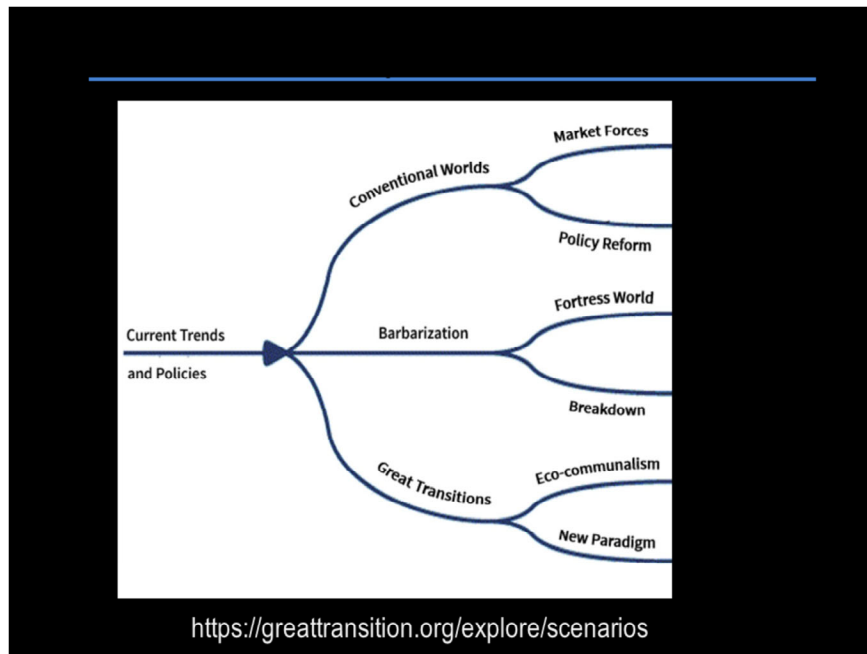


- Then GTI has proposed three possible courses the future could take.
- It's important to note that elements of each of these future courses exist in the present and that current trends and policies related to each of them can be seen today.

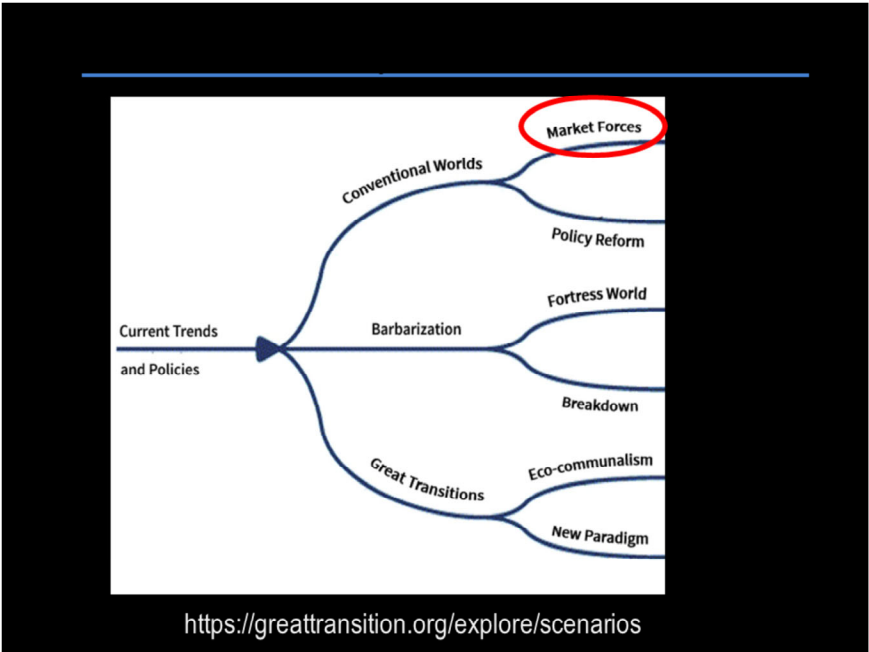


- These are the names that GTI has given to the three possible scenario pathways – conventional worlds, barbarization, and great transitions.
- GTI describes them as follows:
 - Conventional Worlds are governed by today’s dominant forces of globalization: economic interdependence deepens, dominant values spread, and developing regions gradually converge toward rich-country patterns of production and consumption.
 - Barbarization explores the very real risk that Conventional Worlds strategies prove to be inadequate for addressing mounting environmental and social stress, and problems spiral out of control, leading to a general crisis and the erosion of civilized norms.
 - Great Transitions examine worlds that transcend reform to embrace new values and institutions in pursuit of a just, fulfilling, and sustainable civilization
- It is important to note that all of these scenarios recognize that a crisis exists. That in today’s world, multiple threads of interdependence (such as economic globalization, communications technology, and climate change) are “binding

people, places, and the wider community of life into a single system. A new era is emerging, yet the worldviews and institutions of the past persist, a disjuncture where crises incubate and a zeitgeist of apprehension spreads.”



