



## Module 8 final exercise

73 73

[Dan Wilton](#)  
[All Sections](#)

The challenge for you now is to reflect on the content presented in this module and consider what it says to you about “building the politics for systems change.”

In doing so, you will begin to synthesize the course content and patterns that advance systems change. Experience suggests that taking the effort to build your own synthesis helps you to internalize systems change as an attitude woven into your way of thinking. Without connecting the dots, and mapping the factors and different levels in a system of systems, building a politics powerful enough to advance systems change is highly unlikely.

So, review the Alperovitz video and Lewis reading early on in the week. But spend the bulk of your time and effort working on your own synthesis. Go back into the course materials for ideas, frameworks. Check your notes and your visual and reflection exercises for insights. Given the limits of time, we suggest you choose one or more models from the course that piqued your interest or spoke powerfully to you because it parallels your own priorities and work.

Finally, see if you can determine a strategy, drawn from your engagement with the course material, that would allow you to promote system change more powerfully in the topic or issue of your choosing.

We are intending this to be a dynamic, and we hope, meaningful exercise that connects the course directly with your work and your interests. Share your thinking with others, including us, and then post it to the public via the Synergia Wavelet site on the Internet as a contribution to the global knowledge commons. See instructions below.

To all of you, your contributions on this exercise are strategically important to our efforts, almost all of which has been done for free. Your completion of the exercises will be very important to our evaluation of the course and exploring its potential for making a real contribution to our collective efforts to make transition in this perilous century are reality.

Those applying this exercise to current projects have three weeks more to engage with the instructors.

### Instructions for Individual Participants.

Choose a theme that is of particular interest to you or the work that you are engaged in. It may be a particular example that provoked your interest or spoke to your situation. Or, it might be a broader movement (such as Via Campesina) or a local neighbourhood development focus such as the Dudley Street Initiatives in Boston.

After careful review of the materials you consider most relevant to your synthesis, use the questions that follow as a general guide to write up your work. Length 3 pages maximum.

1. Why did you choose this topic?
2. Describe the focus or aim of the model/policy/initiative/movement.
3. Briefly describe the context that the initiative emerged from.

## 4. In what ways does this initiative address systems change?.

Consider the following in your analysis, or contribute questions of your own:

- Can you generally map it in relation to the figures we examined above? Where would it fit?
  - Describe the goals for change and for whom.
  - What obstacles block(ed) the progress of the initiative to date? Keep in mind the MLP, in particular at the regime level—policy, norms, rule, practices etc. Note landscape factors that may be in play.
  - What strategies helped reduce blockages to change?
  - What beneficial impacts have emerged?
  - Identify key factors generating benefits to date.
- What political strategies can you detect that were important to advancing change? Who were the targets? Who were the allies? Are there other allies that you think could be potentially useful to reach out to?
  - Finally, review what you have done in light of Figure 8.1. What additional ideas do you have that could build the politics for systems change based on this case?
  - If you're feeling inclined, visually represent your work in a chart or figure.

Once you've completed your response, post it below to share it with the class as attached file, visual, or combination of these.

This topic was edited by [Mike Gismondi](#)







[CJ Holden \(https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/906739\)](https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/906739)

Jun 8, 2019



Will hope, there may be a possibility of human survival. Most days, I don't think so. Highest levels of CO<sub>2</sub>; and the world is more violent, more dangerously at the brink of nuclear war since I was a child. To ever generation comes a time when we must defend that is worthy. The rise of self-ishness and ego, even toxic narcissism also seems great. One of the side-effects of capitalism, globally and locally, is we reward those who are ruthless in their achievements, those who de-humanize the rest of us. This has been true through all of history, but especially in a capitalist contaminated planetary culture.

Having some new theories, some new systems thinking is helpful, but not at all in the immediate. I believe these theories and tools will be essential for those who survive what comes. Their's will be the re-creation of a world with inhabiting. I expect to be dead before this happens. My plan is not an easy exit, but rather to survive as long as possible with the local and global threats, to teach true history to those who listen, to grow and share my food with the hungry, to provide wherever I can with compassion, and to keep focused on resilience of the body and spirit.

A more valuable goal is to create more community locally in an already divided ethnically complex historical community. This means extended myself to earn trustworthy status. This means continually showing up to be part of the whole, to speak truth, to offer hands and help as I am able. I have little illusion about what is coming. We are on our own, no one will rescue us, no one will come. We must organize ourselves according to talents and resources available. We must restore the fertile agriculture lands as ancestors did. We must care for each other, especially the children of all diversity -- so they may survive with tools and ideals.

[Not a Liberal Snowflake.jpg \(https://learn.canvas.net/files/895885/download?download\\_frd=1&verifier=XlhudP0LBukvVnqXni8yUP3oRH6cx4hwr16OCBs\)](https://learn.canvas.net/files/895885/download?download_frd=1&verifier=XlhudP0LBukvVnqXni8yUP3oRH6cx4hwr16OCBs)

← [Reply](#)



[Dave Darby \(https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/887852\)](https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/887852)

Jun 16, 2019

My real interest is in talking strategically about how we can build an alternative to capitalism, to [transcend it](https://www.lowimpact.org/transcender-manifesto-dil-green/), rather than overthrow it (early capitalists didn't, I'm sure, talk about overthrowing feudalism). It's not really possible to talk strategically with capitalists or growth advocates, but we can offer support if they're helping to build things that will make replacing capitalism easier – even inadvertently. I've been looking all my life for 'it' – something to light the blue touch paper of the mutualist economy. In the last few years I've found two very strong contenders – one more controversial in alternative circles than the other.

## Credit Commons – money for the new economy

First, mutual credit (the less controversial of the two) – a trading / exchange system that requires no money, charges no interest and doesn't involve banks. Businesses have an online account and appear in a directory (that lists the products and services they're offering, and what they're looking for). When they purchase in the system, their account goes into debit, and when they sell in the system, they get credit. There are limits to how far members can go into credit or debit. That's it, in terms of the essential practical details. Members can only earn credit if another member incurs exactly the same amount of debit. Credits and debits cancel each other out, and the entire system balances at zero. There is no value held in the system itself, and therefore no value to be extracted.

Three years ago, I read Tom Greco's book [The End of Money and the Future of Civilisation](https://www.lowimpact.org/books/books_lets/), and a penny dropped – this could be the key to system change. Any exchange system that involves money that can be accumulated will concentrate wealth and power. Mutual credit doesn't use a currency that can be accumulated – unlike crypto, for example. Around the same time, I read Matthew Slater's [Credit Commons](http://creditcommons.net/) white paper, and that was it – I was hooked. Matthew is working with others on software to allow mutual credit schemes everywhere to become interoperable, and so create a global moneyless trading system.

Matthew came over from Athens to speak at Oliver Sylvester-Bradley's [Open2018](https://2018.open.coop/) (<https://2018.open.coop/>) conference, and afterwards, Matthew, Oliver and I decided to build a mutual credit network for the UK. Matthew introduced Dil Green, and together, we launched the website – the [O pen Credit Network](https://opencredit.network/) (<https://opencredit.network/>) – and conducted our first trades earlier this year. Tom Greco came over from the States to see us, and now he and Matthew are in our advisory group, along with other finance and tech specialists. I'm working on ways to simplify and clarify the concept of mutual credit, and so for example, at [Open2019](https://open.coop/events/open-2019-community-gathering-decentralised-collaboration/) (<https://open.coop/events/open-2019-community-gathering-decentralised-collaboration/>), there will be a series of 'lightning talks' on a range of solutions to the problem of collaboration at scale, and I'll be giving talks about mutual credit. It would be good to see you there.

[If you have or are part of a small business, please go to the home page of the [O pen Credit Network](https://opencredit.network/) (<https://opencredit.network/>) and express interest. You'll go into a directory of businesses, that at the very least will offer some promotion – but at the very most, will help change the banking / money system. Please tell any small business owners you know, too].

## Viability

Secondly, I came across the viable system model (VSM) last year, brainchild of the now deceased genius, [Stafford Beer](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stafford_Beer) ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stafford\\_Beer](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stafford_Beer)). A major problem in growing a co-operative / solidarity / mutualist economy that stays co-operative and is immune to corporate buyouts, is keeping it decentralised. I was told by several people whose opinions I respect, that the best tool for this job is the VSM. There have been [huge debates](https://www.loomio.org/d/qQFpGLRk/synergy-between-sociocracy-and-the-vsm) (<https://www.loomio.org/d/qQFpGLRk/synergy-between-sociocracy-and-the-vsm>) about whether the focus should be on a viable systems approach or on building human relationships and good communication. My feeling is that these approaches are two sides of the same coin – i.e. just communicating well and being nice to each other without a systemic approach to change, or a systems approach in which people are horrible to each other and don't communicate well are not really viable options.

Swayed by what seemed like excellent advice from people I trust, and thinking 'what can it hurt?', I visited Jon Walker and Angela Espinosa (both disciples of Beer, who met at his funeral and married soon after), authors of several books on cybernetics and viable systems, including [the most accessible guide to the VSM online](https://esrad.org.uk/resources/vsmg_2.2/pdf/vsmg_2_2.pdf) ([https://esrad.org.uk/resources/vsmg\\_2.2/pdf/vsmg\\_2\\_2.pdf](https://esrad.org.uk/resources/vsmg_2.2/pdf/vsmg_2_2.pdf)). They've been impressed with the concept of mutual credit, and are now preparing a proposal for a package involving the VSM and mutual credit to help accelerate the growth of the new, mutually-owned, decentralised, regenerative economy. We hope to show key people working in community energy, community-supported agriculture, worker co-ops, housing co-ops, platform co-ops, free software, community land trusts and alternative finance that the benefits this package could provide will outweigh the effort required to understand and implement it, whilst taking their lead as to how to tweak the proposal.

I'd like to see a new 'mutualist' sector develop, but with tight criteria on the economic institutions we'd like help create, grow and network. The corporate sector will always attempt to co-opt, dilute, buy or crush any opposition, but a non-growing, mutually-owned, decentralised economy is not something that they can ever pretend to be part of.

Any thoughts on any of this are very welcome. I've been working in the environment field for 25

years, and it may well be too late already. But what else is there to do?

↳ Reply



Pat Conaty (<https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/379202>)

Jul 2, 2019

Hi Dave

Great news that the Open Credit Network has started now trading in the UK. A great effort to introduce Mutual Credit here. So needed to harness Synergia between co-ops and commoners. Also value in relation to mutual credit is completely reframed or at least it should be as Tom Greco and Gesell argued it needs to be seen in order to escape the clutches of rent seekers and usurers.

Paul Mason has just posted some thoughts on Post Capitalism that is relevant on how to rethink and develop strategies to transcend the commodification of everything: land, housing, people, data, tech, etc

The democratic finance system he describes and what he calls the non-market sector in a provisioning way needs Mutual Credit as a collective nexus to develop a money commons as you well describe it.

<https://www.socialeurope.eu/time-for-postcapitalism> (<https://www.socialeurope.eu/time-for-postcapitalism>)

All power to your efforts.....!

Pat

↳ Reply



Dave Darby (<https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/887852>)

Jul 4, 2019

Thanks Pat,

There are a few things I don't understand about Paul Mason's approach. For example, he says that co-operatives and mutuals are part of the 'non-market sector' - why? They operate in the market, but they're owned by the people who work in them / use them, and (up to a certain scale) organised non-hierarchically. Mutual credit, for example, is all about the market, and a free one at that (always wondered at the conflation of 'capitalism' and 'free market' - never really made sense to me. Capitalism is anything but a free market - it's skewed by the state in favour of banks and corporations. I don't need to tell you the number of ways it does that).

I also find the idea of machines replacing human work worrisome - there's a huge network of mines, oil extraction, trucks, roads, factories, electricity pylons etc. behind machine-produced goods. This is a debate I've been having with colleagues recently, but give me craft products wherever possible. Craft work / smallholdings / human-scale work keeps us

grounded, closer to nature and strengthens communities.

Plus I fear that relying on the state will just waste time that could be spent building non-state and non-corporate alternatives. Sure, if John McDonnell doubles the size of the co-op sector, great (and in fact, that's why Labour will get my vote next time), but the threat of capital flight from a particular country is always there in a capitalist world, which will scupper their election chances next time around, and then those policies will be reversed, and on we go.

Also, I'm not sure how the zero-marginal-cost effect works for anything but the information economy. Can't see how it works for food, housing, clothing etc.

Having said that, I do like his proposed shift in organisational structure from hierarchy to network. This is the nub of the solution in fact. If we get involved in building a networked, mutual, co-operative sector, and/or support the people who are already doing it, we don't need to think too much about a blueprint of what society will look like. It will grow organically.

← [Reply](#)



[Pat Conaty \(https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/379202\)](https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/379202)



Jul 6, 2019

Hi Dave

If you read Mason again closely you will note that he is arguing that the second and third value creating streams of financialised capitalism are usurious and superfluous - namely rent extraction via debt and via branding and global control by corporations of inflated prices. In the past the struggle of the labour movement and other social movements for a shorter working week and the welfare state have spread the wealth. We now have the absurd position of zero marginal costs and no wealth sharing - quite the reverse.

So a convergence of social movements (trade union, women's, co-op, ecological, etc) and alignment for a three day week and for UBI could secure a cultural shift, support a real economy provisioning and also create the space for the non-market sector of co-ops, mutuals and indeed mutual credit as a monetary commons that Mason is making the case for. For non-market sector, read co-operative commons and his analysis makes sense.

Your point about automation is a key one. I shared on Module 7 the essay by Mary Mellor just out on an Eco-feminism that is missing in the case Mason makes.

But on the other hand, I do think the state is a vital partner. Co-ops, mutuals, associations and trade unions only became legal because people fought and died for their recognition and economic democracy roles enshrined in statutes.

Thus I cannot imagine any of this happening unless we contest and defend and extend the benefits, good governance and social democratic human rights related services that social movements have won - including economic, cultural, civil, political and social rights. This is the Double Movement's legacy that Polanyi stressed

provides us concrete hope for a better world. Today horizontally uniting Double Movement efforts, currently very fragmented indeed, is our biggest challenge. Mason offers us a helpful way at looking at the Sweet Spot and commons opportunities for finding common cause.

Pat

← [Reply](#)



[Dave Darby \(https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/887852\)](https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/887852)



Jul 8, 2019

Hi Pat

I'm really nervous about UBI, in that a tiny minority at the top of the FANG corps especially, will own almost everything, and the state will then be in control of most people's means of survival – and as the state is in a symbiotic relationship with banks and corporations, for mutual gain, and power, backed by military force, that's a bit of a worry. I guess I'm an anarchist at heart – I'd prefer to do it ourselves, and if we get help from the state, great, but I wouldn't expect it and I don't think we should rely on it.

But – UBI could be a great opportunity for some people to have the freedom to build co-ops, community land trusts and other mutualist institutions, without having to worry about where the next meal is coming from.

So I'm unsure where I stand on that one, as yet.

But yes, I'd support people working within state institutions to bring about the new economy.

And yes, it definitely does make sense if you replace non-market with co-operative / commons, but I don't think it's wise to do that. The right (and centre) see non-market as synonymous with centralised state control, and some with out-and-out Stalinism.

We could get quite a lot of opposition, just because of semantics.

What we're building with the Open Credit Network is absolutely a free-market solution in a way that capitalism can never be, because the state skews the market in favour of multinational corporations and banks. Just imagine the boost SMEs / sole traders / coops would get if the state was as lax at collecting taxes from them as they are from the corporates; and if they didn't give preferential treatment to multinationals for govt. contracts; and they didn't accept jobs on corporate boards; and they didn't listen to corporate lobbyists so much; and if they didn't give banks monopoly control over the money supply – etc. ad nauseam.

← [Reply](#)



[Pat Conaty \(https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/379202\)](https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/379202)



Jul 10, 2019

Dave

Yes that is a risk and the shape of UBI and how it is designed could make matters worse. But not necessarily as Mary Mellor shows in her contribution on Democratic Money in Module 7. Also read Ditto all the work of Ellen Brown

on public bank solutions and the history in Module 7 of the radical period of the Bank of Canada and its development banking arm.

I thought you and others on the course would be interested in this short summary of the Hidden History of corporations.

<http://reclaimdemocracy.org/corporate-accountability-history-corporations-us/>

The focus is on the US which had in the period before the US civil war and for decades a system of revocable corporate charters. The idea was like the Hippocratic Oath for doctors, corporate Directors should 'Do no Harm!' and if not be struck off and also jailed for corporate damage. This happened all the time before 1870.

All this goes to show is that the law and an accountable state (in this case local states) can be a force for economic democracy. That is what the arguments on this course for a Partner State as John Restakis has been setting out is so fundamental. As we saw in Module 7 the Worgl experiment was of universal benefit as fee based, debt free money but it was issued by the Mayor to retain public services and to invest in public works.

With the increased circulation rate that the negative interest rate led to, the new public money (legal tender) then massively and quickly ended stagnation and structural unemployment. But because the local authority accepted stamp scrip that they issued to pay local taxes, this creative a circular economy impact.

There is in play a constant struggle for Human rights (political, civil, social, economic and cultural) that once secured need defending. Democratising money, corporations and creating commons can become common cause with the public sector. But it needs strategic advocacy for a paradigm shift. This is how to Reclaim Democracy for everyone and on behalf of the planet.

