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## The Solidarity Economy: A Way Forward for Our De-Futured World

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## **The Solidarity Economy: A Way Forward for Our De-Futured World**

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*As society contends with the ongoing economic, environmental and political crises perpetuated by racist patriarchal ecologically-destructive capitalism, there is a need to look beyond forms of inequality to the opportunity of solidarity. While histories of mutuality and reciprocity have long been present in economies around the world, it is in the last thirty years that global movements have begun to coalesce under the framework of the solidarity economy. This framework asserts a path forward towards a just and sustainable post-capitalist future, based in cooperation and care.. We begin by exploring how the solidarity economy framework and movement have been making already-existing alternatives to capitalism visible. Then we consider the values, practices and institutions that have come to define the solidarity economy, and the vital role social movements have played in creating a politics and culture of solidarity. We then look at how the solidarity economy movement is growing and solidifying the solidarity economy through education, incubation, and establishing networks at multiple scales. The article concludes with a consideration of present challenges, including capitalist competition, dealing with competing frameworks, inclusion/exclusion, and overcoming conflict.*

*Key words:* sustainability, capitalism, social movements, solidarity economy, cooperation

### **Introduction: An Economic Way Forward for our De-futured World**

If there ever were a time in history when the world needed to think about economic transformation, it is the present moment. The crises we are facing on this planet – all with deep roots in our racist-capitalist-patriarchal-anti-ecological capitalist system – are intense and chronic, including:

- climate change and ecological destruction
- increasing inequality, precarity and poverty, and the concentration of wealth and power in the hands of a few
- corrupt, militarized governments and war
- persistent gender, racial-ethnic, and North-South inequality, and the devaluation of care work
- personal crises across all subgroups, due to the breakdown of community – including isolation, lack of meaning, depression, and alienation

We are, as Riane Eisler (2023) puts it, on a sinking ship. It is not enough to live life as usual and compete for berths higher up on the ship, or to struggle to make that competition fairer, or even for the slaves rowing in the bowels of the ship to win their freedom. All will still drown if the ship

goes down! According to Eisler, we need to figure out how to use our joined, diverse energies and abilities to repair the ship itself, while we fight for a fair way to position ourselves within it.

However, since the crises we are experiencing are systemic in nature, we need to go beyond simply repairing the economic “ship” to its original state. We need to build a new and better economic system because we have realized that ours is not just or sustainable. This requires a dual set of actions that the U.S. Solidarity Economy Network calls “Resist and Build”. While providing immediate “resistance” to the injustice that capitalism creates, both material and emotional, we must also take steps towards imagining and building alternatives. Cooperation Jackson calls this “Build and Fight” (Akuno and Nangwaya, 2017) while Robin D.G Kelley sees it as a question of asking what we are for and not just what we are against. (Kelley, 2022).

But what can we build? We live in a curious moment in which we are envisioning the end of life on the planet, with no real solution, no positive way forward in sight. We have been deprived of a vision of a livable future – de-futured, as Tony Fry (Fry, 1999) has put it so eloquently.

The solidarity economy provides a framework, a possible future, a path forward out of these crises to a just and sustainable future economy. It shows us that a process of systemic transformation towards a peaceful, just, sustainable, democratic and free economy is already underway across the world. The solidarity economy framework identifies economic values, practices and institutions that are part of this transformation. There already are, and long have been, social and political movements which, together, are deepening and extending these practices. In doing so, capitalism is being transformed and supplanted. In the remainder of this essay, we will situate the solidarity economy within a larger process of paradigm shift; discuss some of the main economic practices and institutions that make it up at present; and consider some issues and challenges that the solidarity economy movement is facing.

### **From inequality to solidarity: Solidarity Economy as Part of a Larger Paradigm Shift**

We believe that it is useful to contextualize the solidarity economy as part of an epochal process of paradigm shift, a shift from the inequality paradigm to the solidarity paradigm. By paradigm, we refer to a set of core values and concepts that structure social relationships, practices and institutions, interpenetrating all sectors of society – economic, political, social, and cultural.

The inequality paradigm is based on relationships that polarize people – and people and “nature” – into different and opposed groups, and place one group above the other in a hierarchy of wealth and power (Matthaei, 2018a; Robinson, 2020). Characteristics of the inequality paradigm include hierarchy, domination and violence, including gender, race, class, and man-nature domination/subordination/violence; divisiveness (us vs. them thinking; tribalism, nationalism, competition); fear, insecurity and greed; lack of democracy; unfreedom; and unwellness, alienation from our bodies, souls, each other, and the earth.

We can think of the inequality paradigm as a prison. We are all programmed from birth onwards – by our parents, then our teachers, bosses, laws, culture, etc. – into economic and social processes that separate and separate and polarize, concretizing inequality. Julie has analyzed this process of inequality creation in her work, showing how the different forms of inequality – race, gender, class, and man/nature – all involve the same eleven inequality processes. Categorization creates the

categories (man vs. woman, white vs. black, etc). Ascription assigns each person to one pole of each inequality. Assigned roles make people and “man/nature” different and unequal by assigning them different rights and roles (polarization) according to their position in each inequality. These roles are stratified such that one pole of each inequality is placed above the other in economic and social hierarchies, and the privileged group dominates the subordinate one. Each unequal identity – say whiteness – is essentialized, claiming it is the same for all who have it, and rationalized, that is, explained as the result of natural differences or God’s will. People internalize the inequalities into their self concepts and their views of others. The inequalities are institutionalized, such that they are present across the social landscape, even in language. Violence and stigmatization against those who deviate severely punishes deviants, and especially keeps those in the subordinate groupings in line (Matthaei, 2018a).

The solidarity paradigm, as it is emerging historically on the planet, stands out in stark contrast to the inequality paradigm. It is characterized by love and compassion for oneself and for others; a sense of oneness with all of life, and attendant sense of social responsibility; peace, cooperation, abundance and sharing; equality and mutuality amidst a celebration of diversity; economic and political democracy; freedom; and holistic health in which mind, body, emotions, and soul are understood to be intertwined and in need of care.

No society, past or present, is purely one or the other, and present day societies all contain elements of each. In fact, it is helpful to place various systems on a from-inequality-to-solidarity spectrum. Patriarchal slave societies would be fully on the inequality paradigm end of the spectrum – while utopian eco-feminist communal societies would be in the solidarity paradigm end.

What is interesting about racist patriarchal anti-ecological capitalist societies is that they definitely embody aspects of both paradigms. They are hybrids. For example, the U.S. was rooted at its founding in class, race, and gender inequality, but its constitution also affirms equality, democracy, and freedom, a tension which has motivated anti-inequality social movements throughout its history. Indeed, we can see capitalism itself as a transitional stage between the inequality and solidarity paradigms. Equality of property rights and the establishment of a market-based economy in which one’s performance in the competition had an impact on their socioeconomic position have contradicted the inequality paradigm’s process of ascription, and set the stage for movements for equal opportunity and against discrimination according to race and gender. Also, the class process, which concentrates wealth and power in the hands of a small minority, violates the principle of democracy, as well as failing to perform the economy’s basic job of providing for peoples’ basic needs. These crises in democracy and provisioning motivate people to come together to move the economy and society towards the solidarity paradigm.

