

**Introducing Transition
as a Pattern Language
(work in progress – June 2010)**



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How the Patterns are Arranged: a guide....

Each pattern has the same format;

- A heading, with between one and three stars. These refer to the confidence you can have that what is proposed is a tried-and-tested solution. *** means that there is a good body of evidence that this approach will work, ** means that it is a more speculative approach, but with good indications of success, and * means that this is work in progress, that more experimentation is needed.
- A photo, which tries to capture the essence of that pattern (if you feel you have photos from your Transition initiative that would do a better job, please get in touch).
- An introductory paragraph which sets the pattern in its wider context, summing up the situations when you might need to consider this pattern
- A headline in bold. This presents the essence of the problem the pattern is trying to address in as concise a way as possible

1.8. Standing Up to Speak***



...feeling confident in speaking about Transition to audiences, or ensuring that as many people as possible in your initiatives can do it, will be key to your success. It will be a vital element in your AWARNESS RAISING (1.0) process and in ENGAGING THE COUNCIL (4.4). As interest in your initiative grows, having confident speakers will also be a key element in COMMUNICATING WITH THE MEDIA (1.10). If your initiative delivers TRANSITION TRAINING (2.3), good presentation skills will also be key to this.

Many of us have lost our voices. We are afraid to stand up and speak in public, indeed surveys show that many people fear public speaking more than death! We fear humiliation, derision, and the mythical smart-as-snow who has spent 5 months honing the killer question that will humiliate you in public. He (or she) doesn't exist, but for many people, public speaking is an utterly terrifying proposition.

It is said that the human brain is a fantastic thing. It's capable of incredible wonder, great power, mathematics and Sudoku, yet it's also when you stand up to speak in public. It need not be like that. Public speaking, like riding a bicycle, is a learnable skill. What follows is an attempt at a crash course in public speaking, although there is nothing like practice. Firstly, know your audience. You cannot expect to give exactly the same talk to wildly different audiences. Who are you speaking to? What makes them tick? What might engage and inspire them, and what is guaranteed to turn them off. Secondly, dress the part. You don't want to give a talk to a group of account growers in a suit and turning up to present to the local Council in a t-shirt and shorts might not be the best approach either. Think carefully about who you are presenting to and how to get off to the best start.

Then you need to know your material. This doesn't mean you need to learn your whole speech by heart, but you need to know what you're going to tell them, and have some kind of structure to whatever you're going to say. You need a beginning (what you're going to talk about, how long you will take, whether or

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- The body of the pattern, which gives more information, case studies, principles, evidence from research, tips for making it happen and so on
- The solution, in bold, stated as an instruction
- Finally, a closing paragraph which links the pattern to the smaller patterns, the ones you will need to bear in mind and refer to when implementing this pattern.

...will be time for questions and so on), a middle (the main presentation) and an end (summarising your talk and inspiring conclusion). There are a few ways you can be sure that you'll get it right:

- Write the main points out onto cards in advance as you give your talk
- Use key points slides to trigger you to talk on different subjects you feel comfortable with
- Write a talk, and then summarise it into points that you can refer to as you speak

Few things are duller than a talk held entirely from sheets of paper. Incredibly, talks done with slides incomprehensible, people, extended dialogues with no reference to the audience. This is likely, engaged, enveloping. Tell your own story, stories of projects you have been involved with. Hearing someone talking honestly about their own experience is worth a thousand slides, and really brings talk to life.

Don't pace up and down, and make sure you engage as much of the audience as possible. Make eye contact. Use your hands, but don't flail them about excessively. Also keep an eye on the clock. Saying you are going to talk for 20 minutes, and to still be there after 40 is very disrespectful of your audience. Most people have an attention span of 4-6 minutes; change the pace, change the medium, to sustain interest.

In relation to giving specific Transition talks, remember that doom and gloom is not good tools for engaging people. You will lose people quickly. Also don't give people too much in the way of graphs and stats, use them judiciously and then move on. What appeals to people, and what stays with them, is the emotion of what you are talking about. What does Transition excite you? Tell your story, tell your audience. Consider the Transition Towns Project. It's a great example of how a small, determined, organised community of peak oil and climate catastrophe, in its inbox unashamedly optimistic, creativity and community, to take the moment of its historic opportunity, to rethink how our communities work. What you are trying to do, in humour, compassion and kindness, to create, as George Marshall of CERN put it, a new social norm, one in which Transition communities at the margins, and the most exciting things to do in these times.

Like riding a horse, public speaking needs practice. If your first one bombs, get back in the saddle and try again. Accept any invitation to speak, it's all good practice. In time, your confidence will grow, and when you take to the stage you will find that space layouts and that you are in command. And always be open to feedback, it may be uncomfortable, but it will help you to improve hugely.

Therefore:

Like riding a bicycle or pruning apple trees, public speaking is a learnable skill. What matters is that you speak from what you are passionate about and have mastered a few basic skills. Make sure that from an early stage, training is offered in public speaking, mentoring is offered by other, more experienced public speakers, and that a diversity of people are sent to give talks for the group, thus enabling the group to build up a team of gifted speakers. Keep this training available as the initiative proceeds, and encourage people to be open with their constructive feedback about other people's talks.

...
When giving talks for your group, try and be mindful of HOW OTHERS SEE US (1.6) and of INCLUSION AND DIVERSITY (2.2). Avoid having one standard talk, but tailor your presentation to your audience. Including an element of ARTS AND CREATIVITY (2.8) can bring life to a talk, as can STORYTELLING (4.13). You may find that overcoming our fear of public speaking can contribute to your PERSONAL RESILIENCE (1.5), with knock-on benefits elsewhere in your life. Your Transition group could use its AWARNESS RAISING programme, and in particular its UNLEASHING events (3.14) to give fledgling public speakers some practice.

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You can therefore read the entire set of patterns by just reading the title, photo, and the short pieces in bold (at this stage, other than 1.8., that is as far as all the patterns have got anyway!). You will note that most of these, so far, are just the problem and the solution, apart from 1.8. 'Standing up to Speak', which has been completed in its entirety.

An Outline of the Pattern Language.

The first set of patterns, ‘What We Start With’, set out the thinking tools, skills and personal qualities that appear to help in the early stage of forming a Transition initiative. When seized with a passionate wish to make Transition happen where you live, might there be some additional skills you could add to what you already bring?

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So you've decided to want to have a go at starting a Transition initiative. You've met a collection of people who share your enthusiasm. Now what? The second set of patterns move you from the ideas stage to a Transition initiative which is underway and has maximised its chances of continuing with a good momentum...

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2.15. Transition Cakes***	57

After the initial stage of forming the initiative, those first heady days of events and everything feeling achievable within the next few weeks, you inevitably reach a point where you have to look again at how you are going to structure your organisation and keep deepening and broadening its work. It is the time when you start thinking more strategically...

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The fourth set of patterns look at outreach. How to best embed your initiative and its projects in the wider community, weave constructive networks and engage as broad a base of support as possible?

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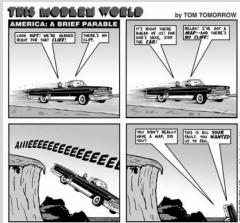
What distinguishes Transition from other local environmental initiatives is the bigger picture, strategic planning. How does the work your initiative has done thus far scale up, and begin to impact meaningfully on the local community and the local economy? These patterns are about starting to create a new parallel infrastructure, one owned and managed by the community itself...

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5.9. Community Supported Agriculture/Farms/Bakeries etc	98
5.10. Strategic Thinking*	99

What are the implications for this work beyond the community itself? What might it look like if Transition initiatives across the UK are so outrageously successful that they start to impact upon national policy making and development?

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1. What We Start With



1.1. Post petroleum Stress Disorder (dealing with grief)*

1.2. Critical Thinking **

1.3. Understanding Scale*

1.4. Thinking Like a Designer***

1.5. Personal Resilience**

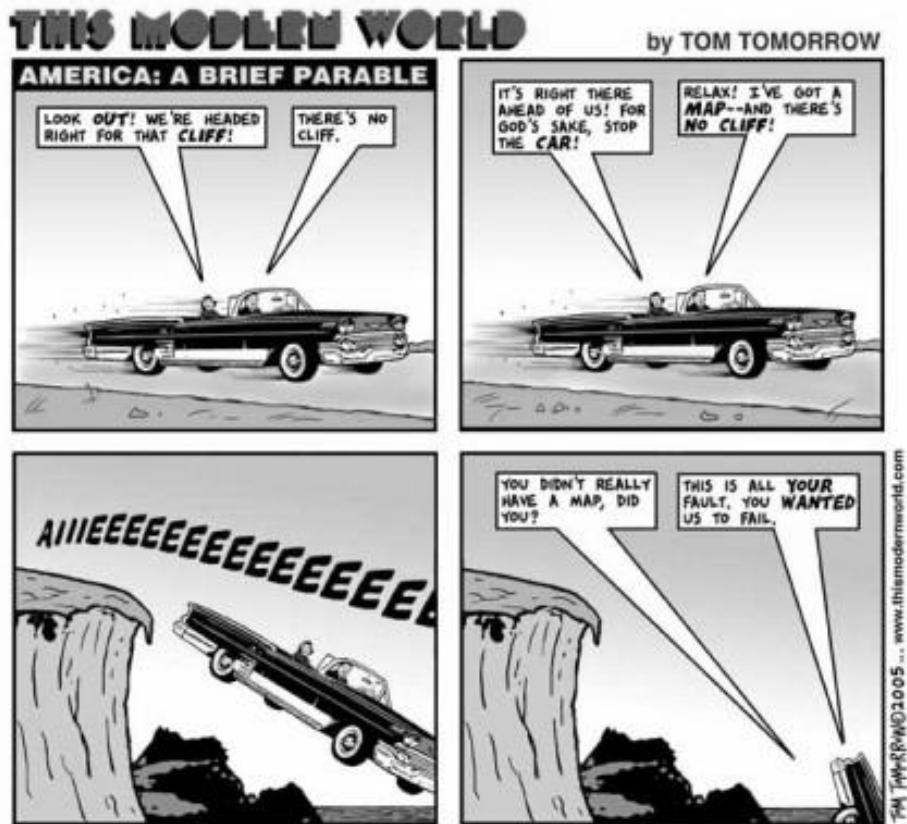
1.6. How Others See Us/How We Communicate*

1.7. Civility/Manners*

1.8. Standing up to speak (full version) ***

This first set of patterns focus on where we start from in doing Transition. What core skills do we need as individuals, what qualities and strengths stand us in best stead for successfully enabling and supporting the Transition of our local community. Why do some people manage, and others not? These first patterns are an attempt to identify these.

1.1. Post petroleum Stress Disorder (dealing with grief)*



The Challenge.

The moment when one ‘gets’ peak oil can be extremely emotional and profoundly unsettling. People can react to learning about peak oil and climate change in many ways, including shock, disbelief, anger, relief, depression, grief, increased urgency or determination to get on with things, despair, fear and other emotions. Strong feelings that remain unfelt or unexpressed are likely to show up somewhere else. This may be helpful – some find anger or urgency a useful fuel to action – but they can also become destructive – the anger could turn into blaming others within the project; the urgency to act can become a force that drives people, or the project, to burn out, and grief unexpressed can become depression or passivity to give just a few examples.

The Solution

Ensure that, whether on a personal level or on a community level, enough space is put aside to let people feel and express what is happening for them, and to do this with others is preferred. This includes time for digestion after powerful information is shared (e.g. peak oil films); encouraging people to form support groups, and modelling the inclusion of feelings as a natural response to what is happening at this time. An understanding of the various symptoms of post petroleum stress disorder (see above), will help in being able to observe them when they arise, so as to not get carried away by them, rather to be able to see them as what they are, natural responses to challenging issues.

1.2. Critical Thinking **



Transition workshops sit among the less scientific weird and wonderful at the Sunrise Off the Grid Festival, Somerset in 2009.

The Challenge

How is a Transition initiative to distinguish between the abundance of information out there? How to establish the best way forward in relation of strategies for healthcare in a lower energy world, how to deal with climate scepticism? Often, a lack of grounding in scientific thinking, and an inability to distinguish between belief and knowledge, or to be able to analyse scientific arguments, can lead to Transition groups promoting ideas that lack rigour and which can actually constitute a rejection of science.

The Solution

Ensure that critical thinking is central to your Transition initiative. Promote the questioning of assertions, and try, through events and trainings, to promote values of scientific reasoning, so as to give people the critical thinking tools vital to the successful design of communities. Integrate new insights from holistic science, particularly systems thinking, and avoid the creation of any 'sacred cows', keeping all assumptions open to ongoing questioning.

1.3. Understanding Scale*



An early Transition Bristol event maps the neighbourhood initiatives popping up across the city.

The Challenge

One of the most commonly asked questions by fledgling Transition groups is “what is the most appropriate scale for us to work on?” Taking on a whole city is probably too huge for any one group/organisation to be able to have any meaningful impact on, while focusing on a single street, while possibly a very efficient scale, is probably not sufficiently ambitious. A lack of clarity in terms of scale can lead to exhaustion, overwork and burnout, and produce initiatives whose effectiveness could have been far greater had more thought been given to the issue of scale at an early stage.

The Solution

Establish from an early stage the scale of focus of your Transition initiative. Are you a neighbourhood group, linked to others around you through some kind of network? Are you a stand-alone initiative looking at your entire settlement? Are you focusing the Transition concept on an institution, a school, a University? This pattern contains no right answers, rather this is a question that boils down to what ‘feel right’, and may relate to more historic community boundaries (i.e. parishes).

