

Ellen McGirt: John, one problem I'm wrestling with, with trying to imagine a world after capitalism as we know it is our stunted public dialogue on the subject. We just don't know how to talk about it. Most Americans have heard all our lives that, as Margaret Thatcher, the former British Prime Minister, liked to say, "there is no alternative" to capitalism. Well I suppose that's true for olds like you and me (laughing), that we've heard that all our lives. The only allowable debate has been, up to now, how do we tweak capitalism?

John Biewen: Yeah, if you just pay attention to the national political and economic discourse and the mainstream media, you get very little substantive discussion about any other model... But...people are talking about, and adopting, other ways of organizing their economic lives.

Scene on Radio, Season 7, Episode 8

In this investigation, you'll explore the work of one or more thinkers who are upending familiar ideas about what an economy is for, what economic progress and success entail, and how economic life might be organized. Their ideas differ in important ways and do not necessarily represent complete or equivalent alternatives to capitalism. Instead, each thinker offers ways for reimagining some of the goals, values, and relationships that could shape how people meet their needs and live together on this planet.

Choose one or more of the following thinkers to research.

Kate Raworth: Doughnut Economics Raworth is an economist who teaches at Oxford University; she is co-founder of Doughnut Economics Action Lab. Doughnut Economics is a framework that asks how economies can meet everyone's needs while staying within the ecological limits of the planet. Raworth challenges the use of economic growth as the primary measure of an economy's success. (Episode 9 mentions Raworth and Doughnut Economics.)	Robin Wall Kimmerer: Gift Economies Kimmerer is a plant ecologist who teaches at the State University of New York. She is a member of the Citizen Potawatomi Nation. Drawing on Indigenous knowledge, Kimmerer contrasts market economies with gift economies built around reciprocity, responsibility, relationships, and gratitude. (Kimmerer is not featured in Season 7, but her ideas connect to themes explored in Episodes 4, 9, and 12.)	Marjorie Kelly: Democratic Economy A business journalist-turned-economic reformer and author, Kelly is a Distinguished Senior Fellow at the Democracy Collaborative. Kelly argues for a more democratic economy in which economic power and wealth are shared among workers and communities rather than concentrated among corporate owners and investors. (Kelly is interviewed in Episodes 7, 11, and 12.)
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Part	Guiding Questions
Part 1 Understand the Ideas	• How does this thinker reimagine economic life?
Part 2 See the Ideas in Action	• What can you learn from examples that reflect or apply some of these ideas?
Part 3 Identify and Investigate a Question	• What is one question, tension, or challenge that has emerged in Part 1 and/or 2? What can additional perspectives help you understand?

Part 1 Understand the Ideas

How does this thinker reimagine economic life?

Explore the sources below to learn about the thinker you've selected. As you work, record notes and questions.

Research Questions	Sources
1. According to the thinker, what should an economy accomplish? For whom? 2. What principles, values, or experiences guide their thinking? 3. What familiar ways of organizing or thinking about economic life do they challenge or ask us to reconsider? 4. Does the thinker acknowledge challenges or limitations to their ideas? If so, how do they respond to them? 5. If these ideas became more common, what might change about the way people produce, exchange, own, share, or care for resources?	Kate Raworth: Doughnut Economics • Source 1: About Kate Raworth from Kate Raworth • Source 2: "How do we create a better economy?" by TED-Ed in collaboration with the World Economic Forum (November 29, 2022) • Source 3: "A healthy economy should be designed to thrive, not grow" by Kate Raworth for TED (June 4, 2018) • Source 4: "About Doughnut Economics" from the Doughnut Economics Action Lab Robin Wall Kimmerer: Gift Economies • Source 1: About Robin Wall Kimmerer from Robin Wall Kimmerer • Source 2: "The Serviceberry: An Economy of Abundance" by Robin Wall Kimmerer for <i>Emergence Magazine</i> (October 26, 2022) • Source 3: "Robin Wall Kimmerer's Manifesto for a Gift Economy," Episode 159 of <i>People I (Mostly) Admire</i> by Steven D. Levitt of the Freakonomics Radio Network (June 6, 2025) – 31:35-54:16 recommended • Source 4: "Practical Reverence: An Interview with Robin Wall Kimmerer" by Emmanuel Vaughan-Lee of <i>Emergence Magazine</i> (November 21, 2024) – 17:58-28:57 and 42:27-46:15 recommended Marjorie Kelly: Democratic Economy • Source 1: About Marjorie Kelly from The Democracy Collaborative • Source 2: "To make the economy more fair, we need to