Pat

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2 2



**Bryan Hammond** (<https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/903252>)

Jul 21, 2019

Hello Dave and Pat... I've read what you have posted so far in this Discussion 8, as of July 21, and have seen no reference to something that I think/hope will interest you both - the LETS (Local Exchange Trading System). Perhaps you, and others who are interested in new economic systems, are already familiar with *LETS*, but if not, or for an update - this seems like a good link, updated to 2019:

[Local exchange trading system - Wikipedia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Local_exchange_trading_system) ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Local\\_exchange\\_trading\\_system](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Local_exchange_trading_system))



It mentions that LETS was more popular in the 80's & 90's - but that's probably because its proponents either weren't interested, or perhaps able, to revise and update its base software program to enable **linking** of local LETSsystems toward co-creating a far broader alternate economic system... which the internet greatly facilitates. **I've long hoped to see the potential developed to link at all levels, local to global, where Caring activists want to co-create such systems of systems.**

The software to do this could and should be part of a very holistic GNU/Linux-based "distro" (a given bundle of open source software packages that come with a given Operating System, such as *Debian, Ubuntu, or Trisquel*) - which with a massive cooperative effort could quickly be customized specifically to holistically serve the expansion and accessibility of the TCC teachings, and realization of the objectives of, this Toward Cooperative Commonwealth (TCC) MOOC - and other ongoing compatible Activist trainings and projects around the World. **This would be a significant facet of what Caring activists - across the whole spectrum of activist concerns - cooperating with appropriate IT pro individuals and organizations within that spectrum - are quite capable of doing - but have not yet communicated, cooperated, and coordinated to actually DO.**

I think this synthesis of the best software-based means of creating an ethical economic system of systems could, and should, become part of the co-creation of a customized GNU/Linux "distro" that is built specifically to facilitate co-creation of a local-global (or as nearly so as possible) peer-peer holistic digital communications system of systems. It would be decentralized to the max., at least having City-City nodes ASAP, but also within them - community-based nodes that also could be locally co-developed ASAP. As Greta has pointed out, our f'n house is on fire!

I won't further elaborate on the **GNU/Linux-based peer-peer system** in this post, I know and respect that the focus here is new economic systems... but **these ideas and methods MUST ALL be parts of the same very holistic overall System of Systems that WE are ALL trying to co-create! I see this communication system as being analogous for the integrated systems of Humanity to the nervous system for a human body. But, FYI, I am NOT recommending we ever let Artificial Intelligence! (digital, neoliberal, or fascist) be in charge... we need real Intelligence and Compassion - in harmony and balance.**

PS For what its worth LETS was first developed by a Canadian living in BC, Michael Linton. A friend I've lost touch with - Ross Dobson - started a LETSsystem in Winnipeg in the late 80's. Ross wrote an article about it back then... it was published in a magazine called LINKS, which I founded here at that time... the purpose of which was very much in the spirit of this Toward Cooperative Commonwealth. I'll upload a scan of that LETS article, if anyone requests it, in a new post in this discussion. Regardless, I'll probably sub-post a copy under my own main post in the Introductions forum.

← [Reply](#)



[Caroline Hurley \(https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/894561\)](https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/894561)

Jul 21, 2019

Hi Bryan,

[Cloughjordan Ecovillage](http://www.thevillage.ie/about-us/the-project/) (<http://www.thevillage.ie/about-us/the-project/>) in Ireland is run in line with the [Viable Systems Model](https://www.esrad.org.uk/resources/vsmg_3/screen.php?page=preface), ([https://www.esrad.org.uk/resources/vsmg\\_3/screen.php?page=preface](https://www.esrad.org.uk/resources/vsmg_3/screen.php?page=preface)) an organisational structure based on the central nervous system, partly developed in consultation with Stafford Beer : )

← [Reply](#)



[Bryan Hammond](https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/903252) (<https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/903252>)

Jul 21, 2019

Hi Caroline,

A couple or so days ago I saw a few posts of yours in this Discussion 8, and have intended to reply to more than I have so far. I've bookmarked the 2 links you just shared, but don't have time to check them out properly now. I'll be going camping for a week, won't be able to communicate via computer till I get back, about July 27. I was going to bring your attention to a link I'll share here, though it has to do with spiritual discussion areas; and perhaps collaboration with other on-line activist learning networks:

[Spiritual Leadership | Pachamama Alliance Global Commons](https://connect.pachamama.org/group/spiritual-leadership)  
(<https://connect.pachamama.org/group/spiritual-leadership>)

and re other activist concerns:

[Global Commons | Pachamama Alliance Global Commons](https://connect.pachamama.org/)  
(<https://connect.pachamama.org/>)

Bye the way EcoVillages are one of my personal top 5 priorities.

I've had mixed feelings about most groups I've read anything about in the following coalition (Humanity's Team) of Spiritually-oriented groups... particularly those with a business focus. But I'd be very interested to see what other participants in the TCC MOOC think. I'm hoping that there is good ground for collaboration?

[Conscious Business Initiative | Humanity's Team Worldwide](https://www.humanitysteam.org/conscious-business-initiative)  
(<https://www.humanitysteam.org/conscious-business-initiative>)

Edited by [Bryan Hammond](https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/903252) (<https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/903252>) on Jul 21 at 5:44pm

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[Caroline Hurley](https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/894561) (<https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/894561>)

Jun 16, 2019

Before I attempt my homework from the back of the class, was it intentional to omit references to spirituality, philosophy, behavior, morals and the subjective realm, from which decisions, and often whole new study fields, emanate?

Catholic priests Teilhard de Chardin and Thomas Berry brought early clarity to the importance of the environment. Pope Francis' 2015 encyclical [Laudate Si](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html) ([http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco\\_20150524\\_enciclica-laudato-si.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html)) was one of few recent institutional statements about cherishing earth. [John Moriarty](https://www.irishtimes.com/culture/the-greatest-irish-thinker-you-ve-never-read-it-could-be-this-man-1.3918158%20) (<https://www.irishtimes.com/culture/the-greatest-irish-thinker-you-ve-never-read-it-could-be-this-man-1.3918158%20>) diagnosed our eco-pathologies in his opera.

Buddhism's Noble Eight-fold Path teaches millions of followers how to minimise harm to life. Native American and other tribal traditions teem with wisdom from the natural world. Feminist analysis paved the path to ecological studies.

Legendary psychologist [Albert Bandura](https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/00139157.2017.1374792) (<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/00139157.2017.1374792>) has been devoting his acumen to breaking the climate change deadlock, while more popular tomes on behavioral shift like [Nudge](https://www.theguardian.com/books/2008/jul/20/politics.society1) (<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2008/jul/20/politics.society1>) also have something to offer. Alain de Botton's [School of Life](https://www.theschooloflife.com/) (<https://www.theschooloflife.com/>) coaches people on self-consolation when the going gets tough, while contemporary philosopher [Clive Hamilton](https://www.newphilosopher.com/author/clive-hamilton/) (<https://www.newphilosopher.com/author/clive-hamilton/>) corrects the aim of our attention toward the real planetary threats.

Stuff like that? Especially when the course has in fact aired opposing worldviews quite widely - foundational neoliberal capitalist thought - even if from a critical perspective. I'd say if it were to be covered in any module, this last one would be the one, as raising the topic too early, before addressing the hard-headed nubs of the matter, could turn certain characters off.

Edited by [Caroline Hurley](https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/894561) (<https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/894561>) on Jun 16 at 3:17pm

↳ [Reply](#)



[Michael Lewis](https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/263480) (<https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/263480>)

Jun 17, 2019

Caroline, you are raising an issue I personally think is very important. Leaving out matters related to spirituality and morality as a specific module was not deliberate, nor was it discussed. This is curious, since our small team has within it strong orientation morality in the context of social justice and earth care. I suppose we have assumed it is embedded in much of the material selected for the core modules. However, the other reality was that we were already concerned with the whether our redesign of the MOOC would still be too much material.

Having said this by way of a rather partial explanation, your points are important, as are your references. Personally, my work for decades has had an explicit spiritual core to it. Indeed, since I was 15 the path I decided to walk stems from a faith based perspective. Loving one's neighbour as one's self was a radical proposition for me. Solidarity, the importance of the individual, community, the nature of oppression, liberation, within and without, stewardship and care for the gift of creation; all these notions were crucial for me as a young person. They continue to be.

Explicitly elevating spiritual teaching and practices within this particular course as a way of connecting the dots within oneself, and as a means of creating and strengthening community, is not a simple task. I am aware of one effort being made to do so that is somewhat aligned with Synergia is the Presencing Institute (MIT I think) An article in Medium by its Director creates a framework that begins to get at an integration of the personal and spiritual, though somewhat opaquely. I would be interesting it exploring further how we 'might approach your recommendations with you and others involved in this course.

I would urge you to raise this issue again in the evaluation of the MOOC.

← [Reply](#)



[Kristi Lewis \(https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/905890\)](https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/905890)

Jun 18, 2019

Thanks Caroline, for bringing this important thread up, and to Mike for responding to it so thoughtfully. I was wondering about this particular pillar as well...

← [Reply](#)



[Mike Gismondi \(https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/227458\)](https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/227458)

Jun 18, 2019

Hi Caroline,

It is a great comment. I think we course authors operate with a an interesting mix of values and moral positions.

And these threads in the mooc could be made stronger by exploring some of the thinkers you mention, and perhaps woven in brighter thread to sharply expose them and their ethical implications.

We try to touch on how practice and values interact and reshape each other when we discuss each module. I think the commons and the moral economists early on, like Polanyi, we fumbled and could do much better with, and raise this ethical issue to the forefront starting there.

Likewise, the processes of resistance and the positives of contemporary commoning offer us an opening to deepen discussions of value conflicts as they relate to practice and motivation and reflection.

I think we did explore the values underpinning democratic ownership models and governance models in many of the initiatives we introduce, some inspired by social justice, some by race or gender inequities or all three, some by a refreshed democracy. The discussion of relational

goods and reciprocity offers us another window onto values and social relations. In other places we introduce global social justice obligations north-south. How we get more people to think this way may be left hanging, It is important that the Pope has some things to say about all this as his church crosses north-south.

In our many talks about course design, we did not want to be too prescriptive in the MOOC, but to provide materials that would inspire and offer input into learners practice where applicable. We also wanted to encourage horizontal sharing and sharing across experiences in different sectors. . That invitation resulted in comments that sometimes overwhelmed us all. Reviewing the suggestions is enriching and posts like yours and many others are teaching moments for us all, helping us learn our own silences and reluctances around certain kinds of materials. I know myself I find it difficult to find inspiration in more psychological individualistic theory and explanations, and I am tired of reading repetitive Marxist debates but have found some good new left materials inspiring of late.

I will try some of these sources you suggest later this summer. A few are old friends I have forgotten. Best regards

Mikeg

↳ [Reply](#)



[Caroline Hurley \(https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/894561\)](https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/894561)

Jun 19, 2019

These values are implicit in course material. Bringing them to the foreground somewhere is just a suggestion, given that survival for many in imbalanced aggressive circumstances can be painful. Apparently in America, [suicide rates](http://www.tomdispatch.com/post/176576/tomgram%3A%20raj%20menon%2C%20the%20death%28s%29%20of%20the%20working%20class%20in%20the%20age%20of%20trump/#more%20) [/post/176576](http://www.tomdispatch.com/post/176576/tomgram%3A%20raj%20menon%2C%20the%20death%28s%29%20of%20the%20working%20class%20in%20the%20age%20of%20trump/#more%20) [/tomgram%3A rajan menon%2C the death%28s%29 of the working class in the age of trump/#more%20](http://www.tomdispatch.com/post/176576/tomgram%3A%20raj%20menon%2C%20the%20death%28s%29%20of%20the%20working%20class%20in%20the%20age%20of%20trump/#more%20) have been rising recently. Is it possible to preserve some mental health whether ecocide worsens or can be halted?

[Ban Ki-Moon](https://www.un.org/press/en/2015/sgsm16710.doc.htm)  [\(https://www.un.org/press/en/2015/sgsm16710.doc.htm\)](https://www.un.org/press/en/2015/sgsm16710.doc.htm) seconded that papal encyclical from a cross-religious perspective.

This [erudite lengthy interview](https://www.sharing.org/information-centre/reports/intersection-politics-and-spirituality-addressing-climate-crisis%20)  [\(https://www.sharing.org/information-centre/reports/intersection-politics-and-spirituality-addressing-climate-crisis%20\)](https://www.sharing.org/information-centre/reports/intersection-politics-and-spirituality-addressing-climate-crisis%20) from Sharing.org draws out the entwined connection between environmentalism and spirituality.

Even the no-nonsense trustworthy journalist [Caitlin Johnstone](https://caitlinjohnstone.com/2019/06/10/on-authentic-spirituality/)  [\(https://caitlinjohnstone.com/2019/06/10/on-authentic-spirituality/\)](https://caitlinjohnstone.com/2019/06/10/on-authentic-spirituality/) sees a place for a particular kind of spirituality in this perilous century.

And an unknown indie Israeli singer's lament, like a psalm or something out of the Book of Job, struck a nerve around the world -

## Lilly Wood &amp; The Prick - Prayer In C (Live @ Main Square 2015)

[← Reply](#)

Bryan Hammond (<https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/903252>)

Jul 20, 2019

**Thank you SO much Caroline for all that you have posted in this Module 8 forum, and to all of you who have posted such thoughtful and important Comments in relation to Caroline's!**

This particular Comment I'm making right here is only in regard to one of her great links, re *suicide rates* - **and** so much more of great importance: it is a very thoughtful and important article and link - very worthy of mention here! I am so favourably impressed with it, that I'll speak no more praise of it than to say I hope a lot of TCC MOOC participants will click and read it, AND thanks for drawing participants attention to **TomDispatch.com** - a very important site, for many reasons. Having said that, I'll also mention the only critical comment I have about that article.... the major problem inherent in this quote from it, specifically what I have put in bold and underlined:

"Evidence from the **United States** (<https://www.frbsf.org/economic-research/files/wp07-12bk.pdf>), **Brazil** (<https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0124934>), **Japan** (<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1514032610600062>), and **Sweden** (<https://jech.bmj.com/content/72/11/1009>) does indicate that, as income inequality increases, so does the suicide rate. If so, **the good news is that progressive economic policies -- should Democrats ever retake the**

**White House and the Senate -- could make a positive difference."**

Well... pardon my crudeness, but W.T.F.! The prevalence of the still-lingering delusion of American Activists whose sincerity, compassion, and intelligence I don't doubt - in other respects - to think that Democrats - who have been clearly dominated by neoliberals, and riding on an undeserved reputation for about 40 years for supposedly sincerely putting the interests & well-being of Common people first - baffles and disappoints me repeatedly. Because this is a related, but different, issue than what I think is intended for Module 8, I won't elaborate here. However, **this lingering delusion that parties like the Democrats in the US, Liberals in Canada, or their counterparts in other countries are seriously for the Common people - or are at least a significantly "lesser evil" - could bring about the self annihilation of Humanity... at best just slightly slowing down our rapid decent into oblivion.** I don't know exactly where I should elaborate within this TCC, so I'll just post some things as Comments to my own Introduction, in that Forum within this TCC.

Just Search for Bryan Hammond IF my Comments may be of interest to you. There I'll probably have other posts that I see as very important, and crucial to the overall TCC MOOC, but am not sure where they best fit into the flow of this MOOC.

← [Reply](#)



[John Restakis \(https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/379201\)](https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/379201)

Jun 21, 2019

Hi Caroline,

Indeed, the points you raise about the spiritual dimension of the subjects we are discussing is important. I, like others on our team, have delved into this issue on a personal level but have not fully engaged with it as a separate element in my work, in part because I find that the models and values we espouse are, at depth, also spiritual values. As Mike G. mentioned in his comment, the questions of reciprocity and mutuality can be read as secular aspects of an essentially spiritual practice. These terms, and the operations of co-operative models of economics, would find a comfortable home in many spiritual traditions.

The inclusion of this question as a separate subject in the course material is certainly possible, but also challenging, inasmuch as spiritual or religious discussions in the context of political economy are sensitive subjects – they can be as alienating for some as they are attractive to others. In a course that seeks a wide audience, it is a tricky undertaking.

Thanks indeed for your comment – it is certainly worth considering.

← [Reply](#)



[Caroline Hurley \(https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/894561\)](https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/894561)

Jun 25, 2019

Seems reasonable, John, although at that rate, why run any course generally seeking to educate by making explicit what is implicit?

I just finished reading this [article by John Tritschcher](https://www.counterpunch.org/2019/06/25/hopeful-things/) (<https://www.counterpunch.org/2019/06/25/hopeful-things/>) about the author's struggle to comfortably fit in remnants of spirituality in a world riven by capitalist cruelties. I can relate : )

The influential eighteenth-century legal reformer and philosopher Cesare Baccaria's opus magnum [On Crimes and Punishments](https://aeon.co/essays/cesare-beccarias-radical-ideas-on-crime-and-punishment?utm_source=Aeon+Newsletter&utm_campaign=64f1a38ee4-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2019_07_02_11_41&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_411a82e59d-64f1a38ee4-53682837) ([https://aeon.co/essays/cesare-beccarias-radical-ideas-on-crime-and-punishment?utm\\_source=Aeon+Newsletter&utm\\_campaign=64f1a38ee4-EMAIL\\_CAMPAIGN\\_2019\\_07\\_02\\_11\\_41&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_411a82e59d-64f1a38ee4-53682837](https://aeon.co/essays/cesare-beccarias-radical-ideas-on-crime-and-punishment?utm_source=Aeon+Newsletter&utm_campaign=64f1a38ee4-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2019_07_02_11_41&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_411a82e59d-64f1a38ee4-53682837)) (1764) is attracting renewed attention after a long hiatus: another one to watch, perhaps, in terms of resources?

Edited by [Caroline Hurley](https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/894561) (<https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/894561>) on Jul 5 at 12:37pm

← [Reply](#)



[John Restakis](https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/379201) (<https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/379201>)

Jul 23, 2019

Caroline,

Thank you for sharing the link to the work of Cesare Baccaria. I was not familiar with his enormous contribution to the Enlightenment movement and I have begun reading his remarkable essay Of Crimes and Punishments. It is interesting indeed, that he coined the formula of the greatest happiness for the greatest number, which Bentham subsequently took up as the basis of utilitarian philosophy. Unlike Bentham, I suspect Baccaria was less compromised by the ideas of free market capitalism, that ultimately corrupted Bentham's work.

Reading Baccaria is like holding a mirror to the gross faults and injustices of contemporary police states, including the horrors of the criminal justice system of the US.

John

← [Reply](#)



[Caroline Hurley](https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/894561) (<https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/894561>)

Jul 25, 2019

I'd only read the Aeon essay about Baccaria but not his original work, which I've since located on [Project Gutenberg](https://www.gutenberg.org/files/58700/58700-h/58700-h.htm) (<https://www.gutenberg.org/files/58700/58700-h/58700-h.htm>) as the second half of more information about him and his



ideas. I hope to read it soon, and leave the link here for anyone else interested.