Then they describe two variants for each of the scenario pathways.
Let's take a look at each of these variants in order.



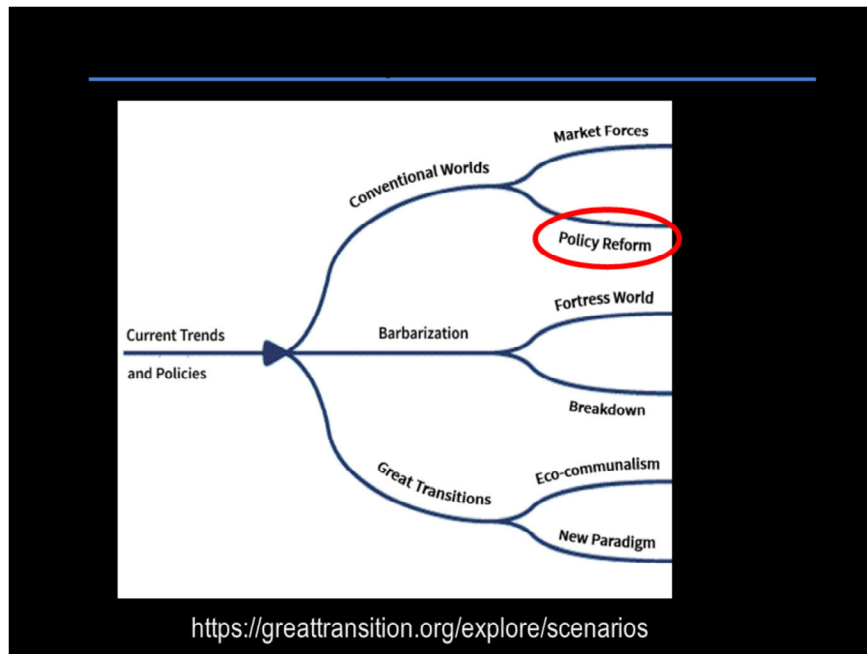
- The first is the Market Forces variant of the Conventional Worlds pathway.

Market Forces



<https://greattransition.org/market-forces>

- The Market Forces variant is described as: “[P]owerful global actors advance the priority of free markets and economic expansion, relying heavily on technological innovation to reconcile growth with ecological limits. The problem of resolving the social and environmental stress arising from global population and economic growth relies heavily on faith in the self-correcting logic of competitive markets.”
- This is a dominant paradigm in today’s world – it is the idea that efficiency, capitalism, upward-mobility, individualism, consumption, and competitive markets are all that is needed to increase wealth and will even spread that wealth around to rich and poor countries alike.



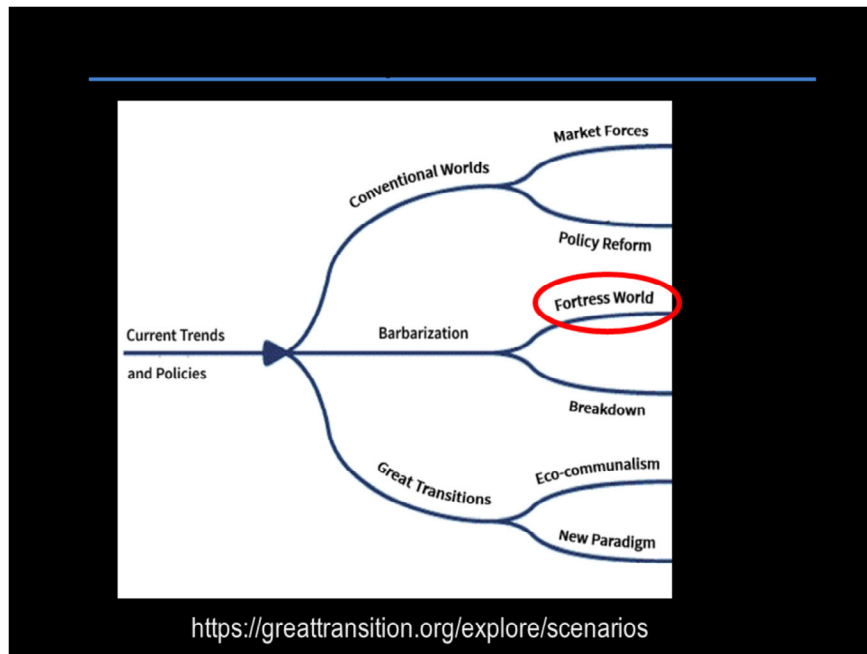
- The second variant of the Conventional Worlds pathway is Policy Reform.

