



# Thinking about the Future of Work

ANDY HINES

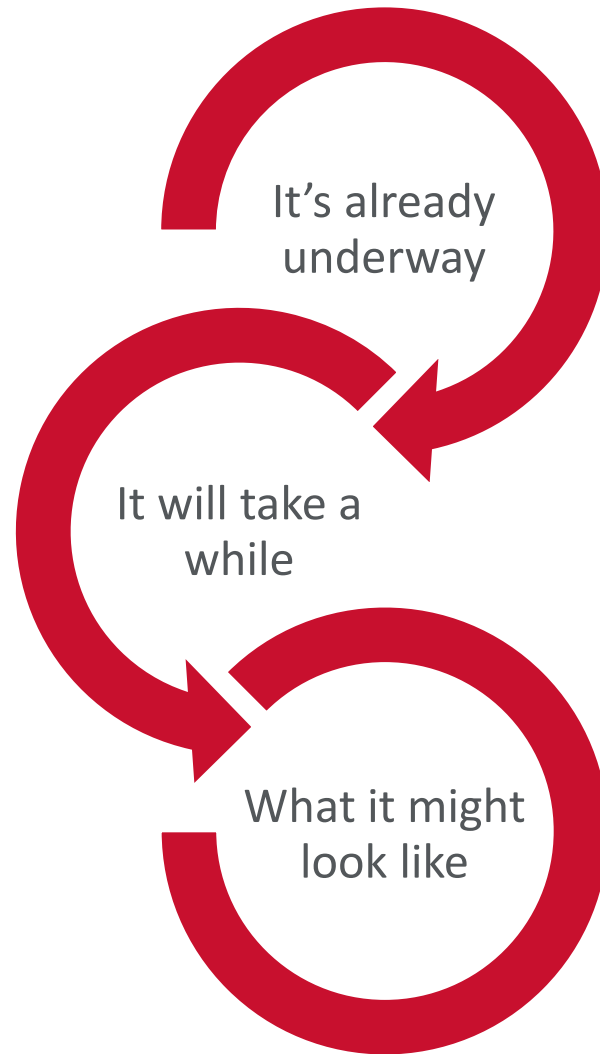
SPRING GATHERING 2024

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HOUSTON **FORESIGHT**

Preparing Professional Futurists

# Approach





It's Already Underway:  
Work ... Ain't Workin'



# Does Anyone Want to Work? Anyone? Please!

## Great Resignation

- + I can day trade, speculate on crypto, gaming, drive an uber
- + I can downsize my lifestyle; much of what I work for is so I can work
- + I can retire or retire early
- + My job is a bullshit job
- + I can consume less and work less (and crash at my parent's house)

## Quiet Quitting

- + "Quiet quitters" make up at least 50% of the U.S. workforce -- probably more, Gallup finds.

## Lazy Girl Jobs & the Soft Life

- + Meet The Latest Version Of Quiet Quitting: 'Lazy Girl Jobs' (Forbes via TikTok )

## Lying Flat

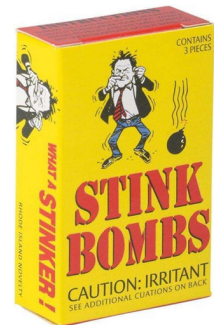
- + "Lying Flat": The Demise of the Chinese Workforce and Its Impact on the Chinese Economy (Berkely Economic Review ) opting out of the pursuit of traditional economic success and unrelenting hours

## R/Anti work

- + Reddit community of 1.9 million members who oppose work altogether.

## Stinkbombing

- + Andy's hunch that what's next is sabotage at the workplace



# Long-Term Values Shifts

Work has [slowly] been becoming less important for more and more people; Covid gave it a boost!

## 4 Values Types

A. Hines

*An individual view about what is most important in life that in turn guides decision-making and behavior*

### Traditional

Follow the Rules

Fulfilling one's predetermined role, with an emphasis on their being a "right" way to do things

### Modern

Achieve

Driven by growth and progress and the ability to improve one's social and economic status...and show it

### Postmodern

What's It All Mean?

A shift away from material concerns to a search for meaning, connection, and greater participation

