The Maturation of A Social Movement

A Regional Response to a Critique of the Transition Movement

Mid-Atlantic Transition Hub (MATH)

Transitionnetwork.org ~ TransitionUS.org

Transitionmidatlantic.org

Mid-Atlantic Regional Transition Directory: http://bit.ly/1y8gHuR
• Pamela Boyce Simms, Convener, Mid-Atlantic Transition Hub (MATH)

• Wendy Brawer, Founder, Director, Green Map Systems Inc.

• Dr. Jon Cawley, Professor, Environmental Studies, Roanoke College, Principal, Environmental Transitions

• Brett Barndt, Fellow, NYC Accelerator, Cleantech Renewables, New Economy, Money and Banking
COMING ATTRACTIONS PREVIEW
MATH 2015 Monthly Webinar Series

OVERVIEW OF SIMPLICITY INSTITUTE QUESTIONS

MID-ATLANTIC, REGIONAL RESPONSE

How does the Transition movement work with:

• POWER?
• DIVERSITY?
• AFFlUENCE?
Local Scaled up to Regional

- 21 Mid-Atlantic Transitioner MATH Council members from 7 states, CT-VA, networked back in their states and watersheds to local initiatives.
- 9 Stewards steeped in Transition ethos with specific environmental specialties, assisted in Working Groups by Resource Persons.
- The Mid-Atlantic regional network is 100% Transitioner by design.
- We speak about the Transition movement directly and exclusively from Mid-Atlantic regional experience.
- We are voices from the most densely populated megalopolis corridor on the planet.
Feedback Loop for: Mid-Atlantic Transition Hub (MATH)

Transition:

- is a whole-systems culture-specific movement.
- incorporates self-organizing insights drawn from the way natural systems regulate themselves at multiple scales.
- constantly adapts in response to internal and external FEEDBACK.

The Mid-Atlantic Transition Hub (MATH) therefore cultivates feedback networks, and envisions the 2015 teleseminar series as such a loop to which we will listen deeply.

Written Listener Feedback is encouraged and welcomed.
POWER QUESTIONS

• Is there too much top down steering of the movement?
• Does Transition have a radical enough vision?
• Is relocalization capable of solving political as well as environmental problems?
• Is small-step grassroots localism the best way to achieve systemic changes?
  • Can small acts of resistance and micro-transformation destabilize macro-systems?
• Can we dispassionately analyze political power without becoming embroiled in politics?
• Does Transition underestimate the adaptive capacity of the current system? Is the arc of the Transition, non-confrontational approach so long that the existing system co-opts, waters down, twists and manipulates the rhetoric without shifting underlying structures or hierarchies?
DIVERSITY QUESTIONS

• Should Transition be more concerned with social justice?

• How can we ensure that Transition isn’t primarily a pleasurable movement for predominantly white, educated, post-materialist, middle class small community people?

• Is inclusion in Transition tantamount to assimilating others to adopt our way of thinking about the world?

• How might we pay more attention to the community power dynamics conditioned by ethnicity, gender, and socioeconomic stratification that shape community relationships and fold this into our work?
DIVERSITY QUESTIONS

• How might we address the facts that:
  • resource depletion and climate change will effect various groups in different ways?
  • relocalization may not be equally as applicable to everyone?
  • some people are more adaptable than others given that there are aspects of change that have more to do with historical power than place?
• How can we honestly look at and skillfully work with various levels of vulnerability between communities and competing interests within communities?
Affluence & Consumer Capitalism

Questions

• How does Transition frame the impact, and the which generates Consumer Capitalism?

• Can self-organizing Transition communities, “ignore capitalism to death” by building a new economy in the shell of the old?

• Is, or how is Transition addressing head on, the fact that Consumer Capitalism created our current predicament; encouraging Americans to face the reality of downsized material consumption on the horizon?
Today’s Topics & Questions

Wendy Brawer

• Lessons & Best Practices Transition Would be Wise to Learn from Other Social Movements
• Transitioning Urban Environments: Mid-Atlantic Transition Neighborhoods in Megacities

Jon Cawley

Region-wide cultural diversity - Power of Transition’s emphasis on visioning and storytelling:
  • honoring unique sub-regional sense of place to avoid slipping into one-size fits all approach
  • common thread of lifting up diversity within the region, which as a practice can be scaled up
  • essential as a catalyst for "reskilling" practices.
Today’s Questions

Pamela Boyce Simms

• How can we ensure that Transition isn’t primarily a pleasurable movement for predominantly white, educated, post-materialist, middle class small community people?

• How might we pay more attention to the community power dynamics conditioned by ethnicity, gender, and socioeconomic stratification that shape community relationships and fold this into our work?

• How might we address the fact that:
  • resource depletion and climate change will effect various groups in different ways?
  • some people are more adaptable than others given that there are aspects of change that have more to do with historical power than place?

