

Contact: Stefan Pasti
Cell: (703) 209-2093
Email: stefanpasti@gmx.com
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The Tipping Point Action Campaign Maximizing Citizen Participation in Times of Unprecedented Challenges

The Community Peacebuilding and Cultural Sustainability (CPCS) Initiative provides research for critical challenge alerts, and support for collaborative problem solving initiatives which seek to maximize citizen participation.

In December, 2013, The CPCS Initiative launched a new and comprehensive campaign called “Tipping Point Action: Citizen Participation in Times of Unprecedented Challenges”. A key supporting document for the Tipping Point Action Campaign is [“A List of Ten Critical Challenges”](#) (1 page), which is a summary of longer CPCS Initiative critical challenges assessments, and which is a quick way to awareness of the convergence of critical challenges now occurring.

Beginning in March, 2014, Campaign Coordinator Stefan Pasti is re-launching the Tipping Point Action Campaign. “And I will continue to re-launch and re-launch, if necessary”, said Mr. Pasti.

“We are going to need all the resources, knowledge, and skills each one of us has, and we are going to need to make the best efforts we can at working together, if we are going to succeed at resolving the challenges ahead of us. And it’s going to be difficult to arrive at that point without persistent efforts over a long period of time. I’m in for the duration of the emergency,” said Mr. Pasti.

The primary goal of the Tipping Point Action Campaign is to encourage citizens from every variety of circumstances to help create, become involved, contribute to, and participate in one or more of the thousands of Community Visioning Initiatives (or similar stakeholder engagement/collaborative problem solving processes designed to maximize citizen participation) which will be needed to exponentially accelerate solution-oriented activity at this critical time.

A Difficult Argument to Make

“I can understand why many people might wonder what I am talking about, and why many people might have no idea why I would be advocating for thousands of Community Visioning Initiatives,” said Mr. Pasti. “And yet I do believe if many people saw the evidence I’ve seen, they would appreciate the need for many stakeholder engagement processes which are designed to maximize citizen participation.”

Most of the evidence Mr. Pasti has seen is included in a key CPCS Initiative document titled [“Invitation Package for Possible Board of Advisors”](#) (589 pages; Nov. 2013). The 56 page section on “The Threat of Global Warming” includes a 28 point timeline of warnings on Global Warming (1988—2013), and many key graphs and charts (fair use for educational purposes). The “Global Warming” section is, unfortunately, only one of many sections in the “Invitation Package” document which provide evidence of trajectories which are continuing to move in a dangerous direction.

What about all the efforts now underway? Why are new initiatives needed?

“What we need” said Mr. Pasti, “are initiatives which are comprehensive enough to keep momentum on the side of ‘We can do it’. Here’s why I don’t see that we have reached that point yet.”

1) Most global warming mitigation strategies have limited definitions of “stakeholders”—as if the challenges of our times can be resolved by the experts while the rest of us are doing something else.

2) Unfortunately, many of the efforts now underway give little attention to the spiritual/moral dimensions of cultural worldviews [Ex: “The satisfaction of one’s physical needs must come at a certain point to a dead stop before it degenerates into physical decadence.” (Mahatma Gandhi)]. How important is a deeper understanding of the spiritual/moral dimensions of global warming, and other related challenges? Here are two examples of how important such a deeper understanding can be.

a) Consider the following statement: “The satisfaction of one’s physical needs must come at a certain point to a dead stop before it degenerates into physical decadence.” (Mahatma Gandhi). *There are many people in the world today who do not understand the wisdom in Gandhi’s statement—and their help will be needed to avoid disastrous global warming outcomes.*

b) Unfortunately, there are many people in communities around the world who—regardless of the difficulties and urgencies associated with resolving multiple crises—choose to focus their attention of trying to make money by preying of people’s fears, manipulating people’s trust, and/or encouraging people to abandon hope in higher aspirations, and indulge in unhealthy, or immoral behavior. Widespread cynicism about our collective capacity to overcome the critical challenges of our times may undermine many projects which would have otherwise led to positive tipping points. Again—what we need are efforts comprehensive enough to keep momentum on the side of “We can do it”.

Community Visioning as Problem Solving on a Scale Most of Us Have Never Known Before

“My interest in Community Visioning Initiatives was inspired instantly,” said Mr. Pasti, “when, in 1994, I watched a video documentary titled [“Chattanooga: A Community With A Vision”](#) (13 minutes).”

The video includes many interviews and how-to details, and documents two very successful Community Visioning Initiatives organized by the non-profit organization Chattanooga Venture (Chattanooga, Tennessee USA)—one in 1984, and a follow-up in 1993. The 1984 Chattanooga Community Visioning Project (“Vision 2000”) attracted more than 1,700 participants, and produced 40 community goals—which resulted in the implementation of 223 projects and programs, the creation of 1,300 permanent jobs, and a total financial investment of 793 million dollars.