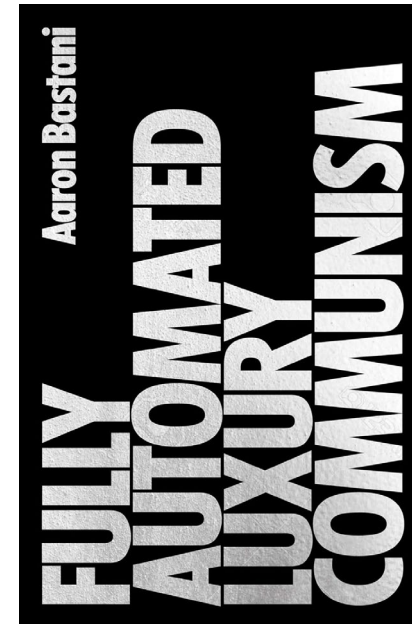
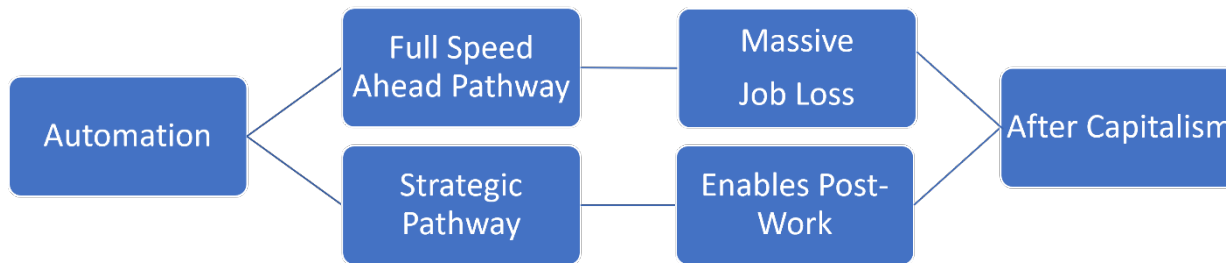
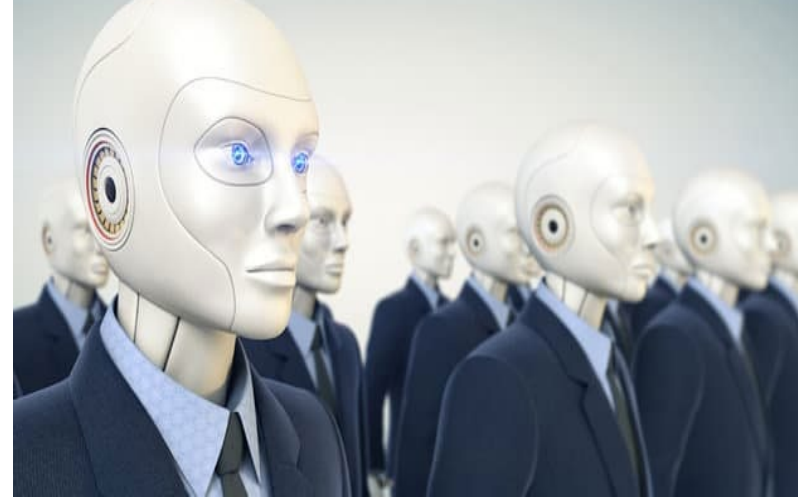
### Integral

Make a Difference

Leading edge of values change emphasizing practical and functional approaches that best fit particular situations

# Automation & Labor Strategy

The equation is simple, if automation enables the production of the same amount of wealth that human workers were producing, then there is sufficient wealth to cover the displaced. Of course, the politics of this strategic shift would be quite challenging!

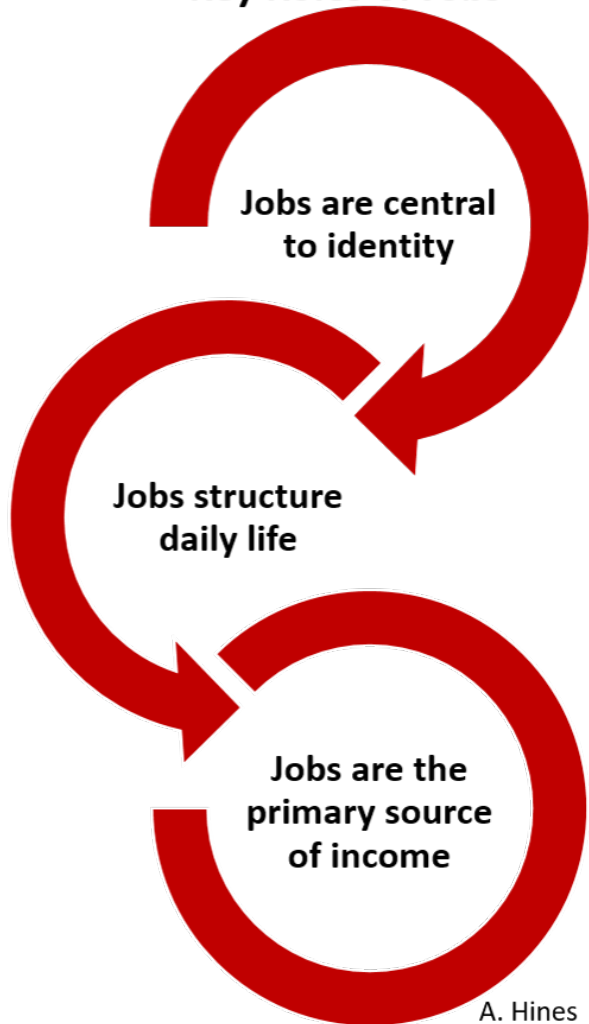


It won't be easy  
( it will take a long time)

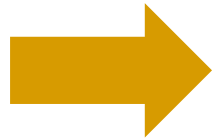


# It Won't Be Overnight: Three Key Roles of Jobs

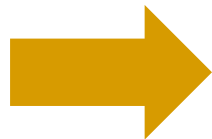
## Key Roles of Jobs



Our sense of identify is evolving beyond work



Virtual work is destroying the 9-5 schedule



Labor's share of national income declining



# The Next-Job-Title Approach to the Future

- + Futurists and experts are often asked to produce a list of future job titles [How many in this room?]
  - 1996: farm manager, genome specialist, man-machine interface specialist, space flight supervisor, robot guides (Hines 1996)
  - More recent: genetic counselors, baby designers, weather modification engineers, meteorite miners, terraformers, career change counselors (*Talwar, Hancock, 2010; Frey, 2011; Armstrong, 2017; Slayter, 2019*).
- + [Other titles???
- + These are useful and entertaining exercises, though perhaps more of the latter than the former.
  - It does remind us that we will still do job-like activities, but we won't depend on them to make a living

# Identity

+ So, what do you do?"

