

CONSTRUCTING COMMONMENTALITIES:
TOWARD COLLABORATIVE GOVERNANCE, KNOWLEDGE AND
SUBJECTIVITY

By

Imil Ferrara

A Thesis Presented to

The Faculty of Humboldt State University

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts in Social Science: Environment and Community

Committee Membership

Dr. Yvonne Everett, Committee Chair

Dr. J. Mark Baker, Committee Member

Dr. John Meyer, Committee Member

Dr. J. Mark Baker, Program Graduate Coordinator

July 2020

ABSTRACT

CONSTRUCTING COMMONMENTALITIES: TOWARD COLLABORATIVE GOVERNANCE, KNOWLEDGE AND SUBJECTIVITY

Imil Ferrara

Western society's intractable social and environmental problems arise outside the bounds of classical liberal ideation, challenging the utilitarian rationality, decision-making faculty, and popular legitimacy of our liberal institutions. Through a qualitative analysis of three collaborative, community-based institutions, this study aims to identify and illuminate alternative conceptions and organizational relationships, which transcend liberal shortcomings and succeed precisely where liberal institutions have failed. It draws on Michel Foucault's account of liberal governance, discourse and subject formation, but employs a complex-systems lens to move from critical deconstruction to intentional normative construction, from radical subjectivism to a collaborative pragmatic realism, and from the critique of liberal governmentality to identifying and supporting alternatives. It concludes that collaborative institutional processes might be employed in the intentional development of unique *commonmentalities*—collectively organized structures, discourses and subjectivities—that overcome liberal crises by cultivating social, psychological and ecological resilience.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my deepest appreciation to my thesis committee. Yvonne Everett was an exceptional model and guide in connecting academic knowledge with a deep caring for diverse local communities, John Meyer offered vital orientation in the vast landscape of political theory, and Mark Baker provided a critical lens, theoretical foil and sense of urgency to my pursuit of positive social change. All three challenged my competing tendencies toward overstatement and convolution, and provided much-needed guidance for cutting, clarity and completion. I am also deeply indebted to my parents, my community collaborators, and other agents of benevolent intervention—human and extra-human alike—whom I interviewed or otherwise engaged in this conversive process. Experience and understanding are necessarily social, and I am profoundly grateful for your cooperative participation in processes of mutual instruction.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	iii
INTRODUCTION: INDIVIDUALITY, COMPLEXITY AND POSTMODERNITY.....	1
GROUNDS FOR A THEORY OF CONSTRUCTIVE COLLABORATION.....	16
Foucault’s Governmentality	16
From Deconstructive Criticism to Constructive Association	18
Orienting Speculative Action with Complexity Ontology	20
Peculiarities of Liberalism as System and Operative Rationality.....	23
Liberal Administrative Failures: The Bounded Rationalities of Market Individualism and Bureaucratic Expertise	25
A Return to Collaborative Governance	31
Collaborative Rationality, Discourse and Subject Formation	34
The Humanity, Psychology and Social Ecology of Intentional Community.....	38
THE PATTERN WHICH CONNECTS: EVOLUTIONARY EPISTEMOLOGY, POSTLIBERAL IMAGINATION AND MY COMMUNITY RESEARCH	45
Knowledge as Practical Discourse and Collaborative Conceptualization	46
My Positionality and Method	52
INSTANTIATION 1: COLLECTIVE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT—THE ROUND VALLEY LIBRARY COMMONS	56
INSTANTIATION 2: COLLABORATIVE SOLUTIONS TO COMPLEX SOCIAL- ECOLOGICAL PROBLEMS —THE WESTERN KLAMATH RESTORATION PARTNERSHIP.....	68

INSTANTIATION 3: COMMUNAL EDUCATION—MENDOCINO COMMUNITY HIGH SCHOOL.....	76
DISCUSSION: GROUNDED SELF-ORGANIZING INSTITUTIONS AS COMMONMENTALITY PRAXIS.....	89
Collaborative Governance: Instituting Intentional Community	89
Collaborative Discourse: The Development of Mutually Beneficial Understanding...	93
Collaborative Subjectivity: The Co-Creation of Cooperative Individuality.....	97
Amending and Transcending Systemic Failures in Modern Liberal Governance.....	102
Situated Knowledge and Context-Appropriate Collective Action	104
Co-Constructions of Meaning.....	108
Toward a More Collaborative Postmodernism.....	114
An Organizing Metaphor for Cooperative Social Construction	117
CONCLUSION: INTENTIONAL COLLECTIVE EVOLUTION—TOWARD A PROGRESSIVE POSTMODERN THEORY	122
REFERENCES	129

INTRODUCTION: INDIVIDUALITY, COMPLEXITY AND POSTMODERNITY

“The one thing we refuse to admit is that we are dependent upon ‘powers’ that are beyond our control... Gods and demons have not disappeared at all; they have merely got new names... In spite of our proud domination of nature, we are still her victims, for we have not even learned to control our own nature. Slowly, but it appears, inevitably, we are courting disaster.”

— Carl Jung (Jung & Franz, 1964, p. 101)

“What if explanations resorting automatically to power, society, discourse had outlived their usefulness and deteriorated to the point of now feeding the most gullible sort of critique?”

— Bruno Latour (Latour, 2004, p. 229)

“Everyone’s task is as unique as his specific opportunity to implement it.”

— Victor Frankl (Frankl, 2006, p. 109)

I believe we can better our situations through ongoing processes of collaboration. Integrating diverse experiences and relevant knowledges to identify practical solutions to concrete collective problems, we can cooperate in experimental interventions, and evaluate, share, learn from, improve upon, and find meaning in the results. In this study, I attempt to illuminate the beneficial function of such adaptive collaborative processes, and their potential for defining, motivating and sustaining beneficial actions through shared understandings imbued with unique personal significance. In three case studies, I

examine community-based institutions accommodating individuality, complexity and adaptive change through semi-formal structures that support self-organizing collaborative governance. From their analysis, I develop the claim that polycentric structures of intentional collaboration can facilitate the development of successful *commoners*—people capable of organizing mutual, sustainable, adaptable, and contextually relevant norms that meet the material and psychological needs of all.

I conceptualize—and present—complex processes of intentional collaboration in relation and contradistinction to two theoretical constellations particularly prominent today: liberalism and its postmodern critique. We all share and recount explanatory stories, part rational and part dramatic, to make sense of the world, share our experience with others, and find meaning for ourselves (Campbell, 2004). The following is a speculative meta-story, a narrative about people making and sharing narratives, which give them meaning, purpose and direction, appropriate to the tensions and contexts they inhabit. This meta-story joins in the postmodern rejection of grand metanarratives of premodern religion and modern liberal progress, but it also departs from divisive postmodern narratives that encourage exclusionary identity, categorical blame, incessant criticism, or linguistic warfare on organized history, reason and power. Rather, it affirms collective and reflective use of observation, language, analogy, reason and criticism, to understand our world and our place within it. And it identifies and endorses evolving progressions of intentional encounter, communication and adaptive problem-solving, to construct common vocabularies, practical understandings and shared motivations, and maintain resilient contexts for our mutual benefit.

The tension in this narrative revolves around liberal ideation, the socialist critique, and the thorny notion of the individual. Individuals arise from, shape and are shaped by, a multitude of worldly processes over time, in systemic relationships so complicated they defy definition. No surprise that throughout history we have simplified ourselves in our thinking, and failed to account for our complexity in our institutions. In modern capitalist nations, individuality's complexity is generally abbreviated by the particular assumptions promulgated in classical liberal discourse and modern liberal institutions (Bronk, 2009; Foucault, 1980, pp. 131–133). Our governments define and discipline us as independent subjects of a centralized polity, and our markets demand we think and act as independent worker-consumers in a vast impersonal economy. In the process, our polity and economy advance the spurious concept of fully autonomous individuals—independent, interchangeable parts, responsible for their own wellbeing, whose behavior is organized in markets and governments that constitute a great machine of society.

Liberal individualism is an extraordinary historical development that should not be dismissed coarsely. The classics gave us philosophy, early Christianity highlighted the primacy of free will, reformation Christians struggled for the autonomy of individual interpretation in the face of Catholic dogma, and Enlightenment philosophers fought hard to rid individuals from external coercion by any form of tradition (Locke, 2013; J. S. Mill, 2016; Steven Pinker, 2003, 2019; Postman, 2011; A. Smith, 2016; Voltaire, 2004). For three hundred years, the liberal intelligentsia championed realism before religion and rationality before revelation (Bronk, 2009; Postman, 2011). Understanding reason to be a function of individual minds, they insisted on and codified the sovereignty of individual

thought and individual will (Hobbes, 2018; Locke, 2013; J. S. Mill, 2016; Voltaire, 2004). Liberal governance gradually replaced traditional societies and feudal tyrannies—and, in successive struggles, the definition of who constituted an equal individual and was given full legal status in liberal society gradually expanded (Zinn, 2015). Liberal education was made universal, and the dominant worldview became that of scientific naturalism and a robust moral individualism (Bronk, 2009; Dewey, 1938; Hicks, 2004; Postman, 2011).

Though the material benefits of natural science and redemptive value of individual liberties are now broadly celebrated, the triumph of a liberal paradigm also came with costs. As the sanctity of the soul became the sovereignty of the individual, the protection of free thought, choice of action, and personal ownership became hallmarks of Western government and modern life. But liberalism's materialist and hyper-individualist ideation also obscured connection, interdependence and community. Emphasizing autonomous individuals acting independently to maximize personal self-interest, liberal ideas ignored and undermined processes by which people shared resources, developed attachments, built and acted on common narratives, and responded collectively to mutual circumstances. Displacing time-tested traditions and collectivist governance structures, liberal polities brought sweeping social and environmental change, and rapid exploitation of what were once commonly held resources (Polanyi, 1971). While liberal societies produced more and more possessions and knowledge, these goods served individual interests, often to the exclusion of shared values. Systematic inequality, chronic social disruption, and vast environmental destruction became grossly apparent. But, with

liberalism's myopic assumptions now self-propagating realities, our inherent capacity to serve collective interests is inhibited, and grave social and ecological ills remain.

Failings of liberalism have long inspired intellectual and political opposition (Bronk, 2009; Hicks, 2004; Lyotard, 1984; Postman, 2011; Zinn, 2015). Nostalgic romanticism sought the return of a more fully human past, and materialist Marxism anticipated a renewed collectivist future (Bronk, 2009, p. 5; Marx, 2004; Marx et al., 2019). Following the tragic experience and prolonged failure of modern communist governments, totalitarian Marxist change was largely discredited, but the Marxist critique of liberal institutions was retooled and revived in the critical discourses now triumphant in academic culture (Hicks, 2004). This critical theory stresses the causative force of the social, rather than that of the material or the individual, emphasizing the importance of dominating power structures, rather than economic production or personal freedom and responsibility (Foucault, 1980, 1991b; Lyotard, 1984).

Western liberal governments have generally responded to critics with piecemeal political solutions. They have expanded regulatory protections, and attempted to mitigate less-than-ideal consequences of market-based organization with the perfunctory lever of bureaucratic intervention informed by scientific expertise (Dryzek, 2005, pp. 75–98). However, this bureaucratic instrumentalism is itself predicated on individualistic and mechanistic assumptions. Acting on individuals as well as materials through centralized power and generalized knowledge, it lacks sensitivity to complexity, particular contexts, and ongoing developments, and is therefore plagued by its own unintended consequences. The perennial response to resulting bureaucratic failures has been a return

to market liberalization. The outcome is a persistence of social and ecological crises, towards which market forces are at best indifferent, and which governments lack the contextual knowledge, organizational sophistication, and political will to adequately resolve.

How can we progress towards a world that is more humane and sustainable, where ecological processes remain intact while every person has the physical and mental resources needed to succeed? Of course, such a grandiose objective immediately begs more questions: what does personal success mean, and what do people need to achieve it? Indeed, what is the purpose of human life, or is there one, or is there perhaps an infinite number? Are individuals fundamentally competitive and therefore their needs unavoidably conflicting, so that meeting everyone's needs is impossible? Suddenly we are mired in the intricacies of human value and emotion, experience and culture and desire. Suddenly there are so many variables, embedded in the vague subjective world of cultural constructs and internal human life, that our esteemed repositories of empirical science have little to offer in the way of orientation, let alone answers. It is at this point in thought and explanation that we generally fall back on our cultural assumptions and canons of theoretical knowledge. What does Plato say? What does the bible say? What does Adam Smith say? What about Karl Marx?

But we live in a strange and unprecedented time, of multifarious and divergent canons, or no canon at all. Suddenly, each of us is empowered to share our own viewpoint, with the push of a button, at lighting speeds, across vast geographic space, via a horizontal system of social networks with no agreed upon value hierarchy or

established definition of truth. And the change is more than just technological.

Philosophically, we have landed in postmodernity, a post-truth world, where knowledge is indeed subjective, reality is constructed, and everything is political. At this extraordinary time in social history, it seems our world is polarizing, atomizing and totalizing, all at the same time. My reality will always be just my own, and our interests will always be in conflict; it is me against you, they tell me, and our word against theirs (Foucault, 1980, 1991b; Lyotard, 1984). May the buffoon with the loudest voice and most powerful friends win.

Of course, this is not the whole story, even if it feels this way—particularly at this time in American politics. A generation ago and for centuries prior, religious orientations were still common, and the prevailing paradigm of educated Westerners was a secular, rational materialism (Bronk, 2009; Coole & Frost, 2010; Hicks, 2004, pp. 7–9). But as the authority of revelation has faded, our academies, once bastions of rationalism and a singular empirical science, have embraced social theory that, paradoxically, denies universality and claims of objectivity (Hicks, 2004, pp. 3, 14). The humanities and social sciences, previously our sources of established orientation, are now drift in a nebulous sea between denial of universal truth and the inversion of establishment as righteous cause (Robbins, 2004, pp. 12–13).

In these disciplines, a prominent critical postmodern zeitgeist aims to overcome calamities and inequities of liberalism by evoking Marx's language and critique of inequality and oppression, conjuring deterministic social construction, politicizing relationships and social spaces, and drawing attention to differences in outcome among

intersecting categories of social identity (Hicks, 2004; Young, 2011). But the next step in social change—from critique to creative transformation—remains unclear. And when criticisms are not directed at particular problems in specific contexts, and oriented toward building common understanding and implementing mutually acceptable solutions, they remain insensitive to complexities—including other perspectives, particulars of circumstance, and practicalities of implementation. With inadequate qualification and contextual consideration, their expression generates oppositional resistance, and efforts at application are likely to generate unintended consequences.

A more practical postmodern theory would be more sensitive to contextual complexities, and get beyond existential division and critical moralizing to inspire positive collective action. Grounded in human individuals and explicit human values rather than a nihilistic philosophical relativism, it would respect and operationalize the contexts, relationships and beneficial community processes that markets and bureaucracies displace, and harness individual agency to address modern failings through mutually supported endeavor. I strive to define such a theory below, and explore its form, implication and practical application. Taking both classical liberal individualism and authoritarian-leaning collectivism as imperfect ideologies based in obsolete modern ontology, I examine forms of social organization that adapt to inherent complexities of social and ecological reality, build socio-ecological resilience, and succeed where markets and bureaucratic governments have failed. It is my hope that, by bringing the generative function of relationship into sharper conceptual focus, we can operationalize inherent human capacities for collective intelligence and collective action—and learn to

overcome our bitter divisions, solve our most perplexing social problems, and facilitate positive transformation in each other and the world.

My revaluing of process and community follows from the acknowledgement of intrinsic limitations in objective knowledge and understanding. Information is too contingent, people and the world too dynamic and complex, and perception too constrained by the perceiver's conceptions and values, for anyone to know with objective certainty the right action for each situation. Fortunately, as humans we evolved to function in this reality, and the complexity of the world is mirrored in the complex functioning of both human brains and human social groups. Though minds and social groups cannot know *a priori* every right answer, we can learn and adapt to contexts full of learning and adapting systems. It is a matter of iteratively engaging our social and psychological resources—our traditions, our intuitions, and our feelings, as well as our rationalities—and allowing beneficial processes to unfold.

Strategic allowance and guidance of a benevolent social learning process requires our being sensitive to it, however, and such sensitivity is either developed or derailed by existing mental constructs—our concepts, language and culture. I believe pressing social problems, rendered invisible or intractable by the predominant liberal worldview, might be solved with a set of conceptual tools that sensitize us to—rather than distracting us from—inherent psycho-social processes. To this end, I eschew the dualistic and mechanistic metaphors of modernist philosophy, which encourage us to see humans as bundles of static self-interests and governments as omniscient and omnipotent engineers

(Coole & Frost, 2010, pp. 1–14), for holistic models of cybernetics and the new complexity science (Bateson, 1979, 1987; Mitchell, 2011).

I aspire to maintain both analytical rigor and respect for indeterminate process, by viewing individuals, communities and ecologies, and all of our social institutions, as *complex adaptive systems*. In the words of complexity theorist Melanie Mitchell, a complex system is “a system in which large networks of components with no central control and simple rules of operation give rise to complex collective behavior, sophisticated information processing, and adaptation via learning or evolution” (Mitchell, 2011, p. 13). Complex systems are open and emergent. Their behavior is always somewhat unpredictable and in constant flux, as they adjust to internal and external change.

An ontology of systemic complexity challenges liberal conceptions of individual autonomy and utilitarian value. If the world is constituted of ongoing processes and interactions rather than inherently independent objects (Coole & Frost, 2010), then the physical and social contexts in which we exercise our individual agencies are of central political and ethical importance. The potential for particular processes and situations to facilitate ongoing collective wellbeing becomes the focus, rather than the material satisfaction of existing atomized desires. Today’s liberal political institutions treat humans as autonomous, inert individuals with innate preferences, which are priced, aggregated, and served by markets and bureaucracies so that total utility is maximized. But subjective preferences are in fact defined and influenced by the institutions that serve them. In the liberal paradigm, environments become stockpiles of individual goods and

services, and people, communities, and ecologies mere expediencies in individuals' quest to acquire them. Liberal ideation ignores holistic understanding and recent scholarship revealing human interests, development, and psychological health as co-constructs of biological, social and ecological systems—of innate individuality interacting with the environments and communities in which we live (Burke & Stets, 2009; Ungar, 2013).

Yet, despite its simplistic understanding of humans and the world, liberalism has pursued global hegemony and, in the process, changed more than political and economic relations. As French postmodernist Michel Foucault famously describes, government power and the *arts and techniques of governance* effect our shared *discourses*, and through them our very *subjectivities* (Foucault, 1991a, p. 87). In this process, which Foucault terms *governmentality*, current liberal discourses desensitize us to mental, social and ecological complexities. By disempowering and displacing cultures, communities and commons-based forms of governance, liberalism's interest-maximizing policies and instrumental-rationalist logic construct liberal individuals, enveloped in a paradigm that replaces collective interests with private interests and denies sustainable communities as a possibility.

In his groundbreaking explanation of liberal governmentality, Foucault offers incisive criticism but makes no mention of more desirable circumstances or how we should proceed. Foucault's many followers deride what they see as manipulation of subjectivities by powerful forces for political purposes, but they have rarely offered alternative models for subject formation. Generally, Foucauldian critics condemn extant power relations, stress the incommensurability of interests, and invite and condone

conflict between perspectives as the liberation of the future. The ideal of consensus is terrorism, proclaims critical postmodern spokesman Jean-Francois Lyotard, and postmodern times demand a new practice of justice that “activates the differences” in a new “war on totality” (Lyotard, 82).

While Lyotard’s prescription was no doubt appropriate for elite corridors of education in late-twentieth century France, as it grows in popularity and comes to justify ever more provocative acts of plebian warfare, negative reactions to its excessive and arbitrary practice may eclipse its usefulness. Taken to its logical extreme, critical postmodernism’s deconstructive creed precludes all common understanding, making collective action in pursuit of common goals and mutually supported solutions impossible. If, as students of postmodern criticism, we forsake consensual truth and instead use postmodern theory to claim self-sufficient knowledge based in our own partisan epistemology, and define our agenda in a zero-sum frame in which admitting complexity weakens our potency, we are free to meet resistance—as well as our own failures—with dismissal, and morally enforce its silence. But, while linguistic victories over conflicting conceptions may appear to serve a progressive cause in a given moment, they can undermine the broader understanding and generalized trust that would allow people to accept and support progressive change. And, with inadequate grounding in the contextual complexities of individual human lives, a practice of interminable criticism provides little practical guidance, and ample reason and opportunity for suffering humans—which is all of us indeed—to abandon open pursuit of redemptive knowledge,

blame our ennui on forces we do not understand, and either wallow in existential despair or seek personal belonging in a chosen tribal partisanship.

Liberal subjectivities might be very much desirable, if, for example, the alternative to governable liberal subjectivity is violent interpersonal and interethnic conflict or a turn to unifying authoritarianism. In condemning social order and offering no substitute, the critical postmodernist project invites affirmation of modernist patriarch Thomas Hobbes' renown fear—that without strong centralized government, life is “a war of each against all” (Schneewind, 2003, p. 115). Denying the possibility of finding common interests, values and points of reference, do we not set ourselves adrift in destructive vortices of competition, exploitation, and alienated subjective experience—a tragic state of interpersonal chaos that cannot abide? Bereft of opportunities and a cultural will to respect, listen to, and reconcile with those of differing persuasions and experiences, how do we avoid escalating conflicts between alternative visions?

If we learned anything from communist and fascist history, it is that we should collectivize only through trust and open agreement among our diverse communities, and must resist, however well-meaning, misguided attempts at bureaucratic vanguard despotism. To move beyond blanket criticisms and attacks on abstract subject-producing power, and avoid a nihilistic anarchy that invites some new tyranny, we should consider what sort of subjects we would have ourselves and our fellow humans become, and what discourses and systems of governance can allow them to arise and persist. While critical analysis of hegemonic systems is an important phase and facet in the discussion, it is equally important to explore the alternatives. It would be unwise to assume that

condemning the contingent history, subject-forming articulation, and social and environmental costs of entrenched discourses will inexorably replace our subject-formations and power relations with something altogether better. To improve our social and ecological trajectories, we must find *new modes of governance*, built upon and reproduced through *new discourses* and *new subjectivities*.