1.4. Thinking Like a Designer***



The Challenge

A community group that comes together to redesign itself so as to be more resilient and more able to function in a post oil world needs to have, at its fingertips, the thinking tools in order to understand how to apply systems thinking, integrated design, how to see systems as intertwined and connected. It needs, as it were, a grounding in being able to see possibilities rather than probabilities, and the ability, without the need for extensive retraining, to be able to think like designers and to think holistically.

The Solution

Permaculture design is an excellent way of taking a crash course in designing for resilience. It has evolved over 40 years as a design system for the design of sustainable human settlements, and its principles and ethics form an excellent and easily understandable foundation for the design work that your initiative will undertake. Make sure that some members of your core group have done a Permaculture Design course, and try, where possible, to weave permaculture training and principles through the work of your Transition group.

1.5. Personal Resilience**



Cllr Christopher Wellbelove, Mayor of Brixton, goes Christmas shopping with Brixton Pounds.

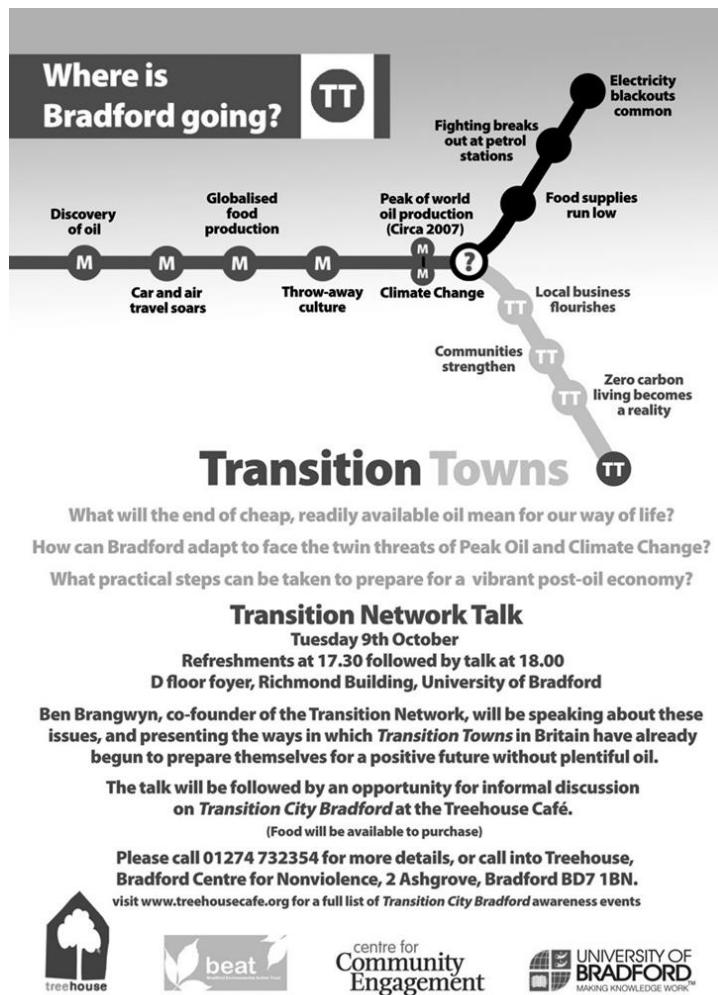
The Challenge

In an increasingly isolated and consumer driven world, we are under constant pressure to value ourselves by what we consume, rather than by the quality of our relationships. Our lives are busy, stresses are multifold, and look set to increase as the economic impacts of peak oil and the realities of climate change really start to bite. Without the qualities of personal resilience, the ability bounce back from shocks to our lives and our expectations, it will prove difficult to support ourselves, never mind our communities, through the coming years of energy descent.

The Solution

Inner resilience comes from a range of things. Research shows the personal resilience is an inbuilt human quality that everybody has, unless its functioning has been impaired by other factors. It has been found that people who are shown to be more resilient have a number of qualities central to Transition , they use humour (Masten 1994, Werner & Smith 1992, Wolin & Wolin 1993), creative exploration (Cohler 1987), relaxation (Anthony 1987, Murphy & Moriarty 1976 and optimistic thinking (Anthony 1987, Murphy & Moriarty 1976), all elements of the Transition approach. Make one of the core activities of your Transition initiative the supporting of increasing the personal resilience of those participating through a range of activities.

1.6. How Others See Us/How We Communicate*



The Challenge

People who are passionate about issues that necessitate change in others (most green issues fall into this category) can sometimes lack an awareness of how they communicate their message. For many, green campaigners can appear fanatical, naive, uninformed, smug, judgemental, patronising or offensive (very few embody all of these, but I have seen talks by one or two people who managed it). Communicating Transition without such an awareness can, ultimately, be self defeating.

The Solution

Embody within your Transition initiative a principle of being open to constructive criticism, of being willing to hear feedback. Be mindful of the language used, avoiding divisive 'them and us' style messaging, however subtle. Carry this mindfulness through into printed materials, local press releases and events, and work actively to avoid perceptions of being 'hippy' or excessively rooted in alternative culture, rather ensure that, to the best of your ability, the project remains as accessible to as wide a range of people as possible.

1.7. Civility/Manners*

(image?)

The Challenge

There are few things more off-putting for newcomers to an organisation, nor more destabilising for the initiative, than for those involved to lose their ability to communicate with each other with kindness. Any organisation that fails to maintain levels of civility between its members will rapidly dissolve into rancour and animosity.

The Solution

Promote a culture of politeness and civility throughout your meetings and your organisation. Extend this into all areas of the work your group does. Value qualities of compassion and respect and try to maintain a balance of playfulness and seriousness.

1.8. Standing Up to Speak*** (Full text)



...feeling confident in speaking about Transition to audiences, or ensuring that as many people as possible in your initiatives can do it, will be key to your success. It will be a vital element your AWARENESS RAISING (2.9.) process and to ENGAGING THE COUNCIL (4.4.). As interest in your initiative grows, having confident speakers will also be a key element of COMMUNICATING WITH THE MEDIA (2.10.). If your initiative delivers TRANSITION TRAINING (2.3.), good presentation skills will also be key to this.

* * *

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not there will be time for questions and so on), a middle (the main presentation) and an end (summarising your talk and an inspiring conclusion). There are a few ways you can be sure that you'll get it right;

- Write the main points out onto cards you can glance as you give your talk
- Use Powerpoint slides to trigger you to talk on different subjects you feel comfortable with
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Few things are duller than a talk read entirely from sheets of paper, interminable slide shows with endless incomprehensible graphs, a standard talk given with no reference to the audience. Make it lively, engaged, entertaining. Tell your own story, or stories of projects you have been involved with. Hearing someone talking honestly about their own experiences is worth a thousand slides, and really brings talks to life.

Don't pace up and down, and make sure you engage as much of the audience as possible in eye contact. Use your hands but don't flap them about excessively. Also, keep an eye on the clock. Saying you are going to talk for 20 minutes, and to still be there after 40 is very disrespectful of your audience. Most people have an attention span of 6-8 minutes: change the pace, change the medium, to sustain interest.

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Like riding a horse, public speaking needs practice. If your first one bombs, get back in the saddle and try again. Accept any invitation to speak, it is all good practice. In time, your confidence will grow, and when you take to the stage you will find that that space is *yours*, and that you are in command. And always be open to feedback, it may be uncomfortable, but it will help you to improve hugely.

Therefore:

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* * *

When giving talks for your group, try and be mindful of HOW OTHERS SEE US (1.6.) and of INCLUSION AND DIVERSITY (2.2.). Avoid having one standard talk, but tailor your presentation to your audience. Including an element of ARTS AND CREATIVITY (2.8.) can bring life to a talk, as can STORYTELLING (4.13.). You may find that overcoming your fear of public speaking can contribute to your PERSONAL RESILIENCE (1.5.), with knock-on benefits elsewhere in your life. Your Transition group could use its AWARENESS RAISING programme, and in particular its UNLEASHING event (3.14.) to give fledgling public speakers some practice...

2. Getting Started



- 2.1. Forming a Core Team****
 - 2.2. Inclusion/Diversity***
 - 2.3. Transition Training*****
 - 2.4. Running Successful Meetings****
 - 2.5. Measurement (surveys, questionnaires, evaluating impact, carbon reduction)*****
 - 2.6. Visioning****
 - 2.7. Becoming a Formal Organisation *****
 - 2.8. Arts and Creativity****
 - 2.9. Awareness Raising****
 - 2.10. Communicating with the Media *****
 - 2.11. Forming working groups****
 - 2.12. Building Strategic Partnerships**
 - 2.13. The 'Project Support' concept***
 - 2.14. Backcasting***
 - 2.15. Transition Cakes*****
-

This set of patterns focuses on the early days of forming a Transition initiative, once we have decided that we want to dedicate some of our energy to bringing about a Transition initiative.

2.1. Forming a Core Team**

(Context info here)



An early meeting of the formative Transition Town Totnes core group, over a shared lunch.

The Challenge

The early stage of a Transition initiative cannot be sustained merely by the unbridled enthusiasm of one person. In the interests of the long term viability of the initiative, what is needed is a group of people who come together to make this happen. They need to be able to find a way to work together productively, and also to see their role as being the catalysts, the pioneers, who set the initiative up in such a way that it may well evolve in such a way that they are no longer necessary.

The Solution

Your initial core group may emerge from a wide range of possibilities; it may be an existing group that decides to re-conceive itself as a Transition initiative, it may be an existing group of friends, it may be strangers drawn together by an event or a call for support, it may be people who converge around an initial, very dynamic individual. What is key is that the group finds good ways to work together, and that rather than building its own long term powerbase, it sees its work as creating a structure for others to subsequently inhabit.

2.2. Inclusion/Diversity*



Images from Transition Town Tooting's 'Earth Walk', which visited the main religious centres in the community to talk about shared philosophies with regards to taking care of the earth.

The Challenge

Reaching the white, middle-class 'usual suspects', what academics call the 'post consumerists', i.e. those who have reached a level of sufficient wealth and education to feel comfortable in letting go of some of it, is relatively straight-forward. However, if Transition fails to reach out to disadvantaged communities, ethnic groups, those who don't normally engage in this kind of work, it will be doomed to remain a small, niche phenomenon.

The Solution

Building an Initiative that integrates all the strengths *and* concerns in your community means starting with *everyone* in that community and interweaving diversity into everything you do. In practise, it's about a lot more than putting up posters in a few carefully chosen places. Rather than inviting people to your meetings and expecting them to come along, it's about going out to other people and listening. It means finding out about the strengths, concerns and the passions that fuel the fire of everyone in your community and then together with your own ideas, using that as the building blocks for creating an inclusive vision that informs everything you do. The result will be a just, fair and infinitely more resilient Transition.

2.3. Transition Training***



The Challenge

Starting a Transition initiative can be a bewildering process. We can learn a certain amount from books such as this, but that is no substitute for spending time with other people also embarking on this work, and being able to draw from the pool of experience already out there. A movement of individual communities where everyone invents everything from scratch is going to be ineffective. Although there is a great deal to be said for knowledge generated by experience, not learning from each other leads to ineffectiveness.

The Solution

Ensure that at least two people from your Transition initiative have done Transition Training. It has been found to make a huge impact in terms of maximising the efficiency and successfulness of Transition initiatives in their earlier stages. Having some form of immersion in what Transition is, makes our work in defining what our own local Transitions are is much more meaningful. Keep the idea of bringing new training into the organisation always at the forefront of the mind, either drawing from the group itself if those skills exist, or bringing trainers in.

2.4. Running Successful Meetings**



A meeting of the Transition Forest Row Core Group.

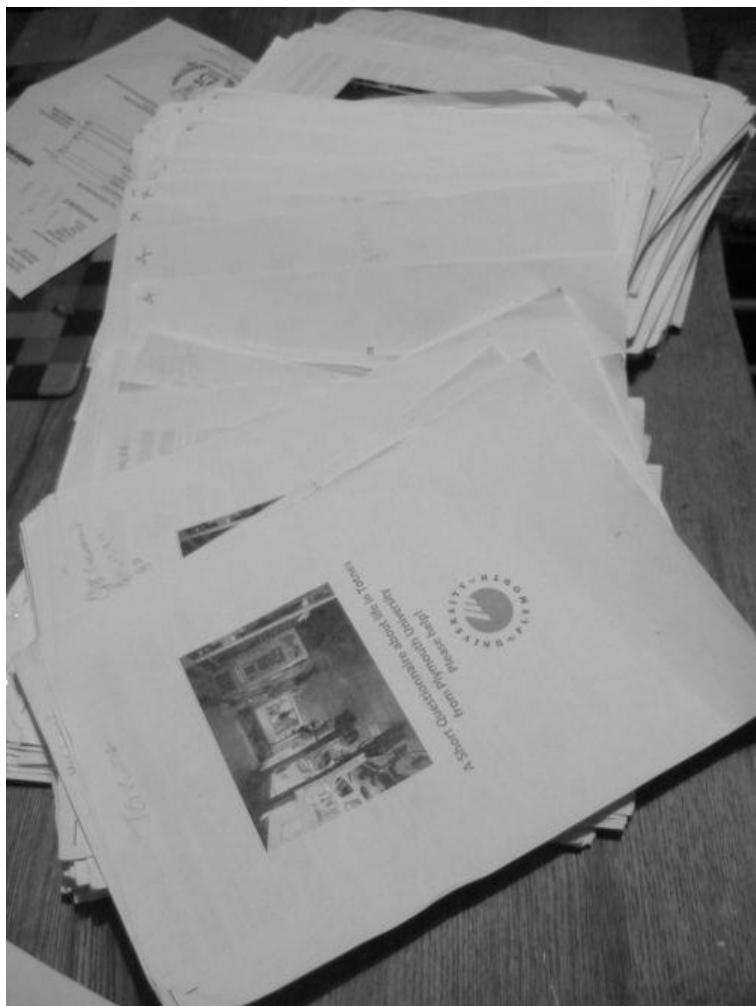
The Challenge

Poorly run meetings will kill a Transition initiative stone dead faster than anything else. If meetings are boring, poorly structured, badly facilitated, and if those participating don't feel their input is valued or heard, they will find better things to do with their time. What is known as 'the tyranny of structurelessness' can be just as damaging for meetings as rigid and uninspired formats. Any initiative that fails to get to grips with how its meetings are facilitated will not last long.