	<u>make it more democratic</u>” by Eillie Anzilotti for <i>Fast Company</i> (October 29, 2019) • Source 3: <u>“‘Wealth Supremacy’ – An Interview with Marjorie Kelly</u>” by Christian Sarkar and Philip Kotler for <i>Regeneration Journal</i> (September 25, 2023) • Source 4: Scene on Radio, Season 7: ○ <u>Episode 12, 57:27-1:00:28</u> (or <u>Episode 12 transcript, pp. 47-49</u>) ○ <u>Episode 7, 36:16-48:35</u> (or <u>Episode 7 transcript, pp. 31-39</u>) ○ <u>Episode 11, 21:21-22:55</u> (or <u>Episode 11 transcript, pp. 18-19</u>) • Source 5: <u>Action guide for advancing Community Wealth Building in the United States</u> from The Democracy Collaborative
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Part 2 See the Ideas in Action

What can you learn from examples that reflect or apply some of these ideas?

Explore the sources below to examine examples that reflect or apply some of the thinker's ideas. As you work, record notes and questions.

Research Questions	Sources
1. Which of the thinker's ideas do you see reflected in the examples? How? 2. What do the examples suggest might be possible when some of the thinker's ideas are put into practice? 3. What questions, tensions, or limitations do these examples raise?	Kate Raworth: Doughnut Economics • Source 1: “How the Dutch are reshaping their post-pandemic economy” by BBC News (June 29, 2020) • Source 2: “‘It feels cool to be a cog in change’: how doughnut economics is reshaping a Swedish town” by Abigail Sykes for <i>The Guardian</i> (July 17, 2025) • Source 3: “The California Doughnut” by the California Doughnut Economics Coalition (November 2025) Robin Wall Kimmerer: Gift Economies • Source 1: “Fast fashion is wasteful, and thrifting is flawed. The solution: swap!” by Sonya Singh for <i>The Guardian</i> (May 13, 2024) • Source 2: Community website: The Buy Nothing Project • Source 3: Community website: Nisqually Community Garden (Olympia, WA area) Marjorie Kelly: Democratic Economy • Source 1: Organization website: Center for Community Wealth (Denver, CO) • Source 2: Organization website: The Democracy Collaborative's Case Studies ○ Recommended case study: The Cleveland Model (Cleveland, OH) ○ Recommended case study: The Preston Model (Preston, England)

Part 3 Identify and Investigate a Question

What is one question, tension, or challenge that has emerged in Part 1 and/or 2?
What can additional perspectives help you understand?

Research Process

Step One: Identify a Question

Review what you've learned about the thinker and the examples you studied.

Identify an important question, tension, challenge, or limitation that you want to understand better. Consider:

- What do the examples from Part 2 show?
- What seems possible when some of this thinker's ideas are put into practice?
- What do these examples not tell us?
- What questions about the thinker's ideas remain unanswered?
- What do you want to investigate? Choose one important question, tension, challenge, or limitation to explore further.

Step Two: Seek Additional Perspectives – and Understand Your Sources

Search for sources that directly address your question. Depending on your question, useful sources might include reporting, research, essays, interviews, or commentary from scholars, journalists, organizers, government officials, or other thinkers. Seek perspectives beyond the thinker and organizations directly associated with their work.

Locate sources:

- Watch the video from [Common Sense Media](#) about creating strong Google search terms. Then, generate different search terms and operators that you can use to continue your research.
- Search the name of the thinker or framework along with key terms from your question.
 - For example, you might try searching for the thinker's name and terms such as "critique," "criticism," "limitations," "debate," "response," "evidence," "scale," or other words connected to the question you're investigating.
- Notice who is participating in the conversation. Consider searching specifically for perspectives from people with relevant expertise or experience.

As you consider each source, ask:

- Who is behind it?
 - Who created the source? What expertise or experience do they bring?
 - Where was it published or shared?
- What is its purpose or perspective?
 - What is the author or organization trying to explain, argue, question, or critique?
 - What perspectives, values, interests, or motivations might shape how they approach the topic?
- What does it contribute to your investigation?
 - What information, evidence, or perspective does the source provide?
 - What claims does the author make, and what evidence do they offer to support them?
 - How does what you find compare with other sources?
 - How does this source help you answer or think differently about your question?

Step Three: Weigh What You've Found

Consider the sources together to synthesize what you've learned:

- What do they agree about?
- Where do they disagree?
- Taken together, what information, perspectives, or evidence do they provide?
- How do these sources complicate, challenge, or deepen your understanding of the thinker's ideas or what the ideas can look like in practice?