• How can we honestly look at and skillfully work with various levels of vulnerability between communities and competing interests within communities?
Today’s Questions

Brett Barndt
• How does Transition frame the impact and that which generates Consumer Capitalism?
• Can self-organizing Transition communities, “ignore capitalism to death” by building a new economy in the shell of the old?
• What does the relocalization of economic systems look like and what are the portents of interconnected NETWORKS of relocalized alternative economies?

Jon Cawley
• The power of - Localism Scaled up in the Mid-Atlantic Region
  • “Concentric Resilience Building” in interconnected local, state, watershed, sub-regional and regional concentric rings
  • Mid-Atlantic Transition Neighborhood concentric asset mapping and gap analysis.
Movement-building & Transitioning Cities

Wendy Brawer
Mid-Atlantic Region Cultural Diversity
Visioning, Cultural Storytelling & Sense of Place

Dr. Jon Cawley
Visions and Footprints
Regional Cultural Diversity
In this conversation, I represent the far Southwest of the Mid Atlantic States Region Transition Efforts

We are somewhat removed from the norms and neighborhoods of the huge coastal cities and their neighborhoods

I represent the Appalachian cultures and traditions—more rural. And with different stories and landscapes.
As climate sweeps up and down, populations migrate
Along the grooves—but seldom move up over the ridges

The Appalachian valleys are varied Micro-Habitats
Eliot Wigginton and his high school students recognized this in a previous decade– he tapped into traditional Appalachian skills and cultures, to record the footprints of a previous generation– one that is no longer with us now– except in this documentation.
To our South we have the traditions of the Cherokee.
Like other places, we have begun to learn that nearly all good visions and ideas are necessarily location specific..

In general, when you try to scale them up without tailoring them carefully to the ecosystem, the location, the culture-- It tends to be a disaster!
There is a three step process of engaging the local– the local culture, and the local storylines. Of realizing that solutions are rooted in the local.

Next is to document the footprint of the past– to listen to stories and wisdom, and to capture it.

Finally, concurrently, is to vision best practices and best outcomes for the future.
Community power dynamics shaped by ethnicity, gender, and socioeconomic stratification

Pamela Boyce Simms
Transition & Consumer Capitalism
Relocalism & Regional Response

Brett Barndt
Consumer Capitalism & REconomy

Dec 4, 2014
CONSUMERISM CREATING OUR PREDICAMENT
Consumerism in Context

- Metaphor – wagon wheel - global supply lines to the metropolitan center

- Natural resources flow to the center, consumer goods flow out, debt flows back, dependence, military enforcement
History

• Ancient Greece – Luxury goods from Egypt and Babylon – gold and silver flowed East
• Ancient Rome – Silk and luxury goods from India and China, gold and silver flowed East
• Medieval Europe – Venice – Silk Road, Spice Road – gold and silver flowed East
• “Golden Age” of Spain – Gold from Peru flowed right through for consumer goods from India and China
• This list goes on – Amsterdam, British Empire, US Empire, Neo-imperialism
Bribery

- Consumer goods at home bribe the people to support the empire supply lines
- What “rituals” do we accept as normal?
- Net net, we work, and borrow, and pay interest, over our lifetimes
- We become complacent
- We tolerate empire

- Consumer “rituals” – temples, marriages, funerals, burials
- Plato – “unnecessary” needs
- Rome – “bread and circuses”
- 1815-1914 – Pax Britannica
- 1940s – planned obsolescence, “American Dream”, suburban sprawl, mass consumerism, supply line consolidation (Central America, Latin America, South East Asia, Africa, etc.)
- Today – psychology, unconscious, identity deficits
Debt Machine
- Looming constantly in the background
- Stitches the wheel together
- Creates vulnerability to shock and obligation to pay with resources
- Compels compliant behavior
- Can reward corruption
- Interest payments on created money is the reason the whole system gets funded

- Individuates us on paper and in our minds
- Mental tallies playing monthly in our heads
- Threat of contracting money supply forces borrowers to find ways to pay back faster
- Engenders scarcity in society and enforces competition not cooperation
- Forces us to move to find work – breaking ties, isolating us
- Compels compliance with the dominant consumer culture
- Can challenge ethics
Moves across the earth
• Consumption, debt & debt crises, empire, and war go together
• Repeated cycles observed in history
• Larger and larger scale
• Today, we tax the entire earth
• Tomorrow, even bigger

• Dutch Empire
• British Empire
• 19th/20th century supply line struggles - French, Belgian, German, Spanish, Russian, Austro-Hungarian, Ottoman, Japanese, Chinese Empires
• US Empire
• Chinese Empire/Russian Empire - 21st century supply line struggles?
RE-LOCALIZATION RESPONSE
What does it look like?

