

*“Common Sense and Social Cohesion
During a Time of Unprecedented Cultural Transformation”*

*by Stefan Pasti, Founder and Resource Coordinator
The Community Peacebuilding and Cultural Sustainability (CPCS) Initiative
www.cpcsi.org
(25 pages; August, 2020)*

Contains Many Practical Insights and Resources

*Copies are free,
and intended to serve as a starting point for local discussion.*

*This pamphlet is initially being sent to editors of local newspapers.
Further circulation of this pamphlet is encouraged.*

For decades, Mr. Pasti has been identifying indicators on challenges ahead, and evaluating ways to maximize citizen participation in responding to the challenges. We now have a convergence of unprecedented challenges. We can bring to each of our communities the best possible wisdom and guidance. We can understand the problems we face, and we can understand ways to resolve such problems. Welcome to a discussion of what practical steps we can take at this critical time.

Contact Information

*Stefan Pasti, Founder and Resource Coordinator
The Community Peacebuilding and Cultural Sustainability (CPCS) Initiative at www.cpcsi.org
stefanpasti@gmx.com
[@StefanPasti on Twitter](https://twitter.com/StefanPasti)*

Introduction

Providing key information for discussion and debate is part of the unspoken social contract newspapers agree to when they serve a community of people.

I am submitting this pamphlet to editors of many local newspapers around the United States--

--as a contribution to local discussion and debate

--because we need to increase cooperation in our communities, and accelerate movement towards positive tipping points on the very difficult challenges we now have.

We are Too Big for the Planet

Consider the following list of solutions:

Worldwide Surveys of Positive Tipping Point Organizations and Institutions (5-10 page overviews) on Challenges and Solutions; Surveys of Key Local Leaders on Challenges and Solutions; Emergency Humanitarian Aid; Community Visioning; Neighborhood Learning Centers; Relocalization; Village Industries/Cottage Industries; Food Sovereignty; Agrarian Reform; Circular Economy; Zero Waste; Gender Equality; Lifelong Education; Appropriate Technology; Community Supported Manufacturing; Community Supported Agriculture; Community Land Trusts; Transition Towns; Ecovillages; Agroecology; Permaculture; Renewable Energy; Energy Storage Systems; Microgrids; Neighbor to Neighbor Community Education (in newspapers/newsletters); Local Currency; Inspiring Role Models; Socially Responsible Investing; Socially Engaged Spirituality; Interfaith Prayer Vigils; Right Livelihood; Civic Responsibility; Voluntary Simplicity; Honesty, Hard Work, Faith, Forgiveness, Wisdom

[Sources: [“Harvest Song”](#) (last two chapters) (78 pages; 2018); [“Growing Wisdom and Compassion in Small Communities \(13 Steps\)”](#) (78 pages)(over many years)]

What problems do you think the above solutions are for?

My view: we need these kind of solutions because our Planet, big as it is, is too small to handle the reckless and destructive behavior of human beings without the ecosystems (including the ocean) getting fouled up by pollution, or destroyed by development--and without the atmosphere become overloaded with Greenhouse Gas Emissions.

We've got to downsize.

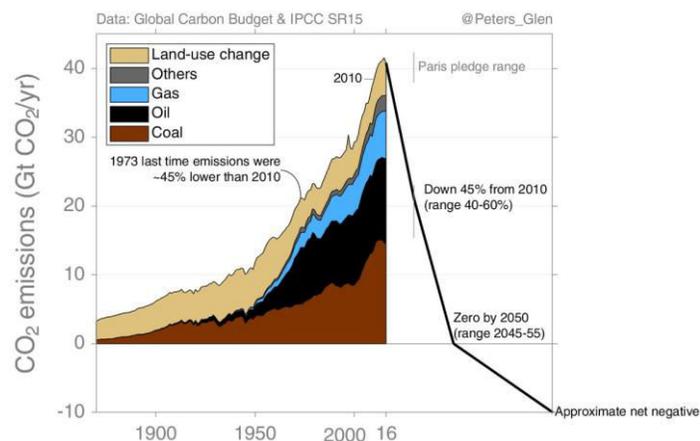
Here in the United States, and in other overdeveloped parts of the world, we have lifestyles which use up too much natural resources, and destroy too much of the Earth’s living systems (ecosystems), until there is less and less for other living beings. And it has become so widespread, this “less and less for other living beings”, that we now have an Extinction Event (6th Extinction Event in the history of the Planet) in process [see [“UN Report: Nature’s Dangerous Decline ‘Unprecedented’; Species Extinction Rates ‘Accelerating’”](#) (“1 million species threatened with extinction”)].