Policy Reform



<https://greattransition.org/policy-reform>

- It is described as follows: “[G]overnments are able to forge comprehensive initiatives to align the economy with environmental and social goals. Incremental change is achieved; fundamental change is absent. The critical uncertainty is how, within a Conventional Worlds cultural and institutional framework, sufficient political will can emerge for such a coordinated and sustained global effort.”
- We see this today at both national and international levels.
- At the national level, in the Executive branch, in congressional bodies, or in parliaments, policies are enacted, often through compromise among widely divergent groups. These policies usually entail incremental change under dominant values as expressed by market forces. The policies are often in the form of top-down regulations.
- At the international level, governments of the various countries work through diplomacy and the United Nations as they attempt to collaborate while defending their own interests.



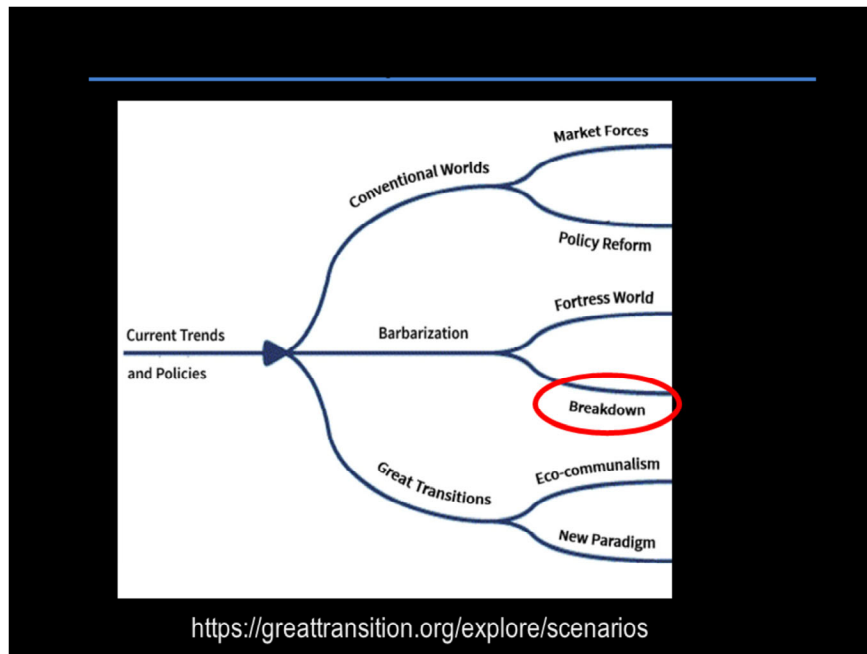
- Fortress Worlds is one variant of the Barbarization pathway

Fortress Worlds



<https://greattransition.org/fortress-world>

- It is described as follows: “[T]he systemic global crisis deepens, powerful international forces are able to impose order in the form of an authoritarian system of global apartheid with elites in protected enclaves and an impoverished majority outside.”
- We see this today in several ways.
- Clearly, immigration controls take this form. The more developed countries (MDCs) of the United States and Western Europe limit immigration from the less developed countries (LDCs) by building walls, engaging seaborne interdiction, and even deploying armed forces.
- Similar efforts occur at a local level as wealthy enclaves emerge with gates and guards present to keep out the people who are less well-off.