The Solution

Give the design and facilitation of your group's meetings top priority. Running a good meeting is a learnable skill, and vastly improves efficiency of the organisation. Incorporating tools like go rounds, open agendas, think and listen, clear beginnings and endings and celebration (see above) make a huge amount of difference.

2.5. Measurement (surveys, questionnaires, evaluating impact, carbon reduction)***



The Challenge

The old question “if a tree falls in a wood and there is no one there does it make a noise?” can be restated perhaps as “if a Transition initiative cuts carbon and/or builds resilience but no-one measures it, has it made any difference?” The answer is yes, a bit, but nowhere near as much as it could do. Failure to gather data, to measure the effectiveness of projects in terms of levels of engagement and tangible outcomes, greatly limits the potential impact of your work.

The Solution

Establish some core elements of what you do that can be measured on an ongoing basis. This might be as simple as numbers of people attending events, but as the number of projects you are supporting expands, encouraging them to keep data is vital. You may well be able to get support with this from a local University, or from someone in your group. Being able to show firm results and that you are measuring your impacts will greatly impact your relationship with funders and with local and national government. As the impact of your projects grows, it will become increasingly important that you are documenting their impacts. Getting into the discipline from an early stage will stand you in good stead for later.

2.6. Visioning**



Visioning the future of Brixton: from a display prepared for the Unleashing of Transition Town Brixton.

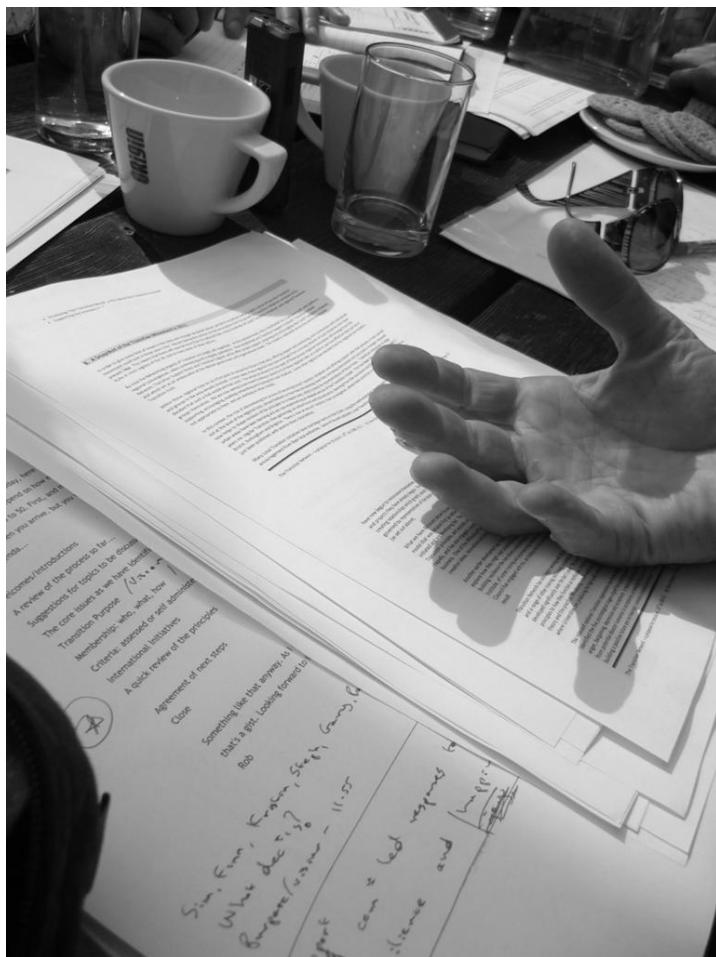
The Challenge

The future can be a scary place. For many people, not being able to imagine a lower carbon world is a huge impediment to designing and realising it. Popular culture is filled with dark tales of apocalypse, and at the same time our local authorities plan, on our behalf, for a future that can never possibly come to pass. If our communities suffer from a similar collective failure of the imagination, Transition will be impossible.

The Solution

Try and weave into everything your Transition initiative does elements of visioning. Ensure that the group's 'vision of the future' can grow and change, and that your initiative attempts, in all of its work, to embody the question, "if you were to wake up in 20 years, in this world which had successfully made the Transition, what would it look like, feel like, smell like, sound like?".

2.7. Becoming a Formal Organisation (Legal Structures/ Constitutions etc)***



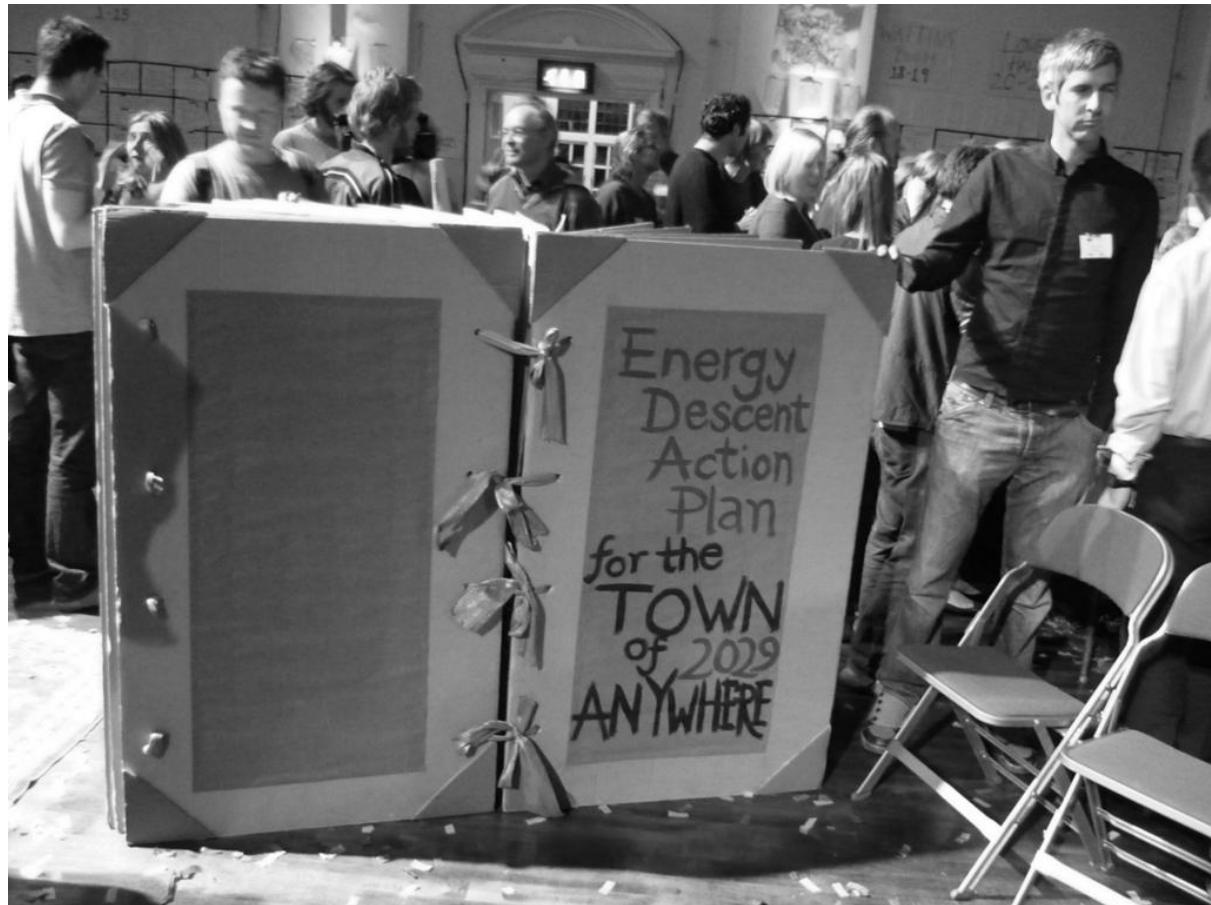
The Challenge

In its early days, your organisation will need the time to form, to develop its processes and to enjoy meeting. However, as time passes, the need will arise to formalise what you have created. Although not having a formal constitution or legal entity may initially be appealing, after a while, especially as you begin to attract funding and scale your work up, it will increasingly become a handicap. But what model to adopt, and when to adopt it?

The Solution

Take the time to carefully consider the best structure for your organisation. View the organisation in the context of its wider role which is to support and enable the wider Transition process, rather than being a vital entity in and of itself. The role of any formal organisation should always be to support and provide services and resources for the process that is underway in the community, rather than to drive it. Create an entity capable of providing support to a process that needs to maintain its creativity and free-spiritedness.

2.8. Arts and Creativity (oil memorial, bag workshops, EDAP in 2 hours**



The 'Energy Descent Plan in 2 Hours' activity, from the 2009 Transition Network conference, Battersea Arts Centre.

The Challenge

Life without playfulness, creativity and art would be a fairly dire affair. Trying to engage communities in a process of visioning and then backcasting a lower energy, more localised future without engaging creativity would be to miss out on a vast wealth of human experience. A revolution based on graphs, theories and reports will not be a revolution.

The Solution

Wherever possible, try and engage the arts in the work of your Transition initiative. Make your posters and materials beautiful and well designed, work with artists to design events and installations that shift peoples' perceptions of what a Transitioned world would be like, and also try to embody the idea that the everyday can be beautiful. Be bold and bright, the arts can make people think about issues like Transition in a completely different way. As French sculptor Jean Dubuffet put it, "art does not lie down on the bed that is made for it; it runs away as soon as one says its name; it loves to be incognito. Its best moments are when it forgets what it is called."

2.9. Awareness Raising**



Preparing to address the Unleashing of Transition Forest Row.

The Challenge

Awareness and understanding of climate change and peak oil, and of the scale of the Transition facing society, is very low. People are bombarded with conflicting information; climate change is a huge crisis/climate change isn't a problem/we are about to run out of oil/we will never run out of oil. For many people the larger picture is so bewildering and confusing that most people switch off.

The Solution

Organise an ongoing programme of awareness-raising, which strives to avoid creating despondency , which avoids bamboozling people with too much detail, too many graphs and too much jargon. Make its core function the building of a positive vision of the future. Distil the essence from the available information. Ensure that awareness raising events are fun, engaging, allow people to get a sense of something historic being underway, and allow them to meet each other. Make sure they start and finish on time. Make your evenings and events memorable and thought provoking, and use imaginative ways to capture the thoughts of those attending.

2.10. Communicating with the Media ***

By Sean Coyte

TRANSITION Town Kingston – a group aimed at inspiring the local community to live an environmentally-friendly life – is calling for locals to help its cause.

Founded two months ago by a number of like-minded people, the diverse group of 20 to 70-year-olds aims to encourage locals to adopt a simpler way of life.

With enough members, the group plans to split into subgroups to teach people the skills to live a life less dependent on oil, to grow and distribute food locally, produce renewable energy locally and ensure housing is built in a low-carbon way.

Toni Izard, a member of Transition Town Kingston, stated in a mission statement: "We will be creating visible and practical projects that will reduce CO2 emissions and dependency on fos-



ON A MISSION: Members of the Transition Town Kingston group

Submitted picture

Transition Town Kingston make their local paper.

The Challenge

It is impossible these days to operate in the world without developing a good relationship with your local media. Local radio, TV, newspapers, magazines and websites will be vital conduits of information

The Solution

Ensure that your relationship with the local media is well cultivated through meetings and ongoing personal relationships through those who decide what is placed in the media. Make sure your press releases are clear and self-explanatory, and that they get to the paper sufficiently in advance so as to be of use. Make sure that press releases are centrally co-ordinated, as for the media to get press releases, seemingly unrelated, from different working groups and so on, can be very confusing.

2.11. Forming working groups**



The Challenge

Single issue campaigns, by their very nature, attract people who are only interested in that particular issue. If Transition is seen purely as a group of people with a shared interest in peak oil and climate change, and if those involved do not get the opportunity to pursue what they are really passionate about and the skills they bring to the process, the initiative will struggle to progress.

The Solution

The energy that sustains Transition is its ability to harness what people are passionate about. We like to think of it as 'engaged optimism'. Either actively initiate or facilitate the emergence of working groups on food, energy, education and so on, whatever people are passionate about. See the role of the wider Transition initiative as being to support the working groups.

2.12. Building Strategic Partnerships



At the Brixton Pound launch event, every participating business had their details posted on the wall, offering a powerful visual representation of the diversity of partnerships behind the scheme....