This inquiry aims to illuminate such alternatives by examining three community-based institutions. One of these institutions is a community center and library space, one organizes natural resource management, and the third provides secondary education. Each governs complex social processes at a local and personal level, through inclusive, loosely structured processes of communication, cooperative leadership, and mutually supported action. They coexist with traditional techniques of liberal governance, wherein distant authorities conduct individual conduct through restrictive regulatory codes and a reactionary security apparatus, but themselves employ a different set of governance techniques. They engage individuals in defining, developing and implementing appropriate prescriptions for voluntary personal action, based in a collective understanding of shared context, common interests, and complex relationships between various human and nonhuman actors; and, in ongoing, iterative processes of communication and evolving practice, they observe and evaluate outcomes of selected interventions and use this flow of information to adjust perceptions, norms and future prescriptions.

I conclude that, through their intentional and evolving praxis of collaborative governance, these institutions develop holistic forms of *collaborative governmentality*. In magnanimous conversation regarding participants' hopes and fears, they overcome differences in perspective to define and pursue *common* values and goals. In semi-formal processes of social learning, they unite participants' collective intelligence and construct new, superior understandings. Maintaining open-mindedness and openheartedness, and sustaining careful listening and difficult conversations despite initial divisions, defensiveness or discomfort, they provide edification for everyone involved. As currency, they operationalize respect in addition to liberalism's state power and monetized wealth. With mutual trust and common purpose, they undertake creative experimentations in collective problem-solving, action and assistance, facilitating the selection and accumulation of resilient relationship, ecological integration, and benevolent social process. With emergent narratives and commoner subjectivities, born of the arts and techniques of cooperation, they transcend worn liberal trappings, and generate new possibilities for advancing the common good. Appreciating the value of linguistic concepts for organizing mental and social activity, I affix to these interrelated developments a protologism: *commonmentality*.

GROUNDS FOR A THEORY OF CONSTRUCTIVE COLLABORATION

“The fate of our times is characterized by rationalization and intellectualization and, above all, by the *disenchantment of the world*. Precisely the ultimate and most sublime values have retreated from public life either into the transcendental realm of mystic life or into the brotherliness of direct and personal human relations.”

— Max Weber (Weber, 1991, p. 129)

“A sense of a wider meaning to one’s existence is what raises a man beyond mere getting and spending. If he lacks this sense, he is lost and miserable.”

— Carl Jung (Jung & Franz, 1964, p. 89)

Foucault’s Governmentality

There is, Foucault tells us, an essential relationship between governance, knowledge and subjectivity. Human subjectivities are informed and transformed by the evolution of knowledge discourses. To illustrate this dynamic, Foucault breaks apart singular, abstracted, totalizing accounts of history into lineages of individualized discourse, each with its own continuity and transformations. These discourses are knowledge systems, developed under particular conditions and rules, that constitute and constrain the subjectivities of those who share them (Foucault, 1991b, pp. 55–56). A society “accepts and makes function as true” discourses that are developed according to *particular* criteria of formation, transformation and correlation, and each society has its own “regime,” “general politics” and “political economy” of truth (Foucault, 1980, p. 131). There is a reinforcing interdependence between knowledge and power: discourses

must meet criteria legitimated by established power to become accepted knowledge, while powers depend upon the disciplining effects of knowledge discourses to function.

Tracing continuities and transformations in political discourse that have generated and limited political possibility in modern Western nation-states, Foucault finds a peculiar shift from family economics and a politics of territorial sovereignty to political-economic governance imbricated in the conduct of individuals on the scale of whole populations. Over the course of several hundred years, he says, economy—understood as “the correct manner of managing individuals, goods and wealth within the family”—became the domain not just of fathers in relation to wives and children but of sophisticated managerial states in relation to their populations (Foucault, 1991a, p. 92). Quantification of phenomena and development of new statistical knowledges about populations allowed governments to claim the welfare of populations as their new ultimate purpose. Statistical knowledge became the basis of new arts and techniques, for managing the conduct of whole populations of individuals (Foucault, 1991a).

In the process Foucault calls governmentality, governments use their new techniques of governance to intervene in the “complex of men and things” (Foucault, 1991a, p. 93). They intercede in relationships between people and resources, including wealth and the means of subsistence. They also intervene in the relations between people and customs—norms as well as habits of thought (Foucault, 1991a, pp. 93–94).

Conducting the conduct of individuals in the name of the economic interest of whole populations, governments shape and reshape individuals as subjects.

From Deconstructive Criticism to Constructive Association

No matter how adept and convincing, a deconstructive analysis of dominant liberal power and discourse is not enough to manifest desirable alternatives. Indeed, Foucault's critical insights into forms of governmentality "are not liable or designed to inspire new political movements, transform the agendas of political debate, or generate new plans for the organization of societies" (Gordon, 1991, p. 46). The critical concept of power/knowledge can be useful, highlighting elitist agendas marshaling expert knowledges that transform subjectivities and centralize control (Robbins, 2004). On the other hand, as we extrapolate from Foucault's analysis to inform our daily lives, it is easy to lose sight of our situation's complexity and resort to treating extant powers, discourses and subjectivities as causes rather than consequences of assemblages of social reality. Foucault's discourse archeology reveals that knowledge/power discourses are not inert and timeless objects that *determine* collective action. Rather, they are, as Bruno Latour describes in detail, *assemblages* created and legitimated *by* collective action (Latour, 1987).

This distinction highlights networks of interaction as the ultimate medium of causation and change. The limits of political possibility are constrained by accepted *discourse* and embodied in individual *subjectivity*, but all three are assembled through encounter. Positive social change is not then simply a matter of dislodging dominating power, like some inanimate object, through incisive criticism and resistance. The value of such strategies is determined by the extent to which they represent *the construction of more desirable assemblages*. Latour refers to the set of ongoing interactions by which socio-natural reality is collectively constructed as a *network* (Latour, 2005). The concept

of a network, he says, is “more subtle than the notion of system, more historical than the notion of structure, more empirical than the notion of complexity” (Latour, 1993, p. 3). Defying categorization, Latour explains, these networks cannot be reduced to politics, society, nature *or* discourse. Networks are a process, always in action, inherently irreducible, and knowable only through the relative accounts of their participants.

Though humans seem to have a unique capacity for providing detailed accounts of networks in action, they are decidedly *not* the only actors within them. Rather, networks are collective hybrids of the human and the nonhuman. The division of nature and culture represents an artificial dichotomy, Latour tells us, maintained through acts of “purification” demanded by our “modern constitution.” As hybrid sociocultural objects, networks are in reality both physical embodiments of politics and expressions of non-human agency. They are, Latour tells us, “simultaneously real, like nature, narrated, like discourse, and collective, like society” (Latour, 1993, p. 6). Indeed, Latour’s networks are that complex of relations between people and things Foucault has been telling us about, the web in which the interventions of governmentality are manifest. And it is within these same hybrid assemblages that we manifest our own individual influences.

However, even Latour’s noble task of making these hybrid networks legible, through holistic anthropological study, cannot get us all the way to *engaged agency and ethical action*. Ultimately, overcoming violence, exploitation, and environmental destruction requires actively assembling *networks* that produce *subjects* that create a peaceful, just, and sustainable *world*. An infinite regress of critical problematization cannot get us there, and neither can the endless job of carefully retracing existing networks of interrelation. In the end, exercising agency in ethical action requires *a*

speculative and normative realism (Bennett, 2010; Coole & Frost, 2010). We must act on the constrained knowledge that we have, even though the terrain is so complex, human interests so incommensurable, and the forces of causation so very entangled that the existence of a predetermined route to an objectively defined goal is, in principle, impossible (G. Smith, 2003; Wells, 2014).

Orienting Speculative Action with Complexity Ontology

A more pragmatic postmodernism, one capable of orienting human agency and a normative realism, is well served by the lens and conceptual tools of complexity theory. Though, as Latour warns us, the concept of *system* cannot match the immeasurable subtlety of a unique network individually mapped, an abstraction of networks to their systemic function renders them accessible for speculative and normative use. The concept of system maintains contingency, while also supporting conditional extrapolation and admittedly imperfect analogy between similar patterns of function. A complexity ontology problematizes positivism, challenging the natural-law foundation of classical modern thinking without abandoning the assumption of reality and ambitions of social progress (Coole & Frost, 2010, p. 29).

Mechanical positivism was a hallmark of the modern paradigm. Liberally educated humans imagined themselves living in what Pierre-Simon Laplace optimistically called *a clockwork universe*. Inspired by Enlightenment philosophy and Newton's explanation of observable motions in terms of mechanical laws, these students of science shared a conviction that, once relevant laws and variables were known, every worldly occurrence could be predicted. The universe was a great machine whose every

structure and function would be revealed, through empirical investigation of its many parts (Mitchell, 2011).

In the postmodern era, this optimistic view of human understanding is discredited, even and especially within the vanguard of theoretical physics. Scientists have discovered chaos, systemic interactions in which the smallest changes, or imprecision of measurement, in initial locations and momentums, result in huge differences in outcome and errors of prediction. While counter-intuitive to the mechanical logic of modern culture (Merchant, 2008, pp. 335–372), this nonlinear behavior is nonetheless easily explained rationally. Changes and differences feed into recursive causative relationships—for expediency and efficient intersubjective communication, we can call them either *networks* or *systems*—and cause more changes and differences, a process that can continue indefinitely and produce seemingly random results. The whole proves to be something quite different from any calculated sum of its parts, and behavior becomes *in principle* impossible to predict (Mitchell, 2011).

In a world of complex systems, any effort to break apart the infinitely interacting world into individually defined systems is itself a reductionist act of imagination. All boundaries between systems are, in the words of systems theorist Donella Meadows, “boundaries of word, thought, perception, and social agreement—artificial mental-model boundaries” (Meadows, 2008). Boundaries represent useful simplification, essential to our collective ability to understand, predict and manipulate real-world outcomes. Yet this ability is inherently quite limited. The influence of unconsidered variables, acting from within or without a given system’s fictitious boundaries, are a constant source of error and surprise (Meadows, 2008).

Impacts on an arbitrarily bounded system from unanticipated internal and external forces test the system's level of *resilience*. Resilience is a system's capacity "to absorb disturbance and still retain its basic structure and function," and it depends upon the system's ability to *self-organize* (Walker & Salt, 2006, p. 2). Unlike a clock, which derives its rigid strength as a system from its ability to withstand impacts without changing shape and function, a resilient system maintains its identity by reorganizing and *adapting* in response to disturbance. A less resilient system is more vulnerable to internal or external shocks, which can push it over *thresholds* into other *regimes* of self-organization, with fundamentally different structures. Ecosystems, communities and human beings are all resilient to some degree, because we are adapting and evolving *complex adaptive systems* (Walker & Salt, 2006).

Careful observation suggests that, despite their inherent uniqueness, these complex adaptive systems share certain qualities. They are all composed of many individual agents interacting dynamically, exchanging information and energy through networks. These interactions are nonlinear, self-referential, iterative and recursive. With many direct and indirect feedback loops between agents, effects spread throughout the system, even if individual agents are directly connected to just a few others. Complex adaptive systems are also open: interactions with their environments influence their behavior, and they have the ability to evolve—to reorganize their internal structures in order to maintain their viability in the face of environmental change (Innes & Booher, 2010, pp. 32, 33).

Patterns of complex interaction are observable at every scale of our world, which contains countless self-organizing and adapting systems that are themselves both

composed of smaller systems and interacting in larger systems. A redwood tree, for example, is a complex, adaptive and resilient system, as are the cells it contains and the forest ecosystem it shares. The individual human psyche is also a complex adaptive system, open to the world in which it develops (Ungar, 2013). As George Herbert Mead observed long ago, human minds are co-constructed with the larger *societies* of which they are part—minds and societies form and transform together, through patterns of interaction and communication (Mead, 1967). In an ongoing iterative process, human activities and ecological systems self-organize in relation to each other on numerous scalar levels, together constituting hierarchies of social-ecological systems, all of which are in a constant state of change and to varying degrees adaptive and resilient. Through ongoing reciprocal relationship, social systems and ecosystems adapt to one another, and come to depend on the other for their mutual resilience (Walker & Salt, 2006, 2012).

Peculiarities of Liberalism as System and Operative Rationality

Conceiving of discourses, their subjective rationalities, and the institutions that support and are supported by them, as integrated adaptive systems, makes visible their particular constraints, vulnerabilities, and forms of resilience. A world of complex systemic interaction is inherently challenging to rational decision-making, and the specific patterns in modern liberal thought and organization that fail to meet this challenge are apparent. But evidence of failure does not justify writing off liberal governmentality as insufficient and therefore irrelevant, as so much exploitative patriarchy. To orient speculative efforts at improving extent social-psychological-ecological systems, and their justifying discourses, we must carefully and cautiously

consider their rationality and function, their multifarious workings, and what they get wrong as well as what they get right.

A hallmark of the modern liberal West is relegation of responsibility and decision-making to individuals. With increases in understanding and mastery of the natural world, rationalism displaced religious explanation, and enlightenment philosophy and liberal theory came to recognize the individual human mind as sole, autonomous arbiter of truth and right action (Locke, 2013; J. S. Mill, 2016). Liberalism maintains flexibility and claims to liberation by shifting the process of valuation from church and state to individual agents. In liberal logic, governments cannot make rational decisions based on unempirical values, and therefore should not make value judgments beyond facilitating generalized utilitarian growth and protecting the *natural right* of individual choice (J. Mill, 2017). And, organized in liberal institutions, liberalism's negative rights and markets indeed accommodate a certain value pluralism among individuals, to the extent that they do not impede upon others' negative rights and can be adequately served through markets or bureaucracies. On the other hand, by conflating incommensurable human values into one utilitarian good—money—liberal institutions also constrain possibilities, manipulate motivations, and thwart full expression of the diversity of human interests (Bronk 2009).

As Foucault deftly describes, these distortions are reproduced in and through *us*, the liberal subjects they evoke. Internalizing liberal discourse and rationality, we view ourselves as variations on the liberal individual—that abstracted and idealized *homo economicus*, a utility maximizer presumed to be perfectly rational and self-interested, with given material desires and the necessary information to optimize their fulfillment

(Smith, 2003, p. 35-36). This utilitarian-individualist subjectivity undermines our sensitivity to the relative, constructed, contingent, and comparative nature of our own identities, values, and desires (Akerlof & Kranton, 2010, p. 10). It also impedes our understanding of a complex reality, where more of something is not necessarily better, social wellbeing does not correlate with a singular utilitarian measure of wealth, and economic growth is in fact a very poor indicator of social improvement (Wilkinson & Pickett, 2010). Institutionalized as governing principles, its peculiar rationalities manifest ongoing social-ecological crises.

Liberal Administrative Failures: The Bounded Rationalities of Market Individualism and Bureaucratic Expertise

In liberal discourse, emergent organization of beneficial markets is the anticipated effect of free individual choice, and according to *free-market* doctrine, the sole purpose of the state is to maintain conditions for us to exercise our own rationality (Hayek, 2011). Total wealth is maximized when individuals freely choose their own actions according to their own desires; through the benevolent function of a metaphorical *invisible hand*, the combined choices of individuals, pursuing private needs and pleasures through exchange in open markets, optimizes wellbeing in society as a whole (A. Smith, 2016). Individual rationality, practiced by all, creates the impersonal rationality of markets (Hayek, 2011).

In the thinking of free-market champions, privatization of resources is the foundation of this *free-market rationality* and a properly functioning invisible hand. Goods that belong to no one in particular are external to the benevolent action of markets; resource shortages and environmental problems are the result of misguided government

interventions, and government's failure to create conditions for properly functioning markets. Given private control over resources, the logic goes, rational individuals would conserve them to maximize their own reward. Thus, the solution to deprivation and environmental degradation is extension of private property rights and markets to all aspects and qualities of the physical world. The primary responsibility of government is to establish and defend these rights and markets, and social and environmental problems reflect the failure of governments to do so (T. L. Anderson & Leal, 2001; Dryzek, 2005, pp. 21–32).

Though elegant in theory, the free-market strategy of total privatization has proven impossible in practice. Commons such as rivers, the air and the sea defy the logic of property-rights schemes. Even in the relatively simple arena of private land, owners' use-rights often conflict with their neighbors', for example, when they disrupt ecosystem processes or cause pollution, flooding, wildfire and declining wildlife populations. At this point, free-market environmentalism's logic of conservation-through-privatization breaks down. For governments to escape their role as regulator and arbitrator of conflicts between individual rights, the infinitely interrelated world would have to be divided into absolutely distinct private interests, allowing markets to be created and regulated for every possible human value (Dryzek, 2005, pp. 121–142). The relational constitution of phenomena precludes such isolation and privatization of all values.

Moreover, the collective result of rational decision-making by atomized individuals, organized in unfettered markets, is often irrational and detrimental. People have a shared interest in the resources, ecosystem services, and landscapes that affect society as a whole, while strong property rights are exclusionary, preserving and

escalating social inequalities (Freyfogle, 2007). Positive feedback is a defining characteristic of nonlinear systemic interaction in unregulated markets: the rich get richer and the poor get poorer, and growth is often exponential, until a limiting variable arrests development. In a world of complex ecological interaction, exhaustion of a single variable can precipitate negative feedback and total collapse (Meadows, 2008, p. 109). Markets therefore require extensive and intensive state intervention, to overcome perennial crises, reverse contractions, open new markets, defend competition, and reverse paralyzing inequality (Connolly, 2013).

But, in our speculative efforts to overcome shortcomings in liberal governmentality, we must acknowledge that government efforts to ameliorate market failures—through rational decisions informed and legitimated by the best available science—also fail in the face of complexity. Claiming hierarchical authority based on their access to professional expertise, Western governments have since the late nineteenth century addressed intractable social and environmental problems through centralized decision-making and “command and control” policies (Dryzek, 2005, pp. 75–98). Their *administrative rationalism* presupposes a single legitimate, positivistic knowledge, making logical deductions from objective data (Innes & Booher, 2010, p. 17). And, assuming aggregated linear relationships, it breaks the world into independently fixed parts, analyzes them separately, then attempts to piece together and concentrate resulting expertise in the hands of powerful decisionmakers (Innes & Booher, 2010, p. 18).

This aggregated understanding and hierarchical decision-making structure is problematic, as no one is capable of holding enough knowledge of the dynamic and chaotic world to make perfect decisions from the top of the administrative pyramid. In

reality, the world's complexity requires that expertise be specialized and decision-making fragmented. Bureaucratic knowledge fails to keep up with changes in circumstance and the effects of bureaucratic actions, and attempts at problem solving end up as problem displacement, with negative consequences simply pushed to areas outside an expert's proficiency or decisionmaker's zone of responsibility (Dryzek, 2005, p. 93).

This failure of bureaucratic rationality offers ample fodder for renewed criticism of government power. In *The Constitution of Liberty*, Hayek uses a complex systems ontology to deride ambitious attempts at utopian social engineering in the twentieth century. Centralized control and planning are destructive and futile, he says, because they fail to respect the ongoing systemic interaction in both human societies and human minds. "Man did not simply impose upon the world a pattern created by his mind," Hayek reminds us. "His mind is itself a system that constantly changes as a result of his endeavor to adapt himself to his surroundings." Attempts at centralized planning are predicated on an "erroneous intellectualism" that assumes knowledge and rationality can be divorced from the processes that create them, standing outside nature and independent of human experience. "To turn the whole of society into a single organization built and directed according to a single plan," argues Hayek, "would be to extinguish the very forces that shaped the individual minds that planned it" (Hayek, 2011, p. 89).

Hayek entreats us to remember a Socratic maxim: "the recognition of our ignorance is the beginning of wisdom" (Hayek, 2011, p. 73). In his view, given the world's inherent complexity, the undirected organizing function of markets will always be more effective than attempts to plan the organization of society. The function and progress of society is too complicated to fully understand, he contends, let alone control.

Attempts at macro-level planning only destabilize natural processes of organization—processes that arise spontaneously from individual planning and produce a predictable order in which individuals can organize their own lives, according to their own knowledge and rationality (Hayek, 2011, pp. 73–90).

In reality, twentieth-first century liberal governmentality is characterized by free-market and administrative rationalisms functioning together, constituting a single administrative sphere (Torgerson, 2005, p. 101). Both rationalisms advocate programs that, hypothetically, overcome resource dilemmas, depoliticize decision-making, and produce rational outcomes. While at any given time and place one or the other may be ascendant, depending on prevailing economic and political winds, both states and the markets they maintain share a unified liberal imaginary that holds rational “order and progress” as a self-evident goal (Torgerson, 2005, p. 99). Political decisions are rationalized with utilitarian arguments, promoting unending growth as measured by market valuation or market-based cost-benefit analysis. All value is placed on a single monetary dimension, conceived as a measure of pain versus pleasure, and on this scale the measure of pleasure has no satisfactory or maximum level (Bronk 2009).

Yet, because this simplifying individualism and hedonistic utilitarianism does not account for the complex interactive nature of humanity and the world, liberalism’s prescriptions often fail to produce the happiness that its ideation evokes. Experience proves markets and property rights indeed drive impressive human industry and material wealth. As societies become richer, however, the significance of wealth as an indicator of wellbeing decreases. While Gross Domestic Product has tripled in the US in the last fifty years, life satisfaction has been flat, and rates of depression have increased tenfold

(Seligman, 2012). This is the so-called *Easterling paradox*. In the underdeveloped world, and for those at the very bottom of the income ladder in the developed world, abject poverty is a real cause of misery. Net economic growth does little to address this, however, in part because it is an issue of equality rather than total production. In wealthy countries and among wealthier groups in poorer societies, growth in income brings little happiness at all, and can in fact further impair psychological wellbeing—exacerbating insecurities, underscoring status differences, and intensifying competitive consumption (Wilkinson & Pickett, 2010).