This epochal paradigm shift and the attendant growth of solidarity economy values, practices and institutions are virtually invisible in today’s world, due to vested interests in maintaining the status quo reinforced by the capture of media and political institutions by those with great wealth. Julie’s profession – economics – is also guilty of “invisibilizing” the possibility of a paradigm shift to an egalitarian economy. Mainstream economists, who dominate the economics profession in the global North and in the world, literally cannot see the emerging solidarity economy, or believe it to be possible, because of their assumptions about human nature. The “neoclassical” model of economics which is taught in Econ 101 classes across the U.S. assumes that “rational” individuals

are narrowly self-interested and materialistic. Rational individuals – “homo economicus” - maximize the utility they and their family derive from consuming goods and services – and do not care about the well-being of others, or the effects of their consumption on others, positive or negative. It is assumed in this model that people are not motivated to work to contribute to the whole with their labor or entrepreneurial skills unless they will be rewarded materially by getting more than they would have if they contributed nothing. Neoclassical economists argue that labor markets and competition between capitalist firms reward the most productive and efficient, harnessing people’s inherent narrow materialistic self-interested agency to the good of the whole. In the end, they claim that markets—although inhabited by anti-social individuals and businesses motivated by selfishness and greed—direct selfish people to serve the common good using Adam Smith’s famous “invisible hand.”

Cooperative and socially conscious consumers, workers, and entrepreneurs simply do not fit into this model, and are ignored. According to mainstream economists, superior alternatives to crisis-ridden capitalism are simply not available, given human nature. As British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher famously proclaimed in the early 1980s, “There is No Alternative” (dubbed “TINA” by solidarity economy activists). A key aspect of the solidarity economy framework is simply to affirm that a multitude of economic solidarity alternatives to capitalism coexist with capitalist institutions within and outside of markets, and have existed throughout history. Or, as the indigenous, cooperatively organized Zapatistas of Mexico proclaimed, “TATA” – there are thousands of alternatives!

The paradigm shift from inequality to solidarity and to a post-capitalist, solidarity economics has also been invisible to radical economists and to traditional socialists. Their view of the shift to a post-capitalist economics has focused on an abrupt, politically-led revolution spear-headed by workers organized in unions, which replaces markets with central planning. The gradual revolutionary transformation that is happening all over the world to post-capitalist, solidarity economic values, practices, and institutions, motivated by multidimensional social movements against all forms of inequality, has thus been invisible to the traditional left as well.

### **Making Solidarity Economies Visible: The First Task of the Solidarity Economy Movement**

The solidarity economy framework has been put forth, advocated for, and developed by a global solidarity economy movement, comprised of a growing number of individuals and institutions. This new way of looking at economic transformation to a post-capitalist system emerged in the late 1980s and early 1990s. The ideological political battles between capitalism and communism, the “Cold War” that defined the mid-20th century, had ended with the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991. This led Frances Fukuyama to declare, in his famous book, that history had ended, meaning that alternatives to capitalism were dead (Fukuyama, 1992). The solidarity economy framework represented a repudiation of Fukuyama’s assertion, as it claimed alternatives to capitalism were alive and well.

The solidarity economy framework, and the movement that champions it, emerged simultaneously in Latin American and Europe, and hence, had global reach from their inception. This process was led by a mix of feminist, indigenous, and worker movements that sought to challenge Western, patriarchal capitalist practices. Luis Razeto, a Chilean philosophy professor, put forward the framework in the early 1990s, as *la economia solidaria* (Razeto, 2019). Meanwhile, in France,

Jean-Louis.Laville had started writing about *l'économie solidaire* (Laville, 2010). By the end of the 1990s, the Intercontinental Movement for the Promotion of the Social Solidarity Economy (RIPESS) had emerged. The solidarity economy movement started to spread around the world with the special help of a proliferation of regional and global World Social Forum gatherings. These gatherings brought social movements from around the world together in a movement of movements against all forms of oppression, and with the motto, “Another World is Possible” (Allard, Davidson, and Matthaei, 2008, Introduction; Fisher and Ponniah, 2003).

The first task of solidarity economy movement is to make alternatives to capitalism visible to each other and to the public at large. As Ngugi wa Thiong'o (Wa Thiong'o, 1992) would put it, this movement aims at decolonizing our minds, by liberating ourselves from racist patriarchal anti-ecological capitalist ideology. As an emergent global framework, new to most, but recognizable to others, the solidarity economy presents an alternative way to understand, live, and be in the world. It allows us to free our imaginations from the hegemony of racist patriarchal ecologically-destructive capitalism. We become aware of how this global system has determined and constrained how we think and act, and we start to see alternative and solidarity-centered ways of doing economics all around us. Thus, the first step in building the solidarity economy is building awareness that this people- and planet-centered economic alternative-in-the-making exists and thrives around the world, and is already part of most of our lives.

It turns out that, once we adopt the solidarity economy framework, we see that solidaritous economic practices and institutions have been the norm, not the exception, through precapitalist history, and have coexisted within markets alongside capitalist ones throughout the history of capitalism. J.K. Gibson conceptualized this with their path-breaking 1996 book, *The End of Capitalism (As We Knew It)*, which affirmed that the multitude of non-capitalist practices and institutions present in the economy signified that capitalism did not exist as an independent, hegemonic system (Gibson-Graham, 1997). Similarly, the Community Economies Collective, which they created, developed the iceberg diagram to represent capitalism as only the “tip of the iceberg” of economic practices and institutions which currently exist (Byrne, 2008). As part of their rooting in feminist economics, they particularly emphasize the importance of unpaid care work or reproduction in the economy:



Figure 1. The Economic Iceberg (Byrne, 2008)

As Paul Singer, National Secretary of the Solidarity Economy in Brazil said in an interview in the early 2000s, “Under the form of cooperativism, solidarity economy has already existed for 200 years in practically all countries of the world” (Gomes, 2005). There are long histories of cooperative economic practices that remain submerged below the surface, which predate the use of the term “solidarity economy.” In African cultures, the use of terms like *ubuntu*, *sankofa*, and *ujima* guide an understanding of the importance of relationship when it comes to collective well being. Practices of mutual aid emerged and were then passed on, surviving the middle passage. Hossein and Nembhard have documented how these traditions have evolved as a means to overcome the risk and marginalization that capitalism had inflicted on the Black diaspora (Hossein, 2017; Nembhard, 2015). Kadalie (2022) shares the intimate democracies that were created between indigenous and free Blacks along the coast of North America to sustain life. The *quilombo*, maroonage, and *Sumak Kawsay/buen vivir* traditions in South America are long held struggles to hold onto cultural traditions and carve out a livelihood outside the bondage that inequality, neoliberal policies, and the colonization of development creates.