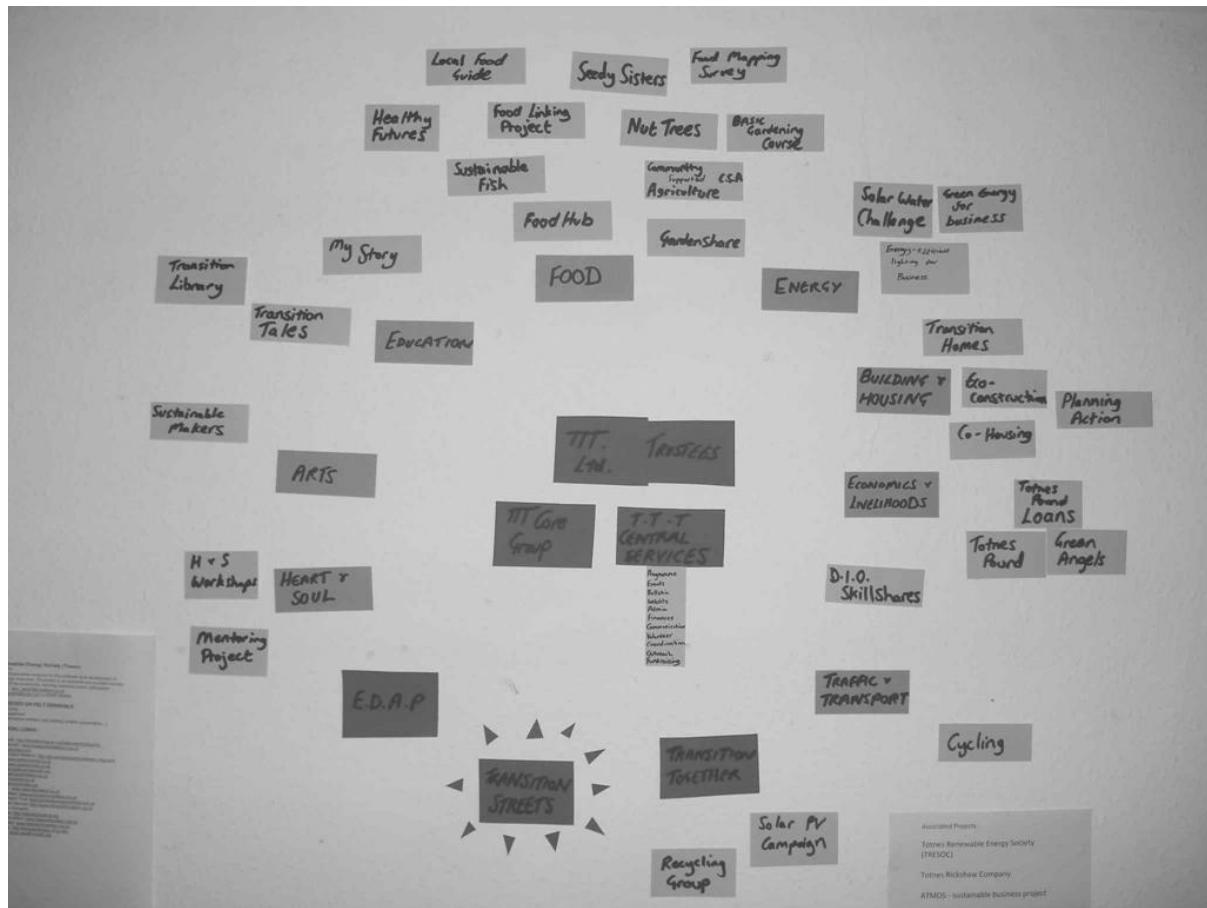
The Challenge

Any Transition initiative that thinks it can go it alone, without the support of, or partnerships with, other organisations will sooner or later find itself isolated and far less effective than it could have been. At the same time, entering into partnerships with other groups or organisations, if not done skilfully, can lead to disenchantment, bad feeling and divisiveness. While creating partnerships is vital, if not done well, they can do more harm than good.

The Solution

Think strategically about which partnerships it would be beneficial for your Transition initiative to enter into. Be clear with each organisation what each expects from the arrangement, and how you see roles and responsibilities being divided up. Some arrangements might just be about co-presenting events and sharing speakers, or about collaborating on a project, but might feasibly be as significant as joint funding bids or event merging organisations. What is vital at every stage is clarity and honesty, and having a clear joint understanding of what each party expects, and what is expected of it.

2.13. The 'Project Support' concept*



An attempt by Transition Town Totnes to map itself, showing how it functions as a 'Project Support Project'.

The Challenge

If a newly formed Transition initiative feels that its role and purpose is to be responsible for the implementation of every aspect of Transition, it will be rapidly overwhelmed, and collapse under the burden of trying to do everything.

The Solution

See your Transition initiative's role as being to offer 'project support', to put in place the organisational infrastructure to support projects as they emerge. Seek to provide an overarching 'umbrella', a common sense of purpose, supported by administrative support, publicity and fundraising. In this way, a Transition initiative becomes a catalysing, inspiring and enabling organisation, rather than actually carrying out projects itself.

2.14. Backcasting*



Backcasting using the 'Transition Timeline' developed by Transition Town Totnes, at the launch of its EDAP creation process.

The Challenge

Creating a vision of the future is all very well, but could well become an enjoyable but rather abstract dreaming exercise if it is not also accompanied by a process of backcasting. Visions of the future are the first step to a concrete plan for how to make that future a reality, otherwise they are a waste of time, and merely fantasy.

The Solution

Once your initiative, through a range of activities and processes, has developed a vision of the future of the community in a lower-energy world, the next step is to backcast. How might we get there, year on year? Which structures and institutions would need to be in place in order for it to become a reality? Where do we start, and indeed, what have we already done that might also be useful? The process of backcasting is creative, fun and also very much focuses the mind on where best to expend our energy to get the Transition process underway.

2.15. Transition Cakes***



The Challenge

Big Transition events (Unleashings, anniversaries, celebrations) can feel a bit flat if they don't have a centrepiece. Some people involved in Transition can feel a bit flat if they don't have something to pour their love and creativity into. At the same time, big events benefit greatly from incorporating ritual, rituals familiar to as many people as possible.

The Solution

Mark major landmarks and developments in the life of your Transition initiative with spectacular cakes which symbolise the love that people pour into the Transition initiative. This is a pattern which has emerged from observing what Transition initiatives do, and the extraordinary diversity of quite stunning cakes that have been produced by Transition initiatives. The ritual involved in "and now we shall cut the cake" has a power and a universal cultural relevance which cannot be underestimated. Also, everyone gets to take pieces home with them, small physical parcels of the magic of the event that they can now share with others.

3. Ongoing/Deepening: maintaining your initiative beyond the start-up stage



3.1. 'Transition Towers' – having an office, or not?*

3.2. Volunteers**

3.3. Financing Your Work (crowd funding, pledgebank, inward investment)**

3.4. Celebrating**

3.5. Emotional Support/Avoiding Burnout*

3.6. Momentum*

3.7. Celebrate Failure*

3.8. Self-Reflection (how are we doing? Fishbowl)**

3.9. Practical Manifestations***

3.10. Local Food initiatives***

3.11. The Great Reskilling**

3.12. Working with Local Businesses*

3.13. Ensuring Land Access*

3.14. Unleashings**

3.15. Conflict Resolution***

As your Transition work builds momentum, with a few practical projects emerging, you begin to have to start designing for the sustaining of the organisation, and also for the deepening of the work, broadening its engagement, and being more efficient and more effective. These patterns look at what has been observed to be key elements of this stage. They explore the need to pay attention to the sustainability of your initiative, both in terms of practical outer Transition work, and also to the inner aspects. They also start, in earnest, the process of your initiative reaching out to the wider community.

3.1. ‘Transition Towers’ – having an office, or not?*



The office of Transition Town Lewes.

The Challenge

There is a lot to be said, at the earlier stages of doing Transition, to working from kitchen tables, cafes and anywhere with wireless and a kettle. After a while though, you will need to decide whether having a dedicated workspace will increase your profile and effectiveness, or become an unnecessary and costly drain on your energy and resources.

The Solution

Having an office, or a share space where people can work, can make a big difference to your organisation. Conceive of office space as serving as many functions as possible, being a space to work, hold meetings, social events, as well as perhaps hosting a cafe, a library, a drop-in centre for advice on energy efficiency and other aspects of Transition. Ensure that it is welcoming and attractive. Allow as many people as possible to ‘hot desk’, and to have access to the space to work in.

3.2. Volunteers and Volunteering**



Volunteers at the 'Fuelling the Future' conference in Kinsale, Ireland, where the Kinsale EDAP was launched (2005).

The Challenge

Any community project that doesn't attract volunteers, and which doesn't support them in their work and enable them to feel that they are gaining useful experience, will rapidly find itself running out of the vital hands needed to make things happen. Similarly, any project which attracts volunteers, but fails to look after them and ensure that they have a rewarding experience, will similarly find itself short of help.

The Solution

Ensure that the process of recruiting volunteers is well thought through and well managed. Strive to ensure that volunteers are able to gain from their time volunteering, by learning new skills, gaining relevant experience, and through feeling involved in the initiative.

3.3. Financing Your Work (crowd funding, funding bids, pledgebank, inward investment)**

The screenshot shows a pledge page for "Pledge “TTttraining”" on PledgeBank. The page includes the pledge text, signatory information, deadline, location details, and more details about the event. To the right, there's a sidebar with related pledges, things to do with the pledge, and comments.

Pledge “TTttraining”

"I will contribute £10 to sending a Transition Town Hackney person on "How to set up, run and maintain a transition initiative" but only if 9 other local people will do the same."

— Ben Metz, train TT Hackney ([contact](#))

Deadline to sign up by: **9th March 2009**
13 people signed up (4 over target)

Country: **United Kingdom**
Postcode area: **N1** ([view map](#))

More details
Let's club together and send a few people on this training to give TT Hackney a great boost in its development.

Lets not limit this to one person. If 10 people sign up then keep signing up and we can send two or three... or more!!

This pledge has now closed; it was successful! You might be interested in these other pledges:

- [give £50 to the Green Party Norwich South Fighting Fund](#)
- [stand for Parliament and pledge £50.00 towards the costs](#)
- [pledge £10.00](#)
- [walk for one hour on Christmas Day during daylight hours](#)

See more pledges, and all [about how PledgeBank works](#).

Things to do with this pledge

- [Share this](#)
- [Create a local version of this pledge](#)
- Creator only: [Send message to signers](#)

Comments on this pledge [RSS](#)

I don't know what this is all about. You have made the assumption

The Challenge

I often hear myself saying that at an early stage, enthusiasm is so much more valuable than funding. You can get a long way just on enthusiasm, but you it is something that no amount of funding can buy. The first year and a half of Transition Town Totnes, for example, was largely self-financing, but you will find you get to a point where funding becomes necessary, whether for an office, an administrator to take some of the work off the central group, or for specific projects. The challenge though, is how to avoid becoming grant dependent, and how to make the project economically sustainable.

The Solution

Give some serious thought to how you might finance your Transition initiative. Rather than just looking at grants, try to take a broader and more creative approach to the question, and look at engaging funding from some of the following; using Pledgebank, finding local philanthropists, sponsorship from local businesses, offering consultancy services, running fundraising events, and a range of other approaches. Try and look at what aspects of your Transition group might be able to get up and run as social enterprises, bring in training when appropriate. Try and plan in the long term rather than living hand to mouth.

3.4. Celebrating**



Glasses raised at Transition Town Farnham's Christmas Party 2009.

The Challenge

Transition work can be busy, stressful, tiring and can feel as though you are shouldering the hope of the community. When engulfed in this mindset, ones very real achievements, from the great to the more subtle, can pass us by, unnoticed. Events, relationships built, grants won, can all pass by in a culture which says that there simply isn't time for anything so frivolous as celebration. Yet without celebration, the whole process can easily lose its spark, and feel burdensome and exhausting.

The Solution

Celebrate and celebrate often. Celebrate the small things and celebrate the large things. Incorporate eating meals together into your meetings. Mark anniversaries. If this is truly to feel, as Richard Heinberg puts it, "more like a party than a protest march", then it needs good parties and events that feel celebratory.

3.5. Emotional Support/Avoiding Burnout*



Laughter at the 2009 Transition Cities conference, Nottingham.

The Challenge

For many, part of the response to learning about the imperilled state of our world is a powerful need to get on with making things better. The problems are so huge, the systems so powerful, and what is at stake is so great that the work involved asks something more of us than most jobs do. The less others respond, the more the burden of doing something sits with those who are willing to take action, and it can feel as though you are shouldering the hope of the entire community, if not the whole world. The closer we get to deadlines about climate change, financial meltdown, the more pressure there can be to make something happen quickly. People engaged in this kind of work need to pay extra attention to resting, to resourcing themselves, and to getting support to avoid burnout and exhaustion, a common outcome for people working in all kinds of movements for positive change.

The Solution

Small, self-organising support groups have been a key feature of many movements for change, including the women's movement, peace activism and civil rights. Arrange the possibility for those most involved within your initiative to be able to draw from a pool of people offering professional support services. This can range from counselling or co-counselling, to more therapeutic responses or just a support group. Remind people who are busy and haven't availed of what is on offer that it is there if they want it. Having key people supported and held in this way can make a huge difference in terms of minimising burnout.

3.6. Momentum*



The Challenge

The initial burst of enthusiasm that your initiative will generate may, over time, begin to dissipate. After a while you might start to get a sense that your initiative is 'fizzling out', losing its energy and drive. How best to sustain momentum over the longer term?

The Solution

This can be one of the key challenges for any community initiative, how to sustain the initial burst of enthusiasm generated in the early stages. Momentum can be supported in various ways, through keeping the process open to new members and engagement, a diversity of events, and some projects that excite the imagination. Momentum won't however be a steady growth curve, different parts of the initiative will ebb and flow as the project progresses.

