

## GLOBAL CITIZENS AND THE PLANETARY PHASE OF CIVILIZATION

### “How Do We Get There? The Problem of Action”

By Paul Raskin and Respondents (Great Transition Initiative, 2017)

Reviewed by Herman Greene

In 1995, the [Stockholm Environment Institute](#) convened the “Global Scenario Group” to study the requirements for the transition to sustainability. An outcome of this work was the publication in 2002 of the influential and widely read book, [Great Transition: The Promise and Lure of the Times Ahead](#). Paul Raskin, the founding president of the [Tellus Institute](#), was the lead author of that book. The Tellus Institute then established the [Great Transition Initiative](#) (GTI) to carry on the work of imagining and realizing the new sustainability paradigm.

As understood by GTI the “‘great transition’ refers to a set of core concepts for understanding the contemporary world and shaping its future.” The overarching framework of the great transition is given in response to four questions:

1. **Where are we?** We are in the planetary phase of civilization.
2. **Where are we going?** There are three scenarios—evolution of the present world systems, degeneration to the point of barbarization of those systems, and transformation to a new sustainability paradigm.
3. **Where do we want to go?** Where we want to go is to the “advent of a new development paradigm redirecting the global trajectory toward a socially equitable, culturally enriched, and ecologically resilient *planetary civilization*.”
4. **How do we get there?** “A viable Great Transition strategy entails actions that address a vast matrix of issues at local, regional, and global levels. . . . A massive and coherent *global citizens movement* seems the essential systemic change agent for the Great Transition project still largely latent, such a movement is already visible in diffuse nascent forms. The core question is how to bring it fully to life.” ([greattransition.org](#))

GTI has established a members-only network of hundreds of scholars and activists who share a common goal of realizing the great transition. On a roughly monthly basis, GTI distributes to the network an essay written by one of its members on an idea relating to the great transition. The other members of the network are then invited to make comments on the essay, comments which are viewable by the entire network. At the end of the comment period, the author of the essay reviews the comments and responds to them. Then the author revises the essay and it is published online together with selected comments on the essay (the Roundtable). The essay and the Roundtable are then published [here](#). Past essays and roundtables may be accessed under the “Publications” menu on that page.

In 2016 Paul Raskin revised the *Great Transition* book. The title of the revised version is *Journey to Earthland: The Great Transition to Planetary Civilization*. It is well worth reading and may be downloaded [here](#). In November 2017, he authored the essay “[How Do We Get There? The Problem of Action](#)” that was sent out to the GTI network. This essay addressed the key issue in

the fourth question of the GTI framework, “how to bring [the global citizens movement] fully to life.”

My response to the essay was selected for this month’s Roundtable. My comment concerned how [“A new thought collective on eco-democratic socialism could provide the needed conceptual understanding for a global movement.”](#)

The Great Transition Initiative is an important resource for ecozoans. The topic dealt with in my response, a thought collective on neo-eco-democratic socialism, “ecodemic socialism” for short, is one to which we shall return. We will also, in this *Ecozoic Review*, keep you informed on the conversations of the GTI network.