### **A Brief Overview of Solidarity Economy Values, Practices and Institutions**

So far, we have only tip-toed around a key question – what economic practices and institutions are seen as belonging to the solidarity economy? In the past two decades, the solidarity economy has come to be associated with a wide variety of practices and institutions around the world which express the values associated with the movement of movements. Our discussion here will focus

on the economic values, practices and institutions that are seen as comprising the solidarity economy in the U.S.

**--Solidarity Economy Values:** In the U.S., core solidarity economy values are defined as democracy, equity, sustainability, solidarity and pluralism. Individually, these values are recognizable positions that are broadly accepted. When brought together and acted upon, they set a foundational platform for asserting systemic change. Democracy extends into the economy, becoming an everyday lived experience that inverts the hierarchical logics that are core to capitalistic organizations. Modes of shared leadership and decision making become normalized expectations. Equity is broadly about fairness, accessibility and inclusivity, but is also about centering marginalized groups in solidarity economy practices. Sustainability respects the agency of nature and places humans within regenerative cycles to nature. Pluralism understands that there is no single answer. Instead it seeks to celebrate the diverse possibilities that emerge from traditions that are geographic and culturally located. Solidarity, as mentioned above, recenters the relational connections and caring for one another that are vital for our wellbeing.

Ultimately, the importance of these values comes as they are lived, experienced, explored, translated, and contended with in numerous contexts. Solidarity economy values underlie a new type of economic agency that is emerging within advanced capitalist economies.

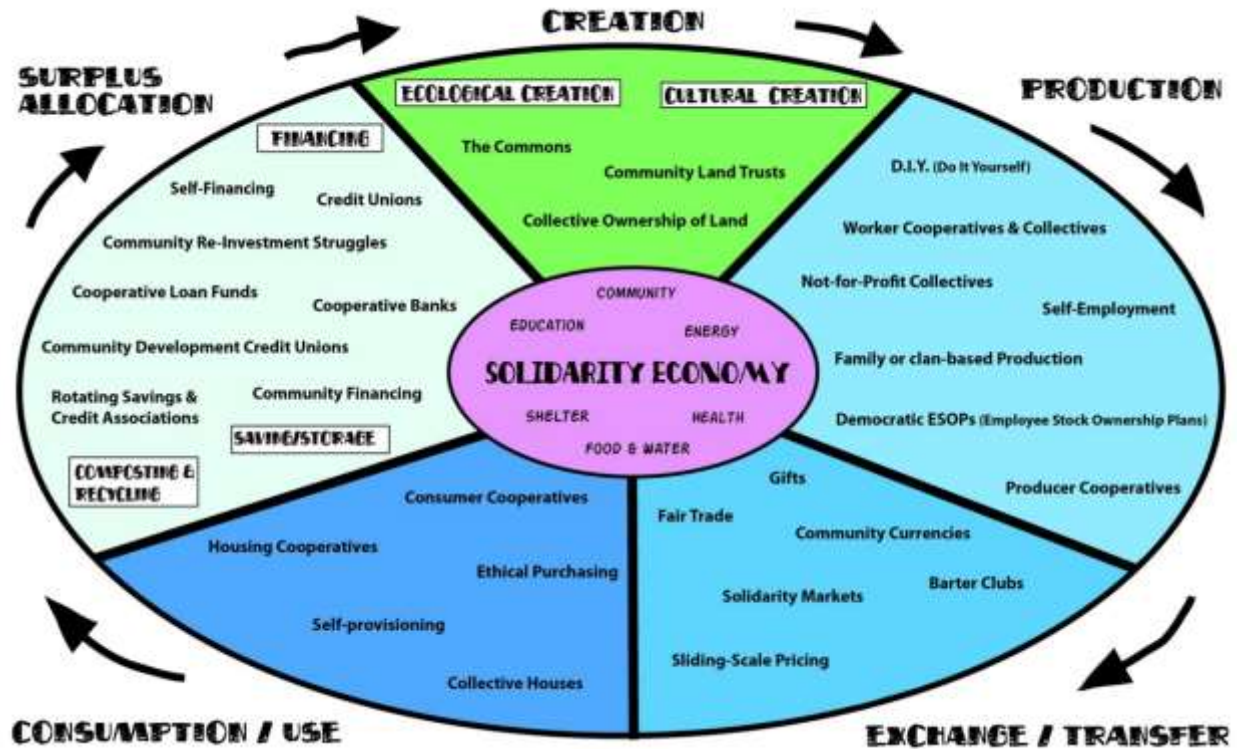
**--“Homo Solidaritous”: Solidarity Economy Agency:** At the heart of the solidarity economy is “homo solidaritous” (Kawano, 2010) – solidarity economy agency – rather than “homo economicus” whom we discussed above, who animates capitalist economies. Solidarity economy agency involves caring about the effects of one’s behavior on other people and the environment, as well as taking care of oneself and one’s family. Instead of the zero-sum game of capitalism (I win-you lose or vice versa), the solidarity economy is based on the belief that cooperation is not only possible, it is desirable. It envisions the market economy – and nonmarket practices, institutions, and exchanges – as benefiting all, “lifting all boats.” Solidarity economics is, then, a positive sum game of mutuality, where one pursues the goal of benefiting the others whom one affects as well as oneself.

The concepts which have developed to describe this new kind of agency are socially responsible and stake-holders. Socially responsible consumption, work, production, and investment all involve wanting to have a positive effect on other people and the planet – as well as striving to fulfill one’s own needs. In the case of the solidarity economy business, this means not only caring about the stockholders or owners of the business, but also about its “stake-holders” – all who are affected by the actions of the business, who thus all have a “stake” in what it does. The fully solidaritous business values the well-being of its owners, workers, consumers, community, suppliers, “competitors,” neighbors, local government, and anyone else affected by its actions, and thus takes its effects on them into account when it makes its decisions about what to produce and how to produce it. The increasingly common practices of socially responsible or green consumption, socially responsible investment and socially responsible business (maximizing the “3 P’s – people, profit, planet) are all examples of the proliferation of solidarity economy agency within market economies alongside narrowly-self-interested capitalist agency.



**--Solidarity Economy Practices and Institutions:** In 2006, Ethan Miller created a wheel of solidarity economy institutions that has been widely shared within the global solidarity economy movement. He divides the wheel of the solidarity economy into five sectors – creation, production, exchange, consumption, and surplus allocation – and then identifies solidarity economy institutions (and some practices) within each sector (see Figure 3).

FIGURE 3. The Solidarity Economy Wheel (Miller, 2006)



We will discuss the main sectors of the solidarity economy in turn.

**--Solidarity Economy Production:** Core to the solidarity economy vision is the replacement of businesses that exploit workers and extract resources with worker-owned and -run cooperatives. This places control of production in the hands of those doing the production. In doing so it allows the production to be responsive to values and needs - rather than organized with the overriding goal of profit maximization. Producer cooperatives – historically common among small farmers – bring worker/owners together. DIY – do it yourself – production and self-employment not only center the worker as the owner, but also resituates production on a more localized and responsible scale. Social enterprises are solidaritous in that they produce materials that respond to a social need.. Many businesses embody at least some solidarity economy values, for example, using recycled materials, providing paid parental leave, or profit sharing.