Activity: Introduce yourself to a neighbor without referencing your job or career.



I'm a professional futurist from the UH Foresight program

Are you a human being or a human doing?

# Blurring Boundaries: Am I Working Right Now?

janefonda  
lilytomlin  
dollyparton

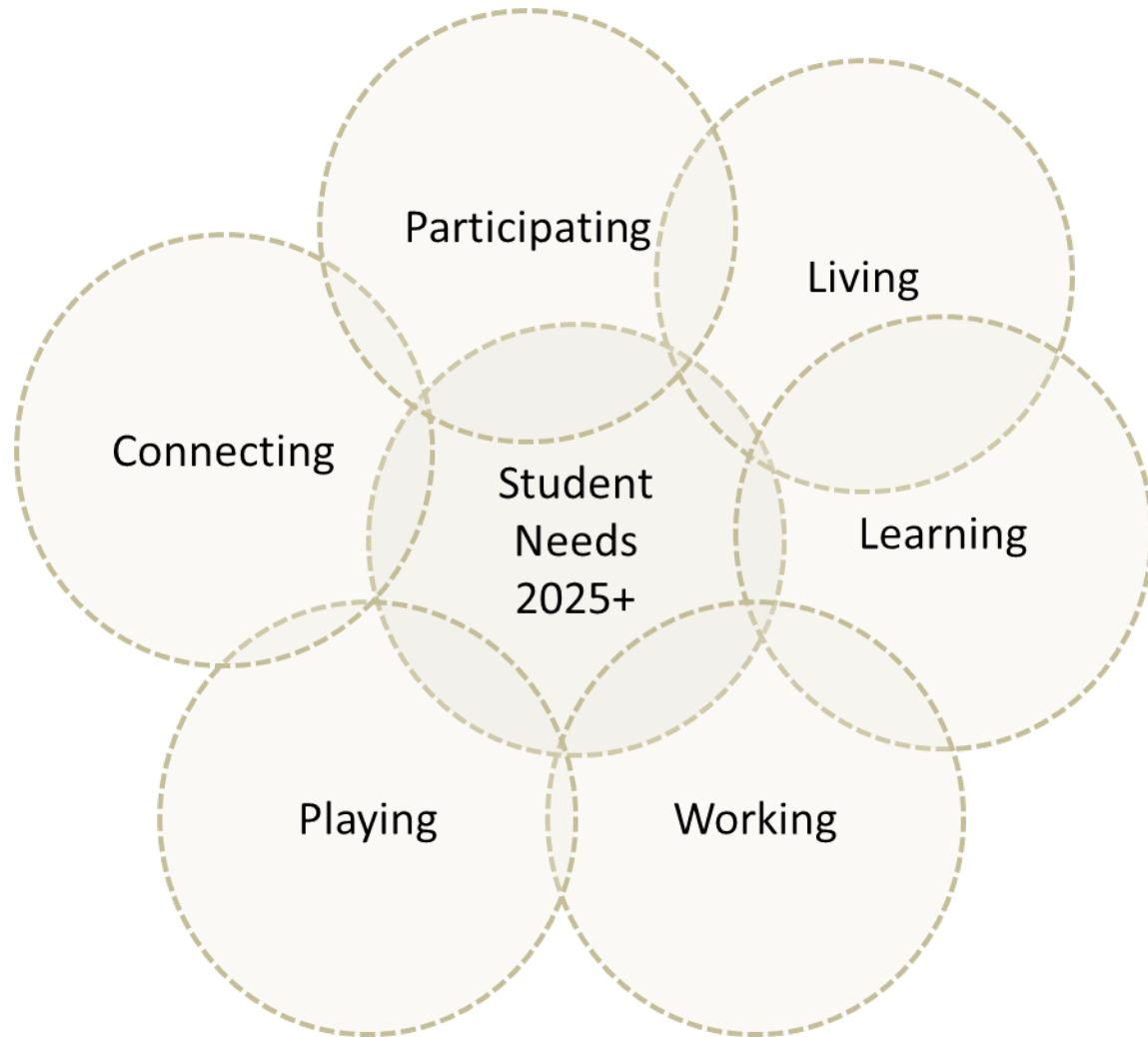
# 9to5



getting even is a full-time job

# 1980

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# Jobs Are Less Important to Making a Living

- + In 1900, 45% of people in the United States were self-employed
- + Four-day workweeks: Belgium, UAE, Iceland, Lithuania, France
  - Trials including Spain, Japan, Austria, New Zealand, Canada, the US
- + Amount of GDP paid out in wages, salaries, and benefits—has been declining in developed countries since the 1980s (source: McKinsey)
- + Labor force participation declining
- + Last decade was free of recessions from January 2010 to the closing bell in December 2019, the [Dow Jones Industrial Average](#) and [S&P 500](#) soared 173.60% and 189.35%, respectively, GDP, increased from \$14.992 trillion to \$21.433 trillion. Yet, during that same period, the [labor force participation rate](#) actually declined.