3.7. Celebrate Failure (and success!)*



Roberto Perez from Cuba in Totnes, UK, standing next to a former Council vehicle storage site which was, at that point, for sale. Transition Town Totnes had bid to the local authority for them to use their powers of asset transfer to gift the site to the community for development as a centre teaching gardening and cooking to people with obesity and a range of health problems. Here he is being interviewed about the scheme and about potential for urban agriculture on such sites. The Council ended up selling the site, and the initiative never happened.

The Challenge

Although the focus of Transition is on positive solutions, and on the harnessing of ‘engaged optimism’, it is vital that we don’t try to fool ourselves that everything we do has been outrageously successful. It is rare that a problem you face is a unique problem, almost certainly many other people out there are experiencing the same problem but don’t want to be the first to acknowledge failure. Yet we can learn as much from well communicated failure, backed up with self-reflection, as we can from accounts of successful projects. If Transition groups only talk about what they have done that worked, they are only sharing half of the story, and the Transition movement will, as a result, end up being only half as effective.

The Solution

Be willing to share your initiative’s failures as much as its successes. Rather than imagining that your initiative can only be successful, and that failed projects should be swept under the carpet, see your work as research, that what you are doing is vital research work which will be highly valuable to other subsequent initiatives. Use the Transition Network website to share both successes and failures, but move beyond the idea that failure is something best kept to yourself.

3.8. Gathering Feedback/'How Are We Doing?'**



The Challenge

The success of any project will depend, in part at least, on its ability to reflect on its progress and to be honest about its shortcomings. Failure to allow a project to hear non-judgemental, constructive criticism can lead to it becoming out of touch, remote and ineffectual.

The Solution

At regular intervals, put time aside for events that focus on how your initiative is doing. They can be either for internal reflection, or wider public events that focus on how your work is perceived and valued by the community. These events will all need good facilitation, and the Appreciative Enquiry process is especially helpful in terms of it being a process of exploring what is working well alongside what isn't. Make sure that the ideas generated and the information gleaned is made widely available.

3.9. Practical Manifestations***



Planting hybrid walnut trees in Totnes with Paul Hussell of Wills Probate, a local solicitors who fund one new tree for every new will they set up (©Totnes Times)

The Challenge

If nothing visible starts to happen at a relatively early stage in your Transition initiative, it will rapidly become seen as a talking shop, and people will start to drift away.

The Solution

Ensure that from an early stage, some projects start to emerge which are visible. Make them playful, fun and unthreatening, and ensure that they are well publicised. Try and site them in places where they will be seen, and try to make sure that they prompt people to consider a low energy future in a different, more positive way.

3.10. Local Food initiatives***



Signs at Growing Communities food initiative, Hackney, London.

The Challenge

Probably the most obvious manifestation of the oil addicted and carbon hungry lifestyles we lead is our food system. A more ineffective model for turning oil into food is hard to imagine. In our communities, money pours out in vast quantities every day, in order to subsidise a globalised food system which is unjust, unsustainable and which has ruthlessly destroyed competition, usually in the form of the small scale grower and processor. Everyone needs to eat. Yet the current system that feeds us is so terrifyingly oil vulnerable that we are all the poorer for it.

The Solution

If you'll pardon the pun, food is where the low hanging fruit for any Transition initiative is. In many Transition initiatives, it is the food group that forms first, and the food-related projects that emerge in advance of the others. There are a huge range of food projects that a Transition initiative can start, from garden shares to community supported farms (a range set out in 'Local Food', published by Transition Books). Local food projects which involve local schools, other local organisations, Councils, church groups or whoever else feels like a useful ally offer huge potential for getting high profile, effective projects underway at an early stage in the Transition process.

3.11. The Great Reskilling**



Making twine from stinging nettles at Transition Town Totnes's 'Winterfest' event, December 2009.

The Challenge

Those of us alive today have a very strong claim to being the most useless generation to ever walk the planet. We have forgotten how to cook, sew, knit, repair stuff, grow food, build soils and live thrifitly. Above all, we have lost the sense, that comes from having a wide range of skills, that we could turn our hand to anything, one of the key distinctions between resilient cultures/individuals, and non-resilient ones. Our schools and colleges teach very few of the skills a more resilient world will need, and young people no longer leave school with the 'can do' attitude that the coming years will demand.

The Solution

Make reskilling one of the core aspects of your work. This could take the form of courses, events, practical projects or courses run in association with local educational institutions. It may be that you don't need to run the courses yourself, but you could work in partnership with a local Adult Education College or somesuch, they would appreciate the suggestions for new courses as well as the increase in students. Providing good training is an area where partnerships are especially helpful.

3.12. Working with Local Businesses*



'Quids In', a new beer brewed by Harvey's Brewery to celebrate the launch of the Lewes Pound.

The Challenge

Often the relationship between environmental groups and local businesses has been one of antagonism, of distrust and/or simply ignoring each other. Businesses are very busy, and often are running incredibly fast just to stay still. Environmental campaigns that take a perspective of being judgemental and critical will fail to engage. Any meaningful Transition process will need to create a meaningful, respectful, mutually beneficial relationship with local businesses, acknowledging the vital role they will have to play in the Transition process.

The Solution

There are various ways in which a Transition initiative might engage local businesses. They will need to offer services that help and support those businesses, and offer to connect them closer to the local economy. Putting this work in the context of making the local economy more resilient makes it a relationship that serves everyone. Forming an 'Economics and Livelihoods' group as part of your Transition initiative will be key to this.

3.13. Ensuring Land Access*



Transition Town Forres celebrate the breaking of the soil on new land bought for new allotments for the town.

The Challenge

Promoting the idea of local food production and the rollout of urban agriculture, whether in the form of market gardens, allotments or back gardening, will clearly struggle if no land is made available to make it possible. Many settlements, even if they are built to a high density, will have both land within them that could be used, and also land around them. Ensuring secure access to this land will be vital.

The Solution

Access to land can be secured in a range of imaginative ways. Work with landowners, seek land that is currently unused and which can be used for free (such as through a 'Garden Share' scheme), fundraise to buy some land in community ownership, or invite landowners to see opening up access as being in both their and the local community's interest.

3.14. Unleashings**



The Unleashing of Transition Town Brixton.

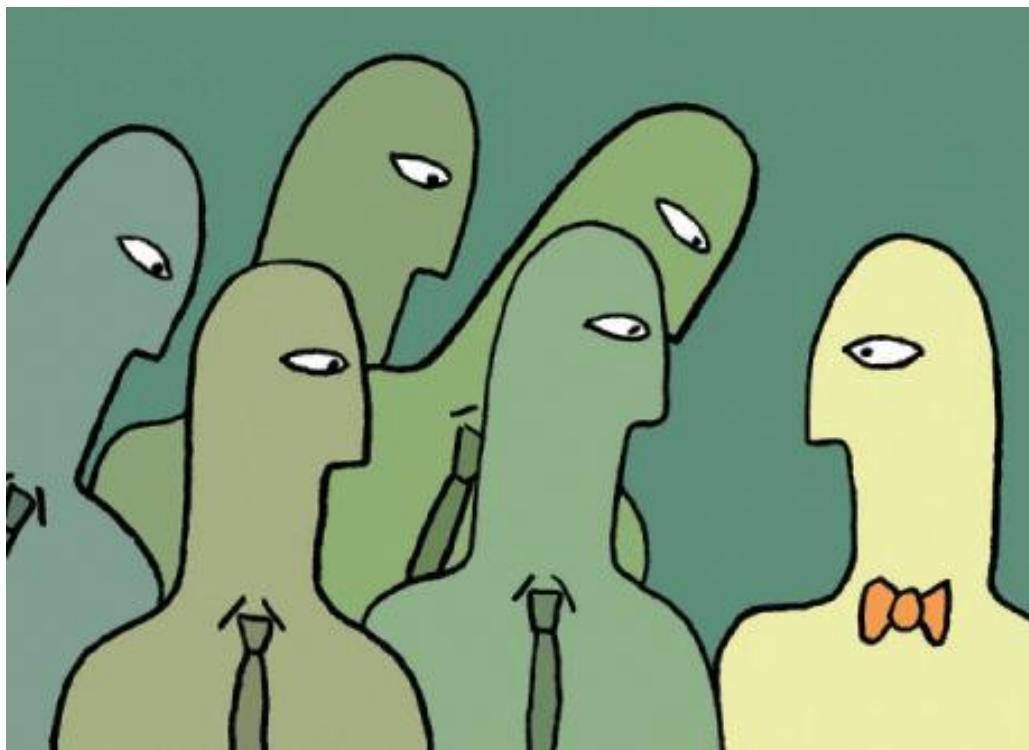
The Challenge

If a Transition initiative doesn't make a bold, inspirational splash, which celebrates both its work and the local community itself, many can be left unaware of its existence, suspicious of its motives and not feeling involved.

The Solution

Organise an Unleashing at the point where you feel you have some momentum behind your work, and when you feel that it needs to have its arrival marked and celebrated. It should be designed to be remembered as the day future generations will look back to as the point when the Transition began. At their best, Unleashings are a celebration of local culture, and are informative, inspiring and celebratory events, with music, food, laughter and also a sense of history in the making.

3.15. Conflict Resolution



The Problem.

Very few of us are taught how to handle conflict, and as a result, many of us avoid it or keep it at arms length as much as possible. However, in a Transition group, unaddressed conflict can escalate in an amplifying cycle, which can bring down your initiative or be extremely divisive within it. Conflict makes your initiative unappealing to newcomers and to the surrounding community, reduces the effectiveness of the organisation, and turns what some might already see as a ‘talking shop’ into an ‘arguing shop’.

The Solution.

Ensure that within your initiative there are people that can recognise conflict when it arises and who are trained to address it. Make sure that your group practices good listening skills and that when actions are agreed they are written down and read back to the group, so as to ensure clarity. Offer training in clear and open communication. If conflicts arise, be prepared to bring in outside facilitation help, and to not try and sweep disagreements under the carpet.

4. Patterns for Outreach -



- 4.1. Transition Together/Transition Circles****
- 4.2. Form Networks of Transition Initiatives***
 - 4.3. Becoming the Media****
 - 4.4. Engaging the Council***
 - 4.5. Energy Resilience Assessment****
 - 4.6. Community Brainstorming Tools*****
 - 4.7. Oral Histories*****
 - 4.8. Engaging Local Landowners***
 - 4.9. Engaging Young People***
 - 4.10. Engaging Schools (training teachers)***
 - 4.11. Meaningful Maps****
 - 4.12. The Role of Storytelling*****
 - 4.13. Networks and Partnerships****

It is often said that the scale of the response necessitated by peak oil and climate change is akin to 1939 and the preparations for World War Two. Every aspect of our lives needs to turn on a sixpence, in a coordinated and effective way. These patterns explore how Transition initiatives can play a part in that process, and embed Transition beyond the 'Cultural Creatives'.

4.1. Transition Together/Transition Circles**



The Challenge

One of the scales that Transition works on is individual change. But if people get to feeling like they can only make changes on their own at home, they will soon lose heart unless they are very deeply committed. Not everyone wants to give the time for meetings and being part of a Transition working group. At the same time, a Transition initiative that does not promote measurable carbon reduction, and build social networks and social capital will have an impact that is marginal at best.

The Solution

Transition Together and Transition Circles are emerging as powerful tools to take Transition work out into the community on a street-by-street basis. They offer a way of getting people talking to each other, building relationships, and starting to address the very real reduction of carbon in their lives, in a way that produces lasting behaviour change. They also allow the Transition initiative to gather data, to evaluate whether or not they are having an impact. They attract a whole group of people who would otherwise not engage, and they produce meaningful behaviour change in a way that is engaging and fun. The emotional support that you get from a safe environment working with others in a cooperative and practical way cannot be overestimated.

4.2. Form Networks of Transition Initiatives*



The Transition North event brought Transition initiatives from across the north of England together, and was sponsored by the Co-operative.

The Challenge

A nation of isolated Transition initiatives will struggle to gain a regional or national voice. While it may be tempting to form regional or even national network, doing so in advance of their being a groundswell of groups wanting and requesting such a thing risks introducing an unnecessary layer of complication and potential difficulty.

The Solution

Wider networks serve a very useful purpose, allowing the sharing of local experience, representation at a wider political level, increased visibility, and the hosting of larger and more impactful events. Make sure that such networks are as capable as possible of self organisation, and that they truly represent the groups on the ground in the area. There is, however, no need to rush wider networks, when the need is felt for them, they will emerge, and their nature will vary, in some places it will just be a banner for occasional large events (i.e. Transition North), an opportunity for sharing learning and experience across an area (Transition East) or a formally constituted support organisation (Transition Scotland Support). On an urban scale, a city wide network may be felt to be appropriate (i.e. Transition Bristol), or not (i.e. London).

4.3. Becoming the Media**



Emma Goude, producer of the film 'In Transition 1.0.' filming the 2009 Transition Cities conference in Nottingham.

The Challenge

Relying on mainstream media sources to accurately capture and communicate what is happening in your Transition groups and in the wider Transition world will mean that either it won't be communicated, or it will be filtered through someone else's lens. The best people to understand and communicate Transition are those intimately involved with it, yet very often they find the idea of capturing and sharing what they do rather offputting.

The Solution

Use the incredible array of technology and self-generated media that is available nowadays to communicate the stories of what is happening in your Transition group. Use blogs, Twitter, write pieces for the Transition Network newsletter, make your own short films or animated slide shows and put them on YouTube, keep video diaries, film your events, share what you do with the rest of the world.

4.4. Engaging the Council*



Officers of Somerset County Council doing Transition Training.