Intractable social, psychological and environmental problems challenge the rationality and stability of liberalism as operationalized discourse. Liberal ideation obfuscates the manner in which individuals and economies are embedded in complex social relations. Sigmund Freud’s popular assumption that pursuit of pleasure is the fundamental human principle betrays his immersion in modern utilitarian imagination. As his defiant and culturally astute protégé, Carl Jung, points out, it is not simple pleasure but attainment of the much more contingent quality of personal meaning that we seek, and when meaning is reduced to “getting and spending” we are in fact “lost and miserable.” And, as Karl Polanyi has warned us, because individuals pursue not a satiable material self-interest but a relative social standing, by removing social striving from stabilizing community context, individualism and the totalization of market relations invite death by “acute social dislocation through vice, perversion, crime, and starvation” (Polanyi 1957, p. 73).

As unintended consequences of liberalism’s bounded rationalities, utilitarian values, and mechanical assumptions, continuing social and environmental crises arise

outside individuals' and bureaucracies' circumscribed cognitive spheres, defying their value calculations and compartmentalized problem-solving with inherent complexity and overwhelming systemic interrelatedness. Market rationality and bureaucratic rationality do indeed complement each other in certain ways, overcoming each other's failures and finding resilience in their interdependence. Nonetheless, persistent environmental destruction and human misery delegitimize liberalism's overarching claims to objective progress and universal purpose, and continue to undermine individual, social and ecological resilience (Torgerson, 2005; Wilkinson & Pickett, 2010).

A Return to Collaborative Governance

The collaborative structures examined here overcome bounded rationalities and quotidian shortcomings of bureaucracies and markets, by cultivating a different operative rationality and means of collective action. Belying warnings of tragedy, they represent contemporary instances of *commons governance*. In his broadly disseminated 1968 article, "The Tragedy of the Commons," Garrett Hardin argues that the commons—a shared community resource—is workable only in undeveloped societies where the fragility of life keeps populations low. Pointing to commons degradation and the movement to privatize them in the ascendancy of liberalism, he finds commons abuse inevitable. Assuming people are rational actors pursuing material self-interest, Hardin believes common use-rights of resources leads inexorably to their over-exploitation, because, while individuals enjoy all of the benefit, they pay only a fraction of the cost of personal increases in use (Hardin, 1968).

Hardin's famous formulation reflects the general assumptions of liberal utilitarianism, and his prescriptions—privatization or centralized state control—reflect the discourses of free-market rationalism and administrative rationalism, respectively (Dryzek, 2005). Yet, given human nature and the planet's complexity, it is not at all clear that either individualized choice or centralized state decision-making can sustain environmental health or produce broad social wellbeing. While they may overcome particular commons dilemmas and support a rational conservation of specific resources, both strong property rights and bureaucratic resource management have encouraged a myopic focus on the maximization of particular system outputs with market value, while disregarding other social and ecological values and larger system functions. Over the last quarter-century, research in ecological resilience has shown that such rational management of ecosystems for one output tends to stress the whole system, and can lead to rapid and complete collapse (Walker & Salt, 2006).

The plight of the commons proved tragic under the logic and practice of political and economic liberalism, whose self-fulfilling assumptions about homo economicus encourage both overexploitation of the commons and its enclosure. In the process of liberal industrialization, common property suffered the effects of unregulated markets and unrestrained individualism, and the newly empowered bourgeois class rationalized privatization as a means of avoiding their tragic consequences. Later, when resource problems persisted among remaining shared interests in the interstices between privatized resources, twentieth century governments began addressing the degradation of shared environments through direct regulatory control (Dryzek, 2005, p. 138; Innes & Booher, 2010, p. 17).

Drawing on this history, Hardin embraces privatization and state control, and rejects all forms of joint ownership and community management. His critique, however, applies only to common-pool resources with open access: limited resources where one person's use reduces the total available to other users, and where access and use are in no way restricted. Common-pool resources with restricted access need not succumb to the commons dilemma (Ostrom, 1990). Mutually agreed-upon norms and high levels of trust are in many cases sufficient for communities to restrict access and overcome resource dilemmas collectively (Putnam, 2000). Social orders based on absolute property rights and coercive state control are in fact recent and historically unique, while collective management has been the rule for most of human history (Bollier, 2014). Under many circumstances, collaborative community management has proven to be more effective than proprietary or bureaucratic control in successfully managing resources (Ostrom & Schlager, 1996).

In the last thirty years, researchers have made important progress in the study of successful community-based management of common pool resources. Much of this research has focused on institutional arrangements through which rural and subsistence societies self-organize, meet needs collectively and sustainably, and maintain community-based practices that were the global norm prior to the introduction of market systems (Bardhan & Ray, 2008; Bollier, 2014; Ostrom, 1990). Some look at urban commons in modern societies, and others focus on the growing importance of counter-hegemonic information commons—exploring knowledge as common property, the internet as a global information commons, and open-source software and web-based wikis as powerful commoning technologies (Hess & Ostrom, 2011). Developments in

common-pool resource theory illuminate *polycentric* governance structures, supporting analysis of complex collaborative systems with multiple decision-making centers, which have overlapping authorities and varying degrees of independence and interdependence, and are uniquely adapted to specific contexts and purposes through bottom-up local development (Ostrom, 2010).

Collaborative Rationality, Discourse and Subject Formation

There is reason to be optimistic about processes of intentional collaboration, and their potential for developing a capacity and motivation for taking responsibility—and making the necessary personal sacrifices—to increase social and ecological resilience. The institutions examined in this study are successfully managing common facilities, resources and learning processes, through relatively egalitarian systems of collective decision-making and action, which serve mutual interests and provide common benefit. In their inclusive communicative processes, decision-makers are held accountable to one another, fulfilling the normative democratic ideal. In fact, these facilitated collaborations follow closely Jurgen Habermas's criteria for authentic communicative action and ideal speech conditions, allowing participants to mutually assure the accuracy, sincerity, legitimacy and comprehensibility of all truth claims (Habermas, 1981; Finlayson, 2005). Rejecting absolutist thinking and unexamined *a priori* knowledge, they make an explicit effort to take nothing for granted and prohibit any one person or perspective from dominating discussion. Mutual learning and knowledge creation arise, not just from established elite expertise, but from the everyday experience of everyone involved (Innes & Booher, 2010).

Existing research documents how other networks of inclusive collective action have allowed common discourses and decision-making criteria to develop, generating what Innes and Booher have termed *collaborative rationality*. Like free-market and administrative rationalisms, collaborative problem-solving processes bridge a diversity of values and perspectives to arrive at implementable decisions. Rather than attempting to depoliticize decision-making by relegating it to the rationality of markets or bureaucratic expertise, however, collaborative approaches make it an involved, inclusive and personal process (Innes & Booher, 2010, pp. 35-37).

Researchers have found collaborative rationality well suited to the management of complex adaptive systems, because it develops through iterative interactions that mirror the systems' own complexity. If the universe is composed of myriad interacting, adapting and transforming systems sharing non-linear and chaotic relationships, then successful management of any one of these open and nested systems would seem to require both impossibly detailed knowledge of specifics and an unlimited perspective on the big picture. Clearly no one can hold adequate knowledge, and information cannot be detailed enough, to make perfect management prescriptions. On the other hand, successful decision-making *can* come about through ongoing, iterative, collective processes—that is, through polycentric governance *systems* that are themselves open, complex and adaptive (Innes & Booher, 2010, p. 30).

Studies indicate that discursive democratic processes permit broad consideration of existing networks of human and nonhuman actors, and facilitate development of discourses that creatively synthesize collective knowledge related to particular issues at a given scale. Bringing differing perspectives and information into conversation,

collaborative deliberation also overcomes simplistic opinions and cognitive limitations, as well as the fragmentation of specialized knowledge. Inclusion of diverse expertise and a multiplicity of perspectives, expressing a variety of values and solutions, encourages social learning and the development of superior, mutually supported decisions (Kaufman, 2012).

In open communication, collaborative discourses develop a synthetic *intersubjectivity* on which collective choices are based. While humans generally make judgments from particular, narrow perspectives, defined by our identifications and commitments, encounter and engagement between differing orientations enlarges our mentalities, allowing for more reflective, collective judgments. Coming to understand the perceptions and value judgments of others, our own judgment becomes a matter of reflection, and we can see our own perspective as limited and fallible. Using imagination, we put ourselves in the position of others; the more we appreciate the perspectives of others, the richer our own judgments become. Thus, by organizing encounter, and enlisting and assimilating multiple viewpoints, collaborative processes can generate an expansive perspective capable of making superior, mutually supported and mutually beneficial decisions (G. Smith, 2003, pp. 25–26). And, in the process, participating individuals often transmute initially self-regarding positions into more objective appeals to justice (Young, 2002).

Research suggests that, with the inclusion of socially marginalized and ecologically sensitive perspectives, community processes develop awareness of unrecognized situated-ness, limitations, dependencies, and impacts. Stimulating communication across difference without erasing that difference, and opening

communication to considerations of non-human nature, collaboration can shape a more just and sustainable order (Dryzek, 2002, p. 3). Collaborative rationality becomes what Val Plumwood calls *ecological rationality*, eliminating remoteness and bridging divisions between regions, cultures, and classes that make problems distant from their causes and allow the rationalizations of those in power to go unchallenged and unchanged (Plumwood, 2005). As networks of appropriately scaled feedback loops, embedded and sustained processes of collective decision-making can rebuild social and ecological resilience (Goldstein, 2012).

Researchers have found that communicative governance processes can build shared social norms and agendas that incorporate and reactivate the full spectrum of human values and capacities, and encourage further collaboration (Goldstein, 2012; G. Smith, 2003). Deliberative decision-making avoids conflating all values to monetary worth through marketization or expert cost-benefit analysis, and allows social and environmental values and ethics to be expressed, shared and defended on their own terms. In the ongoing process of collaboration, common conceptions, truths, and identities are formed, creating shared understanding upon which mutually beneficial norms and rules are based (Goldstein, 2012, pp. 344–345). As differing knowledges and values become part of new governing discourses, they transform the worldviews of participants, promote more holistic and long-term thinking, and motivate future collective action (G. Smith, 2003, pp. 61–65).

The Humanity, Psychology and Social Ecology of Intentional Community

The causative elements gathered together in beneficial collaborative process run deeper than mere organizational structure and intentional socialization, as a capacity for cooperative community is key to the success of our species and inherent in humanity itself. Despite radical claims of some reductive social constructionists—and a common ethos in American social sciences and humanities—evidence for the innateness of many aspects of human subjectivity and behavior is mounting across many other disciplines (Christakis, 2019, p. 11). And contrary to cynical theories of some critical postmodernists, much of this innateness averts power struggle and is unambiguously cooperative in nature. Nicholas Christakis identifies eight genetic traits humans share that allow us to collaborate and form cooperative society everywhere we exist. He calls these society-building inclinations our *social suite*, which includes recognition of individual identity, love of kin, friendship, social networking, cooperation, in-group bias, a desire to balance hierarchy and egalitarianism, and a knack for social learning and teaching (Christakis, 2019, p. 13).

These innate capacities manifest in networks of goodwill that are both personally advantageous and of inherent social value. Constituting what Robert Putnam has termed *social capital*, close social networks can foster civic virtue, trust, and trustworthiness. Indirectly calculable but traditionally ignored in economic calculations and materialistic liberal ideation, they reduce social costs, and serve as both private and public goods—benefitting not only those with social connections, but communities as a whole, through externalities such as norms of generalized trust and reciprocity. As an evolutionary adaptation and phenotype of our species, community is fundamental to both

psychological and physical health. Socially engaged people are happier and better able to overcome trauma, whereas social isolation puts people in a condition of chronic stress. In fact, isolation precedes illness, and is strongly correlated with frequency of heart attacks, strokes, depression, colds, cancer, and premature death in general. Statistically, for those that do not already belong to one, joining a social group can cut the likelihood of dying in the next year by one-half (Putnam, 2000).

Of course, we are complex creatures with competitive and antagonistic facets to our psychology, and social capital can have costs as well as benefits. Social capital networks can be exclusionary, harnessed for malevolent or anti-social intentions, or used to dehumanize others and incite violence. Putnam distinguishes between inclusionary *bridging* and exclusionary *bonding* forms of social capital. Looking outward and including a diversity of people, bridging social capital can overcome division, link individuals to external assets, create broad understanding, and inspire common cause. Bridging capital is a form of social lubrication, generating broader identities and generalized reciprocity. Looking inward and reinforcing the special identities of self-defined homogenous groups, bonding social capital can benefit group members but often negatively affects outsiders (Putnam, 2000).

Our need for community and innate capacity for collaboration does not mean humans are inevitably or in all ways cooperative, therefore organizational structure and socialization are immensely important. Christakis describes cooperation as an emergent factor, and his research lab finds the more connections people have in a social network the more incentive they need to cooperate, and also that visibility of wealth deters teamwork, meaning collaboration is more difficult in both larger and more wealth-

conscious groups. He also finds that people choose to build ties and cooperate with people that are nice and cooperative, demonstrating the evolutionary value of these pro-social qualities. The degree to which people can choose and sever ties in their collaborative network is also important: a network that is too rigid deters collaboration, as does a network that is too fluid, while a semi-structured organization that balances rigidity and fluidity maximizes cooperative behavior (Christakis, 2019, pp. 105–108).

To be progressive, collaboration must also be inclusive and structured in a way that promotes open, equal, and authentic dialogue (Finlayson, 2005; Innes & Booher, 2010). Iris Marion Young points out that mere existence of communicative process is not enough, for people can be excluded not only *from* communicative processes, but also *within* them. Discourse might proceed from assumptions that are not shared, particular styles of expression can be privileged, and the contribution of certain people could be cursorily dismissed. Formal political debate and other established conventions might exclude people from effective participation, and therefore limit the respect, trust, and understanding across difference that more inclusive communication can produce. Thus genuinely inclusive problem-solving collectives must go beyond authoritative reasons and assertions, fully incorporating the diversity of humanity and appreciating manifold forms of expression, including greeting, rhetoric, and narrative (Young, 2002).

Experience shows such inclusive social process can serve important social-psychological functions that expand empathy and ameliorate intragroup conflict. We know people are inclined to empathize more with members of their own groups, and often fail to empathize with outsiders, particularly in competitive environments. However, empathy for outsiders increases with contact, even in conflictual and

competitive circumstances, and especially when that contact is structured in particular ways. Specifically, research shows empathy increases when members of different groups feel accepted, and are brought together in a way that gives them equal status, is personal, allows them to learn about each other's idiosyncrasies, focuses attention on mutual goals, and supports cooperative endeavors. Moreover, when empathy is thus extended to a member of another group, that empathy is often generalized to all members of that group (Allport, 1954, pp. 269–277; Zaki, 2019, pp. 60–64).

Research also suggest that, beyond expanding empathy and reducing intergroup divisions, accepting and inclusive social processes foster healthy development of individuals and serve our most basic psychological needs (Susan Pinker, 2014; Putnam, 2000; Ungar, 2013; Wilkinson & Pickett, 2010). Over the last thirty years, resilience theory has developed in the field of psychology, independently but contemporaneously with its development in ecology. Initially treated as an inherent capacity of particular individuals, who experience significant environmental stresses yet maintain or return to positive psychological health and development, psychological resilience is now studied as something that develops within individuals through their interaction with their environment. In studying human psyches as complex adaptive systems, this research supports the design and management of social systems for the improved resilience of individual psychologies (Ungar, 2013). The experience of egalitarian relations, collective efficacy, and a positive social ethos—in other words, a healthy *community*—is critically important to the development of resilient individuals (Ungar, 2013, p. 37). People thrive and become more resilient when they are given respect, positive role models,

responsibility, opportunities to succeed in a variety of fields, and attention and public acknowledgement for their positive work (Ungar, 2013, p. 38).

Collaborative endeavors can provide for these personal needs, while supporting expression of personal values and codification of cultural norms that transcend the material, instrumental and self-interested. Recent psychological research shows people are more motivated, more productive, and more psychologically resilient when they develop a sense of purpose rooted in something outside themselves. This rootedness involves attachment, self-reflection, a sense of personal responsibility, and the development of conceptions of right action (Seligman, 2011). Our collaborative relationships engage us in generating shared symbolic, narrative and normative structures that feed our psychic life, structures that religions once supplied but liberal reason, science and individualist consumerism only insufficiently provide (C. G. Jung, 1933, pp. 196–244).

Indeed, it is in collective processes that we create the stories and subjective experiences that constitute the fundamental *meaning* in our lives. Following Jung and existential psychologist Viktor Frankl, I reject Freud's pleasure principle which assumes an essential *will to pleasure* reflective of the utilitarian mindset, as well as Alfred Adler's *will to power*, which draws upon Nietzsche's famous formulation and undergirds much Foucauldian critique, as inadequate explanations for human aspiration. Unique to humans is a more primary motivating force: striving after meaning itself. As Nietzsche himself remarks, "If we have our own why in life, we shall get along with almost any how. Man does not strive for pleasure; only the Englishman [read: acculturated utilitarian] does" (Nietzsche, 1998). We are "able to live and to die" for our values and ideals, explains

Frankl, because it is our *will to meaning* that defines us as a species (Frankl, 2006, p. 99). Meaning is particular to a given life in a certain moment and context, as “everyone’s task is as unique as the specific opportunity to implement it” (Frankl, 2006, p. 109). Yet life’s meaning is always and invariably to be found in the world, through some form of self-transcendence, as “being human always points, and is directed, to something, or someone, other than oneself” (Frankl, 2006, p. 110).

Intentional collaboration provides unique opportunities for locating personal meaning in self-transcendent endeavor, and can stimulate and guide the meaning-making process beyond bland utilitarianism, destructive competition, and superficial material strivings. Working together, we can cultivate deeper ethical, aesthetic and spiritual meanings, by redirecting our symbolic veneration, expanding our range of attachments, and employing more sophisticated and imaginative ontologies. Relearning cooperation to meet human and extra-human needs, and avoiding mechanistic modern conceptualization that views reality as mere inert matter, to be broken apart, calculated and controlled, we can reanimate our worldly attachments with a positive existential *enchantment*, inspiring ethical aspirations and a *spirit of generosity* that motivates energetic pro-social behavior (Bennett, 2010; Moore, 1997). Perhaps, collectively, we can each find our own individual meaning, as qualia of the universe uniquely conscious and reflective, and capable of acting intentionally, cooperatively and wisely in the world (Swimme & Tucker, 2011, p. 2).

These ideas, studies and discourses provide the analytical frame for an optimistic theory of intentional collaborative governance. They illuminate possibilities and

cooperative conditions for generating knowledge and discourse, according to mutually developed and mutually supported criteria, that constitute subjectivity and constrain behavior in socially and contextually appropriate ways. In more-or-less egalitarian regimes that distribute powers to speak, share experience, and contribute individual rationalities, self-governing groups come to accept, and make function as true, *collective* rationalities that constitute more than a sum of their parts. Through collaborative function, the group defines and maintains legitimate understanding, and that understanding disciplines the collaborative and maintains its benevolent function.

Pushing postmodern thinking beyond deconstructive criticism into intentional social assembly, this framing builds on Foucault's critique of liberal governance, discourse and subjectivity, and rejuvenates more cooperative means of conducting individual conduct. Drawing on complexity theory, the venture reaffirms speculative realism, reclaims personal and collective agency, and encourages experimental pursuit of normative goals at multiple scales. Based in collaboration's genetic, historical and structural possibility, it supports an intentional transition from market and bureaucratic rationality to collaborative rationality, from individualism versus socialism to collective self-organization, and from profane competitive utilitarianism into a more enchanting relational vitalism. Applied to the case studies below, it illustrates collaborative governmentality in practice, providing an imitable substantiation of intentional community through a cooperative postmodern lens.

THE PATTERN WHICH CONNECTS: EVOLUTIONARY EPISTEMOLOGY,
POSTLIBERAL IMAGINATION AND MY COMMUNITY RESEARCH

“Epistemology is an indivisible, integrated metascience whose subject matter is the world of evolution, thought, adaptation, embryology, and genetics—the science of mind in the widest sense of the word.”

— Gregory Bateson (Bateson, 1979, p. 87)

“There is no difference in principle between organic and psychic growth.”

— Carl Jung (Jung & Franz, 1964, p. 64)

“What’s the difference between deconstruction and constructivism?”

— Bruno Latour (Latour, 2004, p. 232)

Since at least the eighteenth century, empirical understanding and means of control over so-called nature have been in continuous and accelerating growth. At times, humanity’s power and prowess have appeared almost absolute, bordering on mastery. Yet the great modern project has always had detractors pointing out the chronic chaos and hardship, ugliness and heartache that are its unintended consequences. Centuries ago, romantics raged against the canonical arrogance of classical standards and enlightenment rationalism, and the dislocation, devastation and estrangement of industrializing society. Today, critical intellectuals rage against the hubris of modernism and scientific positivism, declaring science, history, progress and the very idea of truth to be fallacious, biased and oppressive.

I see in recent complexity theory an opportunity for constructive reconciliation between enlightenment and romanticism, and between modern Apollonianism and its

pessimistic postmodern critics. A basic operative assumption in complexity thinking is that the world is in fact too complicated, and perception too limited and subjective, to arrive at one objective understanding or definitive choice of right action. This relativistic perspective is not the end of complexity theory, however, but its beginning. Having acknowledged contingency and uncertainty, complexity thinkers forge on, in search of recognizable patterns, relationships and strategies that remain useful.

Knowledge as Practical Discourse and Collaborative Conceptualization

The insight that human minds are formed and transformed through situations and interactions fundamentally challenges modernist conceptions of knowledge. Truth no longer stands as a mirror of reality. Rather, it is an evolving outcome of symbolic interaction with it (Mead, 1967). While objective truth may exist *out there*, humans do not know it *objectively*. We know it subjectively. “We speak of knowing something,” says Jung, “when we link a new perception to an already established context” (C. G. Jung, 1933, pp. 196–244). With insight from the study of linguistics, George Lakoff further explained determinations of truth as inseparable from the process of understanding: only when a statement about a subject is in agreement with an understanding of that subject can it be said to be true (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003).

The process of understanding, like that of communication, is conceptual, created in the mind through language, experience and imagination. “We are in all truth so enclosed by psychic images,” observes Jung, “that we cannot penetrate to the essence of things external to ourselves” (C. G. Jung, 1933, p. 190). The particular conceptual categories we use to understand people and the world necessarily highlight certain

qualities and hide others, and are an outcome of human interactions with environments rather than inherent, stable properties of people and environments themselves. Thus determinations of truth—and all rational evaluations—are dependent on contextual human ideation, experience and understanding, and by nature limited, situated and subjective (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003).