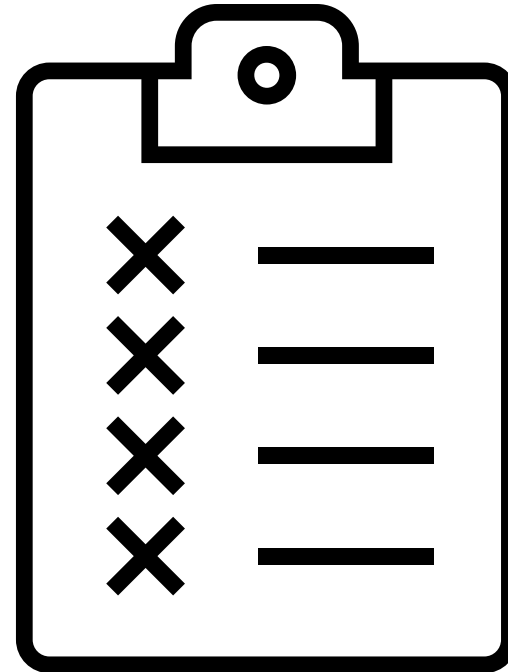
A clue?

But if people don't work, they will \_\_\_\_\_

# List Ten Things You Would Do if You Didn't Have to Work



The Fear



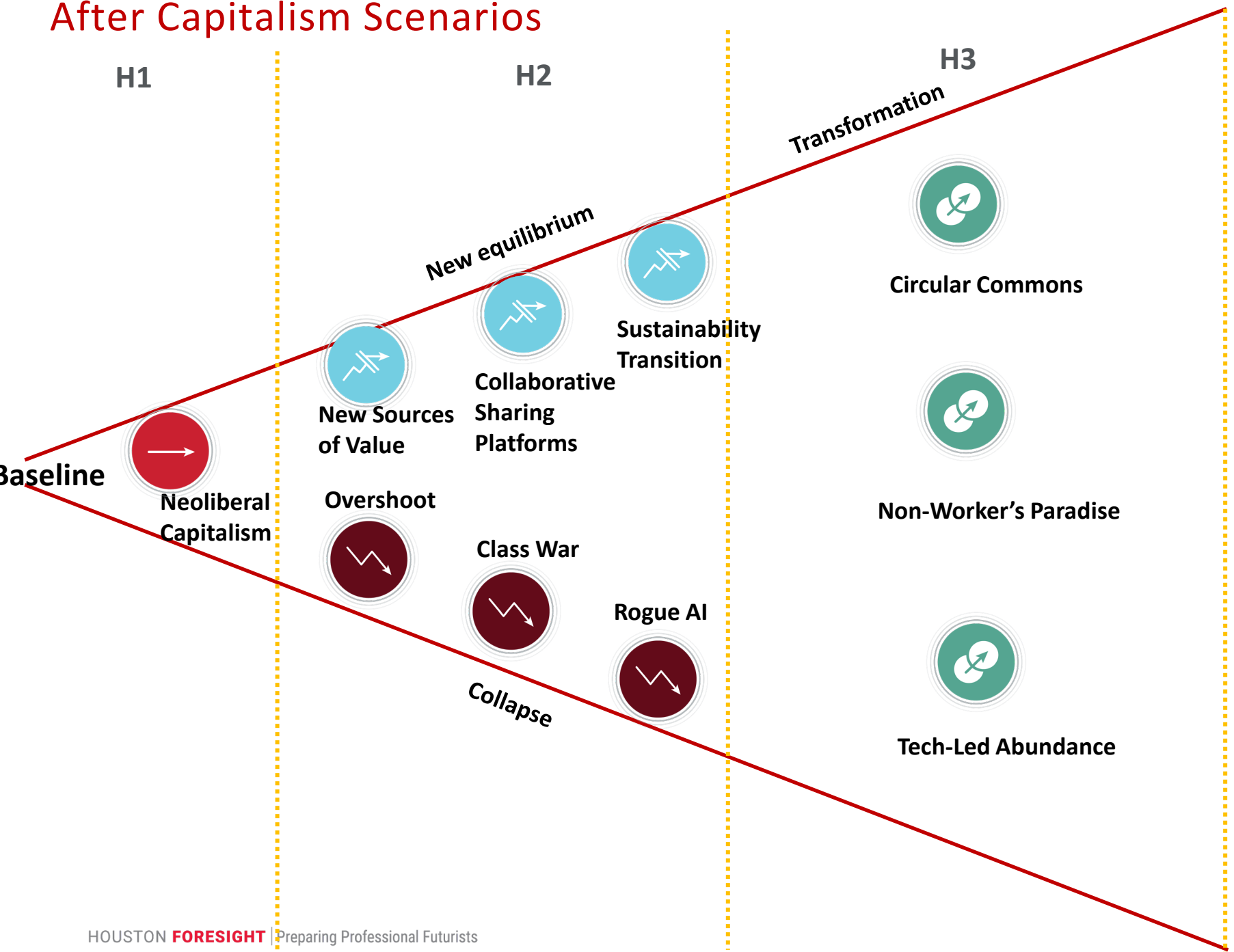
# Debrief: Ten Things You Would Do if you didn't have to Work

- + Does anyone have an activity on their list of 10 that you think no one else has?