**--Solidarity Economy Work:** Solidarity economy work (both productive and reproductive) means striving to do work that uses one’s special talents and skills to contribute to society as a whole, in ways that are affirming and empowering of oneself and one’s co-workers. It also accounts for reproductive and care work that is not typically considered in traditional economic thought. SE

forms of working include the crucial work of raising children with solidarity values and awareness; being part of worker- or producer-owned cooperative; working for a business which embodies socially responsible principles; and acting as a whistle-blower on unjust, destructive, and/or illegal practices occurring in one's workplace.

**--Solidarity Economy Exchange and Distribution:** Solidarity forms of exchange include a number of forms of gifting and/or getting for free, from open source, freecycling, charity, volunteer and unpaid work, and skillshares to freeganism (living off of the waste stream). Informal ways of organized sharing like mutual aid, swapping and bartering help people fill their needs when their income is limited, and allow them to do so without taxing the environment. Not obeying the laws of private property when they are unfair – by refusing to leave one's home upon eviction, squatting on unused land or in abandoned homes, or continuing to work in factories after their owners have shut them down – is another example. Time trade circles facilitate the exchange of services through participation in an egalitarian, internet-facilitated, exchange community where one hour of anyone's time has the same value. Local currencies have been created as a way to use money to facilitate specialization and exchange in the service of local communities.

**--Solidarity Economy Consumption:** Socially responsible consumption -- i.e. caring about how the products you purchase were produced, and about the effects of your consumption on others and the environment – is a key part of SE consumption. This involves looking for “fair trade” and green products, as well as minimizing your consumption -- rather than maximizing it --by reusing, repairing, recycling, and sharing with others. Sharing on a larger scale, another important part of the solidarity economy, is accomplished through the collective provision of public goods such as parks and roads, funded by taxes, and through the guarantee of the right of all to health care, education, housing, and jobs. Buying clubs, consumer coops, and housing cooperatives/cohousing are also important examples.

**--Solidarity Economy Saving and Investing:** There are a number of ways that one can participate in and build the solidarity paradigm in this sector. Banking with a socially responsible bank invests in projects that align with specific community held values, overcoming the limits defined by profit driven, investor benefiting models. Public banks can also play this function supporting the flow of funds into and through communities. There are community investment funds that gather pots of local and global private capital to be used for community projects. They develop the financial strength to invest in ways that help others and the planet through vehicles like socially responsible investment or pension funds or impact investing. Cooperative saving – through a credit union, mutual, or rotating credit association – is a solidarity economy form, as is crowd-sourcing. These all seek to shift the financial sector from solely focusing on profit maximization toward well-being which includes quality childcare and education, worker cooperative development, and public goods.

**--Solidarity Economy and Land:** Forms of holding land and resources in common existed in precapitalist societies and are being revived and lifted up by the solidarity economy movement as “the commons.” Community land trusts are a form of land holding that marries community ownership and stewarding of land with individual ownership of homes built on it. This separates the value of the land from the value of the home, allowing the land to reside outside speculative markets that drive up value solely for profit and have made housing unaffordable in most U.S.

cities. Similarly, Land Banks gather property to use it in the service of community goals whether that is housing or food production.

Solidarity economy institutions of work, production, consumption, land-holding, and exchange/distribution collectively form a solidarity economy ecosystem. Each is deeply connected to the other. In order to truly move to a solidarity economy, action must be taken across them all and integrated together. Cooperatives identify anchor institutions with like values to purchase their products, and look to source their inputs from solidarity economy businesses, creating solidarity economy supply chains. Socially responsible individuals contribute their labor to solidarity economy businesses, and then use their earnings to purchase from other ones. Another key process which connects solidarity economy participants is solidarity economy networking, which we will discuss below.

At this time in the U.S., most examples of the solidarity economy institutions we have discussed here lift up at most a few of the solidarity economy values. However, to fully realize the vision of the solidarity economy, they must address all solidarity economy values.

### **Growing <sup>1</sup> the Solidarity Economy**

The solidarity economy represents an economic way forward beyond the unjust, inefficient, divisive, and violent racist patriarchal ecologically-destructive capitalist system which dominates our planet. At this point in time, and in most places, the solidarity economy formally represents a smaller part of economic life. A key question is then how can we grow the solidarity economy in order to move beyond the extractive and destructive tendencies of capitalism? What are the forces or movements which are fueling the shift from inequality to solidarity and contributing to the growth of the solidarity economy. We will look at four factors here – social movements, education, incubation, mapping, and crises, and then devote the following section to discussing another key factor – solidarity economy networking.

**--Social Movements:** One key force in the paradigm shift from inequality to solidarity are the social movements challenging inequality – in particular, the worker/anti-classist, anti-racist, feminist, and ecology movements. Each combats a different form of inequality entrenched in the dominant economic system. The solidarity economy's core values of anti-racist, feminist, class, and LGBTQ+ equity and sustainability/valuing mother earth have been generated by these social movements as they have come together in a movement of movements. This process is exemplified by the World Social Forum movement (Fisher and Ponniah, 2003), but is also present in many other movements, such as Black Lives Matter/Movement for Black Lives, which stand against all forms of inequality and domination.

In the late 20th and early 21st centuries, the geography of identity politics – in which workers, people of color, and women struggle for their liberation – has been expanded to include solidarity politics. Solidarity politics recognizes the various ways identity impacts our individual lives, as a foundation for political action. However, it also values the multidimensional dynamisms of our lived experiences in creating a response that unites us across the differences and inequalities fabricated by the capitalist system and the larger inequality paradigm. In other words, we acknowledge that all of the 'isms are intersecting (Crenshaw, 2013; Gonzalez, 1988), mutually determining, and part of a larger system of inequalities which must be overthrown in their

entirety. As such, solidarity politics is the basis for the emerging solidarity economy which connects people and institutions around the globe in a set of increasingly interconnected, egalitarian, democratic, mutually-beneficial, cooperative and sustainable economic institutions (Matthaei, 2018b). Ethan Miller’s tree of solidarity diagram (2012) illustrates the way that the solidarity economics and culture grow in the soil created by the social movements.



Figure 3: Growing Solidarity (Miller, 2012)

Social movements are at the forefront of teaching us how to recognize, affirm and care about, and cooperate with each other in a landscape meant to fracture and divide us. For solidarity economy movements in the US, this means centering oppressed peoples’ experiences and leadership, and being ready to learn from others who experience oppression as an everyday experience. It means searching for solutions that are mutually beneficial. It means learning to welcome difference, and to realize that conflict among mutually respectful people can be generative. This is a long and arduous process of reeducating ourselves and reversing inequality paradigm programming. As Adrienne Maree Brown puts it, our solidaristic relationship has to move “at the speed of trust” (Brown, 2017). Solidarity politics is intertwined with an economy of care that uplifts loving relationships, ethical life choices, and unity consciousness, i.e. seeing oneself as part of an interdependent, mutually supportive whole.