Also here in the United States, and in other overdeveloped parts of the world, we have already caused so much Greenhouse Gases to be crowded into the immense atmospheric system of the Planet that we now have a Climate Emergency--described below in a letter from over 11,000 scientists—

“The climate crisis has arrived and is accelerating faster than most scientists expected (figure 2, IPCC 2018). It is more severe than anticipated, threatening natural ecosystems and the fate of humanity (IPCC 2019). Especially worrisome are potential irreversible climate tipping points and nature's reinforcing feedbacks (atmospheric, marine, and terrestrial) that could lead to a catastrophic “hothouse Earth,” well beyond the control of humans (Steffen et al. 2018). These climate chain reactions could cause significant disruptions to ecosystems, society, and economies, potentially making large areas of Earth uninhabitable.”

[From statement [“World Scientists’ Warning of a Climate Emergency”](#) (with more than 11,000 scientist signatories from around the world) (November 5, 2019; paragraph 7)]

And so, according to the “IPCC Special Report on 1.5°C”, “global net human-caused emissions of carbon dioxide (CO₂) would need to fall by about 45 percent from 2010 levels by 2030, reaching ‘net zero’ around 2050” to limit Global Warming to 1.5°C [from [“Summary for Policymakers of IPCC Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5°C”](#) (paragraph 10)(Special 1.5°C Report released **October 18, 2018**)]. Here is what that kind of decrease in Carbon Emissions would look like in a graph—



[from [October 12, 2018 tweet](#) by Gary Peters, Research Director, Center for International Climate Research--CICERO; Oslo, Norway)(@Peters_Glen on Twitter)]

[Note: increasing negative feedback loops since the IPCC 1.5°C report suggest that we need to achieve “net zero” ASAP (faster than the graph above) (see [“Climate tipping points — too risky to bet against”](#) by Johan Rockström,, Stefan Rahmstorf, Will Steffen, et al. in Nature Journal (November 27, 2019)--and--Guardian article [“Climate emergency: world 'may have crossed tipping points'”](#) by Damian Carrington November 27, 2019)]

Are We There Yet?

Since the IPCC Special Report on 1.5°C was released, [“over 1747 local governments in 30 countries \(representing 830+ million people\) have declared a Climate Emergency”](#) (as of August 17, 2020) (Climate Emergency Campaign at The Climate Mobilization).

However--

Global Greenhouse Gas Emissions *have not yet peaked--they are still increasing (NASA)*(monthly readings).

and

“Despite the growing deployment of renewable energy around the world, the share of renewables in total final energy consumption (TFEC) has seen only a moderate increase. As of 2018, modern renewable energy (excluding the traditional use of biomass) accounted for an estimated **11%** of TFEC (others: **Fossil Fuels 79.9%**; Traditional Biomass 6.9%; Nuclear Energy 2.2%).”

[From Chapter 1 [“Global Overview”](#) (see Figure 1) in Ren21 “Renewables Global Status Report 2020” (released June 16, 2020)]

Unfortunately, there is a significant majority of people who are trying to carry over into the future energy intensive habitats (buildings in cities over 1 million inhabitants, for example), energy intensive transportation (cars, planes, ocean freight carriers, etc.), and energy intensive lifestyles (large scale construction and manufacturing)--*with hardly a word about how we can learn to NOT NEED SO MUCH ENERGY IN THE FIRST PLACE.*

Imagine yourself in special sacred place, or a quiet place in Nature, and contemplate the passages below:

If many people can learn to find contentment and quality of life while consuming much less, this limiting of desires at the “root” will save much trouble trying to respond to the symptoms of unrestrained desires--as they materialize worldwide. This part of the value and benefit of spiritual teachings is often overlooked.

Do most people think that somehow we cannot have high quality of life in small cities, towns, and villages?