# What It Might Look Like



# After Capitalism Scenarios



# Images of After Capitalism

CIRCULAR COMMONS



NON-WORKERS PARADISE



TECH-LED ABUNDANCE

# Non-Workers Paradise

A play on the attributed-to-Marxist idea of a worker's paradise, but in the After Capitalism world we are not working in paid jobs as a means of sustenance.

- + Society over economy
- + Inequality reduced via redistribution
- + UBI
- + Confronting laziness lie
- + Left gets it together
- + Tech acceleration as enabler
- + Organizing: Local and Direct [Democracy]



## Key Sources

- ***Alter-Worlds***, Shaw and Waterstone
- ***Communism***, Peter Frase
- ***Economic Democracy***, David Schweickart
- ***Pluralist Commonwealth***, Gar Alperovitz
- ***Post-capitalism***, Paul Mason/Srnicek and Williams
- ***Precariat***, Guy Standing
- ***Solidarity***, Solidarity Economy Initiative
- ***FALC Fully Automated Luxury Communism***, Aaron Bastani
- ***Utopia for Realists***, Rutger Bregman.

**Purpose** reducing inequality to creating a *more just and fair society*.

# Driver Outcomes

<b>Driver</b>	<b>Outcome in Non-Workers Paradise</b>
<b>Shifting values</b>	Traditional, mixed with Integral
<b>Technology acceleration</b>	A key potential enabler
<b>Inequality</b>	Reduced via UBI
<b>Jobs &amp; automation</b>	Automation balanced with human needs
<b>Stagnation</b>	Not viewed as problem; move to UBI
<b>Climate &amp; carrying capacity</b>	Improves but secondary to social issues
<b>Ineffective left</b>	Significant shift is effective mobilization

# 1. From Economy to Society

- + *Capitalism puts the economy and work first, and everything social second.*
- + *Practically everything is monetized today (dating, social buddies, parenting-as-a-service); constantly on the search for new things to monetize).*
- + *This image flips that and refocuses life so that the economy supports social life.*
  - *As you're probably thinking right now, there is a lot of "work" to do in order to make this happen!*

## 2. Redistribution

- + *The most inflammatory issue focused on by this image is reducing the tremendous inequality gap. This necessitates rethinking the distribution of wealth. UBI, sovereign wealth funds, and employee stock ownership funds are among the tools to enable this.*
- + Piketty: if global output and income were equally divided, each individual in the world would have an income of about **\$912 per month** (global poverty line is roughly \$57 per month)

### Why

- + Automation will force it
- + We will choose it: ethics, social justice, individual freedom, basic security.
- +

### Issues

- + Bringing in underdeveloped areas brought up to the global average
- + How does one measure value without labor?
- + What are the likely effects of profits falling?
- + How do we distribute goods and services efficiently in the absence of market prices?

### 3. UBI ... or Something Like It

*UBI is a concept that is generating much discussion and is in the spirit of this image. At the least, it provides a starting point to build from — universal basic services, for instance is an idea emerging from it.*

- + The Basic Income Earth Network defines the UBI as “a periodic cash payment unconditionally delivered to all on an individual basis, without means test or work requirement.”
- + There have been **at least 160** UBI tests globally, according to the Stanford Basic Income Lab.
- + Using oil revenues, the Alaska Permanent Fund has paid equal yearly dividends to every resident, including children, ranging from about \$1,000 to over \$3,000.
- + Panera’s nonprofit arm launched a new experiment: It opened a cafe in St. Louis that looked exactly like the company’s other restaurants, but customers could pay what they wanted for the items on the menu, or not pay at all.
  - The experiment was abandoned

## 4. Confronting the Laziness Lie

*A major concern, reflecting how strong the work ethic has been ingrained through capitalism, is that without work, people will lose purpose. Research suggests that this may be true for some, but certainly not all. Paradise is reconsidered from the idea of not having to do anything, but rather as having the freedom to do what makes one happy and/or contributes to the collective good.*