Regarding the broader topic of reforming international security, I'm finding [A Global Security System: An Alternative to War \(2018-2019 Edition\)](https://worldbeyondwar.org/alternative/) (<https://worldbeyondwar.org/alternative/>) edited by Tony Jenkins for World Beyond War, to be very comprehensive and firmly focused on the real possibility of transition.

[← Reply](#)



[Sandra Wheeler \(https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/903359\)](https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/903359)

Jun 16, 2019

The reason Farmington, NM is not a fossil-fuel-free municipality is that it's illegal. Like Kristianstad, the city of Farmington is our electric utility. They have regulations limiting even the number of solar panels we may install and stopped paying new solar customers for excess electricity sent to the grid. In NM, in 2019, Senate Bill 374, the Local Choice Energy Act, would have allowed local jurisdictions and tribes to develop, produce, distribute, and sell renewable energy. Fossil fuels are our one abundant resource in an otherwise poor state, making the fossil fuel industry the corporate capitalist landscape engine driving our particular regime. Even with a Democratic trifecta, the Senate **Conservation** Committee wouldn't hear this bill.

This tension between the empowering factors in Kristianstad, Sweden and their absence in Farmington, NM in the energy sector is what snagged my attention. In terms of next system movements organizing for fair, low carbon economies, Kristianstad is an example of a territorial emphasis making its local contribution to community resilience at the international level by contributing to GHG reductions and incorporating climate justice (by using grant money from the Swedish government to subsidize all city residents to either retrofit their vehicles to biogas or replace them with biogas vehicles). In terms of cooperative economic democracy, I haven't found any mention of the electorate having any input in the fossil-free decision. Because this systems change was initiated at a regime level with the national and city governments in accord as allies, I can't detect any political strategies or opponents that were involved in the decision. It was not some grassroots model at the niche level that was scaled up. As community benefits, Kristianstad heats and powers its buildings through severe winters, fuels its vehicles and saves more than half of the \$7 million it used to spend heating municipal buildings, all while reducing annual CO2 emissions by an estimated 130,000 tonnes. This last benefits everything on the planet. We need more Kristianstads.

Based on my jealous frustration over Kristianstad, on my experience as a member of Retake Our Democracy's alert network that calls and emails our legislators about upcoming bills we favor or oppose, on the fact that not one of the climate bills that we advocated for passed this session, and on the fact that I have just joined Retake's new Climate Action Team, I am now considering

systems change by researching alternate ways of increasing access to renewables that might meet less political resistance. One that seems like a smaller ask is community ownership of renewables. A community is smaller than a jurisdiction and could be one apartment building (or low income housing unit) or several homes in a neighborhood, like solar sharing, but solar sharing may or may involve joint ownership.

And local ownership matters. According to John Farrell, the director of the Energy Democracy initiative at the Institute for Local Self-Reliance in "Advantage Local: Why Local Energy Ownership Matters," [ilsr.org](http://ilsr.org), Sept. 2014, "[T]he number of jobs and economic returns for communities are substantially higher when electricity generation from wind and sun can be captured by local hands.... and **builds political support** for a low-carbon, more local and economically rewarding energy system." According to the American Wind Energy Association, "The economic benefit of a single 2-megawatt wind turbine is \$2 million.... If the state met its renewable standard with in-state wind instead of imports, the economy would gain at least \$4.2 **billion** and over 3,000 jobs. If that wind power were locally owned, the economic value could rise as high as \$14 billion, supporting nearly 9,000 jobs." For Washington, DC, the difference between economic benefits of solar power alone compared to locally owned solar is the difference between \$432 million and \$1.5 **billion**, almost 3 1/2 times the benefits. According to RE-volv, "The solar industry is adding workers at a rate nearly 20 times faster than the overall economy." Perhaps we should ballyhoo these strong selling points in as many different localities in the state as possible to pump up support that could then be directed at the legislature. Note, however, that gains of this size come from local ownership at a larger scale than one apartment block or a few homes that is typical with community-owned solar, though larger jurisdictions--cities, counties--**could** be the community owners.

Looking into funding, I found RE-volv, cited above and touted in [Forbes](#) and by the Obama administration, is a 501(c)(3) non-profit crowdfund source for charitable solar projects through ordinary online donations and through community members who nominate a community service organization they want to help get rooftop solar and then go out and raise funds locally that they contribute to RE-volv to do the project. They are too small to fund all the solar I want to see, but they've given me something more to think about. According to RE-volv, "A little known fact about solar energy is that it's contagious.... [S]tudy after study... shows that when someone goes solar their neighbors are more likely to go solar, and their neighbors go solar at faster and faster rates. This means that if we put solar up on a popular place in the community," one with beneficial contacts with many local people, this contagion could ignite. I think this is politically interesting. This implies that even old-fashioned fundraising--the bake sales and car washes, the auctions and benefit concerts--could encourage the extension of the positive connections the community has for its service organization to include the solar project itself, building more local support for solar. And psychologically, the more we do for someone or something, the more we value the recipient of our efforts. So donations that benefit the service organization also benefit solar power, making solar power contagiously more valuable to the donor. I don't see yet how to apply this in campaigns for renewables, but I'll keep it in mind.

At this point, only 15 states and the District of Columbia provide for solar sharing. Six of the 16 are in New England. All but two are in the North. That might seem counterintuitive, but my thinking is this pattern prevails not in spite of gray northern days, but because of them. Utilities there aren't afraid they'll lose much business. New Mexico, on the other hand, is ranked #2 in the nation for potential solar power and #7 for wind, so we could meet all our own needs and be an exporter of

renewable electricity. We may not need our heavily fossil fuel invested utilities, but they need ratepayers. So far, our legislature is determined to help them keep their grip on us.

In spite of this, to be eligible for community owned renewables or even shared solar, we would need to bring enough pressure to bear that lawmakers would provide for virtual net meter reading. Ordinary meter reading tracks electric consumption. **Net** meter reading is used with renewables, typically rooftop solar, connected to a utility grid and tracks both consumption from the grid and excess electricity generated and sent to the grid. **Virtual** net meter reading tracks the consumption by multiple and perhaps separated individual owners as well as tracking the excess energy sent to the grid to determine each owner's utility bill. Without virtual net metering, much of the economic benefit of ownership is lost, though the planet would get full benefits.

Community ownership may bring economic empowerment, but if it's likely available only to small groups rather than even cities and counties, this would prevent the gain of thousands of jobs and billions in revenue while utilities would likely recognize the potential threat and have their lawmakers block the necessary legislation. I don't think either the benefits or odds of success are good enough to commit our limited resources to this particular strategy. We need to pick our fights carefully in the war for our only planet.

↳ [Reply](#)



[Caroline Hurley \(https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/894561\)](https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/894561)

Jun 17, 2019

Would you consider [a lawsuit \(http://climatecasechart.com/case/alec-l-v-mccarthy/\)](http://climatecasechart.com/case/alec-l-v-mccarthy/), Sandra? Or like these more [recent hearings \(http://climatecasechart.com/principle-law/public-trust-doctrine/\)](http://climatecasechart.com/principle-law/public-trust-doctrine/)?

↳ [Reply](#)



[Mike Gismondi \(https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/227458\)](https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/227458)

Jun 17, 2019

The local benefits of community energy are clear and persuasive. TxS for the OFarrell Report.

Im a bit puzzled and unsure about the context so I will ask.

Is utility scale community generation of say 2MW to 25 MW permitted?

This could be a way forward , greater than microgeneration, but less than large corporate solar fields or wind fields, or a large municipally owned power generation business.

Often these smaller green energy generators make the grid more efficient by using existing wire capacity, and locating closer to loads. If owned by a NFP or coop, or co-owned with a municipality, part of the revenue streams could be circular and re-invested in social good activities - including providing excluded social groups access to affordable rooftop or home efficiency retrofits to address utilities poverty.

If many of these bloom they bring with them apolitical base that can be networked and provide

the pressure to make the larger changes you seek. As the climate crisis increases, opportunities may open up.

Best

Mikeg


← [Reply](#)

 [Mike Gismondi \(https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/227458\)](https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/227458)

Jun 17, 2019

This seems a bit more optimistic from the same source. I guess it is in limbo...Mikeg  
<https://ilsr.org/could-new-mexicos-proposed-community-solar-program-raise-the-bar/>

← [Reply](#)

 [Karl Horak \(https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/903858\)](https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/903858)

Jun 30, 2019

In response to the NM legislature's failure to pass so many worthwhile environmental bills like SB 374, several organizations like Retake Our Democracy are identifying key Democratic-in-name-only representatives and senators who were responsible for the poor result. There will be consequences at the ballot box, not the least of which will be the replacement of Mary Kay Papen, President Pro Tempore.

← [Reply](#)

 [Kelleigh Wright \(https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/897550\)](https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/897550)

Jun 17, 2019

### The Topic

As a culinary nutritionist with a deep interest in nutritional ecology, I know that food touches everything in our lives and so can be a place where change can occur - both individually and collectively.

I make no claims that anything presented here are full and lasting answers to the complexity of what lies before us. What we are doing now is a 'repair job' because we haven't planned our communities in a way that sustains life. Restoring community is part of the way forward (I'm taking the optimistic long view).

How we view the world determines how we choose to interact with the world. It has been our

diverse traditions, cultures, stories, and music which sustained us - sustained life. These things are no longer fulfilling that role because they are no longer diverse, rich, complex, sacred and full of mystery. 'Monoculture everything' is now the norm. We have normalized that which is not normal. My local food system has been no exception. Without these various diversities there isn't the necessary resilience needed to weather what is yet to come.

My work has also taught me that we can't separate mental health from emotional health from physical health from spiritual health. It is all entirely interrelated and connected. Our personal health affects our community health. We have forgotten what is really required, and as a result, we (my community, at least) is collectively operating from a deficit position.

In order for all of this to happen, we need proper care - and one of the foundations for this is the accessibility to local, seasonal, nutrient dense, culturally appropriate food that has been grown/harvested to regenerative standards. Easier said than done these days.

The bias and world view rooted in my work is that our deeply ingrained, collective, dominant, industrial value system of 'fast, cheap and easy' must die. It has had a long enough run. In its time it has shored-up conformity, uniformity, obedience and worshiped comfort - at all costs. It has also sought to side step the laws of nature, attempts to remain separate from consequence, avoids evolution, and ignores decay. Death is a part of living and life comes from death.

### **The Aim**

Small scale co-operative regenerative agriculture farms that support diverse forms of monetary exchange and are integrated with co-operative holistic care services (cradle to grave care). These partnerships and future alliances are intended to eventually influence other systems at the community level.

"When every economic relationship becomes a paid service, we are left independent of everyone we know and dependent, via money, on anonymous, distant service providers. That is a primary reason for the decline of community in modern societies, with its attendant alienation, loneliness, and psychological misery. Moreover, money is unsuited to facilitate the circulation and development of the unquantifiable things that truly make life rich."— Charles Eisenstein

### **The Context**

["It may be that when we no longer know what to do we have come to our real work, and that when we no longer know which way to go we have come to our real journey. The mind that is not baffled is not employed. The impeded stream is the one that sings." ~ Wendell Berry](#)

Change rarely comes without crisis. Village Poverty is our crisis.

The work (at a micro level) is to re-establish the unmet individual and community needs of reconnection and trust, through the pillars of personal care and food. After over 400 years of colonialism, white supremacy, genocide and more recently capitalism, we all have a lot of healing work to do in my region of the world - as was highlighted in the [MMIW report](https://www.mmiwg-ffada.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Executive_Summary.pdf) ([https://www.mmiwg-ffada.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Executive\\_Summary.pdf](https://www.mmiwg-ffada.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Executive_Summary.pdf)). We have an opportunity to examine our beliefs and the belief systems that were put upon us - and then act accordingly. Our energy crisis, climate crisis, monetary crisis, food system crisis are all symptoms of the dominant belief systems.

[Nipun Mehta](https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/profile/Nipun_Mehta) ([https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/profile/Nipun\\_Mehta](https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/profile/Nipun_Mehta)) believes that four key

societal shifts can transform our culture: from consumption to contribution, transaction to trust, isolation to community, and scarcity to abundance.

Here where I live, wise Cree elders who keep Traditional Ecological Knowledge will tell you there is an order of things (and it is mostly circular): spring, summer, late summer, fall, winter; birth, aging, disease, decay, death; nothing in nature lives for itself; in nature after a period of growth, is a period of rest. Nature is never in a period of constant mass production. The way of life in the modern world does not honour nature's cycles. And because we are nature, we are not honouring who we innately are. All life wants to be honoured. So, the idea of 'owning' any part of the sea, sky, water, soil is fallible and violent.

**Studies** (<https://www3.laurentian.ca/livingwithlakes/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Final-Summary-Report-Climate-Change-and-Multiple-Stressor-Aquatic-Research-Programme-2019-.pdf>) done in my little corner of the world are indicating that climate change has arrived already as we are warming faster than other areas in my country and the world. **Studies** (<https://www.hqontario.ca/portals/0/Documents/system-performance/health-in-the-north-en.pdf>) also show our population is quite unwell. We have higher than average rates of chronic disease, postpartum depression and postpartum depletion, and higher rates of suicide. Much of this is from a collective dysfunctional way of life. What is missing is the container of true community where we feel safe, we are seen & recognized, we are heard and held. This is where trust is build, reconnection begins and necessary behaviour shifts start.

### The Systems Change

"A better system will not automatically ensure a better life. In fact the opposite is true: only by creating a better life can a better system be developed" - Vaclav Havel

This initiative is a very small undertaking (that builds on resilience strategies), in an era where we no longer seem to have the luxury of time and feel, out of desperation, the urgency to scale out and scale up with our projects. It feels more like **nudging** ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nudge\\_theory](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nudge_theory)) in the whirlwind of chaos than a true proposed systems change - which seems to come with a level of certainty and lots of planning when all elements are so tightly synergistic. It boils down to bridge building & field building, an openness to be innovative and when necessary disruptive.

### The Goals

- continue to erase 'village poverty' by restoring the 'social glue' through intergenerational relationships & ceremonies, by celebrating local distinctiveness, by promoting support networks, and by identifying economic opportunities that support drawdown in the small communities that have identified a 'readiness'. Japan's eldercare model has been inspirational.
- continue to support, diversify and stay educated on alternative forms of currency at the local level, assisting in restoring autonomy, relieving poverty and promoting inclusion. Inclusion is one step closer to participation.
- continue to establish land trusts for co-operative farms and co-operative holistic care businesses
- reclaim food sovereignty in this bio-region at the grass-roots level to thwart the epidemic of diseases related to lifestyle
- continue to expand the conversation around de-growth at the individual and community levels and in doing so, change the story about what thriving might look like in future years

## The Obstacles

[“You can not build ecological integrity without human integrity. The land reflects the people.” - Ray Archuleta](#)

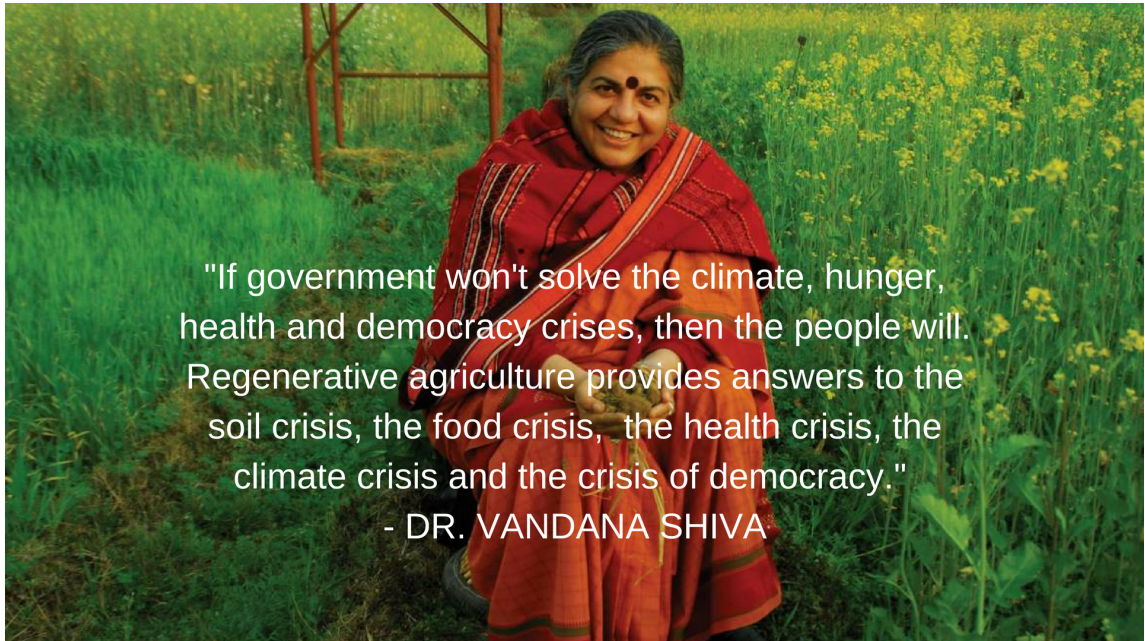
- sustainable localization depends on the removal of hidden subsidies that makes global trade possible. This is not a federal priority nor will it be in the near future.
- the mandate of the current provincial government is to maintain the will of large corporate interests, and the north has always been their playground. The north is the economic engine of the province -> mining, forestry, hydro-electric power are sacred cows
- without continuing education and deep cultural roots, our local extraction economy quickly erases all holds on tradition. Poverty, addiction to convenience, as well as, the preference for ‘fast, cheap & easy’ continue to undermine small gains.
- keeping local currencies circulating when our economy has become delocalized and when seasonal local producers are competing with year-round cheaper imports, is a challenge (and shopping habits are hard to break). Local currencies have a tendency to accumulate in the hands of a few, and it doesn’t help that the percentage of use among the local population is still relatively insignificant. So, people get burned out, the novelty wears off, and it doesn’t get used to its potential.
- going against our own family patterning and the collective belief systems of the community (that have been perpetuated by capitalistic beliefs and values for over a century) is a recipe for divide and isolation.