The development of solidaristic culture fuels the development of the solidarity economy, centered as it is in socially responsible agency – and the development of solidarity economy practices and institutions help develop and sustain solidaristic, anti-inequality culture. This is a process. Initially solidarity politics is about developing tensions with our present modes of inequality. This opens up the cracks within which solidaristic values and practices can emerge. (Araos, 2023). At the same time, it means imagining and experimenting with alternatives. As is commonly said in the movement, ‘we build the road as we travel,’ evolving ourselves and our institutions multidimensionally from inequality to solidarity, from violence to peace and love, from scarcity to abundance, from oligarchy to democracy.

**--Education and Consciousness-Raising:** An important piece to creating a solidarity politics is education and consciousness-raising around the solidarity economy. This happens in both formal and informal ways. Movements organize book clubs and study core texts that open an understanding of key ideas and practices. They organize trainings and curricula as a means for political education. USSEN has SE 101, People’s Hub has Mapping our Futures, NPQ (Non-Profit Quarterly) has articles and webinars, and other new programs are popping up that not only create awareness of how the economy works but also provide examples from around the world that inspire us to action. These include solidarity economy tours, where SE activists from one city or country visit those in another, and their SE institutions. In Higher Education, we are starting to see courses, departments, and research beginning globally. Courses in the past have included solidarity economy as part of broader conversations about economics and politics, but we now have courses specifically focused on solidarity economies. In the Spring of 2022, Matthew co-taught a course on solidarity economies, which brought together classes at the University of Virginia, Indiana University, and the Federal University of Parana.<sup>ii</sup> Initiatives include the International Labor Organization’s Academy on Social and Solidarity Economy; the National University of Quilmo’s Masters Program in Social and Solidarity Economy in Buenos Aires; and solidarity economy programs at Georgetown University and the University of Illinois at Chicago. In many cases, universities and colleges are partnering with movements to support the solidarity economy.

**--Incubation and Experimentation:** Another means of growing the solidarity economy is incubation of and experimentation with solidaristic practices. A growing presence of collectives and nonprofits dedicated to growing a particular solidarity economy institution in a region or country is emerging. Participatory budgeting began in Brazil and is now a worldwide practice; in the US, it is being spearheaded by the Participatory Budgeting Project. Worker cooperatives are being incubated by non-profit organizations such as Wellspring, The Democracy Collaborative/Evergreen, and Tosepan. These are inspired by the Mondragon complex of cooperatives in Spain. Models of land commoning are being tried as a means to challenge the market based, speculative land ownership models via land trusts and shared modes of agriculture such as the Agrarian Land Trust. Each of these experiments share a vision for an economy based in solidarity, but the practices are being translated and developed differently in different contexts and geographies.

**--Research and Mapping:** Another action that has been vital to growing the solidarity economy is research, including a variety of mapping activities that have developed since the early 2000’s. A breadth of research has taken place since the 1990s to better understand the wealth of practices

that could be included under the larger solidarity economy umbrella. Socioeco.org emerged from European based organizing and research to create a library of solidarity economy policies, publications, and practices that span global geographies and languages. In countries, such as Brazil, where there has been a commitment to supporting solidarity economies at the state level, an extensive mapping project was undertaken to document the existence, location, and contact information for solidarity economy institutions across the sectors. These provide information to consumers and businesses seeking to be solidaritous, as well as aiding solidarity economy infrastructure development and the alignment of capital with policies. Others create thematic maps of the solidarity economy, documenting the existence and prevalence of cooperatives, food justice institutions, participatory budgeting, and the like. Researchers of the US Solidarity Economy developed a map in the mid 2010's that brought together data from various organizations as a means to see the solidarity economy and start to build networks (<https://solidarityeconomy.us/>). More localized efforts in New York and Virginia have used maps not only as a way of seeing the solidarity economy, but also as a way to establish a collective organizing base for education and incubation.

**--Crises:** Until stronger solidarity economy ecosystems, policies, and infrastructures are in place, economic crisis remains a key means to grow the solidarity economy. Failures of our existing practices and institutions force people to find other ways to survive. Coming together through cooperation to create alternative, mutually beneficial institutions is a natural response to the failures of capitalism. Crises in provisioning brings people together in structures of mutual aid, as happened widely during COVID. Unemployment brought the MST, Brazil's Landless Workers Movement, together to take over unused lands for their use. An economic crisis in Argentina in the late 1990s which caused widespread factory closings spurred workers to occupy and often find a way to buy their workplaces, creating worker-owned cooperatives (Klein and Lewis, 2004). Knowledge of the catastrophic effects of climate change, or of the exploitation of workers in the global supply chain, motivates people to act socially responsible in their consumption, or to start social enterprises with the goal of solving pressing social problems.

### **Solidifying Solidarity: Solidarity Economy Networking<sup>iii</sup>**

A key task of solidarity economy movement is to create networks connecting solidarity economy actors and institutions, many of which are taking place within silos or contained within specific contexts. The challenge is to place them in relationship to each other, integrating and magnifying them across solidarity economy ecosystems, and start building an interdependent, cooperative, many-faceted economic system that can provision our needs, as an alternative to capitalism. Since the mid 1990's, networks have been organizing, and we are seeing the growth of local, regional, national, continental, and global networks that connect those who are building the solidarity economy to one another. Some of these networks formally identify with the solidarity economy, and others do not. These networks exchange best practices, provide mutual support, build political power, and connect the local to the global and vice versa. A rich 'network of networks' has been established with activity taking place on every continent. In the continued churning of the capitalist machine, 1000 new seeds have sprouted in response.

At the global level, RIPESS (The Intercontinental Network for the Promotion of the Social Solidarity Economy) was envisioned in 1997 and formalized in 2002. With a focus on organizing and advocating for the social solidarity economy, it brings together national and sectoral initiatives

to foster international collaboration. The network works at both the local and global levels to bring greater legitimacy to systemic, transformative change. In response to the 2008 global financial crisis and the United Nations commitment to sustainable development, the UN Task Force on Social Solidarity Economy was established in 2013. This brought together various UN departments, the International Labor Organization, RIPESS, the International Cooperative Alliance, and the Mont-Blanc Meetings (now the International Social Solidarity Forum) to support inclusive, rights-based and sustainable development. Since its inception the UNTSSE has further sought to incorporate solidarity economy values, gather leaders, and make visible sustainable projects. In 2023, several UN member states and the UNTSSE submitted a resolution before the UN General Assembly recognizing the social and solidarity economies. This passed and in doing so gave the solidarity economy further legitimacy at the intergovernmental level.