### Ten Things We Could Do If We Didn't Have to Work

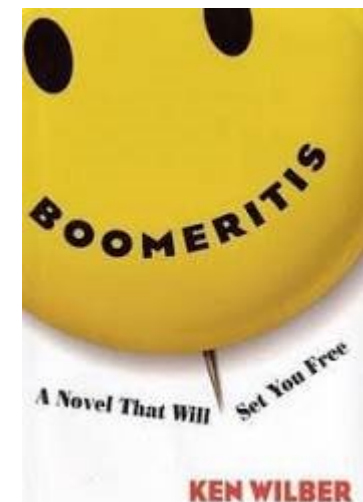
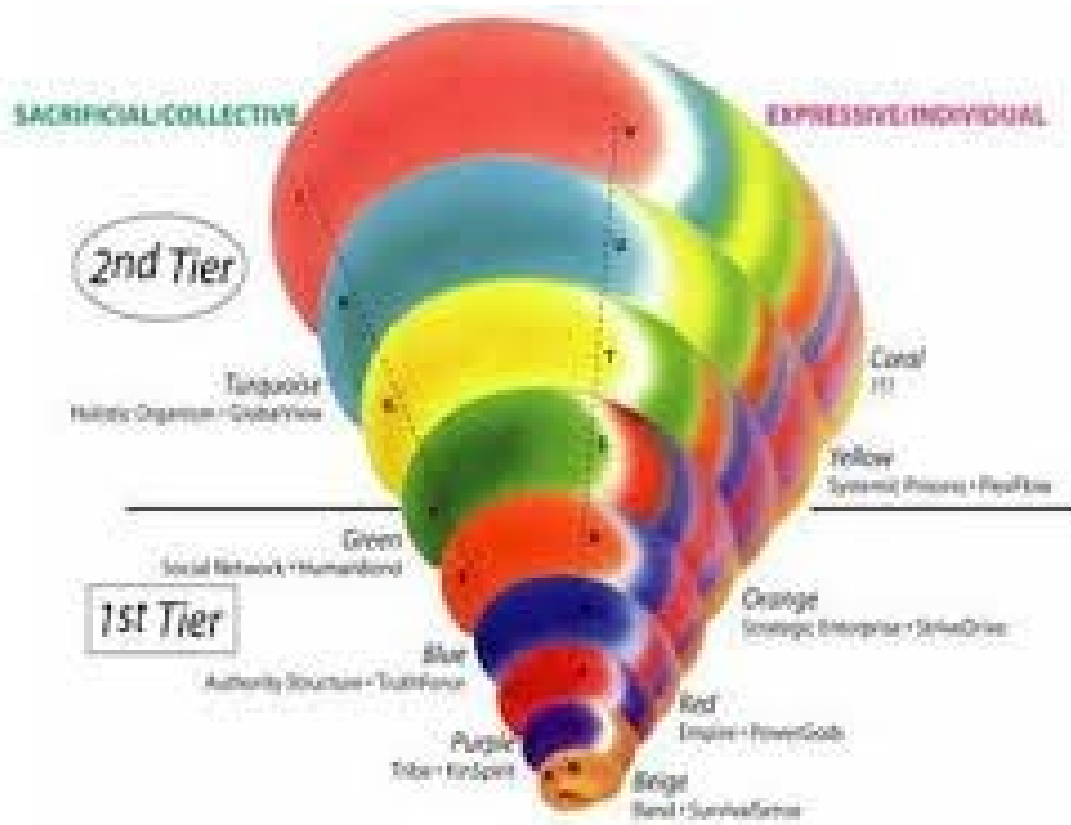
1. **Learning** for the sake of learning
2. **Parenting**, more time raising children
3. **Participating** in political and civic affairs
4. **Helping** the less fortunate locally and globally
5. **Exercising**, in light of the growing obesity epidemic
6. **Connecting** to **family** and **friends** outside of social media
7. **Reinvigorating** our interest in **space** exploration
8. **Restoring** and enhancing the **environment**
9. **Travelling** to experience other cultures
10. **Hobbying**, reading, music, cooking, surfing, etc.

-- Andy Hines



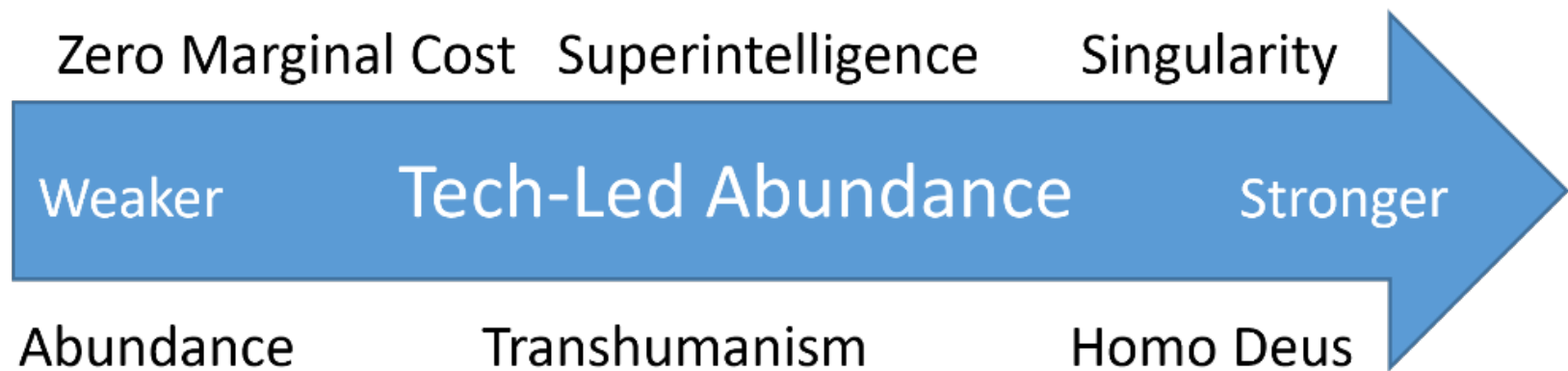
## 5. The Left Gets It Together

- + *It is not unthinkable that the left reexamines and modifies its approach to the future. It moves away from “reaction” mode and instead proposes a pragmatic vision of how to move towards a better society.*