## The Strategies

[“Live the question now. Perhaps then, someday in the future you will gradually, without even noticing it, live your way into the answer. “ - Ranier Maria Rilke 1903](#)

- go where you have influence; there seems to be more of a readiness in populations under 30 years of age, with high rates of mental illness, poor employment prospects, exclusion from the economic opportunities, dissatisfaction with the status quo. Also, smaller communities that have been gutted of services have a readiness to embrace newer strategies
- Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women Report’s recommendations are legal imperatives based in "international and domestic human and Indigenous rights laws, including the Charter, the Constitution and the Honour of the Crown."- Qajaq Robinson. If implemented, they will assist in making policy changes, at the federal level, needed to address many concerns raised in this MOOC
- current allies: Ontario Co-op Association, Slow Food Canada, local NFP organizations and charities with a food mandate, Ontario Native Women's Association, FN reserves with land based programming and engaged elders, private independent business (grocers, book stores, holistic care givers, restaurants, permaculturists), farmers, students, many town and a few city councillors, mothers & grandmothers, ancestors and local biology
- future allies: engage with new immigrants being funnelled to this area by the federal gov’t - they still have their traditions intact which tend to value food and care, they bring with them new perspectives and ways of knowing
- the benefits that have emerged are: diversified supply chains for micro producers of food and their support services, new local producers, collaboration between businesses as a newer norm, living seed banks have been established, alternative modes of care are being embraced in the absence/shortage of professionals in our health care system

- o the factors that have generated the benefits to date have been: the internet and social media channels for communication & promotion, community lectures and meetings, project led trainings, systems change ideas are moving from the fringe to the mainstream, investing in personal relationships, reaching out to professional bodies for help and guidance, a willingness to unlearn, & loving the 'unloveable'



← Reply



[Mike Gismondi \(https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/227458\)](https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/227458)

Jun 17, 2019

Inspiring Kelleigh.

The quotes were very effective for me as a reader. Catching me where I am.

Confused and not knowing what to do next is not only ok, but means I am on the right track.

← Reply



[Kristi Lewis \(https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/905890\)](https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/905890)

Jun 18, 2019

I concur! So well stated, both of you!

← Reply



[Caroline Hurley \(https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/894561\)](https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/894561)

Jun 19, 2019



Yes, another superbly well thought out and articulate exploration from Kelleigh.

← [Reply](#)



[Kelleigh Wright \(https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/897550\)](https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/897550)

Jun 24, 2019

**[INTEGRATIVE LEADERSHIP: Innovating from 'The Middle Space \(TMS\)'](http://www.ntl-psc.org/assets/Uploads/PSC-February-2018.pdf)** (http://www.ntl-psc.org/assets/Uploads/PSC-February-2018.pdf) 2018 by Gary Nelson talks about *an emergent value proposition for our times, offering a concept, principles and tools to guide 'how' we can foster sustainable lives and social enterprises that balance the interests of people, planet, and performance - DESPITE the chaos, disorder and uncertainty of living in the space between the known and unknown (Middle Space). It's been a helpful resource when I'm stuck on 'now what??'*

← [Reply](#)



[Saviour Ubong David \(Blaze Nissi\) \(https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/902864\)](https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/902864)

Wednesday

You are absolutely amazing Keleigh Wright. Is there anyway we can connect off here for a possible cooperation eventually? Here is my email: blazenissi@gmail.com

← [Reply](#)



[Caroline Hurley \(https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/894561\)](https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/894561)

Jun 19, 2019

Unlike many classmates, I am not coming from a career in the community co-op or energy sectors, nor even from any significant volunteering background but am re-awakening interest in the themes of creating and protecting commons resources and services in solidarity with others. After this course ends, I don't know how well I'll stay involved, but for now, in tandem with this exercise, I am compiling two proposals for the real world that could conceivably come into being.

One is community energy microgeneration; the other an ecofarm. A principle of stewardship would be applicable in both cases, if to different degrees. I develop both these ideas in a preliminary way here, to subsequently work into two separate documents. First, the overall picture.

Kate Raworth's doughnut economics sketches the balance of systems, with inbuilt safety limits and scientific tags on where we end up with shortfalls or overshoots.

Eleanor Ostrom's insistence that *'groups are capable of avoiding the tragedy of the commons*

*without requiring top-down regulation*, at least if certain conditions are met' offers more encouragement on how to move successfully in one direction or another. She names these eight critical conditions: 1) Clearly defined boundaries; 2) Proportional equivalence between benefits and costs; 3) Collective choice arrangements; 4) Monitoring; 5) Graduated sanctions; 6) Fast and fair conflict resolution; 7) Local autonomy; 8) Appropriate relations *with* other tiers of rule-making authority (polycentric governance).

This work won Ostrom a Nobel Prize in 2009. It lays down a hard-wearing interactional framework on which to build. I would hope to keep these explicit principles constantly before all those solicited and coming on board.

The multi-level perspective will be integral in getting both projects off the ground. The Irish government has just published a [Climate Action Plan](https://www.dccae.gov.ie/en-ie/climate-action/publications/Documents/16/Climate%20Action%20Plan.pdf) (<https://www.dccae.gov.ie/en-ie/climate-action/publications/Documents/16/Climate%20Action%20Plan.pdf>), in which microgrids are flagged to become a reality in the near future. In the meantime, as the landscape hopefully aligns in time with aims, I would try to interest committed teams, rounding up local authority, political, business, installer, design and finance figures to have the expertise ready at the regime level to carry out the energy project once regulations are passed to allow buyback for the national grid along with free local energy usage.

The proposal would adhere to the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) Coalition for Action description of community energy: "the economic and operational participation and/or ownership by citizens or members of a defined community in a renewable energy project" —regardless of size and scope of the project. Community energy is any combination of at least two of the following elements: local stakeholders own more than half or all shares of a renewable energy project; voting control rests with a community-based organisation; and the majority of social and economic benefits are decentralized locally." This would be permanently and prominently stated as first principle. A lot will be learned too from what has been happening in the [UK community energy](http://www.ukerc.ac.uk/publications/evolution-of-community-energy-in-the-uk.html) (<http://www.ukerc.ac.uk/publications/evolution-of-community-energy-in-the-uk.html>) arena and other wind power schemes around the world.

As I am co-owner with five others of a parcel of land currently leased to an ordinary farmer, that is of probably sufficient size to situate a small ecofarm, the crucial opening job, not assured at all, is persuading those co-owners that an ecofarm is both a wonderful idea and also a sustainable one in terms of a going concern that preserves the good of the land, with regeneration in mind wherever possible, and the [access to land for community connected farming](http://www.agter.org/bdf/docs/tcl_fs_2012_case-study-series_pt.pdf) ([http://www.agter.org/bdf/docs/tcl\\_fs\\_2012\\_case-study-series\\_pt.pdf](http://www.agter.org/bdf/docs/tcl_fs_2012_case-study-series_pt.pdf)) model.

The ecofarm, while a niche development in a particular place, would equally require MLP analysis in relation to planning permission for building and land boundary and use changes, and promotion to heritage and tourist bodies. Visits to successful similar ventures such as [Crannog](https://www.facebook.com/CrannOgEcoFarm/) (<https://www.facebook.com/CrannOgEcoFarm/>) would form part of research. Qualifying as Community Supported Agriculture would be another priority, short of wholesale commercial viability beyond the compound. Liaising especially with Irish umbrella groups such as [Susy](http://www.solidarityeconomy.eu/) (<http://www.solidarityeconomy.eu/>) for support and information, and organisations further afield for expertise and inspiration, such as [eco-farm.org](https://eco-farm.org/) (<https://eco-farm.org/>) and [GreenHorns](https://greenhorns.org/) (<https://greenhorns.org/>) would be essential.

Thought would be given to relevant employees for multiple roles in activities to be included: organic

horticulture; a restaurant serving food grown, to be powered by renewable energy, probably solar and wind; an efficient operational waste recycling and processing unit; a series of interpretative stations; an alternative health pod with information on co-operative care models; educational workshop and craft rooms; an area of [silvopasture](https://www.drawdown.org/solutions/food/silvopasture) (<https://www.drawdown.org/solutions/food/silvopasture>); a yard for small free-range farm animals; some land kept for conventional grazing for comparison and also with a view to dedicating some of that space in the future for glamping or other light eco-friendly accommodation facilities; and walkways by terrain features of special historical, cultural, biological or archaeological interest.

Everywhere, information on [land use](https://www.drawdown.org/solutions/land-use) (<https://www.drawdown.org/solutions/land-use>), draw-down, the environment and community amply and visibly placed. A definite healthcare element would be incorporated into the ecofarm, lending itself to circulating background details about social care. Massage, mindfulness, meditation, yoga, nature walks and the like are among such activities envisaged. Attempts would be made to link in with established care and social co-ops.

Returning to the energy undertaking, something like the structure of a community land trust might suit the proposition unless granted permission to use public property for public purposes, similar to a community orchard already planted in the neighbourhood. The unique selling point would hinge on introducing micro turbines of colourful playful 'artistic' designs into the town centre to bring energy direct to businesses and homes in order to reduce local antipathy to surrounding windfarms.

Such antipathy is now recognised in the sector, as the [University of Auckland](https://www.policycommons.ac.nz/2018/12/06/policy-strategies-for-inclusive-renewable-energy-in-aotearoa-new-zealand/) (<https://www.policycommons.ac.nz/2018/12/06/policy-strategies-for-inclusive-renewable-energy-in-aotearoa-new-zealand/>) reports: *...centralised strategies are also signalling and communication devices. The lack of government leadership around distributed energy has translated into a widespread lack of public support and awareness of the benefits and opportunities provided by renewable energy, with nearly all community organisations reporting instances of local opposition (sometimes violent), health and safety concerns, or concerns around the effectiveness of the technology, many of which are unsupported by empirical evidence.* With residents directly involved and to benefit from clean cheap life-enhancing energy using infrastructure thoughtfully arranged to look well around the town, the hope would be for a change of heart.

Having made a decision on type or mix, taking the cue from existing designs - [1](https://www.architecturaldigest.com/gallery/wind-turbines-that-look-like-works-of-art) (<https://www.architecturaldigest.com/gallery/wind-turbines-that-look-like-works-of-art>), [2](https://www.alternative-energy-news.info/tree-shaped-wind-turbines-paris/) (<https://www.alternative-energy-news.info/tree-shaped-wind-turbines-paris/>), [3](https://inhabitat.com/architectural-wind-modular-wind-turbines/) (<https://inhabitat.com/architectural-wind-modular-wind-turbines/>), [4](https://singularityhub.com/2017/07/09/this-mini-wind-turbine-can-power-your-home-in-a-gentle-breeze/) (<https://singularityhub.com/2017/07/09/this-mini-wind-turbine-can-power-your-home-in-a-gentle-breeze/>), [5](https://www.lowtechmagazine.com/2019/02/heat-your-house-with-a-water-brake-windmill.html) (<https://www.lowtechmagazine.com/2019/02/heat-your-house-with-a-water-brake-windmill.html>) etc. sourcing a turbine manufacturing company in the country to collaborate with on such designs would be the preference.

[The Cooperative Commonwealth & the Partner State](https://thenextsystem.org/cooperative-commonwealth-partner-state) (<https://thenextsystem.org/cooperative-commonwealth-partner-state>) would have a bearing on both projects, but more centrally to the town energy upgrading. Much reference would be made to drawdown, the energy transition, democracy and citizen-orientated energy provision as in Steinfurt, Kristianstadt, Kirklees and Community Energy Scotland. Closer to home, there would be liaison with community wind enterprise [Temple Derry](https://tipenergy.ie/projects/templederry-community-wind-farm/) (<https://tipenergy.ie/projects/templederry-community-wind-farm/>) in Tipperary for guidance, with [Clare Energy Co-op](https://www.clareenergycoop.org/) (<https://www.clareenergycoop.org/>), in the process of moving towards

energy independence and sustainability as well, and more mainstream approaches such as the [Sustainable Energy Community](https://www.energyco-ops.ie/hydrogen-production-plans-for-irelands-valentia-island/) (<https://www.energyco-ops.ie/hydrogen-production-plans-for-irelands-valentia-island/>) Partnership formed in Valentia Island. Studying their methods would be highly instructive, particularly in terms of resourcing.

Financing will certainly be a challenge so alternative financing such as Community Development Loan Funds, Community Development Credit Unions, Community Development and public Banks, and Community Development Venture Capital, will need to be explored alongside applications for conventional funding such as grants, community investment shares, tax credits, loans and so on. [Newer unorthodox cash streams](http://www.geo.coop/story/innovative-funding-models-worker-owned-platform-co-ops) (<http://www.geo.coop/story/innovative-funding-models-worker-owned-platform-co-ops>) would also be considered. Entrance fees for the ecofarm and grid payment for spare electricity would hopefully soon propel each concern into viability. If and when opportunities arise, promoting community financing options would be out of place in neither venture.

Both projects lend themselves to public education about co-ops, solidarity, the commons, glocal action, decentralisation, alternative economics and to collaboration with initiatives of related values. If successful, they might convince local authorities to give their blessing and material support to similar community schemes.

The Next System attributes speak for themselves, as both ideas aspire to community resilience, territorial importance and shared ownership, for a co-operative economic democracy. Both also uphold the priority of ensuring fair low-carbon economies, and the neighbourhood energy project especially leverages change to make it easier to reclaim the commons. A sense of community pride and competence would be other nice byproducts.

Realisation of these projects is first of all blocked by the absence of those with authority to agree progress at the table. For now, what I've written down here is as far as they've come! So a long way to go. Identifying the best people to consult matters, while relationships and communication will be key, and an effort at this stage to clarify participatory design and fair engagement using non-violent communication, coherence of objective with interactions en route and responding to obstacles, could later deliver vital pay offs. Not only will local community figures need to participate but also regulatory and corporate entities for access to licences, permissions, resources, funds and so on. Through this process we would learn about strategies put in place by others that successfully removed barriers in similar circumstances, and key factors at play to generate maximum benefits.

On obtaining interest and support from the very minimum number of people, a business plan in each case setting everything out in as much detail as possible would repay time and study put in and represent a good start. After all, *tosach maith leath na hoibre* (Irish proverb: 'a good start is half the work').

↳ [Reply](#)

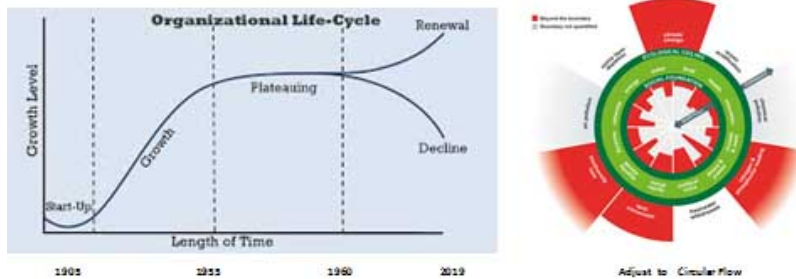


[Murray Hidlebaugh](https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/895967)  
(<https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/895967>)



Jun 19, 2019

## Rural Saskatchewan Communities Responses to Environmental Impacts



The first image, organizational lifecycle, represents change occurring over time going into decline, leading to death, or renewal. The second image, Kate Raworth's doughnut economics, is a graphic indicating the limits of the carrying capacity of the Earth's ecosystems. It shows we've already overshot in several key areas that impact our capacity to survive. The images together indicate that both change and contraction are not optional. We need to address transformative change.

I am part of a small group in rural Saskatchewan who have been researching models that support democratic, transformative change in rural and remote communities. The long term goal is to enable community groups to be able to build their capacity to adapt to depleting resources and climate change by replacing the current economic system that is accelerating the problems, with a decentralized system based on a circular flow of resources. Rural needs to be a healthy and vibrant place to live, to work, and to play, not just a place to visit or as a source of cheap resources, cheap labor, and a place to dispose of wastes.

Many communities in rural and remote Saskatchewan are struggling to transition into the 21st century. They have become redundant in the current market economy and are being left to cope as best they can. They vary in size but most are in the 200 to 5000 population range. Regardless of size, the key will be to reclaim the commons to meet basic needs within the carrying capacity of the local ecosystem. Eight areas we reference as the commons include; food, water, energy, shelter. (including clothing and footwear), education, leisure/recreation, health, and finance.

I registered for this course to learn from others about the issues referenced in the outline. The content description in the modules appeared to cover several of the issues I was looking for information about.

The resource material, the discussions, and the feedback have provided very useful information.. One problem is most of the papers deal with European and American neighborhoods that are bigger than any of our four biggest cities. This has required us to make some arbitrary interpretation when analysing the information in the papers.

We are aware that we can't take on all the issues at once in working to create a decentralized, sovereign and democratic rural community system. We are working on the premise that the actions

we undertake need to be “small enough to be doable but big enough to matter.” And that the people feel supported in working on projects at the pace and in the priority that is relevant to their community.

Our initial discussions have been to work on a sequence to use as a guide: 1) food, 2) energy, 3) leisure/recreation, 4) governance, 5) shelter (including clothes and footwear), 6) finance, 7) education, 8) water, 9) health. The priorities vary among the communities with whom we are connected. Much depends on the assets they have, including leadership capacity and cultural connections. We are using John McKnight’s guide to asset mapping. At present it is really informal but it helps community groups discuss priorities and capacity. Patience is definitely a requirement.

Local food production, processing, distribution, and retailing has been the first area of focus. In rural communities the up-take in gardening, raising small animals for food, growing fruit trees and sourcing locally is just starting to return as appropriate activity. Regulations are used as arbitrary barriers to local food processing and distribution. We need government policy to be changed. A second barrier has been the privatization of large tracts of prime agricultural land.

Our approach is to work with local people, especially the younger women and the older women. We are connecting with those who are interested, and particularly those already involved in local food production and processing. Projects include school-community programs with school gardening, developing small gardens in senior citizens homes, re-introducing community kitchens, and restarting the small agricultural fairs in the communities, as a social event.