Survey Question

Please check the box below which best corresponds to your view of the following statement:

“It is possible to create, support, and sustain communities which can:
 minimize resource requirements
 maintain ecological sustainability
 maintain a high level of compassion for fellow human beings--
 and which represent what a significant majority of community residents surveyed
 would describe as a high quality of life.”

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I believe it-- and there is much evidence to support it	I believe it-- and there is sufficient evidence to support it	I would like to believe it, but there isn't enough evidence to support it	It is difficult to believe it, with the way things are going now	I don't believe it— there is no evidence to support it

Why Small Cities, Towns, And Villages For A Solution Focus?

This writer prefers that priorities (for urgently and drastically cutting global emissions, and for supporting a vast network of sustainable ecosystems around the world)

[“Over 90% of our food comes from terrestrial ecosystems, which also provide energy, building materials, clothes, medicines, fresh and clean water, and clean air”](#) (paragraph 4)]

be given to small cities, towns, and villages--
 as more sustainable-friendly in the long run
 having less complex vulnerabilities
 creating more emphasis on downsizing and focusing on what basic necessities are most needed
 where it is easier to see the results of our actions
 and where a truly natural circular economy (sewage treatment, food miles, less packaging, zero waste, etc.) is much easier to implement, and more likely to actually happen.

One inspiration for this point of view: J.C. Kumarappa, an economist who worked with Mahatma Gandhi. Consider this passage:

“If we feel it is beyond us to guarantee the concomitant results of all our transactions, it necessarily

follows that we must limit our transactions to a circle well within our control. This is the bed rock of swadeshi... *The smaller the circumference, the more accurately can we gauge the results of our actions, and (the) more conscientiously shall we be able to fulfill our obligations as trustees.*" (p. 60)

[From "[Why the Village Movement?](#)" by J.C. Kumarappa (All India Village Industries Association, 1946) accessible at Internet Archives]

Specifically then, as we evaluate which investments of time, energy, and money (the "votes") each of us make in our everyday circumstances of community life, focusing our best efforts at the small city, town, and village level will help us--

a) identify, support, and sustain supply chains which will accelerate movement towards a Zero Carbon Economy

b) identify, support and sustain socially responsible business and manufacturing practices--

in areas such as

land rights

gender equality

living incomes for small-scale farmers

rights for farm workers

sustainable sources for products and raw materials (and under what conditions)

transparency and accountability

sustainable water use

proper sanitation

eliminating pollution

zero waste, etc.

Further, here is a very important fact of life, which often gets overlooked:

"... every article in the bazaar has moral and spiritual values attached to it.... Hence it behooves us to enquire into the antecedents of every article we buy."

(J.C. Kumarappa; p. 53 in above source)

Thus, the increased transparency of local transactions, and the increased proximity of supply chains, will also help create, support, and sustain a positive environment of honesty, reliability, fairness, and trust in our communities.

"We do not live unto ourselves, and the more we realize the repercussions of our actions on our neighbors and strive to act according to the highest we are capable of, the more shall we advance in our spiritual development." (J.C. Kumarappa; p. 55 in above source)

What Exactly Is This Convergence of Unprecedented Challenges?

What are the problems which require the overdeveloped part of the world to downsize, and make sacrifices, as in give up so much of what we consider valuable about of our modern lives?

Climate Emergency

6th extinction event

COVID 19 deaths and stresses on economy, employment, health care, food security

Cultures of violence, greed, corruption, and overindulgence

Global inequities and the tragic cycles of malnutrition, disease, and death

Deterioration of trust/confidence in institutions responsible for guiding public discourse

toxic air in cities

water scarcity and sanitation issues

gender inequality

migration and displacement

widespread human rights violations

floods and chemical sites

no permanent disposal solution for High-Level Radioactive Waste and Spent Nuclear Fuel

additional potential for pandemics

meat and dairy carbon emissions

plastic pollution

widespread cancer causing chemicals (see www.ewg.org)

cement carbon emissions

thawing permafrost

cynicism and despair

cyber threats

The increasing world population and its implications relating to widespread resource depletion

The increasing number of people who are consuming material goods and ecological resources *indiscriminately*

The end of the Fossil Fuel Era

Analysis supported by much credible evidence--*that there are many danger signs flashing now (involving significant threats to ecological stability and social cohesion)*--can be easily lost amidst a swirl of misinformation, other more trivial information, and the “siren song” of multiple entertainment venues