## 6. Tech Acceleration as a Key Enabler

- + *Post-work still requires the creation of wealth and the ability to get tasks and activities done. Tech acceleration enables a wealth bounty that can be distributed more fairly.*

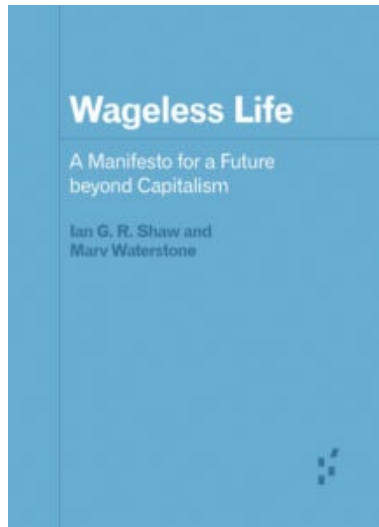


## 7. Organizing Locally ... and Direct Democracy

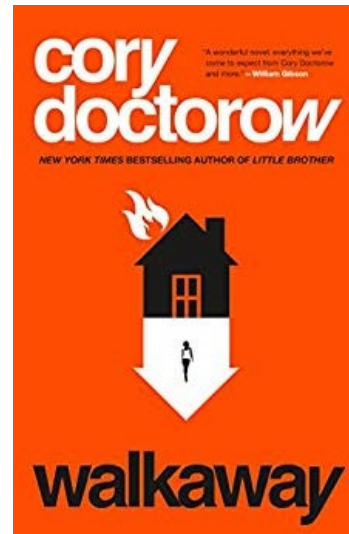
- + *Emphasis on mobilizing at the local level and using more direct approaches to decision-making. People no longer see themselves as consumers, but as users of goods for productive local activity. The former guiding principle of supply chain management — not holding excess inventories, just-in-time logistics to promote efficiency, getting the lowest possible cost through economies of scale and deregulation — is exchanged for a resilient system that is guided by dispersion and diversification.*
- + Re-localization: Social control of investment. Funds for new investment are generated by a capital assets tax and are returned to the economy through a network of public investment banks, municipal protectionism and the introduction of a set of universal basic services (UBS).
- + Worker self-management: Each productive enterprise is controlled democratically by its workers.
- + Worker-owned production: Alperovitz (2013) suggests moving ownership beyond just workers to the community as a whole. The concept of economic democracy shifts a firm's decision-making process away from a board of directors
- + Direct democracy/Participatory Politics: A consensus decision-making, prefigurative politics (reflect the future society being sought) with an emphasis on direct action; role for individuals, such as meeting in popular assemblies in matters affecting them.

# Making It Happen: Evolution or Revolution?

A. Evolution with a plan



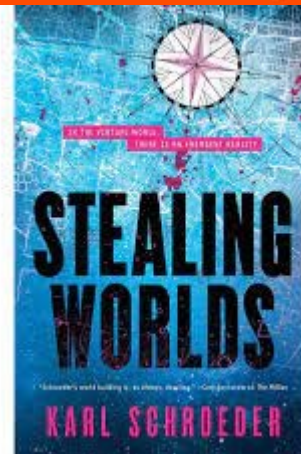
B. Natural Evolution



C. Revolution (blow it up 7start over)



Q1. Which is the most likely of the three to happen?



Q2. Which option would you choose?

# How much Sacrifice?

- + The [After Capitalism](#) research did not find a future without sacrifice, so I think it's useful to consider how much we are willing to make.
- + Magnuson (2013) found that current growth could be preserved under a fully renewable energy system — with investments in the \$30-\$40 trillion range. He references a Swiss Federal Institute study that identified a “2000-watt society” in which the 7 billion people on earth consuming an equal amount of energy would equal out to 2000 watts daily. Americans, today, consume about six times that amount daily (Magnuson, 2013). Clearly the cost and sacrifices needed to maintain current growth rates are daunting for those in affluent economies.
- + Can we take the challenge, Americans in a position of relative affluence? Could we cut our energy use by a factor of six? [I beg your indulgence for a brainstormed list — not thorough research] What might that involve at the individual level:
  - Moving into smaller homes; adding more people to existing homes
  - Making our homes smarter and more efficient (e.g., weatherization)
  - Adding solar panels
  - Composting .... Growing our own food to reduce food miles (enables smaller refrigerator, a big culprit, but this is admittedly a long way around)
  - More efficient heating/cooling units
  - Being more conscious about the eco footprint of goods
  - Substituting biking for driving; moving to hybrid or electric vehicles (admittedly increases electricity footprint, but better overall for energy)
  - Moving to as-a-services over owning goods to enable smaller living spaces.
- + Does that move the needle enough? Not sure. Probably not dramatic enough. Even these changes would surely cost more in dollars and effort, at least upfront, as well as demand a lot more effort and attention.
- + Obviously, there needs to be coordination at larger scales. Mixed-use development approaches, for instance, could make some of the above changes more practical.
- + I'm thinking of an earlier post where I discussed how futurists help clients “[get aligned and in motion](#)” with the emerging future. Applies to us as individuals too! It would be fun to hear what some of y'all are already doing on this front. What are you doing to reduce your electricity/energy consumption? – Andy Hines