An initiative that we have been working on for many years has just been announced: ‘[Food Policy for Canada: Everyone at the Table](https://www.canada.ca/en/agriculture-agri-food/news/2019/06/everyone-at-the-table-government-of-canada-announces-the-first-ever-food-policy-for-canada.html)’(link is external) (<https://www.canada.ca/en/agriculture-agri-food/news/2019/06/everyone-at-the-table-government-of-canada-announces-the-first-ever-food-policy-for-canada.html>), June 17, 2019, the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Marie-Claude Bibeau. *announced the launch of a five-year, \$50 million Local Food Infrastructure Fund, designed to support community-led projects that improve access to safe, healthy and culturally diverse food. Starting August 15, 2019, eligible organizations will be invited to submit an application through the first intake period for non-repayable funding of up to \$25,000.* The module discussion on CLTs and small multi-stakeholder coop organizations has been most informative for our situation.

Energy transition from fossil fuel to renewables is a real challenge in Saskatchewan. The uranium industry has also taken a downturn with the cutting back of nuclear power programs. This has created major economic and social upheaval in rural. There is a rapid increase in small scale solar power installation on farms and in the towns, However, there is no viable alternative for fossil fuel in large scale agriculture production. This is a high priority and needs to be addressed sooner rather than later. The entire industrial agricultural model will need to contract as fossil fuel phases out. There has been no discussion on how that will be done, In fact the Federal Sustainability Development Strategy as well as government Agriculture policy promotes expansion of agricultural production for export. I think the impact of fossil fuel reduction in industrial scale agriculture requires more attention.

Leisure/ recreation is a very important consideration in building healthy communities. For rural and remote areas this is often their main focus. The discussion by **Gar Alperovitz** about the value of leisure and the importance of free time (leisure) as a basic requirement for liberty are consistent with both the leisure research and with the research in the Canadian Index of Well-being. David Fleming’s book “Surviving the Future” goes into the value of leisure, the value of social interaction,

and the value of having fun as being an important aspect in building community capacity to respond to stress. We are working from the national "Framework for Recreation in Canada". I think in-depth discussion on the role that leisure and recreation plays in local community development, building on Gar's observations, would be useful in future modules.

Governance needs to be collaborative if decentralized systems are to work in a democratic manner. Our Westminster model of government is adversarial. Municipal governments are controlled by the provincial government and are constrained in their ability to address local issues and local concerns. Another of our challenges is creating an atmosphere of trust between rural settlers and Indigenous people. We have studied strategies used in Bolivia, (36 ethnic groups), in Norway, (Sami), and in New Zealand, (Maori). There are Indigenous members in our group. We make a deliberate effort to measure our proposed actions against the recommendations from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Of particular interest is the discussion around "free, prior, and informed consent" for proposals impacting Indigenous communities. La via Campesina is a movement that we have been involved with for several years. They have demonstrated that to gain support for change there is a need for focused, persistent, loyal, and courageous leadership.

Shelter and clothing, appropriate to the region, are essential components of healthy communities. One strategy we are reviewing involves educating people on how to again live in harmony with heat and with cold. A start is to adjust to temperature change by adjusting the clothes we wear, rather than relying almost entirely on central heating and air conditioning. The Rocky Mountain Institute has given several talks about building into hill-sides to address temperature fluctuations as well as protection against tornadoes and severe storms. We have several net zero buildings as pilot projects for energy reduction. The LEED building standards are valuable as guidelines and have been piloted in several communities. However the building code is still lagging behind. For clothing and footwear we need to look at material that is produced locally and material that is recycled (shoddy). This was done extensively in our rural communities until around 1960. A few remote communities still make outerwear from local material. We also have small scale local clothing and shoe manufacturing making a coming- back with the new equipment that is really efficient and appropriate. The papers discussing building digital platforms to facilitate management of production and labour among groups is a system we are planning to look into in more detail.

Financial control at the local level is essential for democratic decision making. It needs to include the ability to accept local investment that can be used to finance community infrastructure without the high cost of compound interest, We are reviewing a system along the lines of the ATB. It could be a Saskatchewan Community Economic Development Bank. The finance section in the module has provided excellent information and examples.

Education needs to change from the industrial model to an authentic community model. That is we need to change from training for just-in-time labor to authentic education with a curriculum focus on leadership (60%), management (30%), and operation (10%) from K to 12. Ken Robinson gives an excellent overview of what might be done and why: [https://www.ted.com/talks/ken\\_robinson\\_says\\_schools\\_kill\\_creativity?language=en](https://www.ted.com/talks/ken_robinson_says_schools_kill_creativity?language=en) ([https://www.ted.com/talks/ken\\_robinson\\_says\\_schools\\_kill\\_creativity?language=en](https://www.ted.com/talks/ken_robinson_says_schools_kill_creativity?language=en)),

Other than the excellent points made by Alperovitz, there was very little discussion about education and training in the modules.

Water management policy in an arid environment, under threat by climate change, is very

important. However, our current water policy is essentially under corporate control treating water as an economic driver. Use of water to handle sewage, to frack oil, to mine potash, and to cool industrial equipment is tied to corporate policy. Also current government policy supports large scale draining of wetlands with no requirement to assess environmental impact. Prioritizing the use of water and considering it a utility and not a commodity will be an ongoing debate. The public challenge on bottled water is encouraging because it does show local people that they can stand up to the corporations We are currently supporting research projects related to prairie water management. There seemed to be only a general discussion in the modules with a narrow focus on water for public consumption and for electrical generation.

Health is a massive sector and we are leaving it until the last. Also Saskatchewan rural communities already have a solid history in developing health services. The first totally publically funded Medicare program in North America was implemented in 1915 by the Rural Municipality (RM) of Sarnia Saskatchewan. Four RMs then joined to expand this to what became provincial Medicare in Saskatchewan, in 1962. Since 1962 we have been challenged by “creeping privatization”. I found the discussions in the modules on using social coops and volunteers to fill the gaps in health care created by the failure of government, problematic I think the assumption that if government isn’t meeting the needs in health care that charity or a private business (coops) should step in, needs to be debated.

To address the need for top-down support for bottom-up initiatives, we had to address our provincial political situation. Our action, to be able to challenge neoliberal government efforts to further privatize the commons, has been to organize support to elect a political leader at the provincial level, who will be in a position, in the legislature, to challenge the corporate control of public rights. We were successful. This holds potential for further initiatives in rural that would have provincial government policy support.

Finally, again referencing the doughnut economics, there has been some discussion on population and carrying capacity. I think the Raworth model and Qualman’s and Catton’s research shows that the current levels of population on Earth are unsustainable. However, we seem incapable of discussing contraction. Maybe there will be space for this debate in the not too distant future?

[← Reply](#)



[Benjamin Turner \(https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/897723\)](https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/897723)

Jun 20, 2019



The model that stuck out to me was community energy due to its positive examples around the globe, its impact on climate change and use of technology.

Quoted from Module 6 Community Energy is “the economic and operational participation and/or ownership by citizens or members of a defined community in a renewable energy project” —regardless of size and scope of the project. Community energy is any combination of at least two of the following elements: Local stakeholders own more than half or all shares of a renewable energy project; voting control rests with a community-based organisation; and the majority of social



and economic benefits are decentralized locally.”



Drivers for community energy:

- Economic benefits
- Increased control over energy generation
- Social and environmental benefits
- Local job creation
- Reinvestment into the community
- Community pride
- Energy Security

As prices for wind and solar keep dropping, many communities are now seeing the potential for income generation by adopting this renewable form of energy. The income made can be used within the community, increasing everyone's quality of life and making a community's future more sustainable. Most energy companies, that are not locally owned, do not reinvest their revenue into the community nor do they feel the need to switch to greener energies.

Community energy is a great way to address systems change. Depending on how a community goes about doing it, it is an opportunity to create a new form of ownership by the community members. It could be in the form of a cooperative, non-profit, partnership etc.. The choice of what kind of structure the community wants for their energy project depends on regulatory issues and also what the community goals are. Whatever structure is decided upon, it takes back community control and ownership.

Challenges:

The challenges for community energy projects include:

- Start up costs

- Dated infrastructure
- Unreliable wind or solar
- Marginal profits
- institutionalized energy systems that prevent the diffusion of renewable energy technology (Negro, Alkemade, & Hekkert, 2012).
- Political interference
- Lobbyists
- Not a critical mass of citizens wanting change

The community energy projects around the world vary on scale. Many of them are niche sized where others span entire countries. Together they are changing the landscape of the energy sector and showing important actors that people are growing restless of the corporate greed of emission producing energy companies.

The way to reduce blockages in community energy projects is to embolden the people. There are a significant amount of case studies showing the success of community energy and the benefits it can provide for the people. Disseminating this information better and by providing communities with a formula on how to create their own project would be important. When the people feel motivated, can understand the project and are aware of the benefits, they will put pressure on government bodies that will hopefully remove red tape or at least get out of the way.

Community Energy Projects:

#### 1. Windkraft Simonsfeld

1. 68 wind power stations in Austria (with a total power of 136 MW) and two in Bulgaria. The initiative turned into a joint stock company with more than 1,600 shareholders. Instead of being listed on a stock exchange, shares can be traded 24 hours a day through an online platform. These measures have put energy production in the hands of the citizens who consume it, helping to work towards a greener future for all.

#### 2. Belgium

1. Ecopower - the co-operative is both an energy producer and supplier operating in the Flanders electricity market. Ecopower is a successful co-operative business with 23 staff that offers nearly 50,000 citizens the opportunity to get a grip on their energy production and supply and to join the energy transition.

#### 2. Bulgaria

1. In Sofia, the homeowners' association of an apartment block have worked together to install a rooftop solar power installation. After 3 years of planning, the all 117 residences are now signed up. Their system has a capacity of 28.2 kWp. It's expected to produce 35 MWh of electricity annually – equal to 5-7% of the consumption in the building. The revenues raised from the installation are reinvested locally – in the maintenance of the building and its surroundings.

#### 2. Templederry, Ireland

1. Templederry is home to Ireland's first community windfarm which supplies the grid with community-owned wind energy. The project with two windturbines is run by the people of Templederry. The 32 shareholders all live in the locality and include farmers, students, retired people and members of the clergy. The project produces enough green electricity to power 3500 homes, or the equivalent of the local town of Nenagh.

## 2. Spain

1. La Serna, Palencia, invested in a 450 kW photovoltaic installation that pumped and distributed water around the local community. The project was a social, environmental and economic success. National policies at the time favoured community energy projects, and the mayor encouraged locals to become shareholders in the project, with 90 local people investing their money. In 2010 the Spanish Government changed their policy, meaning that local investors are now paying more money back to the bank than they receive for energy production. Today, this situation is echoed across Spain, with more than 50,000 families and farmers similarly affected by the change of financial conditions.

The examples above were borrowed from: <http://www.poweringcommunities.org/community-power/examples-of-community-power/> (<http://www.poweringcommunities.org/community-power/examples-of-community-power/>)

There are many more amazing examples to get people excited about taking on their own project!

Ideally, government support is needed as well. For example, if Canada were to take it's Paris Agreement seriously then perhaps they would be more inclined to subsidized community energy projects instead of subsidizing the fossil fuel giants. <http://communityenergy.bc.ca/> (<http://communityenergy.bc.ca/>) is an association designed to support small governments in creating energy projects. Shockingly, when reading through their member list I see gas companies included (Fortis BC). How does an association promote renewable energy to mitigate climate change but then have a gas company as a member? Seems odd...

It's been very interesting diving into this topic more. Europe definitely seems to be miles ahead in their use of community energy and awareness around it. There are several rural areas in Canada that are off the grid, an energy project would be a great benefit to them and perhaps leapfrog them over building oil/gas infrastructure and straight to solar or wind.

← Reply



Lazaros Angelou (<https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/886724>)

Jun 20, 2019



Topic: Bios Coop, a Social Consumers Cooperative in the urban area of Thessaloniki, the second city of Greece in population.

I chose this topic as it is the one I am mostly engaged to for the last 8 years.

Aim : The aim of Bios Coop is to “*take our food into our hands*”, as part of a broader aim “*to take our lives in our hands*”, starting from reclaiming the commons.

Context : Debt Crisis in Greece, bailout programme of the Eurozone, a regime of austerity measures, landgrabbing, privatization pressures and funding of big agrifood corporations.

Industrial food system is dominant, but there is a considerable proportion of small food businesses striving to overcome crisis. Big retail chains are dominant in the food system market, but small retail shops are existing in the neighborhoods too. Production costs are too high, purchase prices are too low for retail chains, while their prices are too high for consumers. Retail chains have a dominant market position, producers and consumers being the weak ones.

During crisis the “potato movement” emerged, bringing potato producers in the city neighborhoods selling potatoes directly to the citizens, much cheaper than retail chains and small retail shops. Too many people were gathering in “open markets” buying potatoes, vegetables and other basic foods at affordable prices.

A counter movement then arised from food chains and small retail shops, demanding from the authorities to stop “open markets” that brought producers and consumers together setting aside the existing retail market. Then the government passed a law that in practice stoped the “potato movement”. One could say that it was a “win of the middlemen”, against the producers-consumers alliance under crisis conditions. The next battle between the movement and the big retail chains is going to be victorious only if an alliance of the movement and the small retail businesses has been built on a basis of common interests.

Another action of producers-consumers alliance is the formation of urban cooperative shops that have on their shelves local and regional products, produced by methods that do not harm human health and the environment. This is a weak trend until now, not annoying the retail chains and small shops due to the very small market share they have achieved. Though, they have a big ideological impact, as they promote “another world”, more just, equitable and environmental friendly, with social solidarity economy and direct democracy. Such is Bios Coop, a Social Consumers Cooperative with 420 members.

In it's grocery's shelves one can find Greek and cooperative products, most of which come from the region and are produced in ways that do not harm humans or the environment.

Bios Coop operates under the rules of Social and Solidarity Economy as well as Direct Democracy. There are no exploitive production relations, the staff are members of the Cooperative, they take part at the Board meetings on an equal basis, at all discussions and decisions of the Board, as any member of the cooperative is allowed to do.

It is open the normal grocery hours and has specially trained staff. On the shelves one can find almost all the products he/she needs for his/her home, that is, a full “basket”. The quality of the products in our grocery is ensured by a Quality Committee that carefully selects products that do not contain prohibited chemical additives, genetically modified, expired and other inappropriate and unsafe substances dangerous to human health and the environment.

To achieve affordable prices for consumers, yet fair to producers, we bypass intermediaries and work directly with the producers. This enables us to offer (a) affordable prices to consumers, (b) a fairer deal to producers and (c) a more environmentally friendly approach to the production-distribution-consumption cycle.

The goal of Bios Coop is not to make profits for its members but to cover the basic nutritional needs of its clients and members, during these challenging times we are facing in Greece. Prices are the same for members and non-members, any surplus at the end of each fiscal year will be returned to members (surplus) and the local community (profit), as defined in the relative Articles of the Statute and shaped by decisions of the General Assembly. Most of the surplus will remain in the accounts of members in order to be reinvested back into the cooperative.

Resistance to gmos, seed patents, privatization, land and water grabbing, and promotion of local traditional seeds, agroecological production methods and zero waste management are common practices of the food system movements. Alliances, networking and cooperation are built more on the resistance basis rather than promoting alternatives, a more difficult task due to the diversity of the movement's "ecosystem".

Alternatives like agroecology, food sovereignty, discourse plus action, local action plus regional, national and international networking.

Starting from nich level and expanding further. Building alliances between urban and rural areas, producers and consumers, setting aside big retail chains and building alliances between small farm producers and urban citizens cooperatives and small shop retailers. Supporting a "biodiversity" of entities like community supported agriculture, consumers cooperatives, agroecology, food hubs, etc.

Connecting anchor institutions with community, addressing health, education, food, energy, local and regional economy and other issues related to food production and consumption, as well as food waste management.

Using cooperative digital platforms for communication, discussion, decision making, education and training at local, regional, national and international levels.

Putting pressure on legislators for laws that support all the above collective actions between community actors and stakeholders, as well as funding institutions for relevant supportive measures.

Above all, building social and solidarity economy structures, operating with direct democracy principles, as preparative measures for an "other world", with social and solidarity economy and direct democracy, spreading from local to regional, national and international level.

To build bottom-up relationships, not top-down. To promote self-management, solidarity and social justice, living and participating in local, regional and national cooperatives producing biological food, solar energy, providing social care, education and training, the skills required to run collectively the cooperatives for social impact rather than profits.

To recollect their heritage and bind it with the progress made by science and technology, in order to serve the people, not the elit.

When coming to the political aspect, always a big question occurs: shall they form a political party or not?

There is not one answer to that question. The political level is present and you have to take it into account. How? Forming one more political party? Then political division, that is present in the society, will be introduced in the cooperatives and may destroy them. If you want to keep the cooperatives out of political division, you have to keep party politics out of it. Cooperatives gather people of a very diverse political spectrum with the same aim : to work together for a common cause, to meet their needs deciding themselves about what to do. Self-managed cooperatives without exploitive production relations, are reuniting people at the production level, simultaneously cultivating direct democracy at the decision level. This procedures are out of the sphere of party policies even in the most democratic countries of the world.

Building a self management and direct democracy culture, the cooperative movement has to start with local authorities, demanding similar functioning. Cooperative producers have to act similarly as citizens, deciding for the commons, welfare, safety, for every aspect concerning their own life in the neighborhood, the municipality, the region, the country, worldwide.

The aim has to be "we must decide about our lives, not others". Not the leaders, the parties, the authorities, the corporations, the bosses, the allies etc.

This aim demands workers-citizens having the knowledge, skills and procedures collectively decided, that lead to positive outcomes, not failures that disappoint people and bring back "saviors". This is a very heavy responsibility and has to be undertaken very seriously. Not forming one more party, but demanding from all parties and authorities to adopt functions and policies similar to the cooperative ones.

Concerning the state I'd agree with John Restakis, "*From Welfare State to Caring Society*":

- o "*cooperative economic democracy can only be achieved through the empowerment of civil society and its capacity to exert social control over both capital and the state*",
- o the path to a democratic state must be "*an autonomous process of self-organizing and direct democracy by citizens and communities at local, regional, and supra-regional scales of operation. The object of this process is the implementation of stateless democracy in actual practice, irrespective of what is achieved formally with respect to the state proper*".

I'd say that the Buurtzorg (Neighbourhood Care) model in the Netherlands is an example of platform economics in practice consisting of self-managing teams without command and control structure (distributed manager-less organization), confederating and becoming powerful through the creative use of a common platform.