In this postmodern perspective on epistemology, accepted truths are constituted by language in discourses, and we anticipate multiplicity and discord between discourses and their entailed reasons. Discourses are shared ways of understanding the world, using collective assumptions and judgments to interpret bits of information and organize them into coherent accounts (Dryzek, 2005). They come to define what is common sense and legitimate knowledge, and they carry particular associations and meanings. Given the diversity of individual experiences, competing and conflicting discourses arise in all areas of knowledge, but discourses around complex issues are especially diverse and increased complexity makes opposing perspectives harder to refute or reconcile.

Foucault's theory of governmentality proposes that, within this multiplicity and incongruity of perspectives, the creation, primacy and legitimacy of particular discourses is interrelated with concentrations of *power*—the unequal capacity to influence events and the behaviors of others. Discourses embody power, and they reproduce power by conditioning perceptions and values that advance particular interests. Powerful discourses become taken-for-granted truth and thereby reinforce the dominant social order, shaping individual motivations with their language, images and stories (Dryzek, 2005, p. 9; Foucault, 1980; Robbins, 2004, pp. 65–66).

Over the last several decades many scholars in the humanities and social sciences have adopted Foucault's denunciation of dominant knowledge discourses, and pursued progressive goals through vigorous criticism of established narratives and standards of truth (Hicks, 2004). Supporting Marxist critique with arguments founded in the postmodern condition, this "activist strategy against the coalition of reason and power" explicitly repudiates liberal rationality and intentionally undermines its ontological foundation (Hicks, 2004, p. 3). The challenge usefully problematizes unmindful positivist epistemology. However, if followed to its extreme ahistorical and illogical conclusion, the deconstructionist agenda's non-foundationalism ultimately denies the legitimacy not only of scientific positivity and liberal government, but of all rationality and ethical claims (Bennett, 2001; Seligman, 2011).

I believe this problem is usefully resolved with an explicit theory of collaboratively constructed consensual truth. When popular Foucauldian discourse is confounded by its odd mixture of materialist criticism, relativist ontology, and unpragmatic utopianism, it offers little theoretical clarity or sense of perspective. If we accept Foucault's critique of reason as "the ultimate language of madness" (Foucault, 1965, p. 95) we are free to wield the weapon of deconstruction, but are likely to find ourselves rationalizing any alternative moral claims with statistical generalizations and simplistic explanations of linear causation, grounded in the very mechanical positivism we portend to dispel. A conceptualization of collective sensemaking can employ critical postmodernism but without accepting partisan deconstructionism as the last word on truth. Knowledge is, in the words of cybernetic theorist Gregory Bateson, "the pattern which connects" (Bateson, 1979, p. 8). Neither knowledge, subjectivity nor governments

are constructed by individuals or powers out of whole cloth. Rather, they evolve as consensus between multiple perspectives on what works within the constraints of an intricate, interacting world. Interpretations are tested by functioning systems and every individual each day, and only select interpretations are found useful, hold firm against falsification, and persist to be tested once again.

With a pragmatic complex systems perspective as foundation, I make the claim that sincere, observant, ethical, empathetic and self-reflective humans have an innate ability to arrive together at useful and legitimate knowledge claims. This ability is biological, hardwired into our sophisticated social-psychological function. Moreover, because creation and sharing of practical knowledge is a universal quality of evolved human consciousness and society, in a profound sense our knowledges do not reflect an infinite assortment of alternative epistemologies but a common, pragmatic epistemological field, which is in fact universal. Of course, some claims are more easily falsified than others, and the criteria by which a claim is tested depends on the goals and therefore values of the individuals and societies that test them. But with openminded communication between individuals and groups, we can share our knowledge claims, and allow them to be tested against one another, translated into new contexts, and reconciled.

In contemporary society, moreover, we have established systems of knowledge creation, selection and sharing that have proven particularly effective, and their processes should continue to be tested but also respected and supported. These include peer-reviewed empirical science, expert long-term qualitative observation, and rigorous and reputable investigative journalism. They also include esteemed and erudite expressions in the humanities, comprised of great literature, mythological narratives and wisdom

traditions, which have evolved in particular environments and been maintained for their resonance and usefulness over thousands of years. The legitimacy of these knowledge sources is not simply a function of power, nor supernatural revelation or exceptional ability, but of the collective processes that constitute, affirm and reproduce them.

As sources of the knowledge claims presented here, I evoke four billion years of biological evolution, nearly forty years of favorable conditions for my personal and intellectual development, and five years of relevant reading and honest and reflective observation on the subject at hand. To test their legitimacy, honesty and integrity, I continue to subject them to lively debate in the inclusive and engaged communities of which I am part, academic and otherwise. My conceptual revaluing of collaborative relationships is a product of these ongoing processes, and its validity remains subject to revision or rejection by any mind or learning community in which it might be tested.

My primary assertion is that, recognizing truth claims are contingent and contextual but nonetheless an imperative constituent of human psyche and society, we can engage collaboratively and without illusion a universal complexity and variability that confounds individual imagination. More specifically, perspective developed from the collective intelligence of diverse human communities can leverage a variety of human values, a breadth of specific and generalized information, detailed knowledge regarding the contexts in which that information developed, and intensive understanding about the particular contexts in which that information might be usefully applied.

Of course, any cumulative process of recognizing complex patterns and applying experience developed in one context to other similar situations involves imperfect, creative analogy. In the words of Bateson, epistemology is “always and inevitably

personal,” and proceeds through a never-ending search by “multiple comparison” (Bateson, 1979, p. 87). Outputs are decidedly *not* packages of positivistic truth. My theoretical claims are not inert objects intended to sit on shelves awaiting use as instruments of mechanistic control. Rather, they are intended to interact with other discourses and influence evolving cultural metaphors, and thereby affect the progression of our collective imaginations.

I address the imagination because, as the material of human perception and sensemaking, imagination is inextricably involved in our every endeavor, even our most rational pursuits (Jung & Franz, 1964, p. 92). It is the means by which we visualize what we cannot see, including hypothetical futures and potential solutions to current problems. Inasmuch as individuals pursue self-interest, it is an imaginary interest based upon an imagined goal. As the means by which we transport ourselves into the experience of others, imagination is likewise the foundation of empathy and the ethical action it inspires.

Moreover, symbolic conceptualization and our imaginative faculty are the means by which we perceive *present* empirical reality. In the process of visual perception, our minds combine abstract symbols, innate inclinations, and vestiges of past experiences to creatively construct the experience—projecting form, meaning and value into the world. Martin Seligman, the founding personality in the field of positive psychology, borrows George Soros’ term *reflexive reality* to describe the way in which human experience is defined and developed by expectations and perceptions of it. Consideration of the contents of imagination is critical, because, in the words of Seligman, “When expectations influence reality, realism sucks” (Seligman 2011, p. 237).

This situation demands not just more knowledge, but different knowledge, and more personal and collective intention in its construction. I follow the new materialists in their “creative affirmation of a new ontology” that is “post- rather than anti-Cartesian,” an ethos that is “more positive and constructive than critical and negative: it sees its task as creating new concepts and images of nature that affirm matter’s immanent vitality” (Coole & Frost, 2010, p. 8). When given concepts reflect centuries of accumulated local wisdom for meaningful and sustainable living, and the order they provide has not become outmoded or come to feel oppressive, accepting established knowledge may be healthy. But in modern societies, where change is rapid and information global, hegemonic discourses often reflect a generalized, commodified and inert ontology that is disconnected and unresponsive to dynamic personal and temporal conditions. Authentic individual agency demands personal understanding, based in experience and reflexive cultivation of the contents of one’s own mind. And guiding meaningful social progress requires authentic *collective* agency, grounded in shared experience and reflexive development of an authentic *common* sense.

My Positionality and Method

This project started with a hunch. It was my premonition that *community works*, and deliberate and practical use of community might help solve our most challenging social and ecological problems. This hunch took on theoretical definition, importance and urgency in response to the ideological milieu of my graduate studies. Exposed to an inflexible subjective partisanship, founded in a critical postmodernism that rejects universal values—and seems to prioritize ideological purity over listening or engaging

with existing systems and other perspectives, and to delegitimize rational discussion, common sense, or the identification and pursuit of mutual interests—I felt it incumbent upon myself to consider cooperative social processes and explore theoretically what I had assumed to be obvious. Community works, because in community, good and just behavior is rewarded by the esteem of one’s associates. In open communication—the inclusive exchange of information among related subjects, objects and systemic processes—prosocial qualities like mutual respect and responsible action thrive. Moreover, processes of community can be martialled to motivate people to overcome ignorance and avarice, as well as inequality, jealousy and aggression, and inspire actions that are ecological, generous and fair.

With this premonition, I read a spectrum of social theory ranging from economics to politics to philosophy, and developed a hypothesis that—in particular—community function is already serving the ostensibly contradictory goals of human wellbeing and ecological sustainability in intentional collaborative *institutions*. To explore the proposition and ground my theoretical exploration, I chose as formal case studies three community-based institutions already implicated in my community-works hunch: my siblings and I attended Mendocino Community High School, I have been involved in the Round Valley Library Commons project since inception, and I have participated in ongoing cultural and resource-management efforts in the Klamath region since early childhood.

Over the next few years, I continued my exploration of relevant theoretical literature while engaging the case studies with a grounded-theory approach. I concentrated my reading on complex systems, psychology, resilience thinking,

evolutionary theory, and collaborative resource governance, and employed a broad mixture of qualitative research methods, relying heavily on participant observation and interviews with key individuals as knowledge sources and using in-depth dialogue to construct common understanding between researcher and informant (Fischer, 2000). Following initial observations and testing of broad research questions in open-ended, informal or semi-structured interviews, relevant themes and categories of data were identified, and used to inform and focus subsequent interviews and research. Repeating these steps in an iterative process, where review of collected data further refined data collection and organization, I attempted to develop a useful understanding determined by neither my nor my data sources' preliminary conceptual structures, but inductively from the co-created understanding itself (Charmaz 2003).

Overall, I conducted 20 semi-formal qualitative interviews. Interviewees were selected from designers, organizers, current and past participants, and other knowledgeable community members. Interviews were complemented with ongoing participatory observation and document review, and analyzed with a combination of content and narrative methods. Validity in analyses depended on establishing shared vocabularies and common conceptual frameworks regarding nuanced subjective meanings, and eliciting research subjects' honest, reflective, and relevant insights. Beyond establishing rapport, I maintained genuine relationships—founded on mutual understanding and disclosure—as advocated in some feminist research approaches (Hesse-Biber et al. 2004).

Ultimately, there is no denying the personal nature of this inquiry. It is wholly a product of my experience, based in emergent processes of emotional attachment, pattern

recognition, and logical reasoning in one human being interacting with the world. I knew most of the interviewees before starting my research, and the three communities described were already my home, the context of my memory, and ingredients of my identity. Any sense I made is a creative *gathering* of observations, notions, and cumulative vestiges of the past, and, as Latour says, “Things that gather cannot be thrown at you like objects” (Latour, 2004, p. 237).

Nonetheless, I respect human consciousness and our innate faculty for rational interpretation, and strive for integrity and sincerity in my investigation of things. Though a far cry from some blank slate on which empirical study has painted the cosmos in perfectly proportionate detail, my mind has remained open and receptive to new ideas and evidence. I undertook attentive, reflective, and critical observation, valued others as experts of their own knowledge and experience, and remained sensitive to the patterns and conceptual structures in the results. From various primary sources contextualized with abstract academic study, hopefully I cultivated useful awareness, perhaps some genuine knowledge, and possibly even a little theoretical clarity.

INSTANTIATION 1: COLLECTIVE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT—THE
ROUND VALLEY LIBRARY COMMONS

Twelve people stroll into a large and comfortably furnished room, and seat themselves in a circle around a giant modular table. As they settle into their seats, the individuals greet each other, chat about various personal matters, and demonstrate the general warmth and close familiarity they share. At around two minutes past the hour, the participants come to attention, quickly decide on who will write down the agenda, and call out agenda items which are written down on a white board at the front of the room.

This is the administrative meeting of the Round Valley Community Radio, a program of the Friends of the Round Valley Public Library, held every week in the Community Room at the Round Valley Library Commons. As always, the first agenda item is introductions—going around the room, everyone says their name. The second item is hearing the interests and concerns of any new people at the meeting, and about any new radio show ideas people might have. The meeting then moves quickly into the various decisions and responsibilities of running a small, all-volunteer radio station, each of which are covered through informal discussion, more-or-less consensus decisions, and one or more individuals' willingness to take action.

The Round Valley Library Commons is a locally assembled and governed facility, meeting the unique needs of its local community through an extended network of actors and resources. Like many other community organizations, it evolved organically through

the efforts of engaged citizens who saw a need and it took upon themselves to fill it. It started as a volunteer-funded and run library in the 1980s, eventually became a fully funded county library, then grew into a community center that provides a plethora of services and covers nearly a whole city block. From conception to present form, it grew through the choices and intelligent innovations of engaged citizen volunteers, to become a social center of the Round Valley area of Mendocino County.

Situated deep in the high ridges and peaks of the Coast Range, Round Valley and its surrounding hills comprise a sparsely settled and demographical diverse region, anchored by the small town of Covelo, population 1,300, in the center of the valley. The area includes one of the largest Indian reservations in California, as well as old ranching families, signs of a once-booming logging industry, a large community of aging “back-to-landers” who relocated from cities after the turbulent 1960s, and many younger residents attracted to the region by the cannabis industry.

The Commons project grew from this unique context and demographic mix, coalesced within an organization called the Friends of the Round Valley Public Library (Friends), and driven by the collective understanding, vision and aptitudes of participants in that group. Specifically, it developed from the personal experiences of its initial leadership, and their knowledge of community needs and the idea that—in the words of the community center’s original proponent and early coordinator—“organizing works.” This originator, whom I shall call Fields, was a professional project manager “used to organizing with like-minded people.” She came from a radical family—her father was a union electrician, and she grew up in the rich atmosphere of labor organizing in mid-

century San Francisco. After moving to Covelo in 2000, she worked at Indian Housing for three years, building up the capacity for tribal employment through a new tribal housing program and facility.

When it came to government, most people in the valley were used to top-down direction, said Fields. She believed government should be through committees and consensus, however, “empowering people to take care of themselves, to control their own lives.” Frustrated by the experience of trying to find a place to hold meetings for an environmental organization, she imagined a “brick and mortar place where things could happen, a place to organize.” She teamed up with another recent arrival to the valley, who happened to be an experienced grant writer, and the two set about finding financial backing to make the dream a reality.

The project immediately attracted broad support, as residents recognized it would serve a clear, locally defined need. According to Chichester, an early participant and current Friends Vice-President, there was a realization among many people in the community that they needed to do something for the town. Covelo is an exceptionally isolated and underserved community, with very high levels of unemployment and poverty. It is also unincorporated, with no mayor or other official leadership. Prior to development of the Commons, the schools were the only significant public institutions serving all demographics in the community. A number of people, collected within the Friends, developed a vision of the library as the new “heart of the community.”

The early leadership mobilized existing institutional capacities, and started a campaign to buy a downtown building and turn it into a library and common space. It

was a good group of people with a consistent common vision, said Chichester. “The common divisive and ego-driven issues didn’t manifest themselves.” Regular discussions were held, and the amorphous group made steady progress toward a shared understanding of the town’s needs, a vision for meeting them, existing capacities for realizing that vision, and additional capacities that would need to be met. Organizers realized it was going to be a \$1,000,000 project—a lot of money to raise from a wider valley community of somewhere around 3,000 adults. However, over the next three or four years, the group gathered half of a million dollars through fundraisers and donations—enough to secure the building and demonstrate the immense momentum of the project.

Throughout project development, most of the work of was done by local people who saw opportunities and recognized their capacity to contribute. For a process like this to work, explained Fields, “You have to have people with vision, but you also have to have buy-in.” Demonstrating both, the project quickly gained extensive backing. It was “a full community-supported project from the beginning,” said Friends treasurer and longtime contributor Gauder, and the support it received was “phenomenal.” Ongoing strategy meetings were crowded, inspired and lively. People took to the project because they saw that it belonged to them, and was a way to demonstrate their good will and desire to contribute to the community. They recognized, said Chichester, “an opportunity for people with skills to benefit the common good.” As a plan solidified, necessary pieces were collected and engaged in implementation. The success of the enterprise depended on particular contributions from many different individuals, and “every person brought something to the table.” The shared vision was realized by an adequate mixture of people

with professional backgrounds, from fundraisers to contractors: an experienced designer worked on the architectural plans; an experienced building project manager recruited a contractor and directed volunteer labor; an experienced electrician directed the installation of a solar system.

Based on her experience with the Commons, Fields developed a schema for those wishing to try this sort of organizing at home. She said you need three different kinds of people with distinct attributes. First, you need visionaries, the “far seers,” who develop the idea and are able to communicate it to others to build buy-in. Then you need “angels,” people with money who are in a point in their life where they are open to an opportunity to give back. Finally, you need implementers, the “doers” with skills, who have time and a desire to use their skills to improvement their community.

Of course, the Commons project did not develop entirely without disagreement. An early point of conflict emerged around the proper balance between the needs of the library and the broader vision for a community center that some participants wanted. The concept of a library commons, combining a library with other community services, is a national trend. Libraries are often leaders for developing commons, Fields explained, because they already exist as institutions, provide access to information, have county funding, and are grassroots. However, some participants in the project had imagined a very large library, focused first and foremost on books. Administrators of the Mendocino County Library warned the Friends that finding the balance between priorities can be difficult, and this proved to be the case. Differences were talked through, again and again, in an attempt to build one unified goal. Over the course of weeks, most participants—

even those who were initially averse—came to share a vision for a full-fledged community center, and such a plan was ultimately adopted. However, a couple of people who imagined a more traditional library felt overruled, and ceased participation in the organizing group (though they too came to see the center as a positive outcome in the end). With this exception, most participants agree the process operated pretty much on consensus.

Once the Friends group had developed the vision, Fields approached one very wealthy landowner in the valley, who contributed early and coached her in how to solicit and collect money from other wealthy people. Fields then secured significant funding from two other landowners with deep pockets, and a large family foundation with origins in Round Valley. With this substantial initial funding, the group purchased a 7,500 square foot building on Main Street. A diverse collection of community members stepped up to organize fundraisers, pursue grants, and undertake a complete remodel, which turned the long-shuttered restaurant and bar into a library, café, and community center. From visioning, to fundraising, to implementation, the group functioned in a self-directed system that Fields calls “do-acracy:” the consensus among those involved was that “the people that do it get to decide.”

With the remodel complete, the large building now provides a public space for myriad services and events. Roughly one-third is rented to the county to house the public library, which includes free wireless internet (the fastest and only public available connection in town), over a dozen computers, and a high-tech media room. The large yet cozy “community room” hosts regular community meetings, government meetings, food

bank distributions, farm-to-table dinners, a monthly movie program, music events, and fundraisers for the library and other community organizations. The facility was furnished through a USDA grant, and now provides the only public restrooms in town, houses various classes and art shows, hosts a seed library, has a rentable commercial kitchen, and has a solar array large enough to cover the electricity demand of the entire facility. The property also includes half of a block of grass shaded by walnut trees, which hosts the weekly farmers market and other outdoor occasions.

Beyond its role as a public space and community center, the Library Commons also functions as a business incubator. The building houses a for-profit café. The rentable commercial kitchen is also utilized by several culinary startups, including several catering businesses and producers of processed foods, a couple of which banded together and formed a cooperative restaurant and local products business with its own storefront on Commercial Street. All of these businesses got their start because of the publicly available kitchen.

The Library Commons also hosts an active and vibrant community radio station. Run entirely by volunteers, the station provides around-the-clock programming, including local and non-local music, local and national news, talk radio, drama, public affairs, and announcements. Housed in a separate building on the Commons property and owned by the greater Friends organization, it functions as a more-or-less autonomous endeavor. From its inception in 2011, the planning, fundraising, construction and function of the radio station has been conceived, debated and decided in an open forum by whoever chooses to attend the station's weekly administrative meetings. The group

has no authority structure or named officers, and—so far—all decisions have been arrived at through discussion and consensus. It does its own fundraising and membership drives, pays for all of its operating, royalty, and legal fees, and—now that it is well established—rents its space from the parent Friends group.

As a loosely organized communication system, the radio unifies and amplifies diverse perspectives and sources of knowledge. It is a medium for the provision of consistent, reliable information, said Chichester, who is also co-founder of the station, and its nominal but FCC-mandated “Chief of Operations.” Call-in programming allows for public discussion of community affairs, and for government representatives to speak to and hear from their constituents. The station has hosted candidate forums, and even call-in discussions with the region’s US Congressional representative. Because many people do not want to go to meetings, explained Chichester, these live forums provide a critical opportunity for politicians to report to communities, for communities to hold politicians accountable, and for individuals “to feel they are actually connected to the people who have power over their lives.” Recognizing that the radio improves community resilience and emergency preparedness, the county Sherriff’s office aided in the purchase of a generator, which provides the station with emergency back-up power. Perhaps most of all, said Chichester, “the radio gives people something to be proud of and excited about. People really love it.”

This sense of collective pride permeates every aspect of the Commons project. The success is recognized countywide, inspiring other communities to attempt something similar, and it has also provided a sense of accomplishment that is shared by everyone in

the Round Valley community. Chichester reported there was long-standing inability for the community to take control of the collective space, and the Commons has changed this reality. In the forty years he has been in Covelo, the commons is the most visual and affirming project he has seen. He believes the ability to pass recent school bond initiatives is a direct result of the previous experience of the successful Commons project. Even though individuals still identify with various groups, people now identify with a common institution as well, and understand they are all in it together. There is a community identity that the various groups share, explained Chichester, oriented toward the common good.