• Re-localize – re-create local supply lines and relationships, food – farming, distributed alternative energy may be the first place to look

• Local currencies, LETS “mutual credit”, time banks – reduce dependence on dominant debt-based money, keep our money at home, learn new ways to actually replace USDs

• Cooperative economy – meet real needs through locally controlled production and employment – this is really starting new businesses, local currencies and LETS can help facilitate this step

• Co-housing – new housing models, share resources, reduce isolation, re-build community

• Community Land Trusts – take back disused space, provide resources for community use in perpetuity
Local Response

• MATH – Transition Neighborhoods
  – Build new relationships and resilience networks in metropolitan centers
  – Translate Transition Towns approach to neighborhoods in big cities
  – Investigate local alternative economy and create models in neighborhoods
Map assets and flows

• Identify assets and resources in communities (i.e. community groups, unused space, community gardens, human services NFPs, institutions – schools, hospitals, faith-based communities, food or housing cooperatives, local food producers, regional farmers – CSAs, credit unions, alternative energy services, etc.)

• Map money flows from our pockets out of our communities and metro, find alternatives to keep money flowing inside
Can re-localization solve systemic economic and environmental problems?

• Re-localization can create alternatives to lessen the impact of systemic problems as they intensify
• Re-localized economies still have to breathe polluted air or drink contaminated water, or send kids to wars for supply lines
• Systemic problems are controlled from City Halls/City Councils, Wall Street, state capitals, Washington & media/cultural elite – there is no way around that
• *Real change is going to happen at multiple levels* – re-localization builds a foundation from which we can work for lasting change on other levels
Concentric Resilience Building & Mid-Atlantic Transition Neighborhoods

Dr. Jon Cawley
Concentricity Mapping
We live in a very complex world where the average piece of food that you eat has travelled an average of one to two thousand miles before you eat it!

It is very difficult to control the access, or the quality, or the pesticide use, or the humane treatment of foods. Or of any other goods and services, across *thousands* of miles.

This long-distance access of resources only works well if gasoline or diesel fuel is essentially free.

The study of Concentricity analyzes how far outward you have to go from “home” before your needs can be filled. Not only for basic survival (in an emergency), but also for an ongoing high quality of life based on your own specific “Sense of Place.”

As we will see, concentric circles give a sound, straight-forward, easily-understandable way to begin to assess—and then to improve a community’s resilience and security.

Mathematically, this process is based on the stability characteristics of two kinds of systems— one that Natural systems prefer (Low Energy Systems), and one that humans, in the 20th Century have come to adopt (High Energy Systems).
High Energy Systems are like a marble on top of a bowl—they are unstable, and are always prone to collapse:

They are much like a hot air balloon-- they need a complex “skin” of infrastructure, and a LOT of fuel to keep from crashing!

(These used to be called “Corporateo” in the Middle Ages…..)
If you “kick the system” it actually rolls closer to home, and becomes more stable!

(In the Middle Ages, these used to be called “Universitas” and included things like Oxford, or Monasteries, or Catholic Church parishes… these tended to last a thousand years…)
Your sphere of influence, or of control of local resources is local, is essentially concentric:

Your neighborhood is essentially your Walking District “Concentricity”

How about a larger circle—Say, as far as you could easily Bicycle?

Or, perhaps, a yet larger circle, which carries you to the edges of the Potential Agricultural Lands that might flank your town or city?

(In the 1800s, with food, this was called the “French Method” of urban farming, because it securely fed the people of Paris.)
First task is to work modularly though finding what you “have” within your Concentric playing field

This obviously includes food resources and “local agriculture, storage, and distribution…"

But also includes social, technological, and physical resources—safe houses and zones, historical resources, medical resources, &c.
This is again, a set of modular steps to determine what items or resources you are actually missing within your local neighborhood or in your wider concentricity.

It pays to know before-hand just exactly where your toilet paper comes from…. 
…. or your antibiotics!

There is nothing wrong with items originating from "Outside," but those items or skills finally must be recognized to be "Luxuries" whose availability simply cannot be relied upon.
Oxford, UK
Questions & Answers

Wendy Brawer
  Movement-building Lessons & Best Practices
  Transitioning Urban Environments:

Jon Cawley
  Honoring intra-regional cultural diversity and sense of place
  Localism Scaled up in the Mid-Atlantic Region: “Concentric Resilience Building”

Pamela Boyce Simms
  Transition’s current participant demographic
  Community power dynamics conditioned by ethnicity, gender, and socioeconomic stratification

Brett Barndt
  Consumer Capitalism
  Interconnected NETWORKS of relocalized alternative economies
Mid-Atlantic Transition Hub (MATH)

Transition.midatlantic.hub@gmail.com

Transitionmidatlantic.org

SLIDE SHARE

http://slidesha.re/1tnYtp4