Buurtzorg is also a paradigm of how use of digital technology save massively on command and control overheads, so that growth is self-financed.

I'd add that this distributed model of service provision at the local level has a much less ecological footprint than the capitalist one.

Something I'd like to add : Geo-strategic issues are not referred to in the course. I think that they are very important in the world we live in. Uncertainty, local wars, immigration etc. are aspects that are high in peoples' minds. When we come to regime broader conditions and geo-strategic alliances become important decision factors not only for states but for the civil society as well. For example, Greek people are against austerity measures and EU policies, but they do not want to leave EU and NATO, due to the instability in the broader region of East Mediterranean. State

bindings with political, economic and geo-strategic institutions are very strong today, so they have to be taken into account in a holistic approach. By this I mean we have to struggle for a long period of time to change the state, because a precondition is to change broader institutions like EU etc. That's why I'd prefer an "autonomous process" as described on the above second bullet.

← [Reply](#)



[John Restakis \(https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/379201\)](https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/379201)

Jul 4, 2019

Hello Lazaros,

Thank you for this very thoughtful overview of the Bios Co-op experience in Greece. I had the pleasure of visiting the co-op a few years ago and was much impressed by its pioneering work – basically establishing the first consumer-owned supermarket in Greece – and the passion and professionalism of the organization. You raise some very pertinent questions, and I would like to add some comments.

First, could you say more about the legislation that was passed at the insistence of large retailers to suppress the local markets? This had not yet happened when I was there. A real shame, especially given the ostensible "progressive" rhetoric of the Syriza government.

Second, has Bios Co-op been able to expand to another location or city outside Salonica? This was an objective at the time.

I very much respond to your comments regarding the challenge of how to mobilize progressive political pressure. I agree, in this case the organization of a new political party does not seem an answer, and you are quite right that while co-ops need to be politically active, they would be very unwise to introduce partisan party affiliations within the co-op. This happened during the 70s and 80s, – with the politicization of co-ops driven by PASOK – and led to catastrophic consequences for the co-op movement in Greece.

The task, as you say, is to fashion inclusive political mobilizations that unite people, and broader civil society, around common interest and issues - irrespective of individual political affiliations. Co-ops are in a unique position to do this. However, in Greece, this is especially hard as there is little experience or history of issue-based community organizing. Most political action has been streamed through political parties, but this appears to be changing, especially as activists have become disillusioned with party politics.

I look forward to your comments.

John

← [Reply](#)



[Lazaros Angelou \(https://learn.canvas.net\)](https://learn.canvas.net)

[/courses/2527/users/886724\)](#)

Aug 4, 2019

Dear John,

there was a ministerial decision 4912/120862/2015 imposing conditions and prerequisites concerning production and market provision of agricultural products. These conditions and prerequisites were very difficult to be followed by small produceres, so they were subject to penalties if they solded their product in the city's open neighborhood markets.

Concerning bios coop, yes the aim is to expand the model geographically. We are running the store for more than five years and it proved to be viable. We had a very hard internal division during the fourth year, mostly because of matters concernig the cooperative members that are the stuff in the store. It was a very hard fight that put the cooperative in danger. We overcome that division following conflict tranformation methods, wich we didn't take into account in our model at the beginning.

An other reason there is a delay in scaling is the lack of investment money. We don't want to put prices high because it is not fare for consumers, but this policy imposes difficulties to scaling. Module 7 of the course is very instructing on our problem, having in mind the difficulties at all levels : nich, regim and landscape. We live in Greece, EU.

I would like to thank you all for the inspiring course you gave me the opportunity to attend. I had very little time beeing very busy as local activist concerning Social and Solidarity Economy. But I tried hard to follow the course through the end. It was worth it. Thank you very much again and yes, we need a global synergy in order to change the system!

← [Reply](#)



[James \(Gien\) Wong](#)

<https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/905142>

Jun 30, 2019

I'll add more later but for now, just wanted to flag a book related to developing the next system:

<http://commonstransition.org/p2p-accounting-for-planetary-survival/?fbclid=IwAR21kBMypvv-0NM9WkgvkYpsZBiBODLBgGjs6FgB1RFNF9wF89CdG1zqURo>  
<http://commonstransition.org/p2p-accounting-for-planetary-survival/?fbclid=IwAR21kBMypvv-0NM9WkgvkYpsZBiBODLBgGjs6FgB1RFNF9wF89CdG1zqURo>

Michel Bauwens and Alex Pazaitis are the lead authors and a number of us contributed to it. Can you add to the resources? Thanks!

Edited by [James \(Gien\) Wong](#) (<https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/905142>) on Jun 30 at 3:19pm

← [Reply](#)



[Mike Gismondi \(https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/227458\)](https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/227458)

Jul 5, 2019

Done and txs

[← Reply](#)



[Rolando Ramirez \(https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/893132\)](https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/893132)

Jul 7, 2019

The Question of Governance, in social structures as Coops, as a vehicle for system change.

Before I dive into the subject, I wanted to share an overview of what has been presented in the course, which understandably leads to system change. I think it would be of great benefit to engage in a review of what has gone wrong with the past efforts of progressive forces, globally, in relation to system change. System change is nothing new.... one of the presenters relates to socialism, the democratic efforts during Allende in Chile, as past experiences, as well as socialdemocratic movements, such as the NDP in Canada, where significant advances were made, the Sandinistas in Nicaragua initially, as many others during the 70's, 80's in Latin America, as some examples. All those efforts had as their core strategic objective system change, they even had the backing up of machinery of the state to do that, and strong civil society movements, workers, peasant, etc. behind them, still they were unsuccessful to make the system sustainable, and eventually reach a kind of democratic socialism. It would be naive to continue talking about system change if we have not learned clearly from those global movements and experiences, to which in many instances people actually gave their lives for, and the errors that were made in terms of reading the context, and the complexities of making a system change irreversible and sustainable. There has been little selfcriticism from the progressive forces during those times. and even less learning. Even of course some elements of imperialism played a role, as well as powerful economic interest, some internal factors to those movements, and social projects, were not inclusive enough and not democratic enough. Why was that, where did we miss the ball, were we too naive, did we know enough of our institutional foundations and what was possible to achieve in regard to system change ... well many of these questions remain unanswered...

I begun with this preable because many of the valuable examples used in the course, around alternatives to present system, as taxi drivers coops, neighbourhood public land management, community green energy production and control, if they really are not aware of what system change means, and of the path that other movements have travelled in history, with their gains and failures, they may committ the same mistakes, and remain as a good local project, but very far removed from the actual achieving a system change, in the medium and long run...Still it may be a valid route to pursue as "stand by" strategy, while new ideological paradigms emerge. The example of Via Campesina is very telling in this regard. Is one of the most successful social movements, with valuable contributions and alternative solutions to the present system of intensive agriculture. But it remains a "farmers" movement. And in Latin America soon enough 80% of the people will live in cities, and in many countries already the average age of a farmer is 65 years old. That reality will have to be considered when we begin to strategise for new social articulations, that can be

movilized to design new social and economic systems, and the change that are needed in the present one. Just as an illustration of the work we need to do to achieve new models of change.

Going back to the task at hand, I chose the topic of governance because I believe that, and the many examples of social formations presented in the course attest to that, how we organize ourselves to make decisions and how we manage power is the heart of future new social formulation that can be the base for system change.

One example that I was part of in Latin America was the Model Forest Network. It is still in existence with over 34 Model Forests in the region. Its particular focus was to bring to the table all the stakeholders in a particular territory to make that territory social and economically sustainable. So there were representatives of local governments, public sector, small farmers, indigenous communities, private sector, research institutions and civic social organizations. The idea, to put on the table their resources, and knowledge, to make that territory socially and economically sustainable. In addition to have an integrated view of territorial development, they arrived to decision in a democratic and inclusive manner. It was not easy to conciliate all the different interests and views of development, but eventually it was achieved, but with the clear understanding that it is an ongoing process, and that power of decision making needs constant review and strengthening.

In present day, like the MFN, many of these "experiments" are still a long way from articulating a comprehensive proposal for system change, and they remain "specific issue/topic" based. And this is because of the hegemonic and power concentration of the present system. In addition the alternatives emerging still don't have a cohesive and integrated ideology paradigm, whether that is some form socialism or something else. So the blocks are internal and external....but the good news is that we don't lack the local projects that carry the seeds for an eventual articulation of that. And they play a key role in being "the transition".

← [Reply](#)



[Dave Darby \(https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/887852\)](https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/887852)

Jul 8, 2019

Rolando – I completely agree. I think the problem always stems from centralisation of power. The Sandinistas, as with the Cuban, Russian and Chinese revolutions, were centralised forces. Centralised power doesn't tend to get distributed, for pretty obvious reasons, especially when armed men seize it. Armed men don't tend to redistribute centralised power that they've seized.

There have been decentralised attempts – the Zapatistas, Makhno's group in the Ukraine, the anarchists in the Spanish Civil war – even Russia between the 1917 revolutions. But it was centralised state power that crushed them all. The Rojavans are giving it a good go now. Let's hope they do better. And Allende was a special case. He'd hired Stafford Beer to implement a viable systems model for the entire country in the early 70s, which could have kept wealth and power decentralised. Again, his experiment was ended by a superior military force.

The state is in a symbiotic relationship with multinational corporations and banks, and it's the

same everywhere, including China – although the state is the dominant partner there, whereas financial institutions are dominant in the West. The game is to maximise growth, to be able to afford the strongest military. The US is winning this game at the moment, and so is able to put its military bases all over the world and say ‘do as we say or we’ll kick the shit out of you’. Anyone who consistently refuses, like Allende, Mossadegh, Saddam, Chavez or Gadafi is captured or killed, or narrowly escapes being killed.

It’s time to stop relying on the state, I think. States are entwined with banks and corporations. Even if it were likely that politicians dedicated to real change could be elected - and it would take near collapse for that – they wouldn’t last long, as they received pressure from international financial institutions, and investors removed their capital. Think Syriza.

There are plenty of interesting structures being built – many of them mentioned in this course – that are free from corporate, financial or state power, and we have many tools to help them – mutual credit, the viable system model, holochain, sociocracy, the internet etc.

As Thomas Greco said today via email:

“The foundation of any economy is trust, which is based on personal relationships. So-called "trustless" techno-fixes are illusory.

What the world needs is a global exchange network in which credit is locally allocated and controlled within relatively small cooperative credit clearing circles that are linked together to provide a means of payment that is globally useful. By adhering to standard procedures and protocols, it will be possible for these local credit clearing exchanges (nodes) to be networked together into a **worldwide web of exchange**. In this web, members of each local node are known to one another and allocate credit to one another based on their reputation and capacity to provide valued goods and services. The core membership will be comprised of cooperative and responsible businesses and the small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) that form the core of every economy. Thus we can have a system of independent, non-monetary payment that is locally controlled but globally useful.

If crypto technologies have a role to play, it is in protecting the network from interference by hostile forces. “

← [Reply](#)



[Kelleigh Wright \(https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/897550\)](https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/897550)

Jul 9, 2019

Thank you Rolando and Dave for this thought provoking thread of discussion. Do you have resource materials that you would recommend for a deeper understanding?

← [Reply](#)

[Caroline Hurley \(https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/894561\)](https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/894561)

Jul 9, 2019

This [OECD paper \(https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/docserver/gov\\_glance-2013-6-en.pdf?expires=1562712588&id=id&accname=guest&checksum=3598B28F27D1664B9C6E6A27D12AC5C8\)](https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/docserver/gov_glance-2013-6-en.pdf?expires=1562712588&id=id&accname=guest&checksum=3598B28F27D1664B9C6E6A27D12AC5C8) from a few years ago seems to concur to some extent with observations made in this thread concerning trust and conventional power structures, viewing the increasing lack of confidence in government as valuable for making it clear how vital the people's trust actually is to the state for getting things done. Is it possible to leave governments behind and amply replace them as repositories of trust, direction and sustenance for a population with something else, something better?

If you sign up for [Next System emails \(https://thenextsystem.org/learn/collections/new-systems-possibilities-and-proposals\)](https://thenextsystem.org/learn/collections/new-systems-possibilities-and-proposals), you'll find this theme being addressed a lot too.

Edited by [Caroline Hurley \(https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/894561\)](https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/894561) on Jul 10 at 6:09am

← [Reply](#)

[Dave Darby \(https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/887852\)](https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/887852)

Jul 10, 2019

Stafford Beer's work on the viable system model in Chile - <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2003/sep/08/sciencenews.chile> (<https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2003/sep/08/sciencenews.chile>) - meant to keep power decentralised. CIA put a stop to it.

More on the viable system model - [https://esrad.org.uk/resources/vsmg\\_2.2/pdf/vsmg\\_2\\_2.pdf](https://esrad.org.uk/resources/vsmg_2.2/pdf/vsmg_2_2.pdf) ([https://esrad.org.uk/resources/vsmg\\_2.2/pdf/vsmg\\_2\\_2.pdf](https://esrad.org.uk/resources/vsmg_2.2/pdf/vsmg_2_2.pdf)) - looks scary, but isn't really. There have been big debates about whether systems thinking can contribute to change, or whether a focus on human relations and communication, along the lines of sociocracy is better. But the two can be complementary - sociocracy inside organisations and VSM between them.

More on sociocracy - <http://sociocracyforall.org/> (<http://sociocracyforall.org/>)

Makhno in Ukraine - <https://libcom.org/history/makhno-nestor-1889-1934> (<https://libcom.org/history/makhno-nestor-1889-1934>)

Rojava - <https://mesopotamia.coop/> (<https://mesopotamia.coop/>)

Tom Greco's blog - <https://beyondmoney.net/the-end-of-money-and-the-future-of-civilization/> (<https://beyondmoney.net/the-end-of-money-and-the-future-of-civilization/>) - with a link to his book 'the End of Money and the Future of Civilisation' - a real life-changer.

His ideas on a 'worldwide web of exchange' are based on mutual credit.

Here's an intro - <https://www.lowimpact.org/lowimpact-topic/mutual-credit/>  
(<https://www.lowimpact.org/lowimpact-topic/mutual-credit/>)

Here's something you can get stuck into in the UK - <https://opencredit.network/>  
(<https://opencredit.network/>)

And here's the white paper for building a global network (work is ongoing) -  
<http://www.creditcommons.net/> (<http://www.creditcommons.net/>)

Plus anything by Kevin Carson - find him on YouTube, and his books are available -  
Studies in Mutualist Political Economy, Organization Theory and the Homebrew  
Industrial Revolution.

← [Reply](#)



[Kelleigh Wright](#) (<https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/897550>)

Jul 11, 2019

Dave - this is a generous list. Thank you very much!

← [Reply](#)



[Barbara Denbeigh Hollingworth](#)  
(<https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/901554>)

Jul 16, 2019

I feel that the political system - the government - is probably the most essential ingredient in real systems change, provided, naturally, that there is the will for dramatic change at the grass roots level. Otherwise, we are, as a species, the proverbial ship headed on a collision course with a giant iceberg. Meanwhile, the passengers are in their quarters discussing the neighborhood food cooperative they are forming, the local public bank they are members of, the community organic garden they belong to, and the list of truly worthwhile enterprises that are essential to a "cooperative commonwealth." However, is the course not determined by whoever is at the helm?

Here in Canada, we have a majority government that was elected in our "first past the post" electoral system. Our elected Prime Minister promised again and again in his campaign that it was to be the last election run on rules where a majority government can be formed that has only 38% of the popular vote. Many of us voted because of this promise for proportional representation, where all voices would be heard. He did not keep this promise, probably because the system worked for him personally. Our government declared a national climate change emergency one night, and the next day signed a go-ahead for a pipeline, which cost each and every one of us 4.5 billion, that will carry triple the amount of dirty bitumin to market, thereby ensuring that we will not

meet our obligations under the Paris accord, and that our destruction of the environment - hence our species - will proceed. I believe that it is essential that we have voices in charge of running the ship the power that can avert colliding with the iceberg. Otherwise we have 2 systems - one of life affirming cooperatives of every type, without much overall power, and the other that has the money, the power and the authority to make the major decision - whether or not we will collide with the iceberg. Our neoliberal political system, where economic well-being (for a few) trumps social and environmental well-being, simply cannot avert the crisis.

Most of us (the 99%) pay taxes, that range between 30 and 50% of our incomes; incomes which many struggle to support families on, expending financial and physical energy to make ends meet. Many if not most do not have the time, energy or resources left over to invest in initiatives such as cooperatives that will improve our lives. When they do get together and form cooperatives they seem like a drop in the bucket, when one considers expenditures on our behalf of 4.5 billion for a polluting pipeline.

The National Post reported Monday on tweets that Trump lashed out at the 3 female members of colour elected to the US Congress, declaring that they should "go back where you came from" and stop trying to make changes here. Two of the three were born in the US (Ocasio-Cortez and Escobar) and all three (including Tlaib) are US citizens. The bright side is that these women were elected to Congress and are making their voices heard - for a more equitable society. Another positive is that they have not been kicked out of the Democratic party, as Canadians Wilson Rhebould and were kicked out of our governing Liberal party.

Therefore, I believe that a more participatory democracy, where government leaders are working for social and environmental sustainability, rather than for corporations, must be a priority in our work for a new paradigm devoted to common wealth.

There are many organisations devoted to political change, such as the CCPA, that one can be part of, but, until we get someone else steering the ship and making major planetary decisions, our local efforts will be band-aids, wonderful and comforting in themselves. Thank you -to the organizers - what a great and eye-opening effort you have made.

[← Reply](#)



[Karl Horak \(https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/903858\)](https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/903858)

Jul 16, 2019

One July 16th the U.S. House of Representatives approved House Resolution 489 by a vote of 240-187 to censure President Trump for his racist tweets. This is only the 5th time in U.S. history that a president has been censured by the House or Senate. Only 4 Republicans joined all the Democrats and one Independent in approving the resolution.