[Sources: ["Unprecedented Challenges Ahead--July 2020"](#) (2 pages); ["Harvest Song"](#) (first two chapters) (78 pages; 2018); ["Recalibrating Our Moral Compasses...."](#) (especially p. 9-20) (85 pages; 2015-2016); ["Brainstorming Zero Carbon ASAP"](#) (157 pages; 2019)]

And the above list of unprecedented challenges is only touching on *some* of the very difficult challenges we have now. **An actual cultural transformation which succeeds in achieving Zero Carbon is going to come up against many more challenges than anyone is currently able to foresee.**

Unfortunately, there are all too frequent tendencies in human nature--bright and inspiring as many other aspects are--to be violent, greedy, corrupt, and overindulgent. And when people get that way, they forget about "social and environmental externalities" ... like family, and community, and the greater good of the whole, and our relationship with the natural living ecosystems which are sustaining us.

"Most economic development and growth strategies encouraged rapid accumulation of physical, financial and human capital, but at the expense of... depleting the world's stock of natural wealth--often irreversibly Existing policies and market incentives have contributed to this problem of capital misallocation *because they allow businesses to run up significant, largely unaccounted for, and unchecked social and environmental externalities*"

[From "[Towards a Green Economy: Pathways to Sustainable Development and Poverty Eradication](#)" United Nations Environment Programme **2011**; [in Introduction, see section "An Era of Capital Misallocation" (insufficient numbering--see the first and second pages of the introduction)]

The point is that we have got to have Zero Carbon, honest, wise, compassionate, sustainable, and peaceful lifestyles for many reasons--with the main one being so we can fit in on this Planet... so that, in other words, human beings are a *positive part* of the many different varieties of life which together makes up a healthy Planet. In short, we have arrived at a point in the history of life on Planet Earth, when human beings cannot continue to be reckless and destructive... we have to learn how to be good human beings.

What We Need To Do--Nine Specific Suggestions

I have provided the list of solutions on p. 2 at the beginning of this pamphlet so that readers can see that there are many ways we can accelerate movement towards positive tipping points on most of the challenges we face. And there are, of course, many solutions which either I am not aware of, or which will not be mentioned here--that is why the #2 suggestion (below) is so important!!

Even so, besides 1) downsizing as in overdeveloped areas of the world need to cut back consumption, simplify, learn how to have high quality of life using less materials goods and ecological services; etc.--so that we quickly decrease and eventually phase out Greenhouse Gas Emissions... and so that the rest of our convergence of unprecedented challenges is easier to sort out)--

--there are eight other solutions which should be getting much more of our attention than they are getting now. The rest of this pamphlet will include some discussion of those eight other suggestions.

2) 5-10 page overviews on how to achieve Zero Carbon ASAP from thousands of positive tipping point related organizations and institutions

A partnership between a few research universities needs to form (somehow), because it's time for a special kind of education, the kind we need when we have to resolve many emergencies at once.

What such a partnership would do—

- a) identify organizations and institutions around the world which are credible, reliable, trustworthy-- and which are focusing their efforts (possibly for decades) on achieving key positive tipping points associated *specifically* with achieving Zero Carbon Economies, significantly limiting species extinction, and reining in the COVID 19 virus... but also with other fields of activity essential to creating just, peaceful, and sustainable habitats for everyone, regardless of race, creed, color, or any other possible prejudice
- b) request that such organizations and institutions provide a 5-10 page overview of the challenges and solutions they see *in their specific field of activity*
- c) establish a clearinghouse website with an organized compilation of the 5-10 page overviews from the thousands of positive tipping point organizations and institutions

Such a clearinghouse of insight and experience from so many diverse organizations and institutions will surely provide--

- a) a most comprehensive visualization of transformations needed in every aspect of our lives (climate action; hunger; water scarcity; housing; land rights; biodiversity; civic engagement; peacebuilding, etc.)
- b) a most comprehensive visualization of how much collaboration is needed to resolve the convergence of unprecedented challenges we now have.

Some people might ask: are there enough experienced organizations and institutions working on responding to the Climate Emergency, and resolving the whole convergence of challenges we face, that we can trust to give us reliable information?

