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An Interconnected World

This is The Weekly Letter for November 6, 2022. [About this newsletter](#)

As I said [a couple weeks ago](#), this will be the final issue of *The Weekly Letter*. Thank you so much for spending a part of your week reading this newsletter, and please stay in touch!

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My View

As I have paid closer attention to the news and politics over the course of writing this newsletter, I have frequently been reminded of the theme of interconnectedness. This theme is especially relevant in relation to economics and the environment.

The interconnectedness of the global economy is both a blessing and a curse. On the negative side, global factors were part of what caused inflation in the U.S., and efforts by the U.S. Federal Reserve to reduce inflation will have significant (and [often damaging](#)) consequences for other countries. And the economic effects of the war in Ukraine have had dramatic impacts far from Ukraine's borders, including exacerbating global food insecurity.

On the environment, viewing the world through an ecological lens reveals a radical interconnectedness. While of course there is competition between species, there is also interdependence. Unfortunately, it has taken collapses in ecosystems for us to understand this interdependence—and to reckon with the fact that humans cannot escape it. Ecological crises like climate change have made it clear that we are all in this together.

The economy and the environment tend to be treated as separate issues, but this is a mistake. Economic prosperity depends on the bounty of the Earth, as well as the physical and mental labor of people. The economy and the environment are inextricably connected.

A structural factor at play in both economic and ecological crises is the global economic system's reliance on growth. I take seriously the argument that economic growth [may be compatible with sustainability](#) if pro-environment policy changes are made. However, the need for growth strikes me as a major barrier to a healthy environment, economic security, and even the ability of individuals and communities to choose their own destinies. One case against the compatibility of growth and sustainability is made by the philosopher and activist Joanna Macy, who [argues](#) that a system geared toward one goal—economic growth for its own sake—is inherently unsustainable.

While the condition of interconnectedness currently causes problems—the chain reaction of ecosystem collapse, hunger in addition to war—we can work toward a *better* interconnected world.

Few things in politics are simple and straightforward—that's something else that has become obvious to me during the time that I've worked on this newsletter. For example, shifting from a focus on economic growth requires major structural changes—as the economy is currently set up, economic contractions are disastrous. And there have been [questions raised](#) about whether a degrowth approach would deliver the just economic and environmental outcomes that it promises. While it is important not to gloss over these complications, I believe that positive political change is possible.

We need a politics that is democratic, environmentalist, and committed to social equity. We need a politics that is idealistic but rooted in reality. We need a politics that is shaped by a multiplicity of perspectives. And we need a politics that recognizes the interconnectedness of all people, indeed of all life, on this planet.



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Jamie Larson

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