The shared pride the Commons inspires clearly stems from its unique combination of charitable, collective, economic, and public endeavors. As a tax-exempt nonprofit, the Friends organization provides a conduit for meaningful philanthropic aid. Those individuals in the community that have tremendous economic resources, but had not been contributing, recognize the commons as an opportunity to make a positive contribution. Individuals who do not have great wealth are also able to contribute, however, whether skilled craftspeople ready to mentor or inexperienced individuals with time and a willingness to learn. In a community with few economic opportunities, the Commons also provides employment and resources for entrepreneurial endeavors—which give the institution stability and a multiplying effect, respectively. Finally, because the library space is rented and maintained by the county, and provides many resources and programs that are free to the public, everyone in the community is welcome to—and

a large portion do—use its myriad facilities. The result, explained Fields, is a venue and an environment that is comprehensive and all-inclusive.

This realization of a common vision for civic revitalization would not have been achieved through market forces alone. For some, one of the catalysts for the project was that an “out-of-town rich guy” had come in and torn down an entire block of downtown to make room for his own vision of a revitalized community. Upon becoming more familiar with the economic reality of the community, however, he lost interest. The block remains vacant after fifteen years and, said Chichester, local people have seen their vulnerability to destructive outside forces; they have seen what someone who is market-driven contributed to their community. The wealthy outsider demolished the Laundromat, an auto shop, a burger stand and several other buildings, presumably because they were not sophisticated enough or sufficiently profitable, and then failed to rebuild anything, because to do so would not have returned the necessary investment. But that same wealthy landowner *did* recognize the value of the Commons project, and eventually became a major financial supporter—revitalizing the community through extra-market means.

Though the Commons remains a charitable-communal-public resource outside the demands of the market, it supports commercial enterprises that otherwise would not be able to cover start-up costs. There is generally too high of a threshold, explained Chichester, for businesses to get started. Given the poor prospects for return on investment in a small, isolated community, a collective investment is necessary to enable small ventures to get started. The retail space in the building now functions as a

successful business, but it is only viable because the Commons provides the facility at a very affordable rate. Similarly, said Chichester, the commercial kitchen is used by many people—including for-profit ventures—for a small use fee, but this works only because it is shared and the activities need not recover the original investment. With the community facility fully constructed, however, it appears economically sustainable. Everything is paid off, and rent income covers the cost of upkeep. The Commons accommodates economic reality while achieving objectives markets alone cannot reach.

As a collaboration between public, nonprofit and commercial, the Commons also accomplishes what governments alone have failed to achieve. One million dollars were raised to purchase and remodel the building without any government help. After construction, various government agencies *have* come to recognize the facility's value and contributed to its improvement, however, including a USDA grant to furnish the building. The county pays for a librarian to be present, and a part-time employee to keep the building clean. The coffee shop cleans the bathroom, the patio, and the community room once a week. The Friends organization hosts ongoing fundraisers, with the goal of bringing in \$20,000 a year, and pay a part-time building coordinator to manage the kitchen, community space, landscaping, and remodel plan. With the building entirely paid off, they are also able put aside a savings for future maintenance needs. This diversity of income sources means the project is able to deliver a diversity of services, and its sustainability does not depend on tenuous government support. The real key to the Commons' long-term success, explained Chichester, is that it continues to fulfil social needs and allows new ventures to flourish.

Participants reported widespread agreement that the Commons realizes a collective vision, and provides an essential role that was previously lacking in the community. Government is not capable of making a community take charge of their destiny, said Chichester, and if we wait for government it will never happen. Markets, on the other hand, can only do so much, because they distribute rewards according to their own system, whether or not they benefit communities. In another culture, explained Chichester, some of the social functions the Commons serves might be provided by the church. Attempts to make community do not need to be church, government or market, continued Chichester, but community members need to feel they are part of something bigger than themselves. The Commons serves and enhances local attachments to place, people and community, and provides a sense of collective agency and belonging.

INSTANTIATION 2: COLLABORATIVE SOLUTIONS TO COMPLEX SOCIAL-
ECOLOGICAL PROBLEMS —THE WESTERN KLAMATH RESTORATION
PARTNERSHIP

Fifty-some-odd folks stand in a rough circle, on the edge of an old logging road in a thick conifer forest, deep in the steep gorges of the Klamath Mountains. The group is diverse in affiliation and outlook, representative of many different organizations and residents with strong interest in the surrounding landscape. Among those present are two dozen US Forest Service employees, including the forest supervisor, the district ranger, a silviculturalist, a fuels chief, a forester, various biologists and ecologists, an endangered species expert and a cultural resources expert; employees of the Karuk Tribe Department of Natural Resources and several members of the Tribe; directors, board members, a map maker, and various employees from local watershed organizations; a representative from the two locally active environmental protection groups; a representative from the Environmental Protection Agency; various active citizens from the tiny rural communities sprinkled among the surrounding mountains; and me, a one-time local resident and now student from Humboldt State University.

The group has gathered in the woods to develop a common vision for how the forests in front of us should be managed. The lively conversation swings between heartfelt, abstract and visionary, to technical, pragmatic, and acutely focused on the material reality at hand. In an effort to develop mutually agreeable forest management prescriptions, participants are deliberating the observable forest structure on this specific

stretch of road, in relation to the overall condition of a huge swath of surrounding landscape. In the service of personal attachments—including the place, its human and nonhuman actors, and its complex social and ecological relationships—they are considering immediately implementable interventions, as well as ultimate long-term goals that can guide forest management for centuries to come.

This is a field trip meeting of the Western Klamath Restoration Partnership (WGRP), and the presence of dozens of busy, educated professionals, engaged in broad holistic conversation deep in remote mountains, is a reflection of the significance and urgency of the general topic: fire on the landscape. Historically, fire is the most important source of ecological disturbance in northwestern California landscapes, and there is growing evidence that regular fire is essential to forests' long-term health. While it is difficult to determine the extent to which historical fires were either lightning or human caused, both were clearly important and ubiquitous in inland northwestern California (Vale 2002; Boyd 1999). Moderated by past fires and combined with lesser disturbances, healthy forest fires generated a shifting-mosaic steady state that maintained dynamic diversity in size and species (Currie and Bergen 2009).

Since European settlement, however, this dynamic diversity has been severely altered. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the routine practice of Native American burning was disrupted and intensive logging left heavy fuel accumulation and unnatural forest regrowth, which resulted in unusually large and destructive forest fires. The social and political response was to demonize wildfire and make fire suppression a

primary responsibility of new federal and state forest management agencies (Pyne et al. 1996). This fire suppression, coupled with the introduction of extensive clear-cut logging and mono-crop plantations in the mid twentieth century, led to drastically changed fire conditions—causing intense fuel accumulation, virtually eliminating fire-resistant stands of old growth, and creating vast areas of dense young forest lacking age, size, and species diversity. Resilience and resistance to natural cycles of fire disturbance were severely reduced (Currie and Bergen 2009).

Still, management policies directed toward complete fire suppression proved quite successful for over 50 years. With deployment of heavy resources and ever-improving technologies, the number of acres burned each year declined drastically throughout the country. It is estimated that in the last half-century of the second millennium, the annual area burned in California was 18 times less than that which had burned historically (Stephens et al. 2007).

Since its low point in the 1970s, however, annual burn areas have steadily risen despite redoubled efforts at suppression (Stephens and Ruth 2005; Westerling et al. 2006; Littell et al. 2009). In the new millennium, increased fire activity and firefighting expenditures have overwhelmed the limited budgets of federal land-management agencies (Preisler et al. 2011). In fire-prone northwestern California, maintaining fire-free forests requires ever more resources with diminishing returns (Preisler et al. 2011), indicating suppression is no longer tenable as a long-term fire management goal (Snider et al. 2006). Increasing size and intensity of wildfires indicates that rapid collapse of homogenous forest systems is a growing threat, and the skyrocketing cost of suppression

shows that established forest management practice is failing and radically different governance is required. It is now clear the strategy of universal fire suppression in fire-prone ecosystems supports vicious feedback loops and a continued worsening of conditions, and that major changes in management practices are needed to improve fire resilience and responder and community safety (Thompson et al., 2018).

As federal and state governments have gradually accepted this reality, they have also come to recognize the benefit and right of tribal resource use and tribal participation in management decisions on public lands. Understanding disruptions of tribal management—and ongoing social and legal constraints on tribal practices—have inhibited traditional stewardships that maintained both tribal wellbeing and ecological integrity, USDA Forest Service scholars now support cooperative management and formal co-management agreements to restore forests through tribally focused restoration strategies. In particular, they call for the restoration of fire regimes and cultural burning through cooperative adaptive-management practices, and a shift from command-and-control strategies towards novel approaches of experimentation and revision (Long & Lake, 2018).

The diverse crowd meeting on a logging road deep in the Klamath Mountains is at the forefront of this innovative effort to address the overwhelmingly complex fire problem through collaborative management. The Western Klamath Restoration Partnership is charged with the broad goal of restoring fire resilience to 1.2 million acres of forestland in the lower Klamath Basin. Striving to include representatives from all responsible agencies, interest groups and stakeholders, the partnership has met for three-

day-long workshops most months for seven years. Professionally mediated according to the internationally recognized Open Standards Process for Conservation, the collaborative is working to establish mutually agreed-upon and implementable fire-related forest policies for the region (Harling, 2015; Harling & Tripp, 2014; Kruger & Lynn, 2015; Long & Lake, 2018; Pixley, 2017).

The WKRP functions as an ongoing communicative process. Based in the belief that conflict between stakeholders can be minimized through “strong collaborative efforts that persist over time,” the group strives to establish and maintain trust and a common vision among partners (Harling & Tripp, 2014, p. 35). Towards this goal, the group first worked to define the collaborative’s shared goals and values, which were determined to be: fire adapted communities, restored fire regimes, healthy river systems, resilient bio-diverse forests, sustainable local economies, and cultural and community vitality. The group then identified threats to these values, the most critical of which were the lack of stable jobs, erosion of community and cultural values (particularly Karuk traditional practices), lack of beneficial fire, altered forest structure and composition, high fuel loading, lack of defensible space, habitat degradation, and an impaired fishery. The organizers and participants hope the WKRP will develop a creative, superior, and mutually agreeable forest management strategy, which will succeed in getting fire back on the landscape (Harling & Tripp, 2014).

Over the years, the Partnership has gradually developed a comprehensive vision. Restoring resilience to northwestern California forests requires returning fire to its historic low-level disturbance role, a challenge given drastically changed forest

characteristics. To recover the rich wildlife habitats and natural resistance to fire disturbance found in healthy shifting-mosaic steady state forests, a new management strategy must leave clumps of a variety of native trees and shrubs, of different sizes, with reduced ladder fuels and open spaces around them. Moreover, contrary to policy precedents and the preferences of certain stakeholders, this labor-demanding goal cannot be funded through selective logging of the most saleable timber. Because of their fire resistance, critical importance as habitat, and limited presence in today's secondary forests, the retention of large trees is a first priority, even after they die (California Forestry Stewardship Program, 2010).

Ultimately, the collaborative aims to develop and reintroduce an extensive practice of prescribed fire. Given the potential dangers, multitude of variables, and exceptional forest conditions, prescribed fire is risky and controversial, and there are no generally accepted burning procedures. There is considerable danger of prescribed fires getting too hot, burning too thoroughly, or getting out of control. On the other hand, if conditions are not favorable the fires will not burn at all, or will fail to have the desired effect on forest structure and fuels. Thus, a successful landscape strategy requires a detailed and varied prescribed fire plan, sensitive to the particularities and necessary burn conditions of each location, including various pre-treatments and ignition patterns (Knapp et al., 2009). Indeed, in most places on the Klamath, introducing fire will first require extensive manual and mechanical fuel reduction (Varner et al., 2005). Thus, the collaborative has undertaken the significant challenge of organizing and sustaining significant resources in the form of expertise, machines, and physical labor, while it also

strives to develop and maintain detailed knowledge, translate it into interventions, monitor the results, and adjust knowledge and management accordingly.

After years of communicative process, the success of the collaborative effort is evident (“WKRP Project Set for Implementation,” 2018). On-the-ground-work has begun, with implementation of the Somes Bar Integrated Fire Management Project. Grant funding for the pilot project was secured from the state’s Cal Fire Forest Health Initiative (using dollars from the state’s carbon cap-and-trade program) and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation. The US Forest Service has officially condoned Karuk Tribal direction in management of the area of Offield Mountain, crews of young tribal members have been walking its steep slopes near the traditional center of the Karuk world, marking trees for mechanical removal and sale as timber. Manual treatments are now underway to prepare the area for widespread use of prescribed fire, with the development of strategic fuel breaks and the thinning and piling of overstocked forests and plantations to break up fuel continuity. Timber sales are planned as part of the larger strategy for restoring grasslands and historically open forest structure on the mountain, and revival of the Karuk’s traditional burning of the mountain in annual ceremonial practice.

This progress is no small matter, and an indication of fundamental change in forest management practice. Mistrust between the US Forest Service, environmental groups, and the tribe is clearly diminishing, a common vision for a resilient, productive and spiritually revitalized landscape has developed, and the Partnership is undertaking practical steps to make that vision a reality within existing restraints. The Six Rivers National Forest administrators have invited the Partnership’s core team leadership to

work collaboratively on a five-year scope-of-work for the Orleans Ukonom Ranger District. Representatives of participating watchdog environmental groups, whose successful litigation on environmental review process has made timber sales on national forests difficult, are themselves surprised to be in support of the action.

INSTANTIATION 3: COMMUNAL EDUCATION—MENDOCINO COMMUNITY
HIGH SCHOOL

Mothers pull up in old station wagons, teenagers drive in and park their varied jalopies, and some kids ride up on bicycles. In a steady stream, adolescents disembark their craft and stroll down the walk to a giant glass entry in the corner of a large modern building. The building is simultaneously reminiscent of a Victorian church, an agricultural barn and an Aztec pyramid. The entry opens directly into a huge common room, with steel beams supporting a vaulted twenty-foot ceiling with a cupola on top. The space is strikingly open and full of light. The cupola is rimmed with windows, a clerestory crests the upper walls, and the lower walls are full of large windows opening into classrooms. Across the room from the entry is another giant glass wall and a door, opening up to a soccer field and, beyond it, the Pacific Ocean.

As the teenagers wander into the carpeted common room, they greet their friends, share hugs and sit, individually or in piles, on mauve and teal couches strewn about the room. At somewhere around 8:35 am, a teacher calls attention and the entire room—some three dozen students, three teachers, and an administrative aid—circle up and take each other's hands. Everyone closes their eyes, and the teacher leads the group in a one-minute guided meditation. Then, after a synchronized squeeze of hands, the group breaks apart, sits down in a rough circle of couches, and commences an around-the-room check-in, a semi-structured conversation on a pressing concern, or some other team-building activity for the rest of first period.

This is Morning Meeting, and how every day starts at Mendocino Community High School. The Community School, an alternative high school in the small town of Mendocino, California, is entirely publicly funded and is not a charter school. According to its former head teacher and principal institutional architect, Steve Siler, it is dedicated to authenticity, freedom, and what he called “inside-out learning”—meaning students lead and the institution serves those who are a part of it. It is the organization’s mission to educate students by drawing them out and helping them find their way. Both lenient and academically rigorous, it is neither a continuation school nor prep school. Rather, in Siler’s words, “it is imaginative.”

The unusual experiment of the Community School is a consequence of forces unique to the place and time in which it arose. In the early-to-mid 1970s, Siler explained, the “hippie kids” of the greater Mendocino area were “full-on free.” Born into the radical 1960s counter-culture that had moved en masse to rural northern California in the “back-to-the-land” movement, these children mostly stayed out of school, receiving only informal education on their communes and through their social networks. Enrollment rates and budgets of the local school district suffered as a consequence, and the administration was concerned. In the mid-1970s, California had an unusually liberal superintendent of schools, and establishing alternative educational institutions was officially sanctioned with the 1976 passage of CA Education Code Section 58500 (*Cal. Educ. Code §58500*, 1976; Times, 1970). When hippie parents demanded an educational

alternative under the new education code, the district established the Community School and allowed it an inordinate degree of autonomy, so long as it boosted attendance.

From these unique circumstances came a truly unusual school. Rather than the highly standardized and test-oriented form of education—what Siler called “the corporate model”—that was at that time just beginning to dominate mainstream education, the Community School implemented an educational philosophy that Siler defined in five general principles. The first is that the educational and the social cannot be separated. Life is learning, all of it an expanded classroom. The school teaches students to recognize when they are learning, regardless of the context, and to exploit the opportunity. Acknowledging that there are infinite ways to acquire useful knowledge, the school is willing to give credit for all of them.

A second principle is that school should empower individuals. The schools’ structures and processes were designed to bring out the individuality of students—to bring out “who they are.” This means the school and its education are different for everyone. It is an emergent process, and success is demonstrated by the fact that people know who they are when they leave. Attendance is not mandatory, and learning is facilitated through four different modalities: classes, directed studies, independent studies, and outside resources—including the regular high school and the local community college. The goal is to achieve the maximum freedom for students to design their own path. This requires a lot of paperwork: students and faculty draw up contracts, the students track their own hours, and the faculty and administration attempt to report it all in the state-mandated fashion.

Maintaining a collaborative school environment is a third principle. Hierarchical relations are explicitly eschewed. There are no bells; students are allowed to collaborate. Leadership, mentors and guides are allowed to emerge from within the student group. The creation of authentic group identity is fostered, and the group identity changes to reflect the students, particularly those who take on informal leadership roles. Bigger is not better, and to maintain the collaborative environment the school is kept small—maintaining a student body between 40 and 50 students (MCHS, 2014). As the school gained in popularity, maintaining this number required establishing an admissions process. Prospective students write an essay explaining why they wish to attend the school and how the school’s unique learning environment is a good fit, and then meet with the faculty for an interview.

A fourth principle is to build intentional community. The school’s founders wanted to teach students to be part of a community, and processes were developed to foster awareness of students’ impact on other people and a sense of responsibility to the wellbeing of the group. Regular teambuilding activities intentionally developed a sense of belonging to people and place. Students were encouraged to take ownership of the community and, empowered to shape communal activities, influential students were continually affecting group practices and group culture. It was a fluid process, Siler explained, and teachers and students alike “had to be comfortable with chaos.” To accommodate the particularity of individuals within the chaos, each student chose a faculty advisor with whom they “clicked.” This was a non-hierarchical relationship; the advisor was the student’s ally.

The final principle is to maintain the school as a small hub with a large network. With its flexible structure, the school operationalizes unique human and nonhuman assets and agents in its larger context. The ocean, the forests, and the town are used as classroom. In order to embed students in the community and its ecological matrix, mentors from the greater community network are invited into the school, and students are encouraged to seek out mentors with knowledges and skills that are relevant to both student and place. Work with chosen outside mentors is credited, including independent study and the required 200-hour senior project. The Mendocino area is host to a huge diversity of craftspeople, professionals, scientists, intellectuals and artists, many of whom are masters and ideal tutors in their areas of interest. Students are responsible for directing their own education, and with helpful suggestions from faculty and associated community members they identify their own mentors, so the network is creative and always changing.

Starting in the 1970s, explained Siler, the Community School pursued its four principles not just in classroom activities and academic programs, but through a unique set of school ceremonies. Developed in Siler's head under the influence of Jungian psychology, the ceremonies were—in his words—"so archetypal, they cut through the bullshit." They spoke to human nature, because humans think in symbols and images. Siler described the ceremonies as tribal but not exactly "hippie," though he saw a relation between the two. People are tribal and always have been, he said, a fact that has generally been suppressed in civilization. Schooling between kindergarten and twelfth grade is the only time in modern life when most people are removed from the larger culture and

placed in a contained environment, said Siler, which creates what he calls a tribal youth subculture. The 1960s subculture was one of these school-developed cultures, and as the children of 1960s culture, students of the Community School were a self-selective fringe, accustomed to the group subculture of their parents. They came to the school with an understanding of sitting in a circle, holding hands, and breathing, Siler explained, and the school's ceremonies intentionally facilitated and guided the subculture within this already tribalistic group.

Beyond everyday community and culture-building processes in first-period Morning Meetings, the whole school left town for multi-day retreats at a summer camp facility. Built in lodge style by the Works Project Administration, the facility is deep in the redwoods of Jackson State Demonstration Forest, providing rustic simplicity in a rich natural setting, physically and aesthetically isolated from dominant culture. On these retreats, held at the beginning and end of the school year, students and staff cooked, ate and cleaned together, and participated in structured, archetypal ceremonies that lasted all day and long into the night.

The carefully structured ceremonial processes fostered personal individuation within intentional community. In the Big Circle Ceremony, held at the beginning of the first day of retreat, the school sat as a circle and meditated on the group as a whole, building collective understanding that "this is who we are." In the Cleanse and Keep Ceremony, the school gathered around a campfire. Each community member came up to the fire one by one, dropping a symbolic object representing something they wished to be rid of into the fire, and dropping another object representing something they wished to

keep into a large hand-made bag, which was then hung up for the year on the wall of the school.

Nighttime ceremonies took advantage of the intimacy and symbolism created by fragile lights enveloped in expansive darkness. In the Candlelight Ceremony, students and staff collected in a dark hall, each holding a lit candle, and each person stood silently and stared into the eyes of every other person, for several minutes, one at a time. In the Positive Feedback Ceremony, also in a dark hall lit with candles, each community member took a turn sitting in the front of the room, staring at candles, while other members provided positive input on the individual's qualities, growth, potential, and unique role in the community.

For the Medicine Bag Ceremony, each school member brought on the end-of-year retreat a small bag they had made or found, filled with objects rich with personal symbolic import. With the whole school seated in a circle in a grassy field, each community member got up, one at a time, and walked around the circle, delivering their bag to someone else in the circle in acknowledgement of a special relationship. When everyone had delivered their bag to someone, givers and receivers sat together and discussed the significance of the gifts and the bag's symbolic contents. In the Goodbye Ceremony, held on the last day of the end-of-year retreat, each senior was acknowledged as a force in the community that would soon be gone, and community members expressed the significance and emotional impact of their departure.

With fifty participants, these intense formal ceremonies lasted hours, and, along with more informal, interstitial interaction the retreats afforded, they facilitated trust,

exploration, bonding, and a shared sense of meaning and import. As can be expected in a youth culture, there were unsanctioned retreat activities and traditions as well, some of which were notorious and risky. “Things got wild, a little crazy,” said Siler, and the school leadership knew it. Students were learning about themselves, what is important, and how to care for each other. Upon returning from retreat, someone with liberal and supportive parents would host an “after retreat party,” where things often got even wilder, as students let loose within the safety that tight social bonds and empathic attunement provide.

