

LOOK UP! The HOPEFUL REALIST Newsletter:

Looking at the World Today as if Facts Matter

Robert MacNeil Christie, PhD

Here we explore the latest facts, actions, and perspectives on the New Great Transformation of the Earth System, as it unfolds before our eyes. We apply the Hopeful Realism we all need to work through the greatest predicament in human history.

Latest News from the Hopeful Realist

Indecision: The Trap of the Modernity Complex

Too many choices? Of course. Just look down that aisle in your local ‘big-box’ supermarket, just how many options are available in selecting a frozen ‘TV-dinner,’ or ‘sports drinks’? We have all become inured to being forced to choose between too many similar products, which results from ‘marginal differentiation,’ even when the difference makes no difference.

And, every choice is made of or wrapped in plastic. On that, we have little or no choice at all. In fact, I would argue, we have very few real choices in the economy about which we worry so much. We sign complex contracts and loan agreements without reading the small print because we know we have no chance of changing any of it if we want to secure that loan.

The same principle dominates politics. How, exactly, do two candidates differ? Both major parties draw the bulk of their support from ultra-rich individuals or mega-corporations that can afford to buy a politician, whatever the cost, to be on the ‘winner’s side.’ A few candidates, of course, refuse all PAC money and the secret donations that too often make all the difference. They are vilified as socialists because they support the public interest above the desires of the financial elites. In that, they are serious deviants. And besides, all politicians are now viewed as corrupt anyway. So, anyone who tries to play it straight can be characterized as corrupt or evil in some way as long as the money is available to pay for enough big lies.

To understand all this, and more importantly to be able to do anything about it, we must be able to break out of the mythological means by which the political-economic hierarchy controls the system in which we all participate in one way or another.

Large complex systems operate by means of many interconnections within and also by many sustained relations with their environment. In the case of modern human systems, the interface with high technology and its powerful influence over key processes of communication and control, result in the ability of the increasingly centralized institutions to reach deeper than ever into the lives of ordinary people, to surveil ordinary citizens, and to issue rewards and penalties for

deviations from ‘acceptable’ political or other behavior.

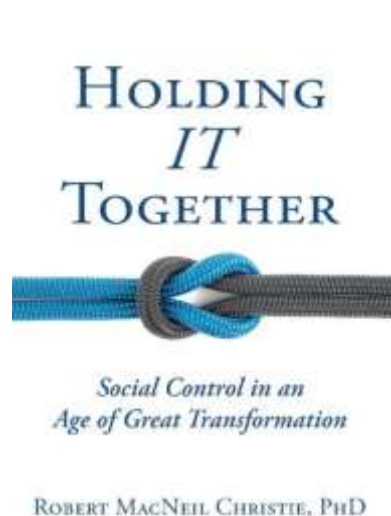
The technology capable of mass surveillance is becoming so powerful that some call our government a “surveillance state” It is actually only part of the strategy of social control by the “corporate state,” which is composed of corporate financial, and governmental elites working together applying AI, GPS, and various surveillance systems for tracking your communications and actions on an everyday basis.

Now, it is hard to imagine how individuals, groups, or communities could make choices in the interests of protecting their lives and wellbeing in opposition to a mega-system that sustains a self-aggrandizing agenda in which people and their communities are at best secondary to the mega-system itself.

All those ‘conveniences’ and techno-distractions of modernity exert pressures to disarm the psychological integrity of most people. “We shall overcome!” is as relevant today as ever.

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Here is a shorter promo for ***Holding IT Together*** which, in every issue of this newsletters may seem redundant, but, hey, it costs me nothing.



Can Modern Civilization Transform Itself in Order to Survive?

In *Holding IT Together*, Dr. Robert MacNeil Christie explains how we got into this mess and what it will take to come out alive. Despite its many benefits, industrial civilization has become an existential threat to itself and our Earth System. It may even threaten our survival, along with many other species. We must transform ourselves, our communities, and our societies into responsible members of the ecosystems of which we are a part. We must ‘hold it together’ to find a place of our own within the living Earth system, Gaia.

Libraries seeking treatises on the major dilemmas of modern society and living, who look for well-researched blends of and contrasts between different viewpoints...will find Holding IT Together especially relevant... ~ Midwest Book Review

Christie’s writing is sharp and thought-provoking, making complex ideas accessible...this book calls for decisive action toward a sustainable, equitable future, making it an essential resource for policymakers, activists, and concerned citizens alike. ~ The Prairies Book Review

“Buy it!” says the author.

My eBook **HOPEFUL REALISM: A Climate Manifesto** is available on Amazon.com. Please give it a rating/review on [GoodReads.com](https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/4250781.Hopeful-Realism). Or, [review and rate](#) *Hopeful Realism* on its Amazon page.

Note: As always, past issues of this Newsletter are available, archived on my web site:

<https://thehopefulrealist.com/hopeful-realist-newsletter/>

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LOOK UP! A Bi-weekly Featured Commentary

Is Localism a Viable Response to the Global Cluster of Crises?

Well, yes and no. We are at the tipping point—which is not a simple flip of a switch, but an accelerating process of diverse changes in society—leading to the New Great Transformation of human societies and of the very Earth System itself, which various analysts and policy wonks have described as at risk of severe destabilization within a decades or two.