And while there may be people would denigrate any kind of cultural institution which has an opinion contrary to their personal agenda... there are, as people can discover for themselves, thousands, yes, thousands of organizations and institutions which can provide valuable and reliable insight into resolving the many problems we have to sort out.

Below are some examples (there are more examples in the document [“Sample List of 231 positive tipping point organizations and institutions”](#))--

Water.org; The Hunger Project; Ceres; CDP Global; International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA); Local Governments for Sustainability (ICLEI); Climate Action Network-International (CAN); Project Drawdown; Centre for Alternative Technology; Divest Invest; Mercy Corps; International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC); Médecins Sans Frontières (Doctors Without Borders); Catholic Relief Services; Save The Children; The Nature Conservancy; World Agroforestry (ICRAF); Fairtrade International; Friends of the Earth; Footprint Network; Green America; Habitat for Humanity; Human Rights Watch; Global Editors Network (GEN); Landesa; Pew Research Global; Religions for Peace; United Religions Initiative; IAP2; Clean Cooking Alliance; Gaia Education; Global Ecovillage Network; Lowimpact.org (LILI); Solar Cookers International; Futurepump; La Via Campesina; International Food Security Network (IFSN); United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR); World Food Programme; Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD); Teachers without Borders; Second Nature; Gaia University; Talloires Network; Global Fund for Women; International Women's Media Foundation (IWMF);

[Note: many people might be wary of “organizations and institutions around the world” because there are many organizations and institutions which are in on keeping the energy intensive infrastructure, energy intensive transportation, and energy intensive lifestyles propped up, because they have financial investments there, or because they are so enmeshed in the system that it has become a cultural identity for them. The work of sifting through the many organizations and institutions doing good work and finding the ones which are most clear-headed about where we are, and where we need to go is important work (similar to the Survey Question about “Right Livelihood” on p. 17), and the work should be done by a very special council (with crowdsourcing assistance from many people if possible)... but it can be done well. And we will be needing the clear thinking from such exemplary organizations and institutions as an “anchor” when there are too many emergencies at once... which may happen....]

Thus--through only a few key partnerships, we can compile the expertise of many positive tipping point organizations and institutions, and create a well-organized clearinghouse website, so that such valuable insight can inform our local community efforts.

3) Surveys of key local leaders

How can we make best use of the valuable insight from the positive tipping point organizations and institutions?

Here is how: local organizers can highlight such expertise in the introductory information included in surveys to at least 150 key local leaders--surveys asking such key local leaders what challenges and

solutions they see *based on what the clearinghouse website insight is suggesting would be good directions to take*. And since local residents may have already read through some of the 5-10 page overviews on the clearinghouse website, and they will know that the key local leaders have been requested to read through some of the 5-10 page overviews, the key local leaders will need to be realistic. (“Are we really in that much of a pickle, Earl?” The answer is yes.)

And while there may be some organizations and institutions submitting 5-10 page overviews while they are only in some ways contributing to achieving positive tipping points--and in other ways (like still using airline transportation, using electricity from coal-fired power plants, etc.) still contributing to negative tipping points... it is very likely that the results of a survey of key local leaders, posted in a local newspaper (and on a local visioning project website), will –

- a) help create awareness of an urgent need for citizens to attend well to their civic responsibilities
- b) encourage residents to discover how they can contribute to collaborative problem solving and community education
- c) help residents appreciate the need for the many meetings which make up such collaborative problem solving processes (done online, if necessary--see p. 12)

4) Community Visioning as a Collaborative Problem Solving Process

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

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 documentary 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 that very same community were going to have a part in it.

Twenty-six years after the “Chattanooga: A Community with a Vision” documentary was made, the basic structure for Community Visioning is still mostly the same. Identify challenges, prioritize challenges; identify solutions, prioritize solutions; and map out action plans. Now, however, it may

seem as if Community Visioning would be difficult to do, with the COVID virus at large--and the need to stay socially distant, and observe correct conduct in all ways, so the virus dies out and that is the end of it *hopefully in the front of our minds*. Even so, there are ways of doing such a visioning or citizen engagement process online (for an example, see Citizen Lab resources at <https://www.citizenlab.co/platform/engage>).

[Consider the details in the Screen Capture below from "[Chattanooga: A Community with a Vision](#)"....]