Latin America has long led and coordinated the global solidarity economy movements with a mix of indigenous, feminist, leftist, and environmental movements with decades-long histories. This has produced a variety of networks and institutions that have been developed at both the national and regional levels. RIPESS Latin America and the Caribbean (RIPESS-LAC) has worked as a continental network “to bring together community, associative, cooperative, and mutual organizations, as well as citizen movements working for a solidarity economy in Latin America.” (RIPESS-LAC, 2023) They focus on supporting the production and exchange of resources and knowledge to strengthen the base of an alternative movement to the current capitalist system. They coordinate with alliances and coalitions from Mexico to Chile, Cuba to Brazil that are working at the national level. (K. Araos, interview with Solidarity Research Center, March 2022).

Taking Brazil as an example, we can see how national, state, and local initiatives form an SE ecosystem. There, the combination of constitutional changes in the late 90s/early 2000’s, the strength of unionized labor, investment in cooperatives, and federal policies have built a broad network to support a pluralistic solidarity economy. This includes the creation of the Brazilian Solidarity Economy Forum (FBES), a Federal Secretariat for the Solidarity Economy, and a network of over 200 SE incubators. Beyond this there are the wealth of grassroots SE organizations such as the Banco Palmas, the Landless Workers Movement, Participatory Budgeting, and the Livres Project that are working across institutions to restructure finance, land, investment, and food production to move beyond capitalist/neoliberal logics (G. Prado interview with Solidarity Research Center, December 2022).

Africa has seen similar developments at the national and continental level specifically in relation to the informal economy. The African Network for Social and Solidarity Economy (RAESS) is a non profit organization coordinating efforts across levels of civil society. Initiatives are also working to develop greater knowledge and development of cooperatives businesses to support stable income, economic growth, and food security. The International Cooperative Alliance-Africa and the Cooperative Society for the Rural Development of Africa are leading these charges. These projects support young people and women with funds and training to create cooperative businesses. Once established, focus shifts to creating markets and integrating supply chains to build sustainable local economies (P. Meno, interview with Solidarity Research Center, December 2022).



A diversity of solidarity economy practices have developed in Asia as a response to the cultural and political histories of the region. In India, the Sarvodaya Action Research Centre is integrating solidarity economic practices with Gandhian concepts of self-reliance rooted in love, truth, and justice. Working at the micro/informal scale, Indonesian programs are using SSE as a means of community development and poverty alleviation. While these terms are new, there is a deep commitment to environmental, indigenous, and feminist organizing. Significant efforts are taking place in Japan, Korea, and China that are connecting historical informal practices with new legal, political systems. All of these are connected through the Asian Solidarity Economy Forum and the Pacific Asia Resource Center, which are further linking and advocating for the wealth of projects that are taking place (S. Tanaka, interview with Solidarity Research Center, 2023).

Europe has one of the strongest networks of solidarity economy activity due to the history of union organizing, agricultural sustainability efforts, and investment in social welfare. RIPPSS Europe brings together a breadth of activity across the dimensions of participatory economies, social justice, environmental justice, and human rights. They focus on linking practitioners, theoreticians and policy makers to promote SSE development that realizes alternative modes of production, consumption, and savings, and exchange. Mentioned earlier, Mondragon is long held as an example of sustainable, community focused economic ecosystems. They are specifically focused on centering people through job creation and the transformation of society instead of a sole interest in capital accumulation. The Italian Solidarity Economy Network (RIES) has sought to formalize a new integrated distribution and logistics network that brings a diversity of producers and consumers together. Whereas initiatives like URGENCI (Urban-Rural networks: Generating New forms of Exchanges between Citizens) work to build new urban-rural networks for agroecology and community supported agriculture. They have developed a transnational network that brings producers and consumers into new relationships. (J. Hitchman and J. Nardi, interviews with Solidarity Research Center, 2023).

Finally, in North America we see a broad range of solidarity economy activity and a variety of networking processes taking place in both Canada and the United States. The Chantier De L'Economie Sociale developed in Montreal in response to the impact of globalization on local industrial economies. Focused on the social economy (cooperatives, mutuals, and nonprofits), they seek to build enterprises with a social purpose, meeting the needs of their community through goods and services. As similar initiatives developed, the Canadian Community Economic Development Network came together to further support the values of participation, democracy, and entrepreneurship that challenges the status quo. In 2007, Julie, Emily Kawano, Ethan Miller and others organized a program of sessions at the first U.S. Social Forum in Atlanta which introduced the solidarity economy framework, movement, and institutions, with the goal of organizing the U.S. Solidarity Network. This has coalesced those working across cooperatives, housing, food, indigenous organizing, racial justice, and participatory democracy practices to strategize and scale up solidarity economy in the U.S. (E. Kawano, D. Cobb, and M. Hill, interview with Solidarity Research Center, December 2022).

In each context, there is a continued solidification of the connections between grassroots movements that are responding to the crises and harm that capitalist systems are perpetuating. Siloed actions are beginning to congeal and create the solidarity that will allow them to respond more creatively and powerfully to the global hegemony of capitalism. Each initiative is starting in



a different position, but they are beginning to find shared identities and concerns that lead to a deepening consciousness that another world is already around us.

### **Current Issues and Challenges for the Solidarity Economy Movement**

**--*Competition with the Capitalist System:*** In order to grow and supplant capitalism, the solidarity economy needs to out-compete it: for peoples' spending; for their labor and savings; and for their very hearts and minds. The solidarity economy holds the high road in the sense of embodying values of caring, cooperation, fairness, and democracy that are lifted up across the world – compared to capitalism's value foundation of profit-motivation, greed, and fear. However, solidarity economy enterprises face higher costs than capitalist ones because they “internalize externalities.” They take the “high road,” paying their workers (or themselves, if they are a worker-owned cooperative), well; minimizing resource depletion and pollution, through clean green technologies and designing products which are durable and repairable; and taking the needs of all their stake-holders into account. In contrast, “low road” capitalist businesses dump as many costs as they can on others, and thus can offer their products at a cheaper price. Also, the large, capitalist corporations which dominate the economic landscape have huge marketing budgets which they spend on convincing consumers that they need their product.

One way that solidarity economy businesses can out-compete low-road capitalist ones is by attracting consumers, workers, and investors who have solidarity economy values – hopefully a growing share of the populace, especially as the failures of capitalism become more and more obvious through climate change and other disasters. Another advantage of solidarity economy enterprises is that their workers are more motivated than those for low-road ones because they believe in what they are doing, and benefit from their own hard work, through ownership (if they are in a worker-owned cooperative), profit-sharing, or increasing wages. A third advantage is that solidarity economy enterprises can connect and support one another through supply chains and other mechanisms, making it easier to weather business cycles. For these reasons, worker cooperatives have been found to have lower failure rates than traditional capitalist businesses (Murray, 2011).

A second way that the solidarity economy can outcompete capitalism is through government. Competing with capitalist forces for control of government is a huge challenge for the solidarity economy movement. In capitalist-dominated economies, the democratic process is usually high-jacked by a small minority of the super-wealthy and large corporations, via campaign financing, lobbying, and outright bribes. They use the power of their wealth to make government protect and increase their wealth and power. But, in countries with a democratic election process, people with solidarity values can use their numbers to outvote the 0.1% and create regulations and laws that embody the solidarity paradigm.