[← Reply](#)

[Bryan Hammond \(https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/903252\)](https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/903252)

Jul 16, 2019

Thank you Barbara for that wonderful post! I've been concerned by everything you mentioned, for a considerable time. I've found it very disappointing that the general public simply does not seem willing, or perhaps able, to see for themselves that Liberals and Democrats, not just Conservatives and Republicans, serve the Neoliberals - what I refer to as the *Wealth Investor, and Power Elites* - **WIPES** - first, and almost "only".

In Canada I see the New Democrats as definitely preferable to the more popular two, **but** even they, because so much of their support is Union based - and so many big unions are within WIPE-owned or controlled businesses, or even governments - can have very counter-productive serious conflicts of interest.. e.g. workers for oil companies and other exploitative, destructive, and unsustainable or unethical industries. CSOs/NGOs are usually fearful of protecting their non-profit status, and hence have what I think is ultimately a self-defeating commitment to remain "nonpartisan". BUT, I think the time is long overdue for a massive and holistic move by the collective progressive Activist groups - across the whole spectrum - and around the World - to loudly and Unitedly speak up for the specific political candidates who truly best represent their - and **hence a collective majority of - the general public's Common interests! In all countries where the Green Party exists, I believe it quite consistently IS the most representative party of both Caring Activists (generally), and the general public of any given country. Right NOW I think Caring Canadians - as individual activists and organizations - across the spectrum of human concerns - COULD influence the general Cdn. public to Unite to Vote in the Canadian Green Party - and likewise in Manitoba this autumn!** I think that really IS achievable... and I've had "a feeling" that 2019 will be a year reminiscent of the late 1960's - where an observable boost in general "social consciousness" IS RISING... but time is fast running out, so that remains to be seen.

**IF Canadians do rise to achieve this, I think WE could trigger a domino effect around much of the World... including even the USA, in time for its federal election in November of 2020. I see this scenario - a rapid near-global election of Green Parties in the next few years - as quite likely Humanity's most viable chance for survival past the next hundred years or so. I hope everyone in this TCC MOOC will seriously consider that possibility... and act accordingly ASAP. We can't afford to waste more time trying to get the wrong people to do the right things!**

[← Reply](#)

[Caroline Hurley \(https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/894561\)](https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/894561)

Jul 17, 2019

The Green Party in Ireland is 'the fastest growing political movement in the country' - [https://twitter.com/greenparty\\_ie?lang=en](https://twitter.com/greenparty_ie?lang=en) [https://twitter.com/greenparty\\_ie?lang=en](https://twitter.com/greenparty_ie?lang=en)

This is after local elections end of May. Hopefully elections everywhere will see the same

trend from now on.

← [Reply](#)



[Barbara Denbeigh Hollingworth](#)

<https://learn.canvas.net/courses>

</2527/users/901554>

Jul 17, 2019

Thanks for your post, Brian. I agree. The Green Party is gaining ground significantly, and has my vote both provincially and federally, and the money I put aside for political donations. It is hopeful that in Europe the Greens are coming out ahead of, or at least neck and neck with, the right-wing nationalist parties. It is a bit frightening that citizenry is dividing more and more into two camps, with a widening empty space in the middle. Somehow common ground must be found. Perhaps fear of the increasingly impossible-to-deny environmental crises will do it.

← [Reply](#)



[Murray Hidlebaugh](#)

<https://learn.canvas.net/courses>

</2527/users/895967>

Jul 22, 2019

Hello Barbara:

Thank you for your concise observations on the political climate in Canada. Your thoughts “*that the political system - the government - is probably the most essential ingredient in real systems change, provided, naturally, that there is the will for dramatic change at the grass roots level*” is consistent with my thinking. I too question whether there is the will for dramatic change

Further to your question regarding whether “*there is the will for dramatic change*” I would offer a football analogy. It seems to me that party members have become like fans at a football game. They are under the illusion that their cheering and their wearing of “team colors” and their loyalty to the “team” will actually make a difference in the outcome of the game (election). In fact they are just part of the cheer-leading section and cheerleaders don’t score touchdowns. The players are like politicians, each playing their own role or being “benched or cut” if they don’t obey. The quarterback is like the party leader. He has a bit more power on the field but again is controlled from above. The coaches and managers are the hired staff who are controlled by the corporate bosses (Party elite). These are who Bryan refers to as the “*Wealth Investors*”. The reality is that the fans (party members) have no significant influence, nor do most of the members of the team (elected members) other than as being support players to deliver a centrally controlled “game plan”. This is referred to as Party discipline that is considered by the “bosses” as important when in opposition and essential when in government.

I felt that Bryan’s response to your posting was also informative. I share his observation that



*“the Liberals and Democrats serve the Neoliberals ... Wealth Investor, and Power Elites - WIPES - first, and almost “only”.* However, I don't share his optimism that there is value in trying to **“influence the general Cdn. public to Unite to Vote in the Canadian Green Party”**, if the primary expectation is that election of the Green Party, as a majority, will create any transformative change in our political situation. However, I think the proposal could have merit if the goal of the elected Green Party members is to demonstrate how minority government can be effective in addressing local issues. This would be an important step in preparing the voting public for a more transformative approach toward implementation of a decentralized collaborative governance model.

Collaborative governance, a primary element in participatory democracy, cannot exist in our present system of representative democracy with its adversarial approach. Jane McAlevey's, “No Shortcuts”, outlines the factors that determine whether our political system continues on its current path supporting representative democracy with a focus on “mobilizing for campaigns”, or whether there will be a movement to implement participatory democracy by “organizing for structural change”. The former maintains the status quo and is the current political system in Canada. The latter is what Norway and New Zealand undertook to change their political process. And it is the action taken in Saskatchewan that led to the formation of a new political party, the CCF. Those changes, in all three situations, took over twenty years from the initial concept to the actual forming of government. Norway and New Zealand have been quite successful in maintaining participatory government. Not so much in Canada.

It should be noted that the changes required leaders who had a consistent vision and were directed by principles that supported a decentralized political system. In Saskatchewan it was called agrarian socialism. Patience, persistence, and considerable resources, both human and financial, were required. For transformative political change there is no quick fix, nor is it easy or in-expensive. Nancy McLean's analysis of the rise of the neoliberal movement, “Democracy in Chains”, tracing how James Buchanan financed by Charles Koch, was able to infiltrate and influence key educational and the political systems in supporting neoliberal policy, is informative. It shows what it takes to create change. Perhaps we can apply Polanyi's concept of double movement to counter the current neoliberal control?

I hope that Barbara's posting resonates with others and a network could be developed that continues with a wider and deeper discussion. I would be most interested in participating. Perhaps a digital Simplicity Social Circle model might be piloted.

← [Reply](#)



[Kelleigh Wright \(https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/897550\)](https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/897550)

Jul 23, 2019

Again, another wonderfully thoughtful thread - thank you Barbara, Caroline, Bryan and Murray. The football analogy creates a very powerful visual. Your thoughts on what is needed to shift political direction (and realistic timelines for change) are very sobering.

← [Reply](#)

○



[Ed Mayo \(https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/893222\)](https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/893222)

⋮

Jul 22, 2019

First, a big thank you to the inspired team for your inspiring content.

I used this exercise as an opportunity to review work I had been asked to do by the International Cooperative Alliance on options to promote democratic ownership of online platforms. What I found was that I had slipped into a narrow format of making the case for these 'platform co-ops' as if a positive case based on reason would make an essential difference. The course encouraged me to set what is emerging in a context of a double movement response and I have dived into the work of Shoshana Zuboff on surveillance capitalism so that I understand more deeply the dynamics and frame more realistically both the challenges of alternative models but also the wider constituencies of support that need to and can emerge around a reclaiming of people's control in the face of Big Tech.

So, I have learned and I do so appreciate that gift - and will reciprocate in a small way with an evaluation (and perhaps some vegan nibbles for Pat).

in cooperation,

ed

[75B549CE-A491-46FB-88F7-390414748732.jpeg \(https://learn.canvas.net/files/900772/download?download\\_frd=1&verifier=P9hzi94peH47oqWyBecVKXmiUbQaYQXICXto9TwI\)](https://learn.canvas.net/files/900772/download?download_frd=1&verifier=P9hzi94peH47oqWyBecVKXmiUbQaYQXICXto9TwI)

↳ [Reply](#)

○



[Barbara Denbeigh Hollingworth \(https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/901554\)](https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/901554)

⋮

Jul 22, 2019

With regard to the lack of directly discussing spirituality and philosophy in this MOOC, I do believe that many of the cooperatives discussed, for example the section on food and agricultural cooperatives, are based on philosophical and spiritual assumptions about humanity's relationship with the natural world and with other human beings in a more inclusive and egalitarian system. In many cases, the assumption is that we are one species among many, all of creation existing in a relationship of co-dependency, which implies that sustaining our species depends upon sustaining the rest of nature. The Christian belief system, on the other hand, is based on a belief that there is a power existing outside of humans, with whom humans have a personal relationship, and which has instructed humans that they have dominion all of creation and all living creatures thereon, as in the Old Testament. This "story" is not unique and exists in many other religions and quasi religions, including Islam (Allah), Hinduism (all the thousands of gods - Shiva and Shakti) and Capitalism (the Economy).

My belief is that any new System or commonwealth we humans come up with, to avert the crisis that humankind is facing, cannot be based on any power that exists outside ourselves and on behalf of which or whom we act towards others and towards the environment. Naturally, we realize that there are the impersonal powers of the natural world that we have no control over. I believe most of us are aware that humans' actions in the name of religions have included more bloodshed, atrocities and suffering than any other force in history, most enacted in the name of Jesus, Yahweh, Allah or some other power such as "the Economy."

Caroline referred to Teilhard de Chardin, a Jesuit priest and scientist, who in Christianity and Evolution, strove to harmonize science and religion by his theory that the evolution of man is an evolution towards God, wherein humankind is evolving into a more godlike state and will finally evolve into God (Christianity is a linear religion). Thomas Berry, a Jesuit priest, coauthored with Brian Swimme, a physicist, THE UNIVERSE STORY. This is a magnificent book, as are the videos Brian Swimme produced "Canticle to the Universe." Thomas Berry represented the school of Creation Spirituality, which strove to represent the spirituality of the Cosmos. Thomas Berry remained a Catholic priest until he died, so one assumes that he remained faithful to the Catholic god as the power underlying the Universe, as a power with which man has in some way a special personal relationship, and includes "the special capacity of the human to enable the universe . . . in our religious rituals." Matthew Fox (THE COMING OF THE COSMIC CHRIST), was defrocked when he included Yoga in his enactment of Creation Spirituality.

Therefore I maintain that any system or paradigm that we create must not allow some sort of higher power in whose name or interest we act, and who justifies our actions, good or bad, helpful or harmful. I believe that we have to assume our power and take responsibility for all our actions and not act "in the name of" any supreme power, be it "God" or "the Economy." Witness the slaughter of hundreds of thousands in the Crusades "in the name of the Christian god," and, more recently, our purchase of a 4.5 billion dollar dirty oil pipeline, justified as "for the good of the Economy," which will affect the health and the future of humankind and the environment.

Therefore, I maintain that we must take full responsibility as humans for our actions towards other humans and the environment in which we are one species among many in order to create a sustainable cooperative common wealth.

↳ [Reply](#)



[Caroline Hurley \(https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/894561\)](https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/894561)

Jul 23, 2019

It is hard to find the pure in this world, Barbara, and if we were to wait for perfection before engaging with promising ideas, whether coming from academics, religious, business, indigenous people or other sources, we wouldn't have much to go on. That's where I think psychology of behavior, things like participatory design, are also important for diverse groups to steer a steady course especially when the horizon turns foggy.

Here's a wee poem I just wrote touching on such matters. It's called Fiddling While Rome Burns (forgive the cliché!)

Strings while Home burns! How sweet the sound,  
as greenhouse gases rise!  
Once clean fresh air, water and ground  
now stink, as if each dies.

Industry foul, our heart failure.  
How badly we've been hurt!  
That well-being we hoped to secure -  
precarious as the earth.

Well may we weep, faint, gnash our teeth,  
as life's dream proves nightmare.  
But wait! Though sky falls, sit and breathe.  
Embrace your blessings there.

Replenish self, till you feel strong.  
Just purse your lips and whistle.  
Then seek out those singing your song  
and make protest orchestral.

Edited by [Caroline Hurley \(https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/894561\)](https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/894561) on Jul 25 at 3:45pm

[← Reply](#)



[Saviour Ubong David \(Blaze Nissi\)](#)

<https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/902864>

Aug 4, 2019

[Barbara Denbeigh Hollingworth](#)

<https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/901554>

**I do share in your sentiment. We have to act with full sense of responsibility for our actions, not hide behind a God or ideology.**

[← Reply](#)

[Lella Blumer \(https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/896798\)](https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/896798)



Jul 24, 2019

Not feeling nearly ready to present a coherent synthesis of what I've learned so far in this course, but I didn't want to miss the opportunity to thank everyone who has contributed to the discussions. The insight and passion shared during this course is overwhelming and motivating at the same time and I find myself reflecting daily on how to turn that motivation into action.

I also didn't want to miss the opportunity to share a few thoughts that are far from complete but they raise something that hasn't been discussed much during the course. Even though every module of this course has presented positive models for change, I've sensed in the discussions an undercurrent of frustration at the lack of widespread uptake, the seemingly impenetrable grip of corporate power, and lack of courage and support from decision-makers. And not only decision-makers, but the mass of "everyday citizens" who need to be engaged in order to make change happen. Many of us seem to be asking how, or even if, we can generate and encourage the behavioural changes needed to create fundamental systems change. Despite evidence all around us, so many people continue to resist accepting and dealing with the reality of climate change and the unsustainable nature of unrestricted growth – especially, it seems, in North America. Maybe those of us who live here are particularly committed to unrestrained capitalism, or maybe we are more easily distracted and still have trouble seeing the link between our actions and the consequences, or maybe we still feel relatively unscathed by climate change and we're operating under a false sense of security. In any case, motivating people to engage in widespread change is a challenge that is hampering the significant progress that we need to make within an ever-shortening timeframe.

There is a huge role to be played here by communication and access to information. Communication is a necessity for humans as a social species, and it's especially crucial during times of crisis: it is a powerful tool for connection, information, motivation, and influence. Ironically, at a time when these are most needed, I would argue that communication and information, like the other sectors studied in this course (land, food, energy, etc.) are being appropriated for individual/corporate gain rather than managed collaboratively for the common good. Locally-owned newspapers have all but disappeared in Canada and ownership of print, radio, and television are concentrated in a very small handful of corporations, focused on entertainment rather than journalism. (The CBC/Radio-Canada is an anomaly and part of a whole other discussion about public corporations.) Over the past couple of decades, social media platforms briefly offered a glimpse of what true global and borderless communication could look like but they have always been privately owned and at this point they are frequently manipulated in order to spread misinformation and collect data on users for commercial purposes.

When local channels of information and communication disappear, so do the voices of individuals and communities and the connection they feel to one another. That disconnect reinforces a couple of perceptions that have contributed to our current problems: 1) climate change and the unsustainable nature of our current system are "out there", not issues that are connected to us directly, and 2) the issues are too big and complex for one individual's actions to have any impact.

Multiple, diverse channels of communication, on the other hand, support engagement because at the root of communication is the opportunity to share and connect over personal stories and experiences. Intangible concepts and ideas become real; issues that seem insurmountable

become less so when we realize others are facing them too.

Until I listened to Jem Bendell's *Deep Adaptation* video, I wasn't sure what kind of strategy to examine for this final reflection because that nagging issue of engagement seemed to be undermining the success of any one model for change. Prof. Bendell's message struck a chord with his audience and identified what I think might be the common bond that could motivate people from all walks of life: addressing the fear of loss by naming what it is they are willing to fight for. It may sound counter-intuitive but I believe it's fear of the unknown that paralyzes most people. Shifting the discussion, at least at the start, to focus on what they are most committed to saving rather than what they will be losing opens the door to positive action. At the same time, it involves an acceptance of the fact that there have been and will continue to be losses.

Without a common and honest understanding and acceptance of the perilous state we're in, it's impossible to move forward and embrace on a wide scale the opportunities that are surfacing in pockets around the world. It's difficult to jump into solutions without first acknowledging the problem, and for many people it seems difficult to acknowledge a problem without someone leading them through the process of making it personally real to them.

A few years ago I was planning to leave the city I'd lived in for 26 years, and I spent my last year there capturing in a journal one thing each day that I would miss when I moved. I called this "proactive nostalgia"; preparing myself for what I would soon lose by focusing on what I wanted to remember. Australian professor of sustainability Glenn Albrecht coined the term "solastalgia" to capture the feeling of distress experienced when a person is impacted by climate change: in effect, separated from the environment with which they are connected and have a relationship. It's a real experience and the symptoms are becoming more evident in societies around the world.

The point I'm trying to make is that communication platforms that have as their focus the sharing of information and individual voices (rather than profit or control) are essential for fundamental change. The most effective instrument of change is individual motivation and commitment to change, and that comes from an understanding, ownership and investment in a situation. It is still relatively easy right now for people to block information they don't want to hear or see, to find misleading pieces of information that make them feel more comfortable, or to distract themselves. Ironically, not knowing the truth in this case is probably more frightening than dealing with what is coming and adapting proactively.

I don't know exactly what that kind of communication platform would look like, but there are definitely elements of it out there already (this course being a good example). Individuals everywhere are finding their voices and sharing their stories. I used to consider both of those phrases somewhat cliché, but I've come to understand their meaning a little more deeply. When a person gives voice to a profound human experience that has impacted them, they are strengthening the collective story. When a person does not have a way of sharing that experience and insight, we miss out on a deeper understanding of how we impact the world around us.

Finding ways to engage others in seeing themselves as part of a global system and as part of transforming to a more equitable and democratic global system, is what this course has motivated me to explore.

[← Reply](#)



[Caroline Hurley \(https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/894561\)](https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/894561)

Jul 25, 2019

Everything you say there resonates, Leila, and articulating what's internal, the turmoil in emotions and in mind, often is cathartic, and often necessarily so for moving onto acceptance and action.