What phase of the Visioning experience do you think these people are in?



It is also possible to manage many meetings through online technologies.

[Examples: [Zoom](#) provides free services through a cloud-based peer-to-peer software platform, and is used for teleconferencing, telecommuting, distance education, and social relations; and there are also free online discussion forums <https://www.proboards.com/> (here is an example of an online discussion forum--
<https://cpcsdiscussionforum.freeforums.net/>).]

The more comprehensive Community Visioning Initiatives require steering committees; preliminary surveys or assessments, workshops, task forces, and collaboration between many organizations, government agencies, businesses, and educational institutions; emphasize personal and civic responsibility; minimize the risk of "transformation unemployment"; provide local residents with many new ways to encourage and support each other in the everyday circumstances of community life; and seek to build up consensus in the community for specific goals and action plans by encouraging a high level of participation by all residents.

Thus, Community Visioning is one example of a collaborative problem solving process which can help people discover for themselves how much we need to be learning so we can be a part of the solutions, and how much we really need to be on same side, helping each other.

5) Our investments of time, energy, and money (“votes”) that we make every day

--“The energy invested in a particular thing, during its life from cradle to grave, is called the ‘embodied energy’ of that object. The amount of embodied energy that an item contains depends on the technology used to create it (the origin of materials inputs, how they were created and transported, etc.), the nature of the production system, and the distance the item travels from inception to purchase.” (p. 36)

--“By supporting items and processes that have lower embodied energy, as well as the companies that produce them, consumers can significantly reduce society’s energy use.” (p. 37)

[From Worldwatch Institute [“State of the World 2004: Special Focus--The Consumer Society”](#)]

Once the community we live in is actively engaged with some kind of collaborative problem solving and intensive community education, the right tools will be in place for citizens to learn and understand that the investments of time, energy, and money (the “votes”) each of us make in our everyday circumstances become the larger economy.

Yes. Once we focus our thinking, and begin to get a feel for where we are going, and what we have to do (Lower Greenhouse Gas Emissions ASAP; end the threat of COVID 19; downsize and use less so that we can maintain critical ecosystems; etc.)--we will see who we need to buy our basic necessities from to support Zero Carbon, sustainable-friendly, and fair work environments.... And we just might find out that we could come out okay with the unprecedented cultural transformation we have to make.

Because with this transition we are not just talking about creating Zero Carbon economies; though there must be no doubt-- *that is the number one priority.*

In addition, the same attention to supply chains necessary to identify, support, and sustain a Zero Carbon Economy can be used to identify, support and sustain socially responsible business and manufacturing practices--in areas such as (repeated for emphasis)

land rights

gender equality

living incomes for small-scale farmers

rights for farm workers

food sovereignty

sustainable sources for products and raw materials (and under what conditions)

transparency and accountability
 sustainable water use
 proper sanitation
 eliminating pollution
 zero waste, etc.

And further, once it becomes clear that local residents are “getting together” on purchasing, and that many local communities are going to “drive” economies from global to local-and-regional, changes may come more quickly in the upper echelons of governments, international corporations, international banks, etc., which have been--thus far--slow to respond to the Climate Emergency (*and the many other social and environmental externalities which have been given the go-by up until now*).

*For we must be able to show
 what kind of habitats
 are real and practical options to live in
 to achieve a Zero Carbon local economy...*

and so far, there are very few communities we can look to as models.

Findhorn Ecovillage (for one) is a most inspiring example--

“The Findhorn Ecovillage--

is at the heart of the largest single intentional community in the UK
 is a pioneering ecovillage that evolved at The Park from 1985
 is a major centre for holistic learning serving thousands of visitors each year from around the world
 has an ecological footprint that is around half the national (UK) average
 features more than 100 ecologically-benign buildings
 supplies energy from four wind turbines
 boasts a biological Living Machine waste water treatment system
 installed a 250kW biomass boiler in 2010 to serve the central Park area, reducing carbon emissions by around 80 tons a year
 includes numerous solar water heating systems
 is part of a comprehensive recycling system
 is the publisher of the UK’s first technical guide to ecological housing
 has a share-issuing community co-operative and a local currency
 is served by a car-sharing club that includes zero-emissions electric vehicles”

“The Findhorn Ecovillage is a tangible demonstration of the links between the spiritual, social, ecological and economic aspects of life and is a synthesis of the very best of current thinking on human habitats. It is a constantly evolving model used as a teaching resource by a number of university and school groups as well as by professional organisations and municipalities worldwide.”

