

The Tipping Point Action Campaign
Making the case for problem solving on a scale most of us have never known before

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Widespread awareness that we are at a critical point in the evolution of life on Planet Earth has been slow in coming, partly because the challenges are complex. But more and more organizations have seen enough evidence, and are taking steps to prepare for problem solving on a scale most of us have never known before.

One such organization is The Community Peacebuilding and Cultural Sustainability (CPCS) Initiative (at www.cpcsc.info). The CPCS Initiative provides research for critical challenge alerts, and support for collaborative problem solving initiatives which seek to maximize citizen participation.

Beginning in December, 2013, The CPCS Initiative launched a new and comprehensive campaign called "Tipping Point Action: Citizen Participation in Times of Unprecedented Challenges".

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

"We are at a critical point in the evolution of life on Planet Earth," said Stefan Pasti, the Founder of the CPCS Initiative, and the Campaign Coordinator for the Tipping Point Action Campaign. "Unfortunately, much of the evidence is not 'coming through the mist' as much as it should be. So I understand why many people might wonder what I am talking about, and have no idea why I would be advocating for thousands of Community Visioning Initiatives. 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. So, what I am thinking is that *the need for an unprecedented degree of problem solving just has not yet become a well known fact.*"

The evidence Mr. Pasti has seen has been compiled 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 that are continuing to move in a dangerous direction." said Mr. Pasti. [Note: ["A List of Ten Critical Challenges"](#) (1 page) is one quick way to awareness of the convergence of critical challenges now occurring. This "list" is a condensed summary of longer critical challenge assessments, and includes supplementary evidence from longer documents.]

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) Too often 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. Whereas the Tipping Point Action Campaign acknowledges that we are going to need all the resources, knowledge, and skills each one of us has, and we are going to need the best efforts we can make at working together, if we are going to succeed at resolving the challenges ahead of us.

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? Consider the following: a) *there are many people who do not understand the wisdom in Gandhi’s statement* b) *their help will be needed* to avoid disastrous global warming outcomes.

3) 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 that many of the critical challenges of our times will not be resolved could be a crippling factor affecting many projects. Again—what we need are efforts comprehensive enough to keep momentum on the side of “We can do it”.

4) If the initiatives were in place to exponentially accelerate solution-oriented activity at this critical time—which is what is really needed—it would be a significant change from “business-as-usual” (in communities around the world), and public discourse in even the most “mainstream” media outlets would be contributing to the efforts. The fact that unprecedented solution-oriented activity has not reached such visibility (the kind of visibility that means a majority of people in the world are aware of it) can be seen as another “danger sign flashing red”.

Stakeholder engagement comprehensive enough to keep momentum on the side of “We can do it”

Community Visioning Initiatives can be described as a series of community meetings designed to facilitate the process of brainstorming ideas, organizing the ideas into goals, prioritizing the goals, and identifying doable steps towards those goals. One of the main goals of Community Visioning Initiatives is to maximize citizen participation in identifying challenges, and in solution-oriented activity.

Mr. Pasti’s interest in Community Visioning Initiatives was inspired instantly when, in 1994, he watched a video documentary titled [“Chattanooga: A Community With A Vision”](#) (13 minutes). The documentary provides many personal interviews and how-to details associated with two very successful Community Visioning Initiatives. 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.

“One part of the building up process to a time-intensive Community Visioning Initiative is preliminary surveys—but I believe this piece needs to be given much more emphasis,” said Mr. Pasti. “Well thought out preliminary surveys (with questions like ‘What are the most critical challenges of our times?’ and ‘What are the most valuable solution options to those challenges?’ can be sent to 150 key leaders in local communities. The responses which the leaders make can then be published in the local newspapers. At this critical time, citizens will be looking very carefully at the responses these leaders make to questions about challenges, and possible solutions. Such survey responses can do much to help local residents appreciate the need for a Community Visioning Initiative.”

Another key element which is underappreciated in most stakeholder engagement processes, according to Mr. Pasti, is Neighborhood Learning Centers.

Here is an excerpt from a primary outreach document titled "["Invitation to Comment on the Tipping Point Action Proposal at MIT Climate CoLab Crowdsourcing Platform"](#)" (4 pages), which will help explain the significance of Neighborhood Learning Centers:

“Collaborative problem solving processes like Community Visioning Initiatives can help citizens understand that the investments of time, energy, and money (the ‘votes’) each of us make in our everyday circumstances become the larger economy. And wisely directed, such ‘votes’ can result in countless ways of earning a living which contribute to the peacebuilding, community revitalization, and ecological sustainability efforts necessary to drastically reduce Greenhouse Gas Emissions, and to also (at the same time) mitigate many other related challenges. Citizens from every variety of circumstances can learn how to wisely cast such ‘votes’—through workshops and meetings at Neighborhood Learning Centers during a Community Visioning Initiative, and through other local learning experiences.”

“The use of digital technology, and websites, in stakeholder engagement processes has its place”, said Mr. Pasti. “However, the process of creating the knowledge base and skill sets necessary to resolve the challenges of our times should also encourage as many formal and informal meetings as possible between neighbors—and people living in the same local community. Creating many Neighborhood Learning Centers can provide places for discussion, information sharing, mutual support and encouragement, fellowship and friendship—so that the exchanging of information and resources will also include the building of a ‘close-knit’ community of people (who now have many new opportunities to help and support each other towards common goals).”