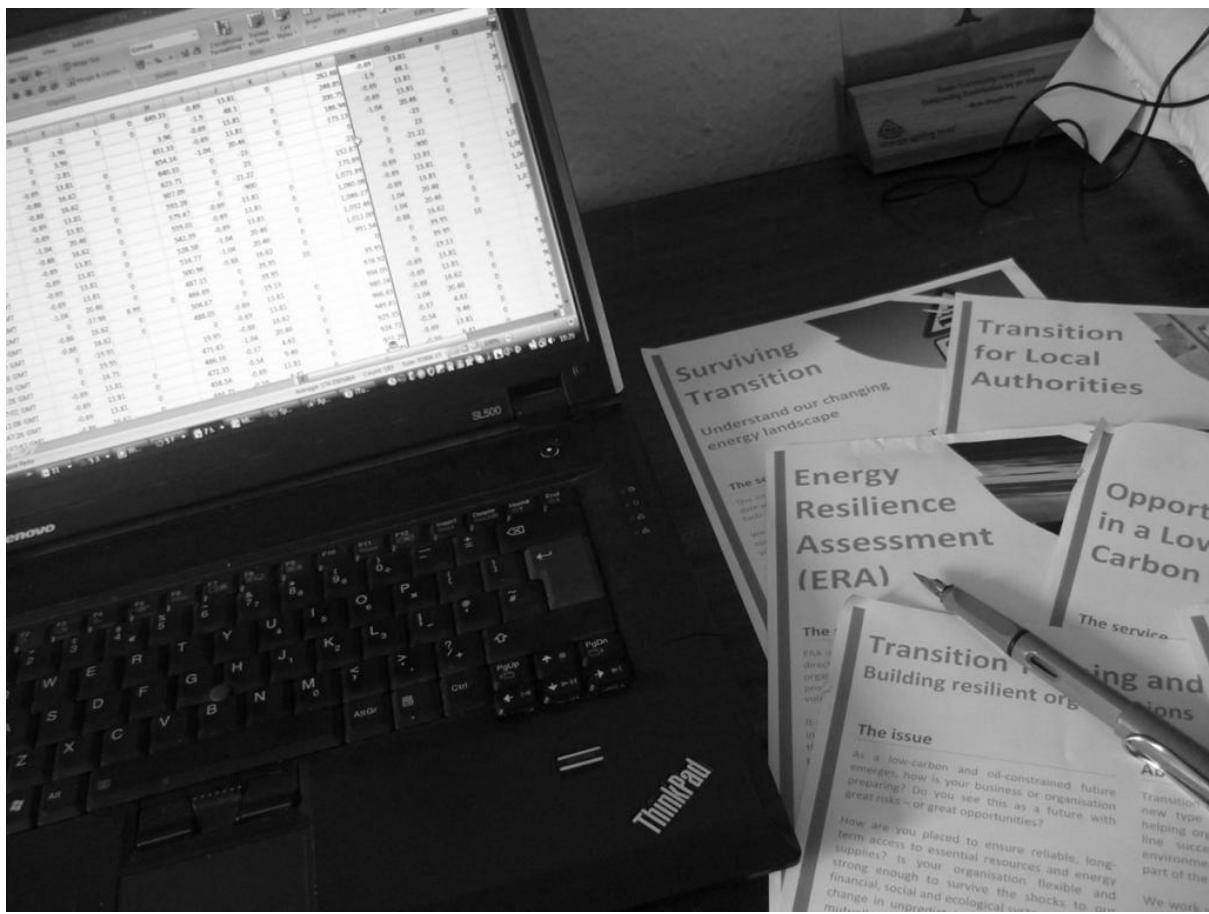
The Challenge

To be able to really have an impact, you will need to develop a good working relationship with your local authority. Many community organisations are seen by their Local Authorities as disorganised, reactionary, unrepresentative, troublesome, and sometimes as a bit of a nonsense. Community consultation processes can be tokenistic and exclusive, leaving community groups feeling sidelined and unheard. Many community groups end up feeling excluded from local politics, and they retreat into knocking their local authority, rather than engaging and, for example, putting people forward for office.

The Solution

When your initiative feels as though it is ready, and it feels that it has sufficient momentum under its belt, make an approach to whoever seems the most sympathetic person within the Council. Explore ways of collaborating, how they can help, and how your Transition initiative can feed into Council policymaking. Explore options for funding, or any other kind of support. You might explore the possibility of passing a peak oil resolution, or offer your services in helping draft policy on areas where your group has expertise.

4.5. Energy Resilience Assessment**



The Challenge

Problem: Transitioning the business sector is a key part of the Transition process. Many environmentalists see business as the problem and retreat into cynicism rather than fruitful engagement. The Transition model and practice for communities are not suitable for most businesses. It talks the wrong language and is not focussed on businesses concerns. Without tools that businesses can relate to and see as relevant, Transition is doomed, in the eyes of the business community at least, to be seen as irrelevant.

The Solution

Energy Resilience Assessment, a tool developed by Transition Training and Consulting, translate the concept of oil vulnerability and resilience into language business can understand. ERAs determine the degree of oil vulnerability or otherwise of a business, an organisation or any particular process. By offering clear and practical insights into business resilience, it makes a good starting place before anything else is done, a gate way process. The insights it provides are hugely insightful

4.6. Community Brainstorming Tools***



Open Space sessions at the 2009 Transition Network conference, Battersea Arts Centre, London.

The Challenge

We have become a society who increasingly believes that little can be done without input from experts and specialists. It is an approach which is often disempowering and ineffective. We need to rediscover how to unlock the collective knowledge, and indeed genius, that surrounds us, and engage it in addressing the big challenges of our times.

The Solution

Find ways of enabling citizens to find solutions to the problems facing them. Use Open Space and World Cafe (making sure you use each where it is most appropriate) to facilitate community brain storming and to draw out the ingredients of a collective vision for the future of the community. Well designed and facilitated, both are extraordinary tools. Make sure that each event has clear questions, and trust in Open Space's ability to enable people to self-organise. For anyone with leanings towards being a control freak, running Open Space is terrifying, but trust it, it works! We see them as structures that operate as bounded instability and hence create very creative ways to think about a problem. Both tools are flexible and inclusive and can be used in many different contexts. However care must be taken to not use them in ways in which they are not suited.

4.7. Oral Histories***



The Challenge

We have lost access to a significant community resource; our local oral history. This history would have been crucial in part societies, as this was the repository of how to sustainably manage local resources and live closer to the bioregion, its soils and microclimates. The advent of the fossil fuel age greatly diminished the need for those resources. In a world that was fast changing the old ways became quickly seen as being less useful and much knowledge was discarded into the dustbin of history. While not for a moment suggesting the future will be like the past, any process of designing for the future that ignores the past is like building a house with no foundation.

The Solution

Find ways for elders – and others – to tell their story and start to re weave the local cultural narrative. Bring elders and local story tellers into schools. Create events and meeting places where younger and older people can meet (moots) and tell their stories, formally or informally. Use artists and musicians to create evenings of storytelling and song about the local community. Identify from oral history interviews the elements of how life was resilient, and what from that past might be carried forward into a lower energy, more localised world.

4.8. Engaging Local Landowners* (with context information)



'Estates in Transition' event held at Dartington Hall with landowners from the Totnes area.

... as your initiative grows, and begins to seriously undertake PRACTICAL MANIFESTATIONS (3.9.) and GREAT RESKILLING projects (3.11.) and then starts, through STRATEGIC THINKING (5.10), perhaps through creating an ENERGY DESCENT ACTION PLAN (5.1.) to look at putting in place key pieces of local infrastructure such as LOCAL FOOD INITIATIVES (3.16.) and COMMUNITY RENEWABLE ENERGY COMPANIES (5.4.), the issue of land access will arise. Without access to land, many projects will be difficult to achieve, so enabling this will be vital, and may emerge from your initiative skilfully BUILDING STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS (2.12.).

* * *

Attempts at rebuilding links between a community and its peri-urban and surrounding rural land will fall flat if those who own that land and/or are responsible for its management are not invited to get involved. When the historic links that once existed between a settlement and its surrounding land break down, rebuilding them takes a lot of work, but failing to rebuild them will make an equitable, sustainable and diverse local food system impossible.

The Solution

Initiate a process of dialogue with local landowners, in the form of an invitation to consider how their business will function in a world of volatile oil prices, and where the key vulnerabilities lie. Design an event that brings them together with other landowners, and invite them to vision the future together with their peers. Seek to assist in the creation of mechanisms such as Dartington's 'Landscape', which create a supportive environment in which people with viable business ideas can have access to land.

* * *

Engaging with local landowners offers great opportunities for inviting them to be part of a VISIONING (2.6.) process, seeing their land not in isolation, but as part of a community process. It can be helpful to invite landowners to imagine their land as home to LOCAL FOOD INITIATIVES (3.10.), COMMUNITY SUPPORTED AGRICULTURE (5.9.) and to use COMMUNITY BRAINSTORM TOOLS (4.6.) to draw those visions out. Well designed events such as 'Estates in Transition' can also be another good tool to WORK WITH LOCAL BUSINESSES (3.12.) and to inspire SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP (5.2.).

4.9. Engaging Young People*



Adding their visions for the future of Malvern at the Unleashing of Transition Malvern Hills, May 2010.

The Challenge

Engaging young people in community activities and in environmental campaigning is a challenge, and not just for Transition. Yet if young people fail to engage or to see a role for themselves, Transition, in effect, has to do without the engagement of a significant sector of the community, and will also be without the energy that young people can bring.

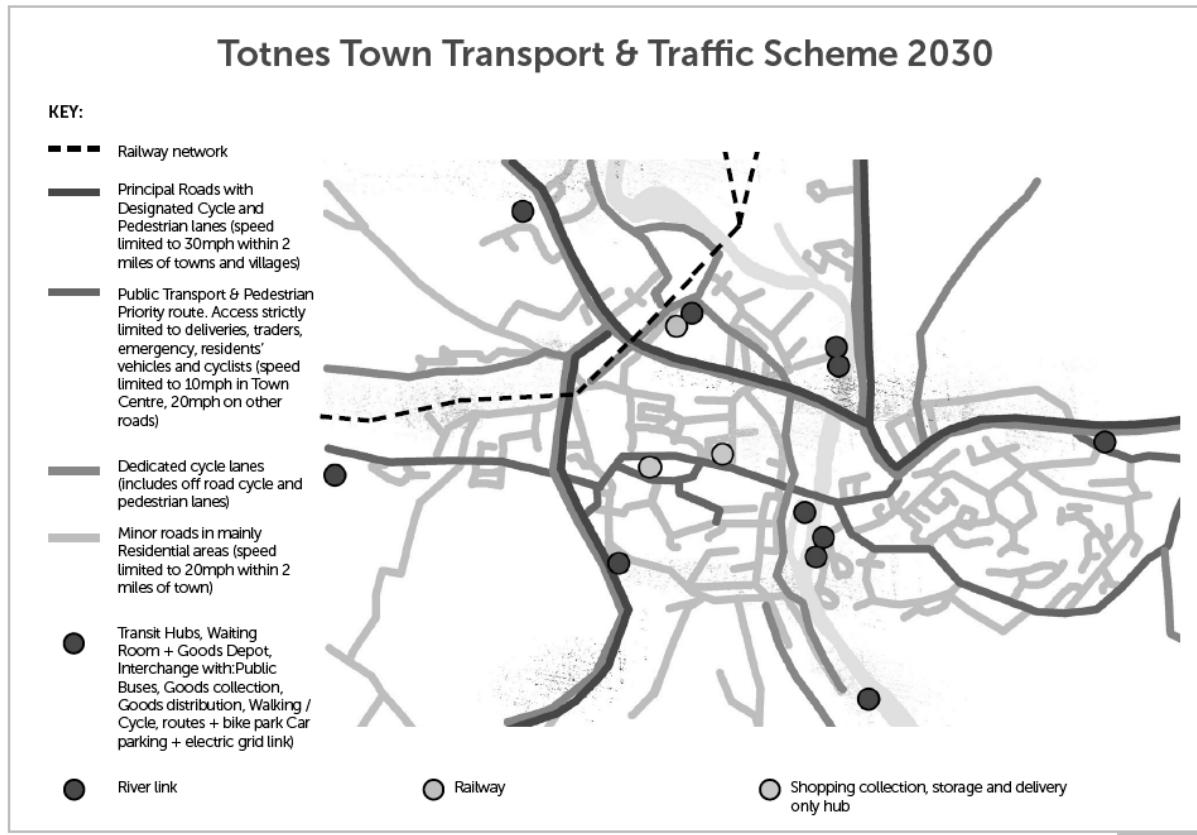
The Solution

Giving children a voice is an important part of the process, as is helping them to express what they already know (which is sometimes far more than adults!) This can take people who work in schools by surprise and can be strikingly accurate. Design into the activities of your initiative events and projects that engage local schools and youth clubs, and use media more accessible to them, Facebook, YouTube and so on. Try to ensure that the voice of young people is represented in the Core Group.

4.10. Engaging Schools (training teachers)*

(still to write)

4.11. Meaningful Maps**



From the Totnes and District Energy Descent Action Plan.

The Challenge

The changes necessitated by Transition can be hard for people to visualise, especially in relation to their immediate surroundings. Presenting suggestions in a way that people don't find easy to access is, ultimately, self-defeating.

The Solution

Use maps, creatively and engagingly, to present ideas and information. They can be printed maps, GoogleMaps, 3D scale maps, models of the community in question, they could be quilted, embroidered, made from clay, drawn in chalk on the ground, projected onto the sides of buildings, or formed by the people at an event arranging themselves physically in the room. Maps can bring ideas to life, and enable people to see their part of the world in relation to others.

4.13. The Role of Storytelling***



David Heath, whose father George ran, until 1980, a big commercial market garden in the centre of Totnes which is now a car park, shows a group of people around the site of the former garden.