Some predict a comprehensive collapse of modern societies resulting from the destabilization of many ecosystems, if not the entire Earth System. Others, naively or disingenuously, forecast a smooth transition to a stable outcome if only we will focus on “green growth.”

Most serious analysts who are not captive to special financial and/or petro-industrial interests, do not expect major changes in how we operate our systems. The big institutional decisions will still be focusing on “renewable” resources and recycling, as various system components crumble, ignoring the difficult measures actually necessary to stem the tide of environmental degradation.

But almost none seriously discuss total societal transformation, which lies beyond the fundamental paradigm on which modern societies are built. It is ingrained in our culture. But for those able to shift to a paradigm that recognizes humanity as an important part of Nature, the question remains. Is the best approach to initiating total systemic transformation to build up from the ‘bottom’ by establishing local ecological communities? Or is it necessary to ‘stop the bleeding’ at the source and directly transform (or replace) the mega-institutions from which most of the damage emanates?

Or, is it really a matter of “either/or”? Of course not. It’s a system and we are all part of it, though in vastly different ways. From different locations in the vast global political economy, we see significantly different aspects of the complexity that must be changed in order to improve the chances for more people to survive and thrive.

It is pointless to argue about whether the chicken is more or less important than the egg. Each has its vulnerabilities and its benefits. A big part of the potential (partial) resolution of the

global trajectory toward further chaos and eventual collapse, is the necessity to move rapidly forward on *all fronts*. None of what's left can we afford to lose. The vast failing techno-industrial political-economic system must be transformed or replaced at all levels, from individual consciousness to global supply chains.

The existing global inter-dependencies are not the kind that are compatible with the requirements that would contribute to the re-stabilization of Nature or the creation of a global ecological civilization. We must break with the 'tradition' of extraction, transport, processing, production, distribution, consumption, and waste, which had dominated modernity from the start.

In a situation where we need to break out of traditions that no longer work, innovation, and not just in technology but in culture as well, is the order of the day. We must look to the past and to the future at the same time to get a grip on what to do now. We must abandon all those technocratic notions of how a society ought to work.

If my reading of the present condition of humanity is anywhere near correct, the result of doing everything right, from top to bottom, left to right, will be a New Great Transformation that yields a range of local/regional ecological communities, perhaps loosely affiliated to form an open ecological civilization. But that is mere speculation. Only time and optimal action will tell the tale of success.

I am also convinced that the road ahead will be bumpy at best. Many will die of starvation and resource wars within the next two decades. Our goal, at both local and global levels, must be to minimize the damage and maximize the conditions that will improve and sustain human and ecosystem wellbeing—neither is possible without the other.

But success, like anything in life, is not a given, it is earned by bold action that rises to the difficulties we actually face. In other words, it requires *Hopeful Realism*.

Today's Featured Image:

Forever wars are increasingly fought from a distance, especially with drones, some of which are 'kamikaze,' that is, drones that perform 'suicide missions,' since they fly themselves into the target and are destroyed with it. Others are interceptor drones, which target incoming missiles or drones to strike them before they reach their target. Drones are way cheaper than missiles or bombers, and can be produced and deployed in large numbers very quickly.



Source: EPA via Google

Drones come in all sizes and configurations, with short and long ranges; many can be launched by hand and still take out a vehicle or group of soldiers. They are just one of many forms of automating the methods of warfare, while producing vast levels of destruction. While they keep more ‘war fighters’ out of “harm’s way,” that cannot be said of civilians, who are largely not considered in attack planning.

Books and other Sources Related to the New Great Transformation

Here is what Local Futures has to say about itself on the front page of its website: “We are living through a crisis of disconnection - from nature, community, and the deeper meaning that makes life whole. Local Futures offers a path home. By restoring local economies and cultures, we regenerate the Earth and ourselves.” That speaks to the persistent dilemma of the work needed to transform the global economy so that humans and other living systems can live in relative harmony and comfort.

Local Futures: Economics of Happiness <https://www.localfutures.org/>

Everyone lives somewhere, even when their head may be buried deep in social media. We all breath the same air and stand on the same Earth. Our personal home is located in a particular ecosystem, whether we know it or not. As we approach the end of our run at industrial modernity, we must reflect on where we can go from here. The answer is nowhere else. So, the obvious implication is that we must re-invigorate our locality as well as stop the destruction by the larger system that engulfs us. Explore this site for fresh ideas grounded in ancient wisdom.

Quotable Quotes

This quote has been attributed to many, but it seems that Patrick Geddes was first made famous for it. He was a Scottish biologist, sociologist, Comtean positivist, geographer, philanthropist and early town planner. Geddes was a pioneer in town planning who used the term in his 1915 book. It has been used in many contexts since.

Think globally, act locally.

~ Patrick Geddes

In the present context of global and local ecological deterioration, and chaotic politics and economics, it is particularly apt in the sense that in the Earth System, all localities are interconnected, but also interdependent in ways far too complex to fully understand. But we do know enough to make major changes in our societies to vastly improve the probability of at least partial success in creating an ecological civilization that can carve out a future far more sustainable than our present terminal trajectory. The relationship between local and scaled up civic action will be critical in that effort.

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See you in two weeks. Meanwhile, stay safe, say hello to a neighbor or stranger, check out my blog posts at The Hopeful Realist.com, read [HOPEFUL REALISM: A Climate Manifesto.](#), and, buy my recent book, [***Holding It Together: Social Control in an Age of Great Transformation***](#).