Besides publishing the results of the preliminary surveys, there are many ways which local newspapers can contribute valuable community service at this time. An undertaking like a time-intensive Community Visioning Initiative, requiring supporting workshops at many Neighborhood Learning Centers, could be supported in many ways by ongoing coverage from professional reporters, and ongoing news analysis.

“What I saw in the Chattanooga Visioning Video,” said Mr. Pasti, “was a way of revitalizing the sense of working together with our neighbors for the greater good, so that there would be an electrifying feeling about what going to happen next—a collective revitalization of the belief that many good things would be happening in the community, and that many people who lived in the same community would have a part in it. Local newspapers can do much to help revitalize that sense of working together for the greater good.”

Two Key Questions

There are two key questions which Mr. Pasti believes 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 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?

Scaling Up

Mr. Pasti has created many support documents for the Tipping Point Action Campaign. In the primary outreach document "[Open Letter to Green Party Representatives \(Subject: Tipping Point Action Campaign\)](#)", Mr. Pasti provided the following thoughts on how the Tipping Point Action Campaign might be scaled up.

“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.

“One important step towards realizing the potential of the Tipping Point Action Campaign would be collaboration among organizations to train organizers and facilitators in 1) how to describe the potential of Community Visioning Initiatives to key local community leaders and 2) how to guide a community of residents through the process (from preparation through implementation to evaluation). Lead organizations providing such training programs would be providing the following services to local communities: affordable workshops; neighborhood learning centers; collaborative problem solving which will turn polarizing circumstances into “how does our community want to respond to what 150 local leaders have identified (in preliminary surveys) as challenges and solution options at this critical time?”;--and a means of continually raising awareness about the outcomes of the “votes” people cast (every day) with their investments of time, energy, and money.

“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. Organizations and initiatives providing trustworthy guidance for collaborative problem solving and citizen peacebuilding efforts—especially at this critical time—should be valued for serving the greater good, and setting a good example.”

“Many people may think that creating thousands of Community Visioning Initiatives would be a massive undertaking, and the coordination of such a process would be too complicated,” said Mr. Pasti. “The Tipping Point Action Campaign, and the key supporting documents for the campaign, can help in two ways: 1) they provide evidence that a profound level of problem solving is needed b) they provide starting points for discussion on how such a level of problem solving can be achieved.

“Consider the following:

“The ‘Invitation Package for Possible Board of Advisors’ (key CPCS Initiative document) has a section titled ‘Descriptions of People Being Formally Invited to Join CPCS Initiative Board of Advisors (272)’. And

in the 'Who will take these actions?' section of the [Tipping Point Action Proposal at the MIT Climate CoLab Platform](#), I list 35 organizations and initiatives I believe will be most helpful to the start up phase of a Tipping Point Action Campaign:

Pew Research Center; Dialogue by Design; D3Associates; Participatory Local Democracy Program; TckTckTck; Stakeholders Forum; United Nations Human Settlements Programme; Food & Agriculture Organization of the United Nations; Teachers Without Borders; International Development Training; Doctors Without Borders; The Hunger Project; ICLEI; Heifer International; Oxfam; Habitat for Humanity; Rotary International; Mercy Corps; CARE International; Religions for Peace; Peace Corps; Sister Cities International; Skoll Foundation; Gates Foundation; Tides Foundation; Women's Funding Network; Save the Children International; Fairtrade International; Ashoka; Katerva; Gaia Education; La Via Campesina; Global Ecovillage Network; Permaculture Research Institute; International Biochar Initiative

"The Tipping Point Action Campaign could gain momentum with even a tiny fraction of the above advisors and organizations," said Mr. Pasti

What about the cost?

"Earlier in this article," said Mr. Pasti, "I explained that collaborative problem solving processes like Community Visioning Initiatives can help citizens understand that the investments of time, energy, and money (the 'votes') each of us make in our everyday circumstances become the larger economy. And wisely directed, such 'votes' can result in countless ways of earning a living which contribute to the peacebuilding, community revitalization, and ecological sustainability efforts necessary to drastically reduce Greenhouse Gas Emissions, and to also (at the same time) mitigate many other related challenges.

"A short way of saying this is that the investments of time, energy, and money that each of us make in our everyday circumstances become the larger economy," said Mr. Pasti.

Organizations, institutions, businesses, government, and local residents can learn how to reapportion their time, energy, and money to make Community Visioning Initiatives and Neighborhood Learning Centers possible. Local economies have always been a reflection of the inner aspirations of local residents. Community Visioning Initiatives are a way of helping local residents carefully examining their inner aspirations at this critical time.

"A rough estimate for 1000 Community Visioning Initiatives is that they would cost \$10 billion," said Mr. Pasti.

"Here are a few selected observations (source references in the 'Invitation Package' document) to illustrate that we have the resources to carry out 1000 Community Visioning Initiatives:

- 1) \$10 billion is only .005% of the \$207 trillion in personal wealth held by the richest 10 percent.
- 2) \$10 billion is only .57% (a little more than half of 1%) of \$1,750 billion in military expenditures in 2012.
- 3) \$10 billion is 1.8% of (est.) \$557 billion in worldwide advertising spending in 2012.

"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."