The Challenge

The stories that surround us, in our films, books, TV programmes, songs, novels and in our political discourse, are not the stories that are appropriate for a world in transition. They generally tell stories of a future where technology solves all our problems (Star Trek), or one where society collapses into a hideous apocalyptic wasteland (The Road). There are very few stories that tell of what it might look like were we to look peak oil and climate change square in the face and respond with compassion, creativity and action. Many stories also often present the past in a way that diminishes the idea that anything of use might be carried forward from it into the present.

The Solution

Weave a thread of storytelling through the work of your Transition initiative. Look backwards as well as forwards, inviting older people to tell stories of how a more localised, lower energy world used to function, ideally by showing people around the actual physical places. Use storytelling in its widest sense, making films, raps, newspaper articles and small ads from the newspapers of the future, cartoons, animations. Hold 'Future Cabaret' events where people tell their stories of the future.

4.14. Networks and Partnerships**



A variety of local organisations running stalls at the Great Unleashing of Transition Whatcom, US.

The Challenge

A Transition initiative emerging in a community that already has a number of other community groups can run a risk of being seen as unnecessary, as somehow elbowing other more established groups out of the way, or trying to make them irrelevant. The long term implications of any of these outcomes can be very harmful to the effectiveness of the initiative.

The Solution

Form partnerships and network wherever possible. Observe what is happening around you and make contact with those who you can collaborate with, avoid reinventing the wheel. Collaborate with other groups and organisation you can never put too much time into networking. Organise events and projects with other initiatives in such a way that each organisation plays to its strengths.

4.15. Pausing for Reflection/'How Am I Doing?'



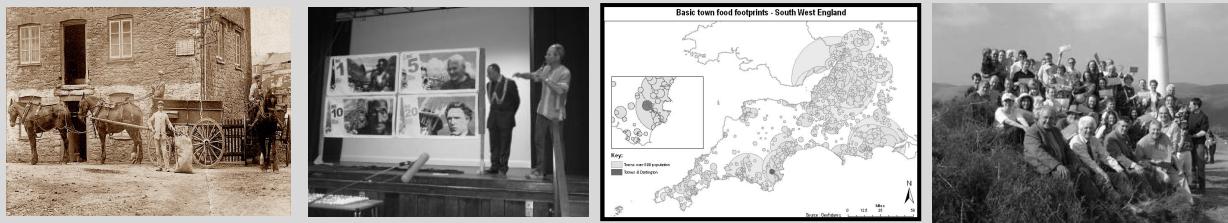
The Challenge

The temptation when doing Transition is to bounce from exciting idea to exciting idea, catalysing and energetically surrounding ourselves with ideas and possibilities. It is a powerful tide that can sweep you along. Yet a failure to pause regularly and check whether what we are doing is meeting our own needs, and those of our family, social life, and wider career, can contribute to burnout , and to our becoming disenchanted with the whole notion of Transition.

The Solution

Make time, say every 6 months, to stop and reflect on how your life is going, and whether or not your work with Transition is supporting that, or acting in opposition to that. Take some quiet space to reflect, and speak with those closest to you. Reflect honestly on how you are striking the balance between your personal life and what you are contributing to Transition. Get some more independent support if you feel that would be useful.

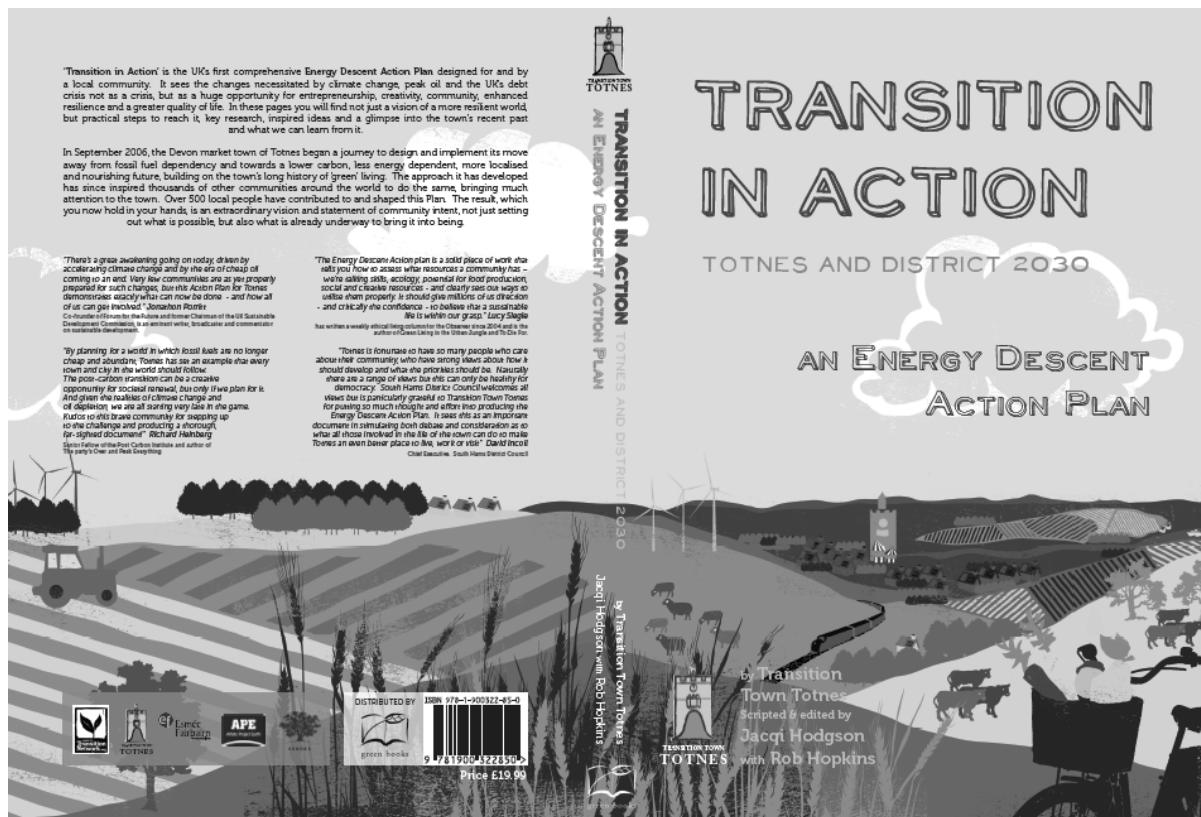
5. Patterns for Implementing Transition Infrastructure



- 5.1. Energy Descent Action Plans****
- 5.2. Social Entrepreneurship*****
- 5.3. Scaling Up***
- 5.4. Community Renewable Energy Companies (ESCOs)*****
- 5.5. Strategic Local Infrastructure***
- 5.6. Strategies for Plugging the Leaks**
- 5.7. Intermediate Technologies****
- 5.8. Community Ownership of Assets****
- 5.9. Community Supported Agriculture/Farms/Bakeries etc**
- 5.10. Strategic Thinking (Stroud food, Can Totnes and District Feed Itself, Leicester)**

Ultimately, the role of Transition groups is to become the drivers for the relocalisation of the local economy in their area. This requires a ‘step up’ from being a group focusing on small community projects, and necessitates the integration of new skills and new ways of thinking, with Transition initiatives starting to become social enterprises, becoming developers, banks, energy companies and so on. This often takes those traditionally involved in green issues out of their comfort zones, but is the vital next step for Transition groups. These patterns explore some of the ingredients of this step up.

5.1. Energy Descent Action Plans**



The cover of the Totnes Energy Descent Action Plan (published April 2010).

The Challenge

Faced with a future of unprecedented uncertainty and potential for shocks, the way our leaders plan for the future is based on deeply flawed assumptions. They assume that the future will be one of cheap energy, economic growth, growth in car use and so on. Designing for such a future at a time when it shows little promise of ever actually coming to pass is futile and irresponsible. At the same time, communities often feel unable to design for their own futures, seeing that as something done elsewhere on their behalf. Without a practical route map, a plan for the future, a new story about what Transition looks like in the context of the community in question, Transition will not get beyond just being a collection of individual projects.

The Solution

Design a creative, engaging, playful and research-based community process with the aim of creating a powerful yet practical new story of the future. Use it to make visible the unrealistic assumptions that underpin current planning approaches, and to offer a coherent and positive response to them. Use creative engagement tools to design a process that engages as many members of the community as possible. Start by creating a powerful and attractive vision of a lower energy future, and then backcast from that, telling the story, year-on-year, as to how it was achieved.

5.2. Social Entrepreneurship***



Preparing vegetable boxes at Growing Communities in Hackney.

The Challenge

The model of community initiatives that are dependent on external funding from philanthropic organisations, governments and external grant giving bodies will become increasingly redundant as economies contract and budgets shrink. In a wider context, we are still living off the surplus generated at a time of high Energy Return on Investment, which enabled surplus to be redistributed. That window of opportunity is starting to close as we enter a time of declining net energy and economic contraction. There is often a resistance within community organisations, especially those with an environmental agenda, to think about how they might operate in such a way that pursues their ethics but also functions as an enterprise, generating revenue for the ongoing development of the organisation, but that resistance needs, increasingly, to be overcome.

The Solution

The relocation process creates huge potential for a range of industries, energy companies, local food businesses, manufacturing and so on, which could either be run purely for profit, or in such a way that they are commercially viable and also reinvest their surplus into the wider community. Understand, from an early stage, the need for social entrepreneurship, and design and support emergent initiatives. Provide training and events, and link with existing providers of support for entrepreneurship.

5.3. Scaling Up*



The Challenge

Knowing how to scale up from a community initiative to an organisation capable of enabling the relocalisation of a community is a huge step into the unknown, yet a stubborn refusal to stay small when evolving to the next stage would be more appropriate represents a huge missed opportunity. The key challenge is how to broaden the initiative's impact, whilst also retaining its values. As circumstances pull us out of our comfort zone, the tendency can be to jump back into it. Yet if our initiative is ultimately to be successful, as previous examples such as the Co-operative movement, Development Trusts and so on have, scale up we must.

The Solution

Be prepared, when the time is right, to evolve your initiative, to take the steps your organisation needs in order to be most effective as the world around it changes. Ensure that you have the organisational structures in place to make it possible, and that you have drawn the most appropriate skills set into the organisation. Ensure that the models and structures you evolve remain open to community ownership and involvement, and that they remain flexible, as different models may apply at different times.

5.4. Community Renewable Energy Companies (ESCOs)***



Members of the Bro Dyfi Community Renewables Co-operative in Wales celebrating their share launch.

The Challenge

When our communities pay their energy bills, huge amounts of money pour out which could be retained and cycled locally, and used to create livelihoods and essential infrastructure. Energy becomes something that is done to us by other people who we never get to meet. What large scale renewables are put in place are usually owned and managed by distant organisations, and no benefits accrue to the local community.

The Solution

Every community should have a locally owned Energy Service Company (ESCO), as, indeed, many of them used to have. These ESCOs should put in place large scale renewable energy infrastructure in a way that it is owned by the community, and its profits are reinvested in Transition projects. The legal and organisational models exist, the technology exists, and the need for functioning inward investment community models exist, the need certainly exists... all that is needed now is to start establishing community ESCOs in every Transition initiative!

5.5. Strategic Local Infrastructure*



The last working mill in Totnes before its closure. It is now the town's Tourist Information Office.

The Challenge

The infrastructure required for a more localised future, the energy systems, the mills, the food systems, the abattoirs, has been largely ripped out over the past 50 years as oil made it cheaper to work on an ever-increasingly large scale, and their reinstallation will not arise by accident. They will need to be economically viable, supported by their local communities, owned and operated by people with the appropriate skills, and linked together. Flour mills for example (such as the one above, Totnes' last, which closed many years ago) are far easier to take out than to start from scratch. However, one of the key outputs of your EDAP process must be to think strategically about this.

The Solution

Make one of the key focuses of your Transition initiative's work and thinking the practicalities of stimulating the infrastructure required by a more localised future. Ideas as to which will be the key pieces of infrastructure will emerge from the EDAP process. Ensure that thinking is strategic and connected, and that it is based on considering the viability of each enterprise. Where elements still exist, find innovative ways, such as the community support model (as in CSAs) to enable them to continue. Where they don't exist, your Transition initiative might create some, some might be created by social entrepreneurs, some by private businesses, and some by the local authority.

5.6. Strategies for Plugging the Leaks



Unveiling the Brixton Pound notes for the first time at the scheme's launch.

The Challenge

Money, like other aspects of life, has become something done to us by distant organisations who, as the recent economic turmoil has demonstrated, do not necessarily have our best interests at heart. As the New Economics Foundation put it, our economies have become like 'leaky buckets', money that should be staying and circulating locally being sucked out to distant corporations and shareholders. Goods and services pour in from elsewhere, and potential investment pours out.

The Solution

Develop projects and strategies which link goods and services and which encourage the local cycling of money. The infrastructure and exchange mechanisms need to be put into place which enable people to live more local lives and strengthen their local economies. These could be local currencies, Time Banks, Credit Unions or a range of other strategies. Ensure that they are seen as being colourful, fun, accessible and have a high degree of 'money-ness' (that is, they feel like money).

5.7. Intermediate Technologies**



A cob greenhouse, using the thermal mass properties of cob to store heat, which is slowly re-radiated into the greenhouse. Made from local materials as part of a large no-dig market garden. The Hollies Centre for Practical Sustainability, West Cork, Ireland.

The Challenge

It is easy to be dazzled by what are put forward as low carbon technologies. They can entice us to stay within our comfort zones, of someone else providing a solution for us that we don't need to take responsibility for without any fundamental change. When discerning which technologies are going to underpin the transition of our communities, it is key to avoid those that end up creating more dependency.