“What I saw in the Chattanooga video,” said Mr. Pasti, “was a way of revitalizing our capacity to work together with our neighbors for the greater good. And revitalizing our capacity to work together for the greater good is going to be critical.”

There are, however, differences between the Chattanooga Visioning process, and the kind of Community Visioning advocated for by the Tipping Point Action Campaign. For example: in the 1984 Chattanooga Visioning process, residents were asked “What would you like to Chattanooga be like in the year 2000?” In contrast, the kind of Community Visioning the Tipping Point Action Campaign advocates for is a process which builds up to residents submitting documents in response to 5 specific stages: identifying challenges,

prioritizing challenges, identifying solutions, prioritizing solutions, and identifying action plans related to priority solutions.

“If the goal is to resolve the unprecedented challenges ahead, then it would seem necessary to exponentially increase the number of actively engaged citizens—citizens who (thus) have a much more comprehensive sense of civic duty. It’s not like mobilizing for war, where there will be drill sergeants and basic training, but people should begin to realize: problem solving on a scale most of us have never known before means there is a lot of work to do,” said Mr. Pasti.

Two Key Questions

Here are two questions which will help readers see how this Tipping Point Action Campaign might be scaled up, and why it might need to be scaled up soon:

1) What would an educational curriculum look like—for preparing survey specialists, resource coordinators for Neighborhood Learning Centers, and organizers/facilitators for Community Visioning Initiatives (and other stakeholder engagement/collaborative problem solving approaches)—if it was to be delivered in training modules similar to the kind used when the Peace Corps was scaled up?

2) What if there needed to be a reversal of the urbanization trend, and a demographic shift from megacities to more ecologically sustainable and villages, towns, and small cities (with much more potential to achieve carbon neutral economies)? What kind of curriculum (in colleges, other learning institutions, and in Neighborhood Learning Centers) would be most appropriate to create the knowledge base and skill sets necessary to make such a transition?

“Educational institutions, and other organizations, could increase their existing efforts, or take up the call, to develop educational curriculum and training in response to such questions,” said Mr. Pasti.

Concluding Comments

The Community Visioning Initiative approach to collaborative problem solving and citizen peacebuilding (supplemented by many Community Teaching and Learning Centers) emphasizes personal and civic responsibility, maximizing citizen participation in identifying challenges and solution-oriented activity, giving people an opportunity to become actively involved in a solution-charged environment, and minimizing the risk of “transformation unemployment”; and is especially appropriate to the building of “close-knit” communities of people... communities with a healthy appreciation for each others strengths, communities with a well-developed capacity to resolve even the most difficult challenges— and communities which demonstrate a high level of compassion for their fellow human beings.

“People may wonder whether this kind of problem solving is possible,” said Mr. Pasti. “For those who are wondering... I ask them to look around. We now live in a complex world where cooperation at many levels of society has created awe inspiring achievements in energy production and transmission (oil wells, power plants, electric power transmission), engineering and construction (large cities); communication (Internet, cell phones); transportation (both private and public); and medical treatments (critical medical assistance for common diseases in becoming more and more widespread). We just need that kind of cooperation to create habitats which are carbon neutral, sustainable, and result in more peaceful and honest ways of living.”

“However, ‘that kind of cooperation’, in the context of the convergence of critical challenges now occurring, will mean we are going to need all the resources, knowledge, and skills each one of us has, and we are going to need to make the best efforts we can at working together, if we are going to succeed at resolving the challenges ahead of us,” said Mr. Pasti.

“1000 time-intensive Community Visioning Initiatives, in communities around the world, would create an exponential increase in solution-oriented investment, an exponential increase in solution-oriented employment, and an exponential increase in our collective capacity to overcome the challenges of our times.”

The Community Peacebuilding and Cultural Sustainability (CPCS) Initiative (at www.cpcsi.org) provides research for critical challenge alerts, and support for collaborative problem solving initiatives which seek to maximize citizen participation.

Stefan Pasti is the Campaign Coordinator for “Tipping Point Action: Citizen Participation in Times of Unprecedented Challenges”. Although Mr. Pasti does not have traditional credentials or professional experience, he has a “trained eye”, and a well seasoned intuitive “feel” for analyzing complex information regarding challenges of our times, identifying pathways for solution-oriented activity to flow, synthesizing such information into understandable parts, and organizing those parts into well organized documents (much like the work which would need to be done to sort through participant input during a Community Visioning Initiative).

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