Activities for building and maintaining community cohesion and collaborative personal development continued, in Morning Meetings and scheduled ceremonies, throughout the school year. Toward the end of the year, the special contributions of particular students were honored in the Awards Ceremony. Symbolic prizes were presented for outstanding academics, but also for contributions to the group, including the coveted Spirit of the Community, and for unique and silly categories chosen by the students. In the Graduation Ceremony, the departing class sat in a circle in the middle of the school and took turns standing while their entire community, from friends and family members to teachers and mentors, shared stories and gave public testament to their individual value, describing where they had come from, who they had become, and where they might be going. The ceremony was known to go on for many hours.

Indeed, informed by Jungian ritual tribalism, the school’s ceremonial curriculum integrated personal growth and community development into every aspect of school function. Its daily processes intentionally cultivated awareness of personhood,

emphasizing integration, freedom and responsibility. The school leadership insisted that classes not be mandatory even though, Siler admitted, the policy was “not one-hundred percent successful.” Some students could not step up to the responsibility, he said, and yet the school did not filter them out. Generally, however, staff and students are motivated by their strong belief in and commitment to the school as a project. Students were expected to find, and usually succeeded in finding, their own motivation by following their own personal interests. The immense freedom afforded students allows them to choose their own activities and get credit for them. Of course, completion of regular classes is also necessary to meet graduation and college entrance requirements, and—though attendance is not mandatory—personal effort and respecting instructors’ and other students’ time were strong community-enforced norms. Though students decided on their own final grades in consultation with their teachers, graded evaluation was taken seriously, the expectation of honest and fair self-assessment was ubiquitous, and students were successfully motivated to apply themselves.

To this day, the school maintains close contact with its surroundings and taps vast community resources. Outside people and processes are enlisted and encouraged as unique and contextually relevant learning opportunities. Parents and the larger community are invited into the school to contribute to classes and participate in various school functions, including potlucks, open houses, seasonal ceremonies, and student performances. Students are also taken out of the classroom and into the woods, the ocean, and town, extending the school’s exploration and intimacy to a network of educational places and supportive neighbors.

With its simple set of structured processes, the school maintains an ongoing complex of relationships—and its primary function of developing healthy, resilient, community-oriented and self-aware youths—despite ongoing turnover in students and staff. Siler described the institution’s organizational structure as *chaos*. “This kind of model has to *emerge*, and will be different every time,” Siler explained. “It’s a living organism. The influential people are going to set the tone.” Sometimes faculty found the effect of certain influential students hard to accept, and for the model to succeed, Siler said, “you have to have a lot of heart, deep ecology, a common mission.” The school relies on self-enforced buy-in on the part of students, he explained: “It ain’t happening ‘till its theirs.” The system works to the extent that, with the assistance of teachers and the community, students develop self-knowledge and the capacity to organize collectively the fulfillment of their individual needs. For kids who “get it,” Siler said, the model works. For those who are already “institutionalized,” who are used to and desire being told what to do, it does not.

From its founding, the school faced ongoing challenges, limitations, and changes. Siler recalled ongoing resistance and lack of understanding from the regular high school administration and the school board, which he characterized as “benign neglect” at best. While the administration has never directly interfered or withdrawn official backing, there has been a lack of support in terms of resources and funding, and also for the school’s unique mission. Siler experienced a dearth of common cause with the district, the county, and the state. “Their imaginations are so limited,” he explained. By the early 1990s, Siler had decided the experiment had gone as far as he could take it, feeling the

school's radical mission had expanded to its borders and was now boxed in by college requirements, the regular high school, and shrinking budgets. Understanding that he too had to follow his own unique calling, he resigned to become a marriage and family counselor in 1994.

Open systems inevitably experience contextual change, and the Community School has successfully reorganized and adapted in response to this and other disturbances it has faced, both internal and external. Along with the school's compelled accommodation of standardized test mandates, Siler's 1960s-influenced, deeply personal and spiritual guidance has given way somewhat to the new head teacher's generation X progressivism and keen interest in outdoor experiential education. As the school website describes it, in the current school curriculum "students are frequently asked to 'step outside of their comfort zones' in order to experience new challenges. Experiential education weaves its way through the entire MCHS curriculum" (MCHS, 2014).

Today's school reflects not only a changed leadership, but a changed student body and community as well. The students are no longer offspring of radical 1960s hippies, and the Mendocino community is a tamer version of its once vibrant anything-goes radicalism. Housing becomes less affordable, the town looks more like a retirement community with each passing year, and enrollment in the school district has dropped significantly. On the other hand, Mendocino remains free-spirited and a progressive stronghold with a highly educated population, and the Community School student body still reflects those qualities. Overcoming rising costs of living with help from the tourist

industry and marijuana cultivation, the children of hippies are maintaining their community and having children of their own, some of whom are now at the school.

In an era of shrinking budgets and top-down administrative standardization of public schools, Mendocino Community High School remains a rare and resilient alternative. The school has maintained most of its original philosophy, format, and function—and retains the profound freedom, ceremonialized hippie bonding exercises, and unusual self-exploration rites that emerged in the still-radical climate of Mendocino in the late 1970s. According to its website, the school remains a place where:

“students and staff are part of a close-knit learning community that values creativity, academic rigor, personal growth, and community involvement. Student success at MCHS relies on student initiative and responsibility. The family-like environment fosters positive relationships between and among students and staff. These relationships form the foundation of the community at MCHS . . . [providing] a wholistic education that challenges students to expand their boundaries academically and personally” (*MCHS*, 2020).

For thirty-five years the Mendocino Community High School has continued to evolve. From its advent in radical 1970s counter-culture, the school has maintained its alternative vision and practice, putting freedom, inclusivity, and the personal development of individual students before other institutional goals. On the other hand, directed by the personality of individuals and resulting group dynamics, the school changes as a whole with each change of its diverse parts. Transformation occurs with

each student cohort and faculty change, but also with changes in the larger community and society. Yet the school has proven resilient, maintaining its basic structure and function despite perennial disturbances. With shrinking budgets and increasing homogenization in public schools across the country, Mendocino Community High School remains both a radical alternative and an extremely high performer—even by conventional ‘standardized’ measures.

DISCUSSION: GROUNDED SELF-ORGANIZING INSTITUTIONS AS
COMMONMENTALITY PRACTICE

“The true meaning of life is to be discovered in the world.”

— Victor Frankl (Frankl, 2006, p. 110)

“Find your place on the planet. Dig in, and take responsibility from there.”

— Gary Snyder (Snyder, 1974)

Collaborative Governance: Instituting Intentional Community

Each of the above institutions presents a novel example of collaborative self-organization at the community level. Each maintains a management regime distinct from privatization and centralized power, organized outside the exclusive control of particular individuals, free markets or hierarchical bureaucracies. With flexible, evolving governance structures and emergent purposes and norms, each overcomes commons exploitation and exercises effective collective agency, in a manner uniquely suited to the scale and context in which it operates.

Formally, the Round Valley Library Commons functions under a standard non-profit structure, with a board of directors, officers and members. But, Chichester explained, “We didn’t codify.” Rather than develop written policy, the board operates in open community meetings and strives for consensus among everyone present. Everyday activities are defined and developed through the “do-acracy” ethos: specific projects—

whether a community service or economic venture, a one-day event or major ongoing program—are taken up and led by the individuals or groups that have the desire and capacity to make them happen. Embedded in close-knit community, the organization functions successfully with minimal formal rules and sanctions, instead relying on communication and reputation to develop and enforce shared norms.

The Western Klamath Restoration Partnership uses the open standards process and ongoing professional facilitation to guide ongoing collaboration. Though a large group of diverse stakeholders with significant differences in education, experience, career advancement, and official status, the facilitated process maintains inclusive and equal communication between all participants. Individuals are respected for their expertise and roles as representatives of other groups and institutions, but no one is allowed to dominate or assumed to have all the answers. Absolutist thinking is discouraged, and everyone—whether an interested resident or the US Forest Service supervisor—is given equal opportunity to express their perspective and share their knowledge.

As a public school, the Mendocino Community High School is legitimized by the state, functions under a school board and superintendent, and is managed by its own head teacher and staff. Yet in everyday activities, from Morning Meeting discussions addressing pressing issues to choosing class grades and assigning awards, the school is concerted in soliciting the full and equal contribution of all students and staff. In contrast to other high school institutions, established rules and rigid structures are minimized. All students are respected for their unique perspective and opinions, and engaged as directors of their education and cocreators of their learning community. Common group activities

and ceremonies provide structure to group process, but it is a flexible structure that is open to the influence of individual participants and allows for adaptive change.

All three of these institutions are also engaged in management of *common* resources. At first glance, it may not be obvious that the areas in which they operate are in fact commons. The Round Valley Library Commons has commons in its name, but many of its resources appear private or under the command and control of centralized government. The coffeeshop is a private business, for example, and the library itself is a public institution under the administrative control of the distant county government in the city of Ukiah. The radio station operates under a commercial license, and the commercial kitchen is open for hire by private parties. By virtue of its non-profit ownership and the open communicative processes by which these programs developed and ongoing management decisions are made, however, the institution and all of its resources are organized to serve the collective interests of all that participate and the community at large.

Similarly, the Restoration Partnership undertakes the management of a huge swath of national forest as well as private inholdings scattered throughout the region. National forests generally function under a rigid hierarchy with clear chain of command from district ranger to forest supervisor, and on to the regional office, the Washington office, and all the way to the president. Based in centralized authority and generalized expertise, regulations and management priorities are set at the national level and pushed down by administrative fiat. However, through the open standards process, the collaborative group is able to develop its own management decisions, which recognize

national guidelines and administrative authority, but focus on local considerations and community priorities, and the particular interests of participating stakeholders, within those constraints.

Through a liberal lens, schools too are generally perceived as operating in the autonomous interests of individual students, their parents, and an abstracted public as represented and codified in centralized government. However, through flexible administration, collaborative decision-making, and ongoing communicative process, the Community School makes education into a collective endeavor. Established customs and procedures engage students and staff alike in decisions that affect the group, and actively solicit individual contributions, for everything from selecting lesson content to defining the norms that govern school infrastructure and social space.

We see in the three case studies presented here semi-open systems of collective governance. Loose institutional structures provide flexibility and receptiveness, permitting some participant addition and attrition, but also stability, continuity and accountability, and allowing for the emergence and adaptation of egalitarian self-organizing governance. In their development, these institutions did not seize control of existing common resources, nor did they simply take control of private or public resources and declare collective ownership. Rather, they *commonized* relationships *to* resources, created a collective domain *around* them, and developed new resources *within* them, through added layers of communicative governing process.

Practices of facilitated communication and collaborative negotiation create a personal equality among participants, reducing the influence of established power

differences and encouraging the expression and manifestation of other considerations and ethical motivations. Drawing on various public and private resources, these institutions generate collective power and build social capital. As community members take ownership of common endeavors through inclusive institutional process, the endeavors themselves become commonly held property. It becomes less important that the library is still ruled by the county and the library building is controlled by a board of directors, the national forest is administered from Washington and inholdings are private property, the school is governed by a school board while students pursue personal advancement under the legal guardianship of instructors and parents. Organized discursive process and thick community ties maintain a norm of open and equal participation, allowing each institution to recognize and incorporate individual interests within the successful pursuit of common goals, regardless of formal ownership structures or internal and external mechanisms of control.

Collaborative Discourse: The Development of Mutually Beneficial Understanding

In the three institutions observed here, participants define and direct their common endeavors through communicative processes that construct shared, prescriptive understanding. With differing procedures, including uncodified do-acracy, the open standards process, and ceremonialized intention-setting, they share their individual knowledges, visions and concerns. Starting with diverse experiences and conceptual points of view, over time they generate shared discourses that define common values and

constraints. In developing collective goals and strategies for reaching them, they come to share common narratives, explanations and conceptual orientations, and build trust, mutual respect, and integrated normative ideals.

At the Library Commons, the institution's discursive process centers on those directly involved in its development and management, but it radiates into the larger community. Through its collective endeavors, the institution spurs discussion and definition of values and goals, and the distribution of knowledge constructs varying from local lore to current world events, and thereby builds common reference and a basis for further collective action. Knowledge is shared through radio news programming, library books, and internet access, but, just as importantly, shared stories and common knowledge develop through informal and intentional activities at the farmers market, kitchen and community room. These activities have spun off numerous new collective endeavors, including other Library Commons programs but also businesses and policy initiatives. "The value is we have demonstrated we can be successful," says Fields. "The Library Commons lays the groundwork for what comes next. Our only limitation is our imagination."

On the Klamath, the collaborative effort to return healthy fire to national forests represents a paradigm shift in natural resource management, towards place-based conservation regimes developed through deliberative processes inclusive of broader communities. This remarkable development reflects recognition, on the part of forest managers and policy makers, of the wisdom in traditional ecological knowledge, developed and sustained over millennia, and of the grid-lock and ecological quagmire

generated by a century of market-driven bureaucratic management followed by an energetic and litigious environmentalist reaction. With attempts at defending degraded forests from consuming wildfire becoming increasingly expensive and ineffective, the need for solutions that are sensitive to local conditions and the needs and vulnerabilities of nearby populations is clear. Bureaucratic authorities and their expert advisors now believe overcoming antagonism to improve impaired forest conditions requires intensive collaboration that develops broadly supported local solutions. In order to build the necessary knowledge and cooperation, Klamath resource managers are subjecting their siloed expertise and customary utilitarian assumptions to the sanction and influence of restoration groups, tribal representatives and traditions, environmentalists, business people, and other local residents.

The inclusive Restoration Partnership is indeed making progress in bringing the diverse stakeholders to a common understanding of both their shared problem and each other's particular interests. Through the facilitated open-standards process, stakeholders have overcome adversarial narratives and developed a story of interdependence and trust among participants and their various associations. Through authentic dialogue, they create a shared discourse and rationality that forsakes initial conflicts and represents a genuine collective vision for long-term forest management. This discourse is already facilitating further group learning, and generating creative solutions to the region's complex social-ecological problems.

The Community School, too, functions through the construction of common collaborative discourse. Solicited input and expression drives each participant's education

and path of personal development, as well as the institution itself as a collective endeavor. In general, decisions are made by consensus and students are included in, and expected to contribute to, important choices affecting them. When the school “circles up” each morning, it creates an atmosphere of common intention and awareness through guided breathing meditation. It then builds on collective understanding through announcements and discussion of pressing community issues. This is followed by further communicative process in loosely structured educational, logistical or bonding activities. At least once a week, these include a “check-in,” in which attention goes around the circle and each person talks about how they are doing, what is going on in their lives, and concerns or suggestions they have for the community and its process. Throughout, communication is fluid, prolific and open, creating an inclusive, collaborative discussion and shared rationality.

All three institutions develop operative discourses that are intrinsically collective. These discourses successfully incorporate the intelligence and experience of each member, and generate a superior knowledge in the group as a whole. Directed and reflected by the personal interests and purposes of the individuals in which they are imbricated, they empower personal actions and meaningful contributions. They do not merely reproduce established traditions or generalized expertise or agendas of remote power centers. Rather, they integrate all of these elements, as well as critique of these elements, in a unique construction that emerges from their reflexive combination, and evolves within deeply personal, place-specific conditions.

Collaborative Subjectivity: The Co-Creation of Cooperative Individuality

Where modern liberal discourse names liberal purposes and reinforces the liberal utilitarian subjectivity of Foucault's critique, these collaborative discourses reproduce collaborative subjectivities, reflecting a broader range of human motivations and the reflexive contributions of participating subjects. Like liberal institutions and other cultural structures, the collaborative institutions develop discursive lenses that simplify an infinitely interconnected world, training participants' perceptions to recognize as objects the qualities they identify and name and thereby make visible. However, because the collaboratives include all participants in the procedure of defining objective world and collective purpose, they prescribe experiences not of perfectly autonomous individuals, motivated by simple competitive consumption and the maximization of a profane zero-sum self-interest, but of generous community working together, toward jointly defined goals that serve common values, as well as physical and psychological needs. These experiences generate collaborative subjectivity, making their participants more likely to organize future collaborative arrangements and effectively engage in further collective action. In providing for participants' needs while simultaneously respecting their sense of fairness, allowing consideration of nonhuman actors and ecological knowledge and attachments, and developing secure identities rooted in equitable group process rather than competitive, inequitable and ecologically destructive behavior, they develop subjectivities better prepared for constructing sustainable social systems.

By community members' own account, the Library Commons has changed perspectives, among active volunteers but also in the larger public. The facility does not simply provide information, internet connectivity, food and entertainment. It provides an attractive and functional heart for the town of Covelo, a symbol of a functioning community and its ability to get stuff done. "You have to have seen it done to know it can be done," explained Fields. The project has captured the imagination of the town, attracting immense attention and energy. It benefits from ongoing financial contributions and countless hours of volunteer work, motivated not by material self-interest but the more subtle and powerful reward of admiration and the experience of doing right by one's community. Whether a regular volunteer or an occasional shopper at the farmers market, participants feel a strong sense of attachment and belonging. "The Commons gives people the opportunity to be part of something outside their little social groups," explains Chichester. "And developing a collective identity makes people stronger."

Similarly, the Restoration Partnership develops, through collaborative discourse, a shared set of meanings, collective identities and practical heuristics. Transmuting the attitudes and aptitudes of its members, these changes in subjectivity in turn transform the collaborative as a governing system. Pursuing group values through iterative process, participant's social identities are gradually freed from bureaucratic convention and assimilating or differentiating commercial consumption, and anchored in individual contributions and participation in the collaborative group. Proactive, place-based cultural and ecological identities are formed and revived, and, through the Partnership's extensive personal and institutional networks, providing an example and inspiration for other

collaborative efforts, in national forest management, cultural revival, fire preparedness, community development, education, and many other arenas, in northwest California and beyond.

The Partnership has developed participants' cultural sensibilities by integrating multiple bodies of knowledge into a shared forest aesthetic. The group has shared stories from Karuk elders about how, when brush grew thick in the forests in the early twentieth century, their grandparents were saddened and said it was unhealthy. The Karuk, like other Native peoples of northwest California, burned brush extensively—to reduce fire danger and detritus, recycle nutrients, control insects and other pathogens, improve game habitat, allow for ease of travel, and otherwise modify the structure of forests and other landscapes (Anderson, 2004; pp. 144-53). These activities were part of a larger sensibility, described as “care for the land,” and a spiritual obligation to foster renewal (Anderson, 2004, pp. 61, 153). Ecological sciences have recently come to share this preference for open forest structure and ecologically renewing fire, and a growing number of current Klamath residents have as well. In cultivating this collective sensibility, the Partnership is developing capacity to use aesthetic appreciation to inform, coordinate and motivate requisite restorative action.

In fact, the Partnership engages the human experience at a depth below the material, the scientific, *and* the aesthetic. There is something inherently enchanting about forests, and the awesome power and mysterious metamorphic process of fire. The act of transforming landscapes and making fire is an entrancing and inspirational act, and the energy and excitement that it brings to those who participate is moving and motivating.

Beauty and fecundity of a recently cleared forest inspires connection, stewardship, and care. Not long ago, ceremonialized prescribed fire was an active spiritual practice on the Klamath River. A central component of the Karuk Fixing the World Ceremony, which included weeks of preparation and involvement of the whole community, prescribed fire was a means of modeling social behavior and a healthy relationship with the earth (K. Anderson, 2004; J. Ferrara, personal communication, November 30, 2013). Cognizant of this past, participants in the collaborative effort to restore the practice—Native and non-Native alike—feel the immense spiritual importance of the endeavor. It is inherently healing, renewing cultural and ecological integrity, and addressing historical wounds of immense tragedy and injustice. The profound meaning is impressed upon the psyche, of each participant in the collaborative and all that hear its story.

Mendocino Community High School also constructs collaborative rationalities and subjectivities of profound personal significance. Through close communicative relationships, anchored with deeply symbolic and intensely intimate ceremonies, it creates personal and collective belonging, and develops commons-minded individuals with strong social skills and an enhanced capacity for collective action. Where today's liberal schools create liberal-minded people—atomized subjects who see themselves as perfectly autonomous individuals that should, and naturally do, seek to maximize material self-interest before all else—the Community School provides the experience of a collaborative and supportive learning community. It creates in students an understanding and expectation that physical and psychological needs can be met collectively, through responsible action and ceremony, rather than trite competition and consumption. This

would be expected to make them more likely to organize collaborative arrangements and effectively engage in collective action, preparing them to develop sustainable economic and social systems Earth desperately needs. And a cursory review of alumni activities suggests this is indeed the case.

The Library Commons, the Restoration Partnership, and the Community School are all examples of contemporary institutions utilizing intentional community governance to build collaborative rationality, actualize humanity's innate capacity to cooperate, and satisfy psychological needs for social belonging. Through the inclusion of diverse participants, and practices, customs and mediators that support norms of tolerance, inclusion and openness, each overcomes in-group bias and builds social capital that is more bridging than bonding in nature. As they establish subjective trust and empathy within and among members, they create expectations, characters and cultures that support trust, empathy and relational ties with those outside the organization. Though limited in membership and purview, each has a generalized effect on human subjectivity that radiates into surrounding communities, providing cultural support for cooperation in all other arenas. With each success in meeting personal needs collectively, the organizations' participants, observers and extended networks become more sensitive and cognizant of opportunities for collaborative organization—propagating an ethos of collective action that meets common needs in a sustainable manner.

Amending and Transcending Systemic Failures in Modern Liberal Governance

Begot and begetting of the common good and a mutual-resilience-through-self-organizing-collective-action ethos, these collaboratives model a rationality that complements and challenges liberal ideation, and transcends the tired partisan agendas of conventional liberal governance. To transcend the bounded rationalities of ascendant liberalism we must move beyond markets and bureaucracies and engage differing means of conducting conduct. In this endeavor, though, both playful experiment and a great deal of modesty are in order. Histories of failed utopianism, from the French Revolution to Jonestown to Maoist China, caution us against attempting a complete restructuring of our communities or societies. In a world of complex adaptive systems, progress is necessarily an evolutionary process. Positive change must start with current reality and existing structures, and proceed through innovation, selection and reproduction. Wholesale demonization and rejection of our social systems and power structures is unproductive, and it is important to acknowledge that our current markets and bureaucracies are expedient in the production of many good things. With notable exceptions, they succeed in feeding us, clothing us, and holding our society together, while allowing us to think, speak and act freely. History tells us things could be worse, and might be made worse with the best of intentions.