The Solution

Implement technologies which can be made or at least repaired locally, which you can understand, and where you can see the supply chain for parts. Ensure that any technologies bring social, economic and community benefits to the local area.

5.8. Community Ownership of Assets**



The Challenge

Development, like money and energy, is something that is done *to* communities, rather than done *by* them. Relocalisation is impossible unless the community owns and manages its own assets. If we don't have ownership of something, or investment in it, we are less likely to take care of it, or care about its development. Finding ways to enable inward investment will be vital, and will also lead to people being far more connected to where they live.

The Solution

Steadily increase community ownership of assets through mechanisms such as Development Trusts, community bonds and shares, and through bringing land and property into community ownership for development or for Community Supported Agriculture or renewable energy projects.

5.9. Community Supported Agriculture/Farms/Bakeries etc



A small pig club with six families as members. Totnes. The author's shoes appear to be of particular interest.

The Challenge

Connections have largely broken down between farmers and the communities that, historically, they would have sustained. This enables communities to feel that there is no apparent connection between themselves and the land around them. Farmers are left feeling isolated, irrelevant, and end up increasingly producing for distant anonymous consumers, in a model that increases oil dependency, carbon emissions and lowers the quality of food.

The Solution

The Community Supported Agriculture model is providing very successful around the world in various manifestations. It can involve communities owning a share in a local farm, setting up their own farm, paying an annual subscription to a farmer they support, and many other variations on the theme. The model is also being applied to other enterprises, such as pig clubs or community supported bakeries. Where possible, use the community buy-in generated by your Transition initiative to support community supported initiatives.

5.10. Strategic Thinking (Stroud food, Can Totnes and District Feed Itself, Leicester)



A food footprint map of the South West of England, developed as part of the 'Can Totnes and District Feed Itself?' study, part of the Totnes EDAP.

The Challenge

The creating of an Energy Descent Action Plan will raise a lot of questions, some of which will revolve around specific questions, such as 'could this area feed itself/power itself?' What is the land base that surrounds the settlement, and what degree of productivity could be relied upon from surrounding farmland, back gardens, allotments, and new urban market gardens? How much energy infrastructure could realistically be installed? Failing to ask these questions will hamper attempts to think strategically about relocalisation.

The Solution

This is specialist work, and your initiative will likely need some help with this. Seek the support and engagement of local universities/specialists, or seek funding to resource it. Don't take this work on at a depth greater than you feel you can manage. If done well, the data generated is hugely useful to relocalisation efforts, providing a strategic underpinning to efforts to stimulate social enterprise and create key strategic local infrastructure.

6. Scaling up beyond the community



64 MOTION IN THE NAME OF COUNCILLOR BULL – FORTHCOMING IMPACT OF PEAK OIL

MMOVED by Councillor Bull, seconded by Councillor Chapman:-

This Council acknowledges the forthcoming impact of peak oil. The Council therefore needs to respond, and help he citizens it serves respond, to the likelihood of shrinking oil supply but in a way which will nevertheless maintain: he City's prosperity. It acknowledges that actions taken to adapt to and mitigate against climate change also help is adapt issues around peak oil.

t will do this by:

- developing an understanding of the impact of peak oil on the local economy and the local community
- encouraging a move across the city towards sustainable transport, cycling and walking throughout the city
- pursuing a rigorous energy efficiency and conservation programme through its carbon management plan, the work towards EMAS accreditation and on leading on raising energy awareness across all sectors to reduce dependency on oil based energy in the city
- supporting research and production within the city which helps develop local effective alternative energy supplies and energy saving products in order to encourage a move away from oil based fuels and also in order to create local 'green collar jobs'
- co-ordinating policy and action on reducing our city's carbon dependency and in response to the need to mitigate and adapt to climate change and peak oil.

6.1. Policies for Transition (the role of politics)

6.2. Peak oil resolutions

The old saying 'Think Global, Act Local' is still relevant, and the patterns discussed above, if implemented, will create a huge groundswell for change, a catalyst for communities across the world seeing energy descent as a huge opportunity for change, rather than as a disaster. But without Transition thinking being embodied by National Government, by business and becoming a key part of the national infrastructure, it will remain marginal. These patterns explore elements of the stepping up of Transition thinking to the national stage.

6.1. Policies for Transition (the role of politics)



Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change Ed Miliband attends the 2009 Transition Network conference at Battersea Arts Centre as a 'Keynote Listener'.

The Challenge

Governments at all levels often implement policies that are making things worse, sustaining damaging and dangerous status quos. There are high levels of disengagement of the electorate, centralisation of power, marginalisation of dissent. Politics of all persuasions speaks of the need to engage communities, but it is usually a token gesture. Yet without appropriate and far-reaching policy-making, Transition will struggle.

The Solution

Transition works to change the cultural story, for example, to what it means to live within natural limits, enabling a different space for policy decisions. It aims to make unelectable policies electable, and seeks to engage with the political process in ways that takes no party affiliation, holding hustings focusing on resilience, to lead by example rather than hectoring.

6.2. Peak oil resolutions

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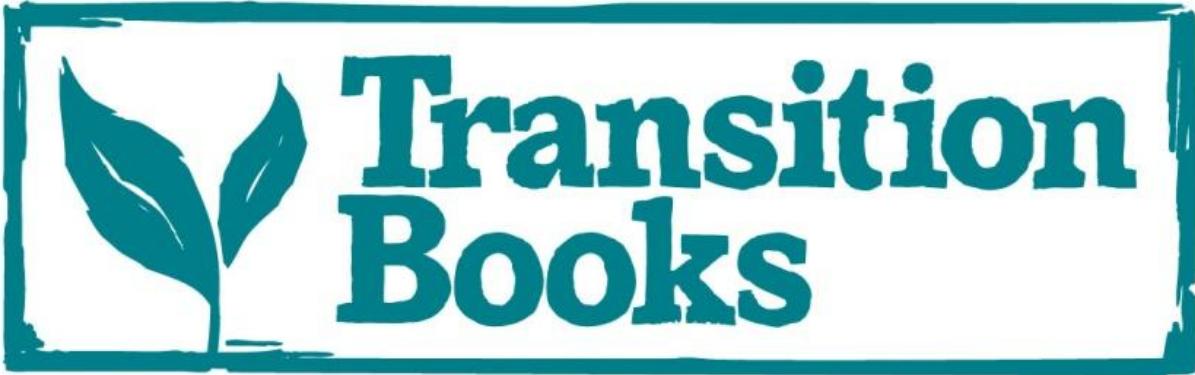
Part of Nottingham City Council's Peak Oil Resolution.

The Challenge

Local and regional authorities aren't planning strategically for peak oil and it is not a concern reflected within their policy making. They may not even understand it. Without a clear statement of concern about the issue, any further steps or actions on the issue will not have a foundation.

The Solution

Lobby your local council to pass a peak oil resolution. Numerous examples now exist, and they can be a great boost to those within the Council working to build awareness. Explore with them the possibility of a Transition Training for Local Authorities being run for key staff. Once the resolution is passed, heap great praise on the authority, and explore with them ways in which your Transition initiative can help with the next steps, a good example of which is Bristol City Council's 'Peak Oil Plan'.



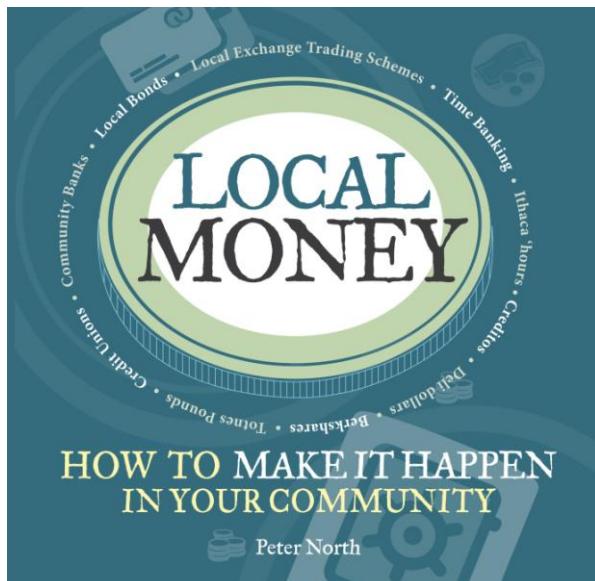
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Patrick Holden, The Soil Association.

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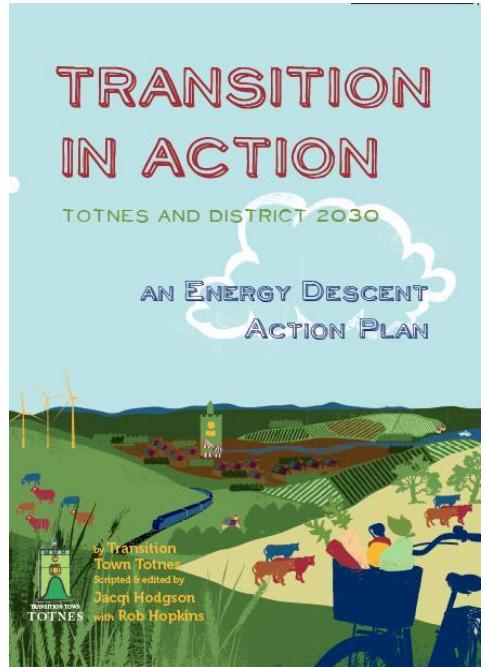
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The Totnes Energy Descent Action Plan is the first EDAP produced by a Transition initiatives. It is an extraordinary document, setting out a pathway away from oil dependency based not on despondency and despair, but on entrepreneurship, creativity and community. Includes the 'Can Totnes and district feed itself?' report, a full energy budget for the area, and much more.

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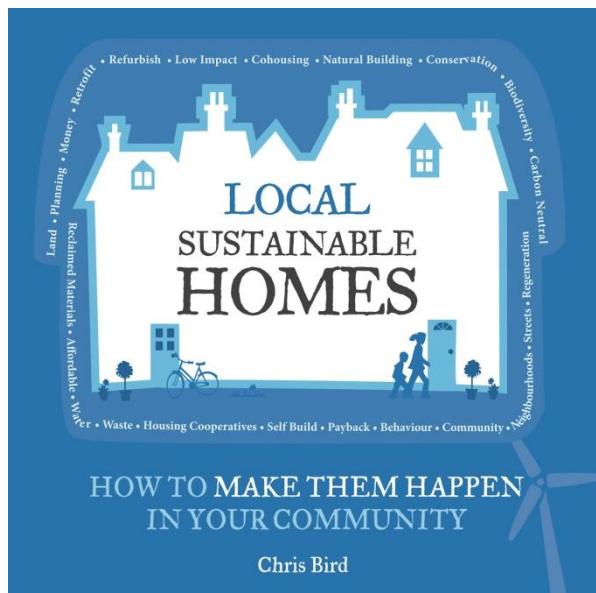
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Transition Communities

A Pocket Guide



MIKE GRENVILLE & ROB HOPKINS

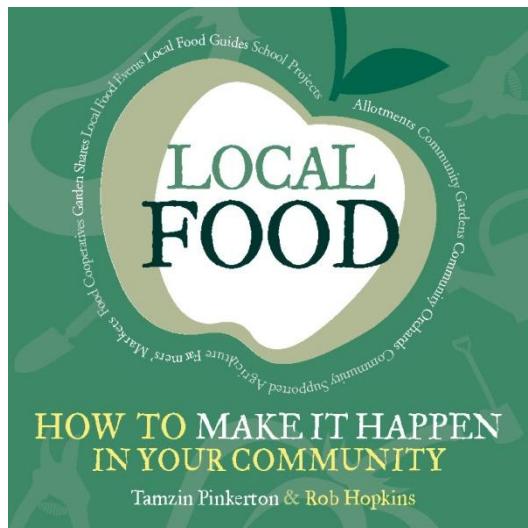
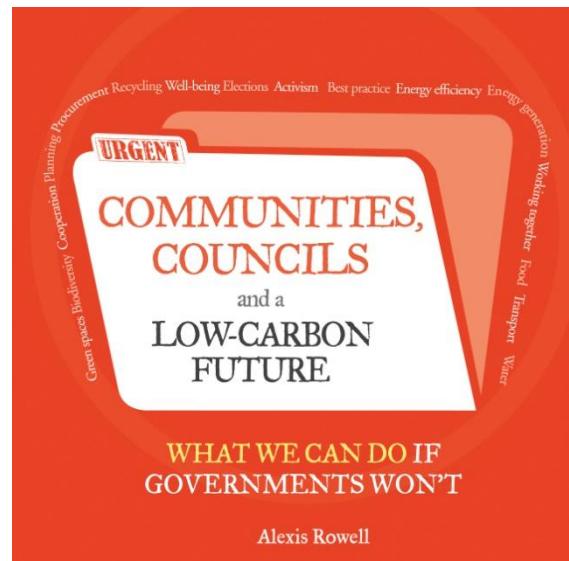


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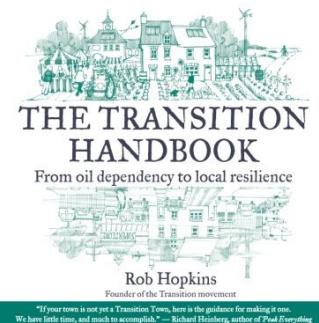
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An illustration of a coastal town featuring a lighthouse, a factory with smokestacks, and a person walking a dog. The town has various buildings, trees, and a beach area. A small boat is visible in the water.

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Notes and Thoughts

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