I first came across Prof. Bendell accidentally just yesterday, for his interview with Joanna Macy -

[Deep Adaptation Q&A with Joanna Macy \(https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k1wUY6945kY\)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k1wUY6945kY)



[\(https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k1wUY6945kY\)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k1wUY6945kY)

[← Reply](#)



[Lella Blumer \(https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/896798\)](https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/896798)

Jul 26, 2019

True, Caroline, and it reminds me that **time** is intrinsic to all aspects of the situation: there doesn't seem to be enough time to process what's happening, to come to terms with how we feel about it, and to commit to doing something. Superimposed on that is a deadline that seems impossible to meet before climate disaster. And on the other hand, there is a general busyness underlying our daily lives that preoccupies our minds and distracts us from dealing with the much more fundamental issue of climate disaster. Not to mention the fact that time is our own (humanity's) invention that has helped to create an artificial framework that is definitely helpful in terms of operating efficiently as a society, but has gone way beyond that to pretty much ruling our lives. Dedicating time (some people call it "saving space") for the deeper discussions that need to happen in order for people to be committed to change is huge part of the solution.

Also wanted to thank you for sharing your poem, Caroline. The last line: "make protest orchestral" I feel is pretty brilliant. It makes me think of the community choir movement that is growing by leaps and bounds everywhere. Different voices with different stories, singing the same song.

[← Reply](#)

[Sandeep Chakravarty](#)

<https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/48821>



Jul 26, 2019

Will hope, there may be a possibility of human survival. Most days, I don't think so. Highest levels of CO2; and the world is more violent, more dangerously at the brink of nuclear war since I was a child. To ever generation comes a time when we must defend that is worthy. The rise of self-ishness and ego, even toxic narcissism also seems great. One of the side-effects of capitalism, globally and locally, is we reward those who are ruthless in their achievements, those who de-humanize the rest of us. This has been true through all of history, but especially in a capitalist contaminated planetary culture.

Having some new theories, some new systems thinking is helpful, but not at all in the immediate. I believe these theories and tools will be essential for those who survive what comes. Their's will be the re-creation of a world with inhabiting. I expect to be dead before this happens. My plan is not an easy exit, but rather to survive as long as possible with the local and global threats, to teach true history to those who listen, to grow and share my food with the hungry, to provide wherever I can with compassion, and to keep focused on resilience of the body and spirit.

A more valuable goal is to create more community locally in an already divided ethnically complex historical community. This means extended myself to earn trustworthy status. This means continually showing up to be part of the whole, to speak truth, to offer hands and help as I am able. I have little illusion about what is coming. We are on our own, no one will rescue us, no one will come. We must organize ourselves according to talents and resources available. We must restore the fertile agriculture lands as ancestors did. We must care for each other, especially the children of all diversity -- so they may survive with tools and ideals.

[← Reply](#)



[Caroline Hurley](#) (<https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/894561>)

Jul 29, 2019

Thanks for nice comments, Leila. I guess there's a verse missing, about not just protesting but doing, as Sandeep urges so eloquently and brilliantly too.

[← Reply](#)



[Lella Blumer](#) (<https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/896798>)

Wednesday

Found this article in The Narwhal, which is dated but I think still helpful along the lines of facilitating the expression of anxiety as a step toward change: <https://thenarwhal.ca/permission-care-moving-anxiety-action-climate-change?fbclid=IwAR2H-kHnl6paJpxnFGpaHulkEDmxX4fGQgxbZb3GG7RB3kRHxFL1f-ario>



<https://thenarwhal.ca/permission-care-moving-anxiety-action-climate-change?fbclid=IwAR2H-kHnl6paJjpxnFGpaHulkEDmxX4fGQqxbZb3GG7RB3kRHxFL1f-ario>

← [Reply](#)



[Caroline Hurley \(https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/894561\)](https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/894561)



Wednesday

I agree, Lelia. Many thanks. I availed of the opportunity last week to attend an intensive 2-day workshop on Joanna Macy's Work That Reconnects, which has lots of parallels with Rosemary Randell's focus on conversations, if facilitated more through ritual and game-type exercises, and emotional release, which isn't for everyone, but seemed desperately important and helpful to others.

I've also been reading some of the [research \(http://www.thevillage.ie/research/research-database/\)](http://www.thevillage.ie/research/research-database/) conducted in Cloughjordan Ecovillage over the last ten years or so, not long after it was set up just as the global recession hit. Some of these papers illuminate difficulties and conflicts encountered, and steps taken to turn things round, which included exacting self-examination. Even those cooperatives that allow for individual diversity, religious, cultural and other affiliations, that filter the impact of outside pressures, and have policies on disagreement resolution, management of boundary trespasses and so on, can still find themselves drifting from their ideals. Safeguarding our humanity during challenges ahead faces as precarious a future as preserving life more broadly.

Edited by [Caroline Hurley \(https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/894561\)](https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/894561) on Aug 7 at 4:24pm

← [Reply](#)



[Karl Horak \(https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/903858\)](https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/903858)



Jul 26, 2019

In the better late than never department, here is my stab at the above exercise.

Module 8 Final Exercise

Topic: **Albuquerque BioPark Heritage Farm**

1. Why did you choose this topic? *As a docent at the BioPark, I have a keen interest in their mission of "Discover nature. Inspire action." As a member of the mayor's Biological Park Board, I have access to all the key decision-makers.*
2. Describe the focus or aim of the model/policy/initiative/movement. *In the past, the Heritage Farm has been a fairly simple demonstration farm with a handful of heritage breeds of livestock and poultry. It was based on a circa 1925 New Mexico farmstead with adobe construction and irrigation from a nearby acequia. Expansions and development are beginning that will highlight lessons to be learned from traditional Hispanic and Indigenous People's agricultural practices. In turn, these lessons may be*

*applied to modern commercial farms, local community gardens, and individual home gardens.*

3. Briefly describe the context that the initiative emerged from. *The expanded role of the Heritage Farm emerged from an internally generated 2014 BioPark Master Plan. Then in October 2015, Albuquerque citizens approved a referendum for an increase of 1/8 of 1% on Gross Receipt Taxes to support BioPark development.*
4. In what ways does this initiative address systems change? *This initiative illustrates that significant local involvement can have out-sized impacts regionally, nationally, and globally across a broad spectrum of issues: water conservation, sustainable agriculture, locally sourced food systems, organic farming, endangered species conservation, and others.*

Consider the following in your analysis, or contribute questions of your own:

- a. Can you generally map it in relation to the figures we examined above? Where would it fit? I don't see a clear one-to-one mapping, but see the list in response to item #7 below.
  - b. Describe the goals for change and for whom. *Initially, the goal for change is to provide a robust educational environment where students of all ages can be exposed to the variety of traditional and indigenous agricultural techniques as they may be applied to modern food production, animal husbandry, and horticultural practices. In the not too distant future, the Heritage Farm will be used as a resource for the conservation of heirloom plant cultivars and heritage farm animals. Outreach programs are being planned to offer foreign exchange opportunities to experts from developing countries.*
  - c. What obstacles block(ed) the progress of the initiative to date? Keep in mind the MLP, in particular at the regime level—policy, norms, rule, practices etc. Note landscape factors that may be in play. *The BioPark has a long and successful history of positive interaction with its community. As a fully City-operated and funded organization within their Cultural Services Division, it receives little state or federal assistance, yet it is able to provide an internationally-recognized experience.*
  - d. What strategies helped reduce blockages to change? *The BioPark Society is the non-governmental organization charged with fund-raising for the BioPark. Their backing, support, and positive messaging were important in gaining public support. BioPark volunteers were also enrolled to canvas, write letters to the editor, and generally get the word out for a successful vote on the GRT referendum.*
  - e. What beneficial impacts have emerged? *With the additional funding provided, implementation of the BioPark Master Plan has been accelerated. Key staff have been hired and preliminary construction has begun.*
  - f. Identify key factors generating benefits to date. *Public support as reflected in the GRT referendum has caused the BioPark management to repay that trust with highly visible, successful projects.*
5. What political strategies can you detect that were important to advancing change? Who were the targets? Who were the allies? Are there other allies that you think could be potentially useful to reach out to? *Politically, the key strategy was to educate and involve the general public. Enlisting city and county councilors as well as the public school teachers and administration as shareholders helped to get the referendum passed. Involving local chapters of conservation organizations (Sierra Club, World Wildlife Federation, Future Farmers of America, etc.) would've been helpful. Assistance*

*from national organizations like the Association of Zoos and Aquaria (AZA) would have made an impact.*

6. Finally, review what you have done in light of Figure 8.1. What additional ideas do you have that could build the politics for systems change based on this case? *Next steps include completing the physical construction and then working up an integrated educational program to deliver the key messages. Outreach to local schools, state universities, national partners, and interested international collaborators will be vital.*
7. If you're feeling inclined, visually represent your work in a chart or figure. *Rather than producing a visual representation, here is a brief text listing of concepts that the teaching of traditional and indigenous agricultural practices can impart with the hope that they can influence the entire agricultural industry: resilience over growth; cooperation over competition; sufficiency over efficiency; well-being over the right to possess; fairness and equity over the freedom of markets, trade, and capital; decentralized and democratic ownership over concentrated private ownership; the commons over the inalienable rights of private property; and, our dependence on nature over our right to dominate it.*

← Reply



[Lella Blumer \(https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/896798\)](https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/896798)

Wednesday

Thank you for sharing this in detail, Karl. I'm finding it so timely because I've been trying to wrap my brain around how to bring forward ideas for a small pioneer village with which I'm involved. I've been volunteering as a gardener there only because my elderly parents have a passion for the gardens and I'm trying to facilitate their involvement for as long as possible. But fundamentally I have issues with what I perceive as its one-sided focus on how this area was "settled" - I feel like the current setup is reinforcing the colonial version of events and could be opening up opportunities to learn things differently, as you've expressed in your point 7 above. There is already a strong tie between the village and local school systems, and it is situated within a conservation area which should be a much stronger partner than it is. You've given me some great ideas and inspiration and I would like to learn more. I've found the website; if you have any resources you think might be helpful, I'd appreciate some direction!

← Reply



[Karl Horak \(https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/903858\)](https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/903858)

Wednesday

Feel free to contact me directly... karlhorak@comcast.net

← Reply

[Barbara Denbeigh Hollingworth](#)

<https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/901554>



Jul 28, 2019

Thank you for your poem, Caroline. It speaks volumes. I am not suggesting that we become paralyzed in the face of the overwhelming crisis we face and the limited time frame to do an about face. I am simply observing that we humans might not be the "chosen" species above all others that we conceive ourselves to be, but simply one species among many other species, all with a right to exist and be respected. As Yuval Harari maintains, the human species just happen to be the arch predator of evolution, so far. Naturally, we must continue to keep our focus on the goal of averting the crisis we face and doing all in our power on the grassroots level to realize a more cooperative way of being with other humans and with other species, also so important to the continuance of life. I observed in our large section of lowering milkweed that we planted that it was covered with honey bees 2 weeks ago, and, for the last week, monarch butterflies are busy fluttering around our plantation. That makes me happy and hopeful.

[← Reply](#)



[Caroline Hurley](#) (<https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/894561>)

Jul 29, 2019

Anytime I've looked since my borage plants started flowering about a month ago, I've seen numerous bees fully engaged with them, and that makes me happy too : )

[← Reply](#)



[Saviour Ubong David \(Blaze Nissi\)](#)  
(<https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/902864>)

Aug 3, 2019

1. All through our lives, we have witnessed the inhumane condition and suffering of most of humanity, ecological degradation, and destruction of eco systems, biodiversity loss and the 'enrichment' of only a few members of human population at the expense of the whole. This is quite unacceptable.
2. Now, Imagine that we are led by an agency that derives its authority from us:
3. This agency claims to know the way to a just and serene society but actually have lead the world to oblivion.

4. What do you think would be the way out of such situation? The first answer that may easily come to mind might be to find an use another way. However, that might prove to be easily said than done. Could a viable way out be to use that same path but on a reverse direction to walk out of the position we have been misled, by realizing that no other path exists on a dead end?
  
5. We shall use existing social, economic, and political “realities” to communicate and bring to humanity this new vision. We act in cooperation to leverage these tools [only] in ways that are humane and peaceful to facilitate a new social system, for a sustainable and abundant future, for the benefit of our members and society at large.
  
6. We cannot sit anymore and watch the depletion and destruction of the very planet that gives us life. We cannot watch corporations that are dogmatically attached to profit poison our waters, our air, and our food for financial gain. We will no longer tolerate laws that perpetrate torture and bring unnecessary suffering to any human, including other life forms.
  
7. We arise now and seek ecological justice, peace in every community and freedom for every human. We pledge our allegiance to the Earth, to redeem and restore her glory. We support sustainable scientific practices for mutual coexistence in nature, in furtherance of a rich bio-diversity.
  
7. As a community, we have begun a movement in furtherance of a cause for the emancipation of human species. We come to terms with the fact that nothing will really or ever change until we changed the systems [not only its rules, but entire systems] that support old-fashioned games for survival and control based on unnecessary and ‘brutal’ competition.

# CREDO FOR THE GIFT SOCIETY

## Verse #1

"We do not 'need' to 'own' the land. Our primary motivation is not to 'earn' a wage."

## Verse #2

"We live for the society that cares for us; one that offers unrestricted access to the basic resources required to live."

## Verse #3

"We pledge, in good faith, to voluntarily offer our good purposes and services to sustain the society, and to do so to the best of our abilities."



← [Reply](#)



[James \(Gien\) Wong](#)

<https://learn.canvas.net/courses>

</2527/users/905142>

Wednesday



**Choose a theme that is of particular interest to you or the work that you are engaged in:**

Bottom-up, rapid whole system change (ie. in the next 5 years).

### 1. Why did you choose this topic?

The billions of citizens of the planet who are currently disempowered, are the sleeping giant of system change. We are the ones who are consistently ignored at the decision table, populated mostly by top-down government and business actors who prioritize corporate interests first. Government actors hands are tied and bound by the lobbying interests of business in politics, adding immense friction to policy reform.

### 2. Describe the focus or aim of the model/policy/initiative/movement.

Bottom-up, rapid whole system change.

**3. Briefly describe the context that the initiative emerged from.**

Five years of collective, trans-disciplinary sensemaking of modern human civilization, after which synthesis of multiple scientific, cultural, socio-economic, and philosophical frameworks was attempted.

**4. In what ways does this initiative address systems change? Consider the following in your analysis, or contribute questions of your own:****a. Can you generally map it in relation to the figures we examined above? Where would it fit?**

It is similar except we disaggregate planetary boundaries and doughnut economics at a city / community scale to break the grand problem of "bending the curve" into city and community-scale chunks that can be addressed by the city/community. "Bending the curve" of community biophysical and socio-economic trends back towards the safe operating space, when performed by each community, can be aggregated to bend the curve for the entire globe. We develop a systematic framework for federating and linking up existing cooperative and democratic bottom-up actors and supply a framework for developing new ones where none exist yet.

**b. Describe the goals for change and for whom.**

To provide instructions and to assist each community to calculate its own regional planetary boundary, synchronized to the bioregion as well as the global planetary boundary, and to developing both vertical working groups within the community and horizontal working groups spanning multiple communities and cities to collectively develop solutions for transitioning each community to a safe operating space. The solution framework logically encompasses all UN SDG's, and all the great solutions presented here. Apply backcasting methodology to establish milestones that need to be taken immediately.

**c. What obstacles block(ed) the progress of the initiative to date? Keep in mind the MLP, in particular at the regime level—policy, norms, rule, practices etc. Note landscape factors that may be in play.**

We are still in planning phase. There is inherently a great deal of complexity in attempting to synthesis multiple frameworks.

**d. What strategies helped reduce blockages to change?**

Diverse perspectives, which is collective intelligence in action, helps us to get out of ruts we create by seeing from a single silo'd perspective.

**e. What beneficial impacts have emerged?**

The onboarding of stakeholders is getting easier as the synthesis comes together. That gives us confidence we are on the right track.

**f. Identify key factors generating benefits to date.**

Bringing together multiple frameworks helps to overcome the challenges that any one, or even multiple frameworks cannot address. It's like building a jigsaw puzzle. All the pieces are required to see the final picture.

Social Tipping Points and Leverage Points are key theoretical and practical tools we employ. We have applied these tools to our own work with success, especially application of Prof. Damon Centola's work on Social Tipping Points.

**5. What political strategies can you detect that were important to advancing change? Who were the targets? Who were the allies? Are there other allies that you think could be potentially useful to reach out to?**

We are beginning in the grassroots and while we have top-down actors and systems in mind, our focus is to develop a system approach to mobilize the bottom and make billions of people aware of the idling resources already in our possession.

The politics of polarization is a valuable lesson on how to develop a strategy for unifying people in polarized camps. The great deal of friction at the top has also helped us to gain confidence that systemic bottom-up mobilization is required to create the required singularity that will create an outside shift of the stuck position of top-down actors.

**6. Finally, review what you have done in light of Figure 8.1. What additional ideas do you have that could build the politics for systems change based on this case?**

Mentioned in 4b. above.

Also, Human Interior Transformation, what we call HIT, is something we have identified as a critical leverage point. This is the world of thoughts, emotions, mental models and narratives. We are operationalizing this in half of our strategies. We do not feel that sustainable change can take place unless there is a critical component of HIT, given the wicked problem of political polarization now ubiquitous in the anthropocene.

**7. If you're feeling inclined, visually represent your work in a chart or figure.**

No chart including all elements exists yet, although one is in formative stages.

For more info, please refer to our preliminary work-in-progress presentations. There's a lot missing in the prez, such as the Personal Transformation section, scientific reference section, the local economic strategy, etc. These will be filled out in time, but this will give you a basic idea.

Main presentation:

<https://stopresetgo.kumu.io/emerging-through-emergency> (<https://stopresetgo.kumu.io/emerging-through-emergency>)

Core team member's PhD thesis, which provides the thrivability framework:

<https://anneloes3.kumu.io/a-transition-plan-for-a-thrivability-world>  
(<https://anneloes3.kumu.io/a-transition-plan-for-a-thrivability-world>)

Edited by [James \(Gien\) Wong](#) (<https://learn.canvas.net/courses/2527/users/905142>) on Aug 7 at 2:36pm

← [Reply](#)



[Caroline Hurley](#) (<https://learn.canvas.net>)





</courses/2527/users/894561>

Thursday

Amen : )

[← Reply](#)