Grateful for liberalism's protections and successes but looking to overcome its limitations, we have in collaborative institutions existing alternatives that complement liberalism's strengths and improve upon its function. In the institutional assemblages

outlined above, a revival of collective decision-making expands bounded utilitarian rationality and autonomous self-interested subjectivity. The institutions accommodate diverse values and collective interests, while avoiding stifling traditionalism, exclusionary identity-based collectivism, or dependence on idealistic aspirations of unity, altruism and faith. Each institution builds, maintains and functions through judicious use of bridging social capital, rather than relying on state coercion, in-group bias, or appeals to crude personal self-interest. Each prescribes behavior according to community plans that serve collective interests, but avoids extinguishing the ongoing processes of learning and experimentation that make planning possible.

Through adaptive process, each institution develops pragmatic understanding of dynamic individual interests, mediates their construction, and facilitates and ameliorates their pursuit. Rejecting the conventional liberal doctrine of competitive material self-interest, they access a more complex nexus of human motivation. With intention, they balance participants' competitive and cooperative natures, harnessing human empathy and sense of fairness, as well as our need for distinction, belonging, and a heroic endeavor larger than themselves. Appreciating and accommodating the self-promotional aspect of human behavior without overlooking its cooperative potential, they support responsibility and ethical action as means of building personal reputation—rewarding generosity, accountability and reciprocity, rather than selfishness, rivalry and profligacy.

In conducting their collective conduct, these self-organizing networks separate processes of valuation and aesthetic sensitization from the profane materialism of impersonal liberal ideation. We comprehend and interact with the world by rendering it

legible through simplification, and it is inevitable that institutions and knowledge systems will organize and direct this simplification process. In the paradigm of state-sponsored and market-mediated techno-science, rendering phenomena legible means measuring and sorting them into utilitarian categories through a standardized commercial or scientific process (Ghertner, 2010). On the other hand, by defining and sensitizing us to esthetic categories independently of markets and bureaucracies, discursive collaborative institutions diminish the influence of powerful conventions, marketers, and technocracies, and allow us to develop local aesthetic sensibilities for our own ethical, material and spiritual purpose.

Situated Knowledge and Context-Appropriate Collective Action

Developed in holistic processes of inclusive communication and ongoing encounter, the collaborative institutions' rationality and collective action are sensitive to the complex personal, social and ecological assemblages of which they are part. Each operates at a scale where participants can get to know each other personally, and experience intimately the causative dynamics of unpredictable developments, as well as ongoing effects of imperfect interventions. Through the continued incorporation of a diversity of viewpoints, attachments, knowledges and values, they develop evolving understandings of individual and collective needs, and adaptive strategies for meeting those needs in socially and ecologically responsible ways. In providing flexible structure for the meaningful contributions of all participants, they generate mutually supported

prescriptive knowledge that is uniquely suited to the health and resilience of their particular communities.

The Library Commons organizes actions appropriate to the particular scale and historical context of its small, rural town. Drawing upon and reinforcing individual attachments to the community, it solves problems identified by the community at the level at which they are experienced. The project began with recognition of a need for a place to hold a public meeting, and it continues to develop through identification of particular deficiencies and implementation of specific practical solutions. Having emerged organically from its context, it continues to evolve through undirected self-organization. Collective action, explained Fields, “happens within a framework: the constraints within which you act help you organize.” Community control and buy-in, demonstrated and enforced by its basis in inclusive voluntarism, ensures the relevance and suitability of the Common’s organizational activity. It serves community wellbeing and achieves what markets and bureaucracies cannot—overcoming the atomization, externalization and marginalization typical of market individualism, while avoiding the inapt and arbitrary remoteness of impersonal bureaucratic instrumentalism.

Similarly, the Restoration Partnership is developing local knowledge, perspectives and governing norms that depart from historical errors and are autonomous from the remote, unjust and environmentally destructive power-centers of industrial capitalism. In the forests of northwest California, like other places throughout the American West, displacement of indigenous peoples and proscription of their traditions, followed by industrial logging practices and ill-conceived fire policies, have generated unstable

ecological conditions. Aggressive paramilitary fire suppression is failing to avert catastrophic fire. Forests are only becoming more vulnerable. Governments are spending more and more on wildfires with diminishing returns. By encouraging broad and inclusive participation, the Partnership's collaborative system is successfully overcoming the simplified technocratic discourse, atomized and polarized subjectivities, and insensitivity to local complexity characteristic of conventional governance systems. Though it depends on the legitimation of centralized bureaucratic government, and for now relies on government and private capital for funding, it is already decoupling local identities and material necessities from competitive consumer culture. It is improving fire resilience while meeting other local needs, through cultural revival and a return to traditional management practices. Resumption of burning is expected to improve local food security and cultural materials, including acorn harvests, game forage, and other means of production necessary to traditional lifestyles (Kimmerer & Lake, 2001).

The Community School, too, generates knowledge, culture and collective action uniquely suited to its time, place and students. Since its advent in radical 1970s counter-culture, the school has continuously evolved while maintaining its alternative vision and practice, putting freedom, inclusive community, and the personal development of students before other institutional goals. The institution has proven resilient, maintaining its basic structure and function through perennial disturbance. Despite lack of common cause with the district, the county, and the state, the school continues to function with the financial support of liberal state and local government (and Californians retain a legal right to demand such alternative educational opportunities elsewhere (Cal. Educ. Code

§58500, 1976)). Directed by individual personalities and resulting group dynamics, it changes as a whole with each change of its many particular parts; retaining flexibility and open communication, and tight connections between students and the broader community and culture, it transforms with each cohort, faculty change, and shift in town and society. With increasing homogenization in public schools across the country, it graduates distinctively integrated and grounded adults, and is an extremely high performer, even by conventional 'standardized' measures.

Through radical inclusion of diverse participants with differing personal experiences, combined with a pragmatic focus on the particular conditions and needs of their specific locations and communities, these collaborative institutions generate context-specific knowledge uniquely suited to their collective action. This social learning would not be possible if society were indeed constituted of self-interested materialist individuals engaged in zero-sum power struggles, resting as it does on openness, tolerance, empathy, egalitarianism, and a sense of justice among individuals involved. The mutually beneficial understanding they generate could not have been bought in markets or forced by administrative mandate, for it is an ongoing, grounded gestalt of good will and gathered personal experience.

I believe interaction among diverse nodes and nested hierarchies of such personal, situated, collaboratively developed and mutually beneficial knowledge constitutes the necessary underlying structure of good and just society. In our postmodern world, we are all and everywhere provided emphatic accounts of things with which we have no direct experience. Sometimes we adopt strong opinions about things which no one we know, or

have reason to trust, has any first-hand knowledge. In matters where close networks of experience are impossible we find ourselves in the divisive, subjective realm of ideological conviction. Unfortunately, some immensely important and pressing matters, such as climate change, are so complicated and diffuse and generalized, their understanding is necessarily data-driven and founded in sensory experiences scattered over vast space and time. In these instances we must rely on abstracted expertise. We do well to get to know our experts, however, for the necessary distinction between knowledge and ideology rests on personal experience, honest investigation, and well-developed processes of informative interaction, maintained by suitable hierarchies of competence, and enforced by networks of well-founded trust. Truth is established through collaboration.

Co-Constructions of Meaning

The output of successful social-learning process is nothing less than meaning itself. Through iterative interaction, each of the collaboratives outlined above identify meaningful patterns in the cosmic noise, and enforce truthfulness and accuracy in assertions about their significance. Demanding and building shared understandings and conceptions of the common good, they generate worthy personal goals and normative social guidance. Participants might be inclined to mislead others and themselves, or turn to cynical nihilism, to justify shortcomings or serve destructive appetites. But disingenuous claims would collide with reality, as they interact with their communities

over the long term. Sunshine disinfects, and lies and nihilistic relativism fail, in the face of real concerns and dense networks of attachment, situated knowledge and experience.

Of course, dangers of collective delusions and enforced tyrannical consensus exist, but they should not be overstated. Though Foucault equates minority opinion with socially defined madness, liberal answers to threats of majority opinion and oppression—the protection of negative rights, especially free speech—have been far more successful than many Foucauldians care to admit. The three collaboratives examined here go beyond free speech, maintaining norms of tolerance, inclusion, open communication, well-founded trust, and collective pursuit of mutual interest. As individual centers within polycentric systems of overlapping governance, they sustain these norms through open communication and interdependence within the group, checked and balanced by their interdependent relationship with other centers of open governance. Voluntary participation in this collaborative matrix builds on liberal freedoms, and our innate ability to co-construct meaning, to give voice to minority perspectives, construct unifying consensus, and make institutional coercion unnecessary.

The collaborative endeavors respect yet transcend freedoms and negative rights, by defining meaningful constraints, setting normative goals, and rewarding personal responsibilities. They reach beyond power and pleasure to serve participants' inborn *will to meaning*, and provide the grounding context, orientation, and social conditions for a more meaningful life. In healthy community function and the development of practical collective goals, participants find worthy obligation, and profound opportunity for effective personal action of their own volition. As they confront challenges and

experience triumphs, the stories they tell, the stories others tell, and the stories they imagine others might someday tell about them, reinforce their purpose and sense of mythic importance.

In Round Valley, the Library Commons has captured imaginations and generated a shared sense of meaning in its community. The result, explained Fields is that “key players are there when we need them,” and their successes invigorate the community and enrich everyone’s lives. Such voluntary collective action is possible, said Chichester, because people are attached to their community and place. But with the demise of place-based attachment, he explained, commons shrink, and in many places “there is nowhere to go where you don’t have to spend.” The Library Commons is an expression of individuals’ desire to find personal meaning locally, outside of commercial activities, and their ability to make the place they live a place they want to live. “We must develop our own sense of belonging,” concluded Chichester. “As Gary Snyder says: ‘Find your place, dig in and take responsibility.’”

On the Klamath, the Restoration Partnership also engages community capacity and civic-mindedness to cultivate place-based meaning and a shared social-environmental ethos. Through discussion and reasoned debate, mediative rather than polarizing leadership, and an innovation and creativity born of integrated diversity, antagonistic interests have given way to common meaning and a mutually defined common good. This shared conception and valuation has begot place-centeredness, ecological care, and community itself. In a context of grave historical injustice and ecological disruption, the goal of reviving historical practices of prescribed fire has deep

grounding and extraordinary social significance. Rekindled fire is naturally enchanting, its beneficial effect on the landscape is inspiring, and its intentional return is an extraordinary opportunity for meaningful action.

In Mendocino, the Community School offers anxious and insecure teenagers—as teenagers everywhere are—remarkable opportunities for develop personal meaning through authentic relations and responsible pro-social actions. By treating students as individual, open systems, and rooting their efforts in secure identity, inclusive community, and equitable group dynamics—rather than uncooperative competition and ecologically destructive consumption patterns—the school provides a living model of just and sustainable provision for common human needs. Through deliberative process and integrative symbolic ritual, the school fosters personal strength, skill and motivation to address social and environmental problems. Through radically inclusive and equitable communication, students and teachers learn together how to treat each other, help each other, and make superior collective judgments.

In very different contexts, these institutions support individuals' quest for personal meaning through self-organizing collaboration—communicative processes of beneficial problemization, the building and retracing of hybrid networks, and the organization of speculative action. As intentional assemblages, they facilitate a creative synthesis of collective knowledge and experience, overcome the impersonal and alienating decision-making of conventional liberal organization, and permit full consideration of local networks of human and nonhuman agents. In their intentional cultivation of collective sensibilities, they develop ethical meaning, inspiration, and

aesthetic appreciation that transcend profane materialism and technocratic rationalism, and are simultaneously scientific, spiritual and artistic. Defining a common good and rewarding those who serve it with recognition and praise, they support healthy esteem, prosocial character, and a sense of belonging. Educating worldly sensibilities, attachments, and enchantments, they stimulate a spirit of generosity and ethical action—and mitigate the disenchanting effects of salvation-oriented theology and rational-mechanical materialism, lamented by academics since the time of Max Weber. Through direct experience and personal relationship, they nurture renewed wonder, connection, and responsibility for the fragile conditions of contemporary life.

I have seen it; this is not mere optimistic utopianism. While environmentalists and social justice advocates often evoke revolutionary change to alter exploitive and resource-intensive practices from the top, the collaborative models explored here are advancing these goals within existing liberal realities. The Round Valley Library Commons provides essential services, information and meaning in a community that urgently needs them. The Western Klamath Restoration Partnership succeeds in collecting and cultivating human capacities, interests and motivations long steered, divided or subjugated by liberal discourse. The Mendocino Community High School develops strong, integrated individuals with an outsized capacity for participatory democracy, collaborative rationality, and collective action. These institutions are imitable examples of appropriately scaled complex adaptive systems, generating personal meaning through sustainable management of complex adaptive systems. The organizations, knowledges and discourses they develop, and the social and ecological systems with

which they relate, together constitute a systemic complex of interdependent adapting systems, bound together by relationship, and reliant on and inducing each other to maintain mutual resilience.

Of course, there are limits to the depth and scale at which these institutions manifest influence. The three organizations examined here each has a limited scope within a rural, northwest California community. Each relies on the good graces and financial support of liberal institutions, and remains subject to powerful decision-makers in distant political and economic centers. Indeed, they do not entirely deconstruct or displace liberal governmentality, which still functions both within their collaborative deliberations and in the larger contexts in which they operate.

Yet, with care and creativity, the patterns of collaborative relationship observed in these examples may be generalized—and discerned and encouraged at many, if not all, contexts and scales. With imagination, one can see the proliferation of polycentric governance and intentional, self-organizing relationship leading to an increasingly informed and connected society, where decision-making is more local and collaborative, open communication maintains respect, accountability and secure identity, and psychological, ecological and economic needs are met in diverse, context-appropriate ways. Working together to find our own personally meaning, we would transcend the insecurity and avarice of isolated ego, overcome the remoteness of consequence from behavior that facilitates unconscious destruction, and cultivate appreciation for the profound significance of our own personal responsibilities. As co-creators of our own subjectivity and phenomenology, we would address pressing problems while recapturing

the awe and sense of purpose that psyche demands, and the world and our improbably existence deserve.

Toward a More Collaborative Postmodernism

This optimistic vision is offered in contradistinction to both liberalism and the popular critical offence on contemporary liberal governmentality. I believe, if we are genuine and strategic in our progressive efforts, we must develop common objectives and experiment with hypothetical paths for reaching them. In this, we must remain open minded, openhearted and generous with our tolerance, and ground our praxis in a manner that re-legitimizes common knowledge and bridges the ontological divide between individual and society. As a conceptual scaffold for collective action and social change, the liberal individual is an inadequate concept, but so are reductive pessimistic narratives explaining knowledge and society as mere deterministic structures of conflicting power relations. Where modern liberalism reduces the moral landscape to atomized individuals, critical postmodernism as metanarrative reduces it to an abstract irrational war over the use and meaning of words. To engage our collective agency, we must get beyond both individualism and postmodern critique, and their tendencies to reinforce simplistic explanations, narrative conflicts, and ideologically justified categorical blame. Whether we are inclined to blame the powerful for not changing society or the powerless for not changing their own lot, we can recognize that even discriminate and deserved shaming is a questionable strategy for improving behaviors and the world. Indiscriminate and

seemingly unjustified shaming has an opposite effect. If we wish to arrive at agency, we must *move on* (Spivak, 2018).

I find in inclusive collaboration the basis for a genuinely progressive postmodernism that gets beyond criticism and is pragmatic, optimistic and accessible. Rather than hang its hat on changing for the better every individual and the whole of society all at once through strategic word games, condemnations, or bureaucratic enforcement, a collaborative postmodernism is embodied in persons, communities and ongoing processes of appropriately scaled institutions. It gathers free-willed individuals, social relations, and necessary resources into living, growing, adapting systems. It generates meaningful narrative, resilient solutions to concrete problems, and adequate provisions for physical, psychological and ecological health. In personal and contextual undertakings, the collaborative process engages subjectivity and addresses the particularity and complexity of circumstance, while avoiding narrative oversimplification and spurious and inflammatory attributions of guilt.

A collaborative theory of progressive postmodernism engages us as individuals, highlighting ways in which we have limited agency, bear responsibility for our own behavior, and have specific capacities and opportunities for positively influencing reality. It entreats us to inform our behaviors with open communication, hold one another accountable, and allocate deserved praise. Rather than setting itself against established knowledge and blaming social ills on forces it cannot change or fully comprehend, it learns from history, respects experience, and facilitates the construction of new understanding that is both immanently applicable and personally relevant. Getting

beyond the impossible task of adequately defining and defending the subaltern, it creates opportunities for all to speak and participate in the collective decisions that govern our lives.

Because human perspectives and values are inherently diverse, and developed and transformed in context-specific process, truly democratic decision-making must include citizens in discussing and directing the processes that affect them. By educating youth, providing community services, or managing public resources through deliberative democratic processes that engender a self-assured collaborative rationality, commons institutions can develop citizens equipped to overcome social and environmental problems with radically inclusive and equitable communication, expanded mindsets, and superior collective judgments. By allowing development of secure identities rooted in equitable group processes rather than ecologically destructive competition and consumption, such cooperative institutions can provide for human psychological needs without compromising social justice or social and ecological resilience.

The three institutions reviewed here illustrate progressive postmodernism in action. They bring diverse human perspectives into inclusive conversation, develop common vocabularies, and transform collective understanding in context-specific processes. They resolve conflicts and identify collective values and goals through pluralistic communication, and meet suitable measures of progress through adaptive systems of creative exploration, experimentation and implementation. In their inclusive processes and flexible structures, they development individual strengths and talents, and provide opportunities for everyone to participate and feel the reward of doing right by

their community. Collectively, they succeed in creating a socially and ecologically responsible discourse, subjectivity and governance that emerges from the group as a whole. With the arts and techniques of commons governance, they provide practical antidotes to the limitations of liberal governmentality, and undertake the intentional construction of a benevolent and sustainable society.

An Organizing Metaphor for Cooperative Social Construction

Pragmatically, the subjective relativism of the postmodern condition hinges not on the abstract philosophy of esoteric existentialism, but a reluctant recognition that the world is unpredictable—overwhelmingly complex and characterized by unknown variables, nonlinear relationships, human unconsciousness, and a systemic interaction between nested scales that defies definition. The postmodern problem is not the absence of God or Nature, but the absence of adequate description. There are no inherent boundaries between objects, so there are no objects per se. Definition to objects is given *within human subjects*, through processes of symbolic simplification and linguistic analogy that make the world visible, useful and navigable, so there is no objectivity per se. Nonetheless, in our evolved mental process, a manifest function of our biology, we divide the world into practical parts, not merely into objects, but into tools and a space to navigate through. In our evolved cultural processes, manifest functions of our social phenotype, our institutions and knowledges further define and ossify our subjective perceptions of tools, and world, as objective. So demarcated by our natural and cultural

constructs, our subjective purposes are inherent in our telic perception of reality, and those perceptions are continually tested and modified, individually and collectively, in ongoing purposive acts.

If assembled from the vocabulary and symbolic imagery of the mechanical positivism it has set itself against, critical postmodernism as popular metanarrative evokes social construction as the undesirable output of a deterministic knowledge/power machine, built and maintained for the purposes of power itself. To many adherents, this ambiguous allegory implies that when we find fault in society we need simply voice our discontent, disassemble the machine and build a better one. The revolution starts with deconstruction of discourse and culminates in construction of a better society. To the impatient, that the project is not complete is evidence of an immoral conspiracy of the powerful. However, the processes of social construction are complex, systemic and self-organizing at countless scales, and their reconstruction is an ambitious undertaking. With no intrinsic boundary between societies and the individuals that co-construct them, to change society means to change people—a dubious proposition indeed. Like all living things, people and societies are not designed and built. We evolve through function in context. The best we can hope for is to positively influence the evolutions.

In a world where everything is connected to everything else, everything is indeed political. Directly or indirectly, the dynamics of causation run through all matter, all culture, and every human psyche. But everything is also moral, ethical, emotional, beautiful and mysterious. Power is not an object, even in the mind's eye. It is graspable only as vague allegory, woven in language through millennia of story and observation.

To cast it out and lay it down as a layer, on all and everything, is an inspired exercise in imagination with limited accuracy and veracity. Everything is political but that is not all it is, and radical claims of social construction notwithstanding, power cannot be separated from the material, the biological and the psychological, which are inherently entwined in the personal and the social. The spaces in which power operates are already filled with all manner of things. Power struggle runs through the heart of each and every one of us, manifest not only in our rational consciousness but also our daily actions, which reveal latent potentialities in our subconsciousness often at odds with our rational assertions, idealistic claims, and best ethical intentions. To challenge power without transmuting practical constraints and intricate dynamics of its imbrication is fruitless, and can be counterproductive.

With care and intention, however, we can create new power relations, in specific contexts, by constructing new meaning through new relationships and encounters. I offer the concept of commonmentality to highlight agency and give definition to inclusive and evolving assemblages of meaningful social construction, represented as loosely structured networks of human subjects and nonhuman qualia. While all of society might be conceived of as a monistic commonmentality, commonmentalities exist in every more-or-less distinct arena of iterative interaction and organization, at every scale of human collaboration. In imagining clusters of complex systemic interaction that are open and adapting to internal and external change, we can remain sensitive to ways in which social construction is characterized by both change and continuity, organized by constraints and as well as fluidities, and punctuated by feedbacks, thresholds and leverage points. Such

sophisticated conceptualization dispenses with facile adolescent arguments that, because everything is socially constructed, we can disregard intricacies of history and current reality as flawed and therefore irrelevant. Instead, it highlights the fundamental importance of understanding complex social, ecological, psychological and historical dynamics, as they are and have been, in order to manifest our purposes for how they might be.