# How much Sacrifice?

- + Magnuson (2013) found that current growth could be preserved under a fully renewable energy system — with investments in the \$30-\$40 trillion range. He references a Swiss Federal Institute study that identified a “2000-watt society” in which the 7 billion people on earth consuming an equal amount of energy would equal out to 2000 watts daily. Americans, today, consume about six times that amount daily (Magnuson, 2013)
- + Could we cut our energy use by a factor of six? Might you be willing to:
  1. Move into smaller living space? A tiny home?
  2. Making our homes smarter and more efficient (e.g., weatherization, adding solar panels)
  3. Composting and growing some of you own food
  4. Be more conscious about the eco footprint of goods
  5. Substituting biking for driving?
  6. Stop flying?
  7. Moving to as-a-services over owning goods to enable smaller living spaces.
- + What’s something you’ve done to reduce your footprint not on this list?

## Contact Info

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# Non-Worker's Paradise

*The goal of the future is full unemployment, so we can play. Arthur C. Clarke*

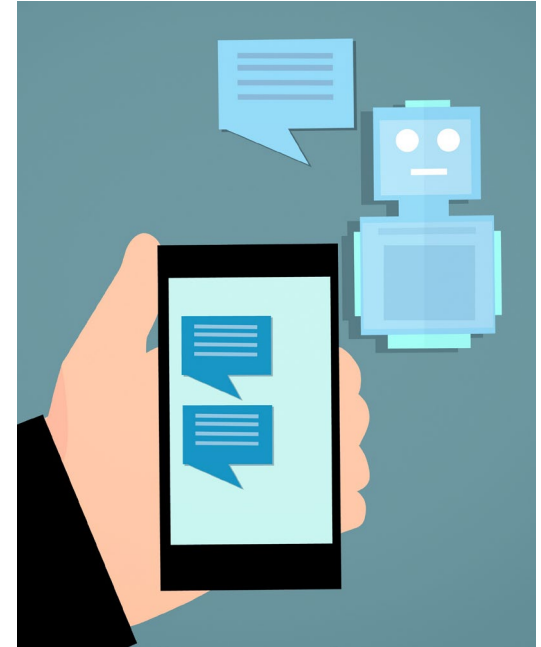
1. *Prioritizing society over economy: Capitalism puts the economy and work first, and everything social second. This image flips that and refocuses life so that the economy supports social life. Thanks to the abundance of wealth brought about by advances in technology and automation, the role of work in the form of exchanging labor for wages is relegated to a background role in society. Income from jobs is no longer needed for individuals to access society's wealth.*
2. *Reducing inequality reduced via redistribution: The most inflammatory issue focused on by this image is reducing the tremendous inequality gap. This necessitates rethinking the distribution of wealth. UBI, sovereign wealth funds, and employee stock ownership funds are among the tools to enable this.*
3. *Adopting [some form of] UBI: UBI is a concept that is generating much discussion and is in the spirit of this image. At the least, it provides a starting point to build from — universal basic services, for instance is an idea emerging from it. UBI is first implemented by the state, and then delegated to a more local scale — utilizing the new abundance of wealth to ensure all people are provided with a basic stipend. As time goes on, communities manage things themselves or simply offer UBI in the context of their own localized currencies.*
4. *Confronting the laziness lie: A major concern, reflecting how strong the work ethic has been ingrained through capitalism, is that without work, people will lose purpose. Research suggests that this may be true for some, but certainly not all. Paradise is reconsidered from the idea of not having to do anything, but rather as having the freedom to do what makes one happy and/or contributes to the collective good.*
5. *The left gets it together: It is not unthinkable that the left reexamines and modifies its approach to the future. It moves away from “reaction” mode and instead proposes a pragmatic vision of how to move towards a better society.*
6. *Tech acceleration as a key enabler: Post-work still requires the creation of wealth and the ability to get tasks and activities done. Tech acceleration enables a wealth bounty that can be distributed more fairly.*
7. *Organizing via local and direct [democracy]: As with Circular Commons, there is an emphasis on mobilizing at the local level and using more direct approaches to decision-making. People no longer see themselves as consumers, but as users of goods for productive local activity. The former guiding principle of supply chain management — not holding excess inventories, just-in-time logistics to promote efficiency, getting the lowest possible cost through economies of scale and deregulation — is exchanged for a resilient system that is guided by dispersion and diversification so any one disruption cannot upset an entire line of products. The technical approaches are available, but the political approach will likely require a great deal of time and effort.*



# An Emerging Structure: Warriors, Giggers, and Bots



The “new” workforce consists of a small core of hard-working, loyal warriors, project-based giggers, and increasingly “bots.”



Employee

Freelancer