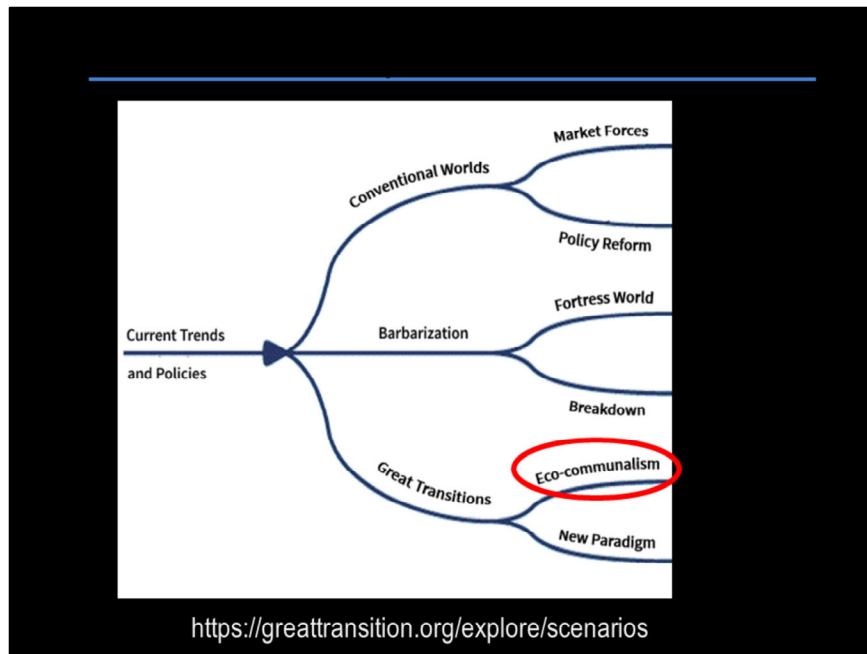
- The other Barbarization variant is Breakdown.

Breakdown



<https://greattransition.org/breakdown>

- “In Breakdown, the authoritarian forces of Fortress World are unable to counter spreading chaos as environmental and social crises spiral out of control, conflict spreads, and institutions disintegrate.”
- This is happening in a few places in today’s world, such as Somalia and northwestern Nigeria, among others.
- This variant proposes that this occur on a much wider scale.



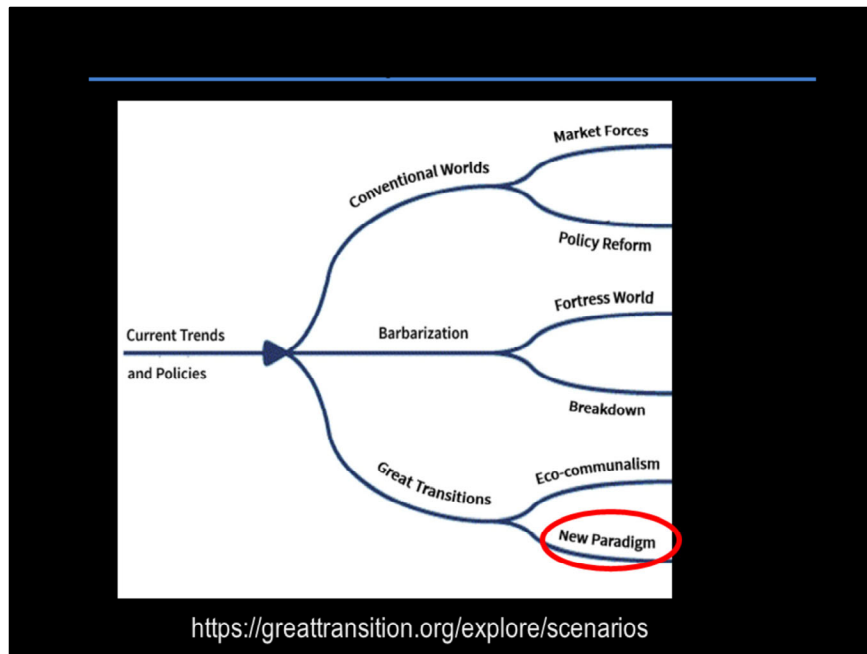
- Eco-communalism is one variant of the Great Transitions scenarios pathways

Eco-communalism



<https://greattransition.org/eco-communalism>

- GTI describes this variant as incorporating “the green vision of bio-regionalism, localism, face-to-face democracy, small technology, and economic autarky. The emergence of a patchwork of self-sustaining communities from our increasingly interdependent world.”
- They also state that although this is a “strong current in some environmental and anarchist subcultures [it] seems implausible, except in recovery from collapse.”
- A key aspect of this approach is that it consists of local, self-sustaining communities.
- There are examples of this but most of these communities that exist today have some kind of connection to the world outside of the community. Some are “off-the-grid” in that they provide their own energy and electricity. Some produce much of their own food. But most of them still have employment and commerce connections to the outside world.
- It does seem implausible that this scenario would spread broadly across the world.