To change the world, we cannot be mere activists. We must be leaders, with an understanding of the terrain and a developed capacity for communicating with power and leading by example. I believe a sophisticated and collaborative theory of social construction can be a foundation for the prescriptive knowledge necessary to a pragmatic postmodern progressivism. As humans, we see the world as a realm of possibility, and we construct our knowledge of it from our experience of what works in the pursuit of our goals. We are right to question whose goals motivate the knowledges we share, but we cannot get to positive change through criticism alone. Eventually, we must consider what is possible, where our common goals lie, and how we can construct knowledge and arrive at wise decisions that get us there.

To lead this process with postmodern sensitivity, we must proceed in our thinking from deconstruction to speculation, then on to prescription, implementation and evaluation of impact. Of course, apostles of critical theory are invited to pick apart and criticize the limitations of any such endeavor, but we should not let the inherent contingency of reality and unavoidable persistence of inequity keep us from differentiating between dishonesty and sincerity, bad and better, good intentions and

progress. Nor should we let cynical affect blunt our motivation or blind us to reality's dynamism, mystery and vitality. Ultimately, what matters most to human and ecological wellbeing is served not by generalized outrage or absolute quantities, but by our innate potential for integration, elevation and appreciation—by the qualitative health and resilience of wholistic process. And, while criticism and condemnations divide affiliations and build up paralyzing resistance, definitions of positive goals and common purpose unite people in action.

CONCLUSION: INTENTIONAL COLLECTIVE EVOLUTION—TOWARD A
PROGRESSIVE POSTMODERN THEORY

“Give me one matter of concern and I will show you the whole earth and heavens that have to be gathered to hold it firmly in place.”

— Bruno Latour (Latour, 2004, p. 246)

“Human community and civility are not, as some would say, humanistic achievements; they are the work of ghosts of memory and the spirits of place, of the genius in things and the soul of culture.”

— Thomas Moore (Moore, 1997, p. 149)

As the unanticipated costs of our organized behavior, ongoing social and ecological crises have revealed fundamental deficiencies in modern liberal worldviews, knowledge systems, and institutions of governance. They draw attention to limits in our understanding of the complexity of the world, our inability to master chaotic patterns in its interacting systems, and our unwillingness to consider uncertain long-term consequences of unnecessary short-term goals. The costs and catastrophes should compel us to question the reductionist utilitarianism that underlies both capitalist markets and liberal bureaucratic government, and rethink the liberal individual that is both their product and their justification. They should also inspire us to revise our relationships with each other and the world’s extra-human processes, and reorganize our collective behaviors in our communities and social institutions.

But if it possible to reconstruct our collective socialization, what qualities do we choose to advance, and how can they be constructed? My purpose in defining an omnibus theory of inclusive social process is to grasp and regain for progressive use the full potential of humanity and human culture, including personal meaning, authentic connection, and responsible collective action. With simplistic, distrustful, zero-sum ideologies of right and left exploiting divisions in our communities and precluding social progress, there is a clear need for social theory that avoids sectarianism and engages multiple perspectives in the service of common values. Our social and ecological problems demand more sophisticated and pragmatic thinking about reality, society and human agency.

To make sustainable positive change, individual or social, we must acknowledge and understand the multifarious processes of interaction inherent to both individuality and society. Individuals and societies develop through a *shared set of complex interactions*, such that change in one entails change in the other. A truly progressive theory and practice must grasp these dynamics as a whole. It will also illuminate and address problems of marginalization and unequal power, without declaring a losing war on power itself or undermining the positive aspects of our historical legacy, and without losing sight of subjective issues like wellbeing, respect, and the common good.

Such praxis requires we move beyond the deconstruction of knowledge, and develop not just more sophisticated ontological frames, but new spaces for epistemological practice. It demands a framing capable of incorporating Foucault's critical insights into an optimistic prescription for practical alternatives and real solutions

to problems of existing government. A theory of collaborative postmodernism is offered to encourage intentional self-organizing community, as a counterweight to processes by which impersonal liberal institutions concentrate power and reinforce liberal knowledge and subjectivity. It is intended to support development of collective knowledges and subjectivities through intentional, contextual, interpersonal interaction. In answer to Latour's call, it strives to make each individual a *realist* critic—"not the one who debunks, but the one who assembles... not the one who lifts the rugs from under the feet of the naïve believers, but the one who offers participants arenas in which to gather" (Latour, 2004, p. 246).

Because processes that gather "the whole earth and heavens" are in principle beyond human imagination, understanding is well served by tenets and conceptual metaphors of complexity thinking. A complex systems ontology encourages us to think past mechanical *construction* to ongoing processes of organic *evolution*, beyond the relativism and infinite regress of *deconstruction* to meaningful and useful *description*, and on into practical, progressive, adaptive *prescription*. Within a subtle and sophisticated paradigm of nested adaptive systems, we can make this movement without compromising postmodern understanding of the inherent contingency and limitation of knowledge. Conceiving of knowledges, subjectivities and social orders as interacting complex systems, we get a sense of their reality, have grounds on which to conceive and analyze their legitimacy, and are empowered to intervene in the "complex of men and things" in pursuit of a positive collective destiny.

Negative aspects of liberal rationality can be ameliorated by identifying, scaling, and protecting institutions with differing techniques of governance. To operationalize a different rationality, we can supplement liberalism's market mediation and top-down bureaucracies with alternative power relations and decision-making processes. Dominant techniques of governance are imbricated and embodied in the hybrid networks that constitute and constrain our reality, discourse, and subjectivity, and transforming these networks and creating new possibilities are necessarily collective acts. Assembling alternative discourses and subjectivities entails organizing alternative modes of conducting conduct, in the complex of people and things.

Through iterative processes over time, the collaborative institutions reviewed here facilitate beneficial problematization, build and retrace hybrid networks, and organize speculative collective action. As *intentional assemblages*, they overcome limitations of conventional liberal organization and ideation—the centralization of power and reductive reasoning of bureaucratic government, and the fragmentation of will and atomized decision-making of markets—to develop collective and creative rationalities bounded neither by generalized expertise nor competitive individualistic interest.

In each of these commonmentalities, commoners collectively manage their resources as well as themselves. They develop shared realities, build trust, and pursue common social goals. With intention, they select and incorporate aspects of traditional wisdom, modern empirical sciences, the liberal norm of emancipatory struggle, and the postmodern perspective of inescapable uncertainty. They avoid spurious categorical judgment and action by remaining sensitive to person and context, and transcend

simplistic identity associations and their unwitting reinforcement by engaging individuals and witnessing personal behaviors. They respect the principle of reality along with individual subjective understanding, maintaining rational inquiry as well as appropriate consideration of its limitations. They also provide opportunities for social acceptance and the sharing of personal truth, and use practices of collective ritual and veneration to cultivate appreciations and direct each other's motivations to ethical, sustainable, and aesthetic ends. Through ongoing interaction, they learn, nurture, define values, solve problems, steward environments, and correct perceived injustices. In self-organizing and loosely governed process, they create maturity, meaning and purpose.

The collaborative institutions achieve this through open, adaptive governance. Their participatory structures allow for collective preparation, implementation, monitoring, and adjustment of their activities. Each is engaged in a collaborative conducting of members' conduct, according to unique collective rationalities born of the interacting knowledges and perspectives of all participants. Unusual in modern institutional decision-making, including the traditionally bureaucratic arenas of public libraries, schools and lands, these collaboratives eschew the standardized utilitarian rationality that informs conventional business and governmental decisions, instead practicing an active and evolving *collaborative* rationality.

This rationality arises through discursive process that brings the full diversity of knowledge and distinct yet interdependent interests into authentic dialogue. The Round Valley Library Commons, the Western Klamath Restoration Project, and the Mendocino Community High School all facilitate an open exchange of ideas. The Library Commons

evolved and continues to function through community meetings where all are welcome, and objectives, strategies and tasks are developed through ongoing discussion. The Restoration Project has overcome decades of rancor, severe differences in perspective, and apparent conflicts in interest, to identify a shared definition of social and environmental problems, a common vision of solutions and long-term goals, and a mutually supported repertoire of concrete actions that can bring lasting positive change. The Community School allows students to educate themselves, according to their own interests, needs and values, with the knowledge and support of extended networks within the community. Students and faculty define problems and develop goals, and teach each other how to engage individuals in achieving collective progress.

As successful institutions respected and at least in part funded by official governments, these collaboratives represent heartening models for transformative process *within* current liberal realities. The blunt instrument of political intervention—whether at the national, state, or municipal level—cannot replace face-to-face community as the arena in which equality and responsibility are defined, encouraged and expressed. It is in communities that we allocate respect and share narratives that give us meaning and purpose, where all individuals can and must be given their fair chance. While communities may develop within particular categories of defined social difference, they are most assuredly not those categories themselves. Rather, in an overwhelmingly complex universe, they are strongest and most effective when they are most diverse, cutting across overlapping categories of social definition that may or may not correlate with shared experience.

We humans are social animals, and, in the most profound sense, we are in this together. Though individuals have will, it is circumscribed both internally and externally by complex structures that evolve over time. Changes of will, like all processes of change, are social products, developed collectively. Solving complex social problems requires us to use our limited individual powers to create contexts that engage our *collective* intelligence, with respect and generosity, rather than those that perpetuate partisan self-righteousness, alienating defensiveness, and callous interpersonal rivalry. My friends, let's work to address our common problems collectively. Let's develop intentional commonmentalties, with inclusion, empathy, and the fullness of our humanity.

REFERENCES

- Akerlof, G. A., & Kranton, R. E. (2010). *Identity economics: How our identities shape our work, wages, and well-being*. Princeton University Press.
- Allport, G. W. (1954). *The nature of prejudice*. Addison-Wesley.
- Anderson, K. (2004). *Tending the wild: Native American knowledge and the management of California's natural resources*. University of California Press.
- Anderson, T. L., & Leal, D. (2001). *Free market environmentalism today*. Palgrave.
- Bardhan, P., & Ray, I. (Eds.). (2008). *The Contested Commons: Conversations between Economists and Anthropologists* (1 edition). Wiley-Blackwell.
- Bateson, G. (1979). *Mind and Nature: A Necessary Unity*. Dutton.
- Bateson, G. (1987). *Steps to an Ecology of Mind: Collected Essays in Anthropology, Psychiatry, Evolution, and Epistemology*. Jason Aronson Inc.
- Bennett, J. (2001). *The Enchantment of Modern Life: Attachments, Crossings, and Ethics*. Princeton University Press.
- Bennett, J. (2010). *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things*. Duke University Press Books.
- Bollier, D. (2014). *Think Like a Commoner: A Short Introduction to the Life of the Commons*. New Society Publishers.
- Bronk, R. (2009). *The Romantic Economist: Imagination in Economics*. Cambridge University Press.
- Burke, P. J., & Stets, J. E. (2009). *Identity Theory*. Oxford University Press.
- Cal. Educ. Code §58500*. (1976). <http://www.leginfo.ca.gov/cgi-bin/displaycode?section=edc&group=58001-59000&file=58500-58512>
- Campbell, J. (2004). *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*. Princeton University Press.
- Christakis, N. A. (2019). *Blueprint: The Evolutionary Origins of a Good Society*. Little, Brown.

- Connolly, W. E. (2013). *The Fragility of Things: Self-Organizing Processes, Neoliberal Fantasies, and Democratic Activism*. Duke University Press Books.
- Coole, D., & Frost, S. (Eds.). (2010). *New Materialisms: Ontology, Agency, and Politics*. Duke University Press Books.
- Davies, W. (2012). The Emerging Neocommunitarianism. *Political Quarterly*, 83(4), 767–776. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-923X.2012.02354.x>
- Dewey, J. (1938). *Experience And Education* (Reprint edition; published 1997). Free Press.
- Dryzek, J. S. (2002). *Deliberative Democracy and Beyond: Liberals, Critics, Contestations* (reprint edition). Oxford University Press.
- Dryzek, J. S. (2005). *The Politics of the Earth: Environmental Discourses* (2 edition). Oxford University Press, USA.
- Ferrara, J. (2013, November 30). [Personal communication].
- Finlayson, G. (2005). *Habermas: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford University Press.
- Fischer, F. (2000). *Citizens, Experts, and the Environment: The Politics of Local Knowledge*. Duke University Press.
- Foucault, M. (1965). *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*. Pantheon Books.
- Foucault, M. (1980). *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977*. Random House LLC.
- Foucault, M. (1991a). Governmentality. In G. Burchell, C. Gordon, & P. Miller (Eds.), *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality* (1 edition). University Of Chicago Press.
- Foucault, M. (1991b). Politics and the study of discourse. In G. Burchell, C. Gordon, & P. Miller (Eds.), *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality* (1 edition). University Of Chicago Press.
- Frankl, V. E. (2006). *Man's Search for Meaning*. Beacon Press.
- Freire, P. (1996). *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Penguin Books.
- Freyfogle, E. T. (2007). *On private property: Finding common ground on the ownership of land*. Beacon Press.

- Ghertner, D. A. (2010). Green evictions: Environmental discourse of a “slum-free” Delhi. In W. Ahmed, A. Kundu, & R. Peet (Eds.), *India’s New Economic Policy: A Critical Analysis*. Routledge.
- Goldstein, B. E. (2012). *Collaborative resilience moving through crisis to opportunity*. MIT Press.
- Gordon, C. (1991). Governmental rationality: An introduction. In G. Burchell, C. Gordon, & P. Miller (Eds.), *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality* (1 edition). University Of Chicago Press.
- Hardin, G. (1968). The Tragedy of the Commons. *Science*, 162(3859), 1243–1248.
- Harling, W. (2015). Learning Together, Burning Together. *Wildfire Magazine*, 24(1), 26–30.
- Harling, W., & Tripp, B. (2014). *Western Klamath Restoration Partnership: A plan to restore fire adated landscapes*.
- Hayek, F. A. (2011). *The Constitution of Liberty: The Definitive Edition* (R. Hamowy, Ed.; The Collected Works of F. A. Hayek edition). University Of Chicago Press.
- Hess, C., & Ostrom, E. (2011). *Understanding Knowledge as a Commons: From Theory to Practice*. The MIT Press.
- Hicks, S. R. C. (2004). *Explaining Postmodernism: Skepticism and Socialism from Rousseau to Foucault*. Scholargy Publishing, Inc.
- Hobbes, T. (2018). *Leviathan*. Strelbytskyy Multimedia Publishing.
- Innes, J. E., & Booher, D. E. (2010). *Planning with Complexity: An Introduction to Collaborative Rationality for Public Policy* (1 edition). Routledge.
- Jung, C. G. (1933). *Modern man in search of a soul*. Harcourt, Brace.
- Jung, Carl Gustav, & Franz, M.-L. von. (1964). *Man and his symbols*. Doubleday.
- Kaufman, S. (2012). Complex Systems, Anticipation, and Collaborative Planning for Resilience. In *Collaborative Resilience: Moving Through Crisis to Opportunity*. The MIT Press.
- Kimmerer, R. W., & Lake, F. K. (2001). The Role of Indigenous Burning in Land Management. *Journal of Forestry*, 99(11), 36–41.

- Kruger, L., & Lynn, K. (2015). FOREST SERVICE COORDINATED TRIBAL CLIMATE CHANGE RESEARCH PROJECT. *Fire Management Today*, 74(3), 19–21.
- Lakoff, G., & Johnson, M. (2003). Truth: Why Care about a Theory of Truth? In *Metaphors We Live By* (2nd edition). University Of Chicago Press.
- Latour, B. (1987). *Science in action: How to follow scientists and engineers through society*. Harvard university press.
- Latour, B. (1993). *We have never been modern*. Harvard University Press.
- Latour, B. (2004). Why Has Critique Run out of Steam? From Matters of Fact to Matters of Concern. *Critical Inquiry*, 30(2), 225–248. <https://doi.org/10.1086/421123>
- Latour, B. (2005). *Reassembling the social: An introduction to actor-network-theory* Clarendon. Oxford.
- Locke, J. (2013). *Two Treatises on Government: A Translation Into Modern English*. Industrial Systems Research.
- Long, J., & Lake, F. (2018). Escaping social-ecological traps through tribal stewardship on national forest lands in the Pacific Northwest, United States of America. *Ecology and Society*, 23(2). <https://doi.org/10.5751/ES-10041-230210>
- Lukianoff, G., & Haidt, J. (2018). *The Coddling of the American Mind: How Good Intentions and Bad Ideas Are Setting Up a Generation for Failure*. Penguin.
- Lyotard, J.-F. (1984). *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*. U of Minnesota Press.
- Marx, K. (2004). *Capital*. Penguin UK.
- Marx, K., Engels, F., & Press, G. (2019). *The Communist Manifesto*. GENERAL PRESS.
- MCHS. (2014). http://www.mendocinoused.org/schools/mendocinohs/index.cfm?fuseaction=dep_intro&dept_id=61
- Mead, G. H. (1967). *Mind, Self, and Society from the Standpoint of a Social Behaviorist* (C. W. Morris, Ed.). The University Of Chicago Press.
- Meadows, D. H. (2008). *Thinking in Systems: A Primer* (D. Wright, Ed.). Chelsea Green Publishing.

- MCHS (2020). *Mendocino Community High School • Page—Mendocino High Schools*. Retrieved June 20, 2020, from <http://mendocinoused.org/MHS/1351-Untitled.html>
- Merchant, C. (2008). *Ecology*. Humanity Books.
- Mill, J. (2017). *Utilitarianism*. CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform.
- Mill, J. S. (2016). *On Liberty*. CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform.
- Mitchell, M. (2011). *Complexity: A Guided Tour*. Oxford University Press.
- Moore, T. (1997). *The Re-enchantment of Everyday Life*. Harper Collins.
- Nietzsche, F. (1998). *Twilight of the Idols*. OUP Oxford.
- Ostrom, E. (1990). *Governing the commons: The evolution of institutions for collective action*. Cambridge University Press.
- Ostrom, E. (2010). Beyond Markets and States: Polycentric Governance of Complex Economic Systems. *The American Economic Review; Nashville, 100(3)*, 641–672. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1257/aer.100.3.641>
- Ostrom, E., & Schlager. (1996). The Formation of Property Rights. In *In S.K. Hanna et al., Rights to Nature*. Island Press. Covelo.
- Pinker, Steven. (2003). *The Blank Slate: The Modern Denial of Human Nature*. Penguin.
- Pinker, Steven. (2019). *Enlightenment Now: The Case for Reason, Science, Humanism, and Progress*. Penguin.
- Pinker, Susan. (2014). *The Village Effect: How Face-to-Face Contact Can Make Us Healthier, Happier, and Smarter*. Spiegel & Grau.
- Pixley, J. (2017). *All-lands management: Convening communities and their lands around fire management*. Humboldt State University.
- Plumwood, V. (2005), " Inequality, ecojustice, and ecological rationality," in *Debating the Earth: The Environmental Politics Reader*, Dryzek and Schlosberg eds. Oxford University Press.
- Polanyi, K. (1971). *The Great Transformation: The Political and Economic Origins of Our Time* (Later Edition Used edition). Beacon Press.
- Postman, N. (2011). *Building a Bridge to the 18th Century: How the Past Can Improve Our Future*. Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group.

- Putnam, R. D. (2000). *Bowling alone: The collapse and revival of American community*. Simon & Schuster.
- Robbins, P. (2004). *Political ecology: A critical introduction*. Blackwell Pub.
- Schneewind, J. B. (2003). *Moral Philosophy from Montaigne to Kant*. Cambridge University Press.
- Seligman, M. E. P. (2012). *Flourish: A Visionary New Understanding of Happiness and Well-being* (Reprint edition). Atria Books.
- Smith, A. (2016). *The Wealth of Nations*. Aegitas.
- Smith, G. (2003). *Deliberative democracy and the environment*. Routledge : Taylor & Francis E-Library.
- Snyder, G. (1974). *Turtle Island*. New Directions Publishing.
- Spivak, G. (2018). *Interview with Gayatri Spivak*.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hdU5G-dunPQ>
- Swimme, B. T., & Tucker, M. E. (2011). *Journey of the Universe*. Yale University Press.
- Thompson, M. P., MacGregor, D. G., Dunn, C. J., Calkin, D. E., & Phipps, J. (2018). Rethinking the Wildland Fire Management System. *Journal of Forestry*, 116(4), 382–390. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jofore/fvy020>
- Times, W. T. S. T. T. N. Y. (1970, November 5). Rafferty Is Defeated by a Negro As California Education Chief; A Black Unseats Rafferty In California School Race. *The New York Times*.
<http://query.nytimes.com/gst/abstract.html?res=9E02E0D9143DEF31A25756C0A9679D946190D6CF>
- Torgerson, D. (2005). The Ambivalence of Discourse: Beyond the Administrative Mind? In *Managing Leviathan: Environmental Politics and the Administrative State, Second Edition* (2nd Edition). University of Toronto Press, Higher Education Division.
- Ungar, M. (Ed.). (2013). *The Social Ecology of Resilience: A Handbook of Theory and Practice* (2012 edition). Springer.
- Voltaire, F. (2004). *Philosophical Dictionary*. Penguin UK.
- Walker, B., & Salt, D. (2006). *Resilience Thinking: Sustaining Ecosystems and People in a Changing World*. Island Press.

- Walker, B., & Salt, D. (2012). *Resilience Practice: Building Capacity to Absorb Disturbance and Maintain Function* (1 edition). Island Press.
- Weber, M. (1991). *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*. Psychology Press.
- Wells, J. (2014). *Complexity and Sustainability* (1 edition). Routledge.
- WKRP Project Set for Implementation. (2018). *Targeted News Service*.
- Wilkinson, R. G., & Pickett, K. (2010). *The Spirit Level: Why Equality is Better for Everyone*. Penguin Books Limited.
- Young, I. M. (2002). *Inclusion and democracy*. Oxford University Press.
- Young, I. M. (2011). *Justice and the Politics of Difference* (New in Paper edition). Princeton University Press.
- Zaki, J. (2019). *The War for Kindness: Building Empathy in a Fractured World*. Crown/Archetype.
- Zinn, H. (2015). *A People's History of the United States*. HarperCollins.