For example, regulations and policies can be (and have been) enacted across the world that embody solidarity economy values, such as living wages and worker safety, environmental protection, anti-trust laws, and reparations for past damages done to colonized and enslaved peoples. Policies can also be created which favor solidarity economy enterprises through direct subsidies, small business loan programs, and as suppliers to the government. World trade policies can be changed to prohibit the trading of the products of low-road firms. Laws can be changed, such that the for-profit limited-liability corporation is abolished (Move to Amend), and worker-owned cooperatives and

cohousing communities are enabled. At this point, many nations – including Brazil, Bolivia, South Korea, and France ([http://socioeco.org/app\\_legislation\\_en.html](http://socioeco.org/app_legislation_en.html)), as well as the U.N. -- have created statutes supporting the development of the social solidarity economy. In the U.S., the greatest progress has been happening on the city level, as part of the Fearless Cities/Municipalist movement. For example, in 2015, the government of New York City earmarked over \$1 million for the development of worker cooperatives (NCBA, 2015). While all of these struggles are worthwhile, public financing of elections - the political revolution that Bernie Sanders advocates – is required to level the playing field so that all citizens have the same power, and can create the political and legal infrastructure needed for a solidarity economy.

**--Competing Frameworks:** A number of frameworks and ideologies have developed historically which envision a way forward beyond racist patriarchal anti-ecological capitalism. Each of these has its own flavor, grounding, focus, and set of key concepts. If we reside in the logic of inequality endemic to capitalist discourse, they are all in competition with one another. And the question for activists and activist academics is, which is right? Which is the best? Which one should you pick? While tensions do exist among the many transformative movements across the globe, at its best, the solidarity economy movement is true to its pluralistic values, lifting up diversity and embracing collaboration across the many other frameworks and movements that envision transformation that seek pathways beyond capitalism to a more just and sustainable post-capitalist world. Indeed, many activists and organizations are affiliated with multiple ideologies and movements. That said, we want to introduce you to some of the frameworks and ideologies that we find enrich and complement the solidarity economy framework:

**Sumak kawsay** or **buen vivir** (Ecuador and Bolivia) and decolonial economics (Chiapas; Araujo, 2023) have emerged from indigenous cosmologies, in response to being on the front lines of resistance and realizing alternatives. Each recognizes the deep connections that humans have with nature and the desire to be in harmony not only with the environment, but with each other.

**Ujima** (African and African American) and **sankofa** (Ghana) represent frameworks for economic transformation rooted in African culture and cosmology.

The **Sarvodaya programme** for social transformation in rural India, mentioned above, uses the principles of Gandhi to focus on the development of self-sufficient farms (Pasad 2009).

**Marxist influenced theory** has produced a specific class and material based analysis, which has evolved to incorporate feminist and racial perspectives. Julie, for example, calls herself a “Marxist-feminist-anti-racist-ecological economist” (Matthaei, 1996).

**Feminist Economic theory** challenges patriarchy, uplifts caring and the care economy, and asserts a need to value the vital role reproduction plays in the economy, In its most radical forms – i.e. when it incorporates anti-racism, anti-capitalism, and ecological principles – it merges with the solidarity economy framework and movement (Matthaei, 2018b).

In Chile, the **Regenerative Economics** framework is foundational to indigenous organizing . Its goal is to regenerate native landscapes and revive traditional economic practices and institutions (Budi Anumka, interview with Solidarity Research Center, 2023).

**Degrowth frameworks** (Kallis 2018) challenge the ever expanding level of economic activity inherent in Western economy theory, arguing for a reduction in consumption and production that works toward greater sustainability.

The **New Economy** framework is very similar to the solidarity economy framework, at least in the U.S., where it is championed by the New Economy Coalition (NEC). The latter brings together a wide array of organizations aimed at transforming capitalism and lifts up a broad swath of alternative economic practices based in social, environment, and economic justice. NEC has a representative on the U.S. Solidarity Economy Network board.

The **Sharing Economy** framework is promoted by the U.S.-based Shareable website. It educates about the full range of solidarity economy practices and institutions, and has sent representation to the U.S. Solidarity Economy Network board.

The **Social Economy** framework, popular in Canada and Europe, focuses on growing cooperatives, mutuals, and nonprofits, which value social needs over profit maximization (Amin 2009).

**RIPESS** itself is the Intercontinental Network for the Promotion of the Social Solidarity Economy. “Social solidarity economy” is a fusion of two frameworks – social economy and solidarity economy. Matthew is currently a member of the RIPESS board.

**Social Ecology** (Institute for Social Ecology), also referred to as eco-socialism, and emerging from anarchist traditions, repositions the relationship between society and the environment. It does so by challenging the centrality of hierarchy and domination, instead focusing on democracy and freedom through forms of symbiosis.

**Just Transition** is a framework put forward by the Climate Justice Alliance that advocates for a shift from an extractive economy to a regenerative economy, in a way that is just and equitable, including reparations for past harms (ITUC 2015).

From the inequality paradigm perspective, a tension is present in this multiplicity of ideologies and frameworks: the desire to have THE answer that moves us from inequality to solidarity. The solidarity economy framework and movement contends with this tension through its pluralistic viewpoint. It realizes that the solidarity economy has been emerging through the wealth of experiments, rooted in different frameworks and ideologies, that are responding to inequalities of all types, around the world. The solidarity economy takes as a given that there will never be one answer but rather many answers – thousands of alternatives, as the Sandinistas say. The abundance of frameworks and ideologies visibilizes and in turn creates a wealth of post-capitalist economic practices and institutions. The solidarity economy movement at all its levels – local, state, regional, national, continental, and global –confronts the challenge of bringing these frameworks and movements together in mutual respect and cooperation as we build a post-capitalist economy and society that is inclusive of difference. At the same time, the solidarity economy framework offers progressive activists in all of these movements a way forward towards a post-capitalist economy.

**--Who is In, Who is Out?** Another challenge for the solidarity economy movement is the presence of disagreements about which economic practices and institutions are part of the solidarity economy – and should be visible, advocated for, and supported – and which are not. Those who argue for a strict definition claim that we need to focus on systemic change. Others espouse the “big tent” approach, which argues for the inclusion of practices and institutions which only partially embody solidarity economy values. A key area of contention is whether capitalist businesses which are “socially responsible,” in terms of striving to have a positive impact on their stakeholders, are part of the solidarity economy. Those who argue for their inclusion say that solidarity economy practices and institutions lie along a spectrum from inequality to solidarity. Uplifting and encouraging socially responsible businesses helps inject solidarity economy values into production, and thus grows the solidarity economy.