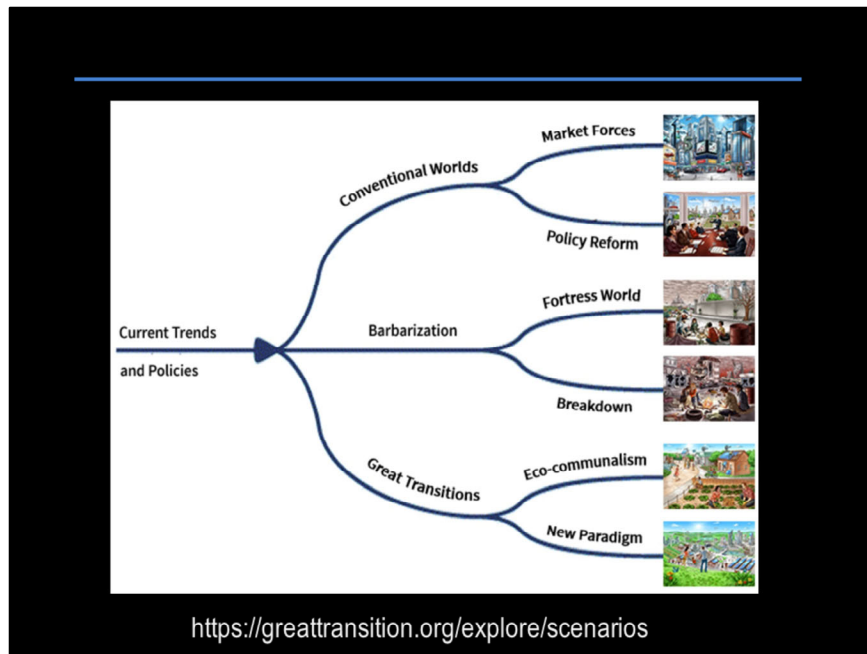
- The final scenario is called the New Paradigm

New Paradigm



<https://greattransition.org/new-paradigm>

- GTI describes this as having an outlook that sees “globalization not only as a threat but also as an opportunity to construct a planetary civilization rather than rely on the incremental forms of Conventional Worlds or retreat into [the] localism [of eco-communalism].”
- The idea is to embrace the interconnections that increasingly exist among peoples and build what they refer to as a “planetary civilization.”
- It seems to be the case that globalization is “binding people, places, and the wider community of life into a single system [and that a] new era is emerging.”
- Indeed, this scenario is a “new paradigm” that prioritizes sustainability and entails new ways of thinking – “the ascendance of new categories of consciousness— global citizenship, humanity-as-whole, the wider web of life, and the well-being of future generations—alongside democratic institutions of global governance.”
- Does this exist in today’s world? In nascent form, yes.



- So, these are the scenarios and variants that GTI outlines.
- They seem well-considered, and they represent trends that exist in the world today,
- GTI states that the New Paradigm is the scenario that they embrace, particularly because it views globalization as an opportunity not just a threat.

A possible sad aspect of a new sustainability paradigm might be that we would *“leave behind not just the bad stuff but the good. . .the liberation – the slow but steady process of valuing more and more people. . .[H]ow aiming for a local economy and community solid enough to survive might edge us back toward societies ‘traditional’ in ways we don’t want.”*

The importance of ensuring that *“new ideas can blow in and old prejudices can blow out.”*

McKibben, Bill. 2010. *Eaarth: Making Life on a Tough New Planet*. New York: Times Books. Pp. 204-205.

- This idea is developed by Bill McKibben who states that a possible sad aspect of a new sustainability paradigm might be that we would “leave behind not just the bad stuff but the good. . .the liberation – the slow but steady process of valuing more and more people. . .[H]ow aiming for a local economy and community solid enough to survive might edge us back toward societies ‘traditional’ in ways we don’t want.”
- He emphasized the importance of ensuring that “new ideas can blow in and old prejudices can blow out.”

