

97. Letter from Northern Europe by Tom Greco

October Newsletter - 2013

Sweden (June 24 to July 8, 2013)

During a two week stay in Sweden I gave presentations and met with community currency activists in Gothenborg, Lindsberg, Gotland, and Stockholm. My Gothenborg presentation, titled *The Economics of Peace, Justice and Sustainability: Toward a New Convivial World Order*, was held in a lovely old church that has been converted into a community center and café that provides, among other things, services to the city's homeless population.

One of my Swedish hosts and main tour organizer, Marianne Pässe, sent out a report on that event. Here is an slightly adapted version of it:

'We had a wonderful evening yesterday! We were around 50 people, including us. I was content with that (I had no idea of how many might come)! The evening started with a mini-concert; a leading violinist (Helga Hussel) accompanied by Barbro Fridén on accordion, playing Pearls of World Music. It was lovely listening to them in that very nice building, good acoustics! After that I spoke a little...making a bridge between Charles Eisenstein's recent presentation (Approx. 25% of the audience were listening to him in the same building some weeks ago) and Thomas Greco. I also asked the audience to raise their hands if they needed translation of some expressions (happened just 2 or three times...once at the very first picture). Tom Greco presented a power point show with very well selected pictures. He spoke about them and...it is good to be able to read at the same time (Microphone is necessary). He spoke for approximately one hour, and people were very interested and kept him busy for another ½ hour, until I closed the session (it was late). The questions were very accurate and in depth. People came up to me afterwards and thanked for a very interesting evening. Afterwards Yoshi and Jackie had an evening meal and chat at our place. And today we pack for Lindsberg! So, we are very pleased!'

At a summer gathering at an intentional community in Lindsberg I lead two workshops on successive days, each one beginning with a slide presentation. These were titled, *Building Resilient Communities: A New Paradigm for Community Development*, and *The Global Financial Meltdown: Its Causes, and Opportunities for Localized Restructuring*. The participants in each of these sessions were few in number but enthusiastic.

As it happened, I was in Sweden at the right time to participate in the *Almedalen Week* on the island of Gotland. This has become an annual event that brings together a wide variety of business people, politicians, academics, grassroots activists and ordinary folks. You can learn more about this remarkable event at <http://www.almedalsveckan.info/> .

I had no official role in the *Almedalen* proceedings, but was able to attend a few of the 2,000+ organized sessions and got to shake hands and chat a bit with the US Ambassador to Sweden, Mark Brzezinski (son of Zbigniew Brzezinski who was *National Security Advisor* to President Jimmy Carter).

I finished up my Sweden tour in Stockholm, where I was hosted by an American friend who has been living there for several years with his Swedish wife and young son. In Stockholm I got to meet some of the main figures in the *JAK Bank*, a unique financial institution that since 1970 has been providing interest-free loans.

They together with a few other groups organized an event for me which attracted a sizable crowd, where I repeated the presentation I gave in Gothenborg.

My photos from Sweden can be found at:

Sweden 1 <https://picasaweb.google.com/112258124863172998784/201306Sweden1?authkey=Gv1sRgCOOd2J6Rr-mVyQE>

Sweden 2 https://picasaweb.google.com/112258124863172998784/201307Sweden2?authkey=Gv1sRgCJuz8u_62bn2mOE

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England (July 8 – July 20)

I may at times complain about it, but I love Britain, and this time I had the opportunity to be in the Lake District at a time when the weather was simply superb ("the first real summer we've had in seven years," the locals told me).

The focal point of my visit was a full day workshop (July 12, 2013), *Unlocking Local Wealth*, held at *Cumbria University* in Lancaster, an event organized by the *Institute for Leadership and Sustainability (IFLAS)* of the *University of Cumbria Business School*, in association with the *New Economics Foundation*, the *United Nations Non-Governmental Liaison Service*, and *Impact International*.

The event was billed as “a one day workshop with world experts on alternative currencies and exchange systems.” That workshop was preceded the day before by a gathering in which most of the same “world experts” came together to “clarify an action research agenda, explore ideas for collaboration, begin grant mapping,” and provide “feedback on one key new initiative (Eurocat).”

Then, that evening, there was a public event titled, *Starting Your Own Currency: Why and How?* sponsored by (IFLAS) in association with *Lancaster’s Ethical Small Traders Association*. This event featured a keynote presentation by John Rogers followed by my response and a general discussion. Here are the links to videos that were recorded during that event:

Jem Bendell introduces the keynote <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iMs2q2Ggwso>

Keynote by John Rogers, co-author of *People Money* <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rqkbiE15G08>

Keynote response by Tom Greco, author of *The End of Money and the Future of Civilization* <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XHEPhQLrTs4>

Along with a few other colleagues, I had the pleasure of enjoying a few more days of discussions and Jem’s hospitality at his home overlooking Lake Windermere. My England photos are at:

https://picasaweb.google.com/112258124863172998784/201307UK?authkey=Gv1sRgCP_6o_OHpP6CggE

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The Geopolitical Struggle

Alvin Toffler observed more than 30 years ago that the power of nation states was in decline and predicted that the trend would continue. It is clear that national governments are ceding sovereignty, not to global democratic institutions, but to transnational corporate entities resulting in a *New (Fascist) World Order* that bypass all the checks on power that have been built into democratic governments over the past three centuries.

George Monbiot’s recent article, *Elite Insurgency* <http://www.monbiot.com/2013/10/14/elite-insurgency/> articulates some current features of that shift.

And Karen Hudes at <http://kahudes.net/about-us/> has revealed that *World Bank* corruption is an inherent element in the global elite takeover. After Twenty one years at the *World Bank*, she has blown the lid off the cover-up of the corrupt global financial regime.

Watch this interview with Karen: <http://youtu.be/M4VGoXV5vYg>

A longer interview in four part can be seen at <http://youtu.be/GWBogcrFGx4>

These are a few pertinent quotes from her interviews:

“This is a massive cover-up; this makes Watergate look like tidally-winks.”

- “Big boys who think they own the world.”
- “We don’t have a democracy here.”
- “The Federal Reserve has “gamed” the capital markets.”
- “This whole country is so corrupt, you can’t begin to imagine. I can’t tell this to the people because the press is owned by those thugs”
- “Stakeholder analysis” identifies a “super entity” of ownership and control.

All of that is very troubling, but we have a choice - to build our own (democratic) new world order from the bottom up, community-by-community. We cannot be complacent; we must reduce our dependence upon corporate controlled mega-systems, especially banks, and secure the availability of the necessities of life within our local regions.

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