Those who argue for exclusion point to the fact that capitalist businesses cannot ever fulfill the solidarity economy value of freeing workers from class oppression by owners. They also note that capitalist firms now commonly publicize socially responsible initiatives to obfuscate their egregious actions in other areas (the term “green-washing” was coined to refer to such actions vis a vis the environment). Those defending the progressive but capitalist firm point out that other solidarity economy institutions, such as worker-owned and -run cooperatives, may not be practicing other solidarity economy values such as being feminist, anti-racist, and/or sustainable, yet the movement includes and supports them.

One compromise is to see progressive capitalist businesses as potential “allies” to the solidarity economy movement, depending on how genuine their commitment is to solidarity economy values. Another is to use Andre Gorz’s concept of a “non-reformist reform” (1967). This would entail deciding which practices and institutions to support based on whether they advance the process of systemic change to a post-capitalist, solidarity economy. Whatever one’s position, a key conclusion is that it is beneficial always to situate one’s support for a solidaritous institution or practice within a larger vision of systemic change and paradigm shift (Kawano and Matthaiei, 2020).

***The Challenge of Creating Solidarity Culture: Constructive Conflict within the Movement:*** Another challenge for the solidarity economy is to bring people and institutions together across the divisions, inequalities, and wounds created by the inequality paradigm.

This is new territory, full of promises and challenges. Incredible creativity and power can be unleashed when people can come together in their full diversity – accepting and celebrating their differences –and cooperate around common goals. Resources can be made available for the solidarity economy when people with privileges use them for transformation.

But people, practices, and institutions can easily reproduce the old inequalities as they participate in the solidarity economy movement or in solidarity economy economic institutions. Even when people and groups are self-consciously committed to being feminist, anti-racist, and anti-classist, it is difficult to move beyond unconscious conditioning about these inequalities. Trust across differences is difficult to achieve, and microaggressions that reflect inequality paradigm culture can cause alienation and rupture, within groups and organizations, and among organizations that try to come together in coalitions.

One way movements are learning to work with these challenges is to accept and value differences, and view conflict as a source of learning and growth. As Audre Lorde (2012) wrote:

Difference is that raw and powerful connection from which our personal power is forged... We have been taught to either ignore our differences or to view them as causes for separation and suspicion rather than as forces for change...Survival is learning to take our difference and make them strengths.

Within our multi-dimensional movements for transformation, those who have privilege need to be aware that they have blind spots, commit to unlearning their “ism’s,” be open to critical feedback, and encourage leadership by members of oppressed groups. Those who are members of oppressed groups need to remember that those who are socially privileged can be valuable allies and those who share their oppression may not. At the same time, they may need the support of a group or institution that does not include people with the privilege they lack, i.e. their “oppressors.” We all need to learn how to advocate for ourselves while at the same time advocating for the best for others, and for the whole.

\ The challenges of dealing with racial/ethnic, gender and class differences and inequality add to the enormous challenge of finding ways to make decisions in truly democratic and cooperative manner. The inequality paradigm creates top-down hierarchies which serve their owners or heads. It is a challenge to find new ways to make decisions, including new ways of assigning responsibilities that are not oppressive (Sociocracy for All, 2023; Harmonize, 2023).

In addition to divisions within the solidarity economy movement broadly construed, in the US, an enormous rift has developed between “the right” and “liberals/the left.” For the last 50 years, equal opportunity forms of feminism and anti-racism have been dominant over more radical forms. The former focus on winning more equal representation within the economic hierarchy, a zero sum game from the perspective of whites and men – not the solidarity economy goal of transforming and transcending capitalism and the inequality paradigm per se. Anger of oppressed groups against those with privilege is encouraged, and then exaggerated by mainstream media to fan racist, sexist, and neo-Nazi sentiment. Solidarity economy policies such as economic human rights for all (to education, health care, living wage employment, housing) hold the promise of simultaneously undermining inequality and bridging this enormous gap (Nader, 2016).

### **Conclusion**

The solidarity economy is, as we have seen, a framework for visualizing and organizing transformation to a more just and sustainable economic system. Rather than positing a utopian vision, it identifies a set of values and of economic practices and institutions that already exist, alongside and within capitalist ones. Then it calls on individuals, groups, and institutions to rally behind the solidarity economy vision – as part of solidarity economy movement – in whatever capacities they can. It encourages us all to see ourselves as small but significant parts of the process of saving our sinking ship by being part of the construction of a new and better one. And it encourages us to link up and network with others who are doing the same, to develop and strengthen the division of labor and web of exchanges amongst us, constructing an economy based on solidarity values.

Solidarity Economy movements in the US have used the metaphor of the butterfly to represent the transformation of economies from inequality to solidarity. economies from inequality to solidarity. (Kawano, 2010). When a caterpillar makes its cocoon, it starts to form imaginal cells, each with the potential to become a part of the emergent butterfly. At the beginning, the caterpillar's immune system perceives them as alien and kills them off. But as they find each other and clump together, they gain strength and together build a butterfly.

The solidarity economy is perpetuating a similar mode of transformation that is taking place at both the individual and societal level. As individuals, we are shedding the habits and logics that have separated us and placed us in competition not only with one another but with the world that surrounds us. This involves ways of being, feeling, and thinking, and doing which are based on the best impulses within us: our capacities to love and care for ourselves and for others, and to cooperate. As a society it means developing and practicing ways of being in relationship to each other which are egalitarian, democratic, and mutually beneficial. As we have seen here, both these new ways of being and doing, and these practices and institutions, are already proliferating across our planet.

Given the multitude of crises that inhabit our everyday lives, resistance is a natural tendency. Social movements must strive to keep the caterpillar alive and healthy, against great odds. The everyday needs of our communities must be our core focus. Yet, the solidarity economy movement calls for us to take another step, to create a butterfly. None of us, and none of our organizations or movements, can build a new economy on our own. But together, with shared values and vision, weaving the past and future into our present, we will. We invite you to seek out the histories and practices that are taking place in your own community. Become an imaginal cell, and help others do the same. Be a part of the movement from inequality to solidarity.

*Julie Matthaei is [Professor Emerita of Economics at Wellesley College](#), and co-founder and board-member of the U.S. Solidarity Economy Network. She has written two prize-winning books on gender, race, and class in U.S. economic history, *An Economic History of Women in America* (1982) and, with Teresa Amott, *Race, Gender and Work: A Multicultural Economic History of Women in the U.S.* (1996). She co-edited *Solidarity Economy: Building Alternatives for People and Planet* (2008), based on a set of workshops at the first U.S. Social Forum in 2007 which she helped organize, and has written widely on the topics of gender/race/class and the solidarity economy.*

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## Endnotes

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<sup>i</sup> By growth, we are referring to the process of the solidarity economy replacing capitalist practices and institutions, not the overall growth of economic output.

<sup>ii</sup> Matthew Slaats, Patricia Basile and Carol Maziviero. 2022

<https://uploads.knightlab.com/storymapjs/a2424c21cc21a72e13edaea0026c6719/solidarity-economy-in-latin-america/index.html>

<sup>iii</sup> The basis for much of the global network information is based on a soon to be published report done by the Solidarity Research Center co-lead by Yvonne Liu and Matthew Slaats.

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