(The two passages above are from the webpage [“Ecovillage Findhorn: New Frontiers for Sustainability”](#))

Also, the Centre for Alternative Technology (in Wales, UK) is a demonstration centre and educational resource, with many short courses and online workshops--and one of their many projects is a series of “Zero Carbon Britain” publications....

“We offer solutions to some of the most serious challenges facing our planet and the human race... Leading by example, we aim to show that living more sustainably is not only easy to attain but can provide a better quality of life.

“Our site is a unique and valuable practical demonstration centre, which includes:

- photovoltaics
- solar thermal
- a micro-grid
- off-grid and grid-connected systems
- biomass combined heat and power (CHP)
- hydro
- air source heat pumps
- a community heat main
- a range of small to medium wind turbines
- two reed bed systems
- off-mains water supply
- and extensive organic gardens....

“Our day-to-day activities include--

- a) running a visitor centre which is open 7 days a week, with 7 acres of interactive displays
- b) providing curriculum-based education to visiting schools, colleges and universities.”

[Source: From the webpage “What Do We Do?” at the website for the Centre for Alternative Technology (which was at <https://content.cat.org.uk/index.php/about-cat-what-do-we-do> before they did an upgrade to the website... and now I can’t find their excellent introductory information....)]

And then there is the Appropriate Technology Library--1050 Books on 1 USB Drive
by Village Earth

[Below quotes from the webpage “Appropriate Technology Library” at the Village Earth website (at <https://www.villageearth.org/> under the “Publications” tab)]

a) “The Appropriate Technology (AT) Library contains the full text and images from over 1050 of the best books dealing with all areas of self-reliance, do-it-yourself technology--over 150,000 pages. Portable and easy to use on 1 USB drive. The AT Library is currently in use in over 74 countries worldwide.”

b) “The AT Library gives you the knowledge to solve real-world problems such as:
 harvesting clean drinking water
 making tools, growing your own crops
 building and maintaining an irrigation system
 preserving crops
 reforesting a denuded watershed
 starting a small fish hatchery
 building a small-scale hydropower scheme
 building and maintaining pumps
 treating human and animal waste
 utilizing solar energy
 improving rural cookstove efficiency
 constructing energy efficient structures
 caring for the sick
 non-formal education
 preparing for a natural disaster, etc.”

c) “The AT Library is the complete text and graphics of each book, digitally scanned into Adobe PDF format.... Each book is summarized and indexed in the Appropriate Technology Sourcebook, included with each library. This format is easy to use and navigate and can be read on virtually any computer operating system. It can also be used with the most basic hardware including low MHz laptops, tablets or smartphones.”

d) A complete list of the 1050 books included in the AT Library is accessible on the webpage for the Appropriate Technology Library. Here is a sampling of the titles included in the AT Library:
 Technologies for Basic Needs
 How to Make Twelve Woodworking Tools
 Permaculture II
 Animal Power in Farming Systems

Small Scale Solar Powered Irrigation Pumping Systems
 Water-Pumping Devices
 Compost Toilets
 Hot Water
 The Wind Power Book
 Small Scale Hydropower Technologies
 Low Cost Passive Solar Greenhouses
 Low Cost Country Home Building
 Small Scale Papermaking, etc.

Yes, the kind of downsizing and light living advocated for in this pamphlet may currently be far from widely recognized as a pathway for resolving many of our challenges at the same time...

however, once it becomes clear--as the 5-10 page overviews at the clearinghouse website will point out, at least to a significant extent--that our options are not really good on the energy intensive lifestyle side of the equation;

and further, once it becomes clear that the natural creativity and capacity for innovation which we human beings have shown ourselves capable is also capable of becoming much more focused than it already is on downsizing and living lightly;

there will be many kinds of Zero Carbon habitats, and there will be enough work for everyone to be employed, to their capacities....

There just won't be many habitats looking for people who want to deceive their neighbors....

6) Local Currencies

I also think much more attention should be given to creating local currencies.

“The purpose of a local currency is to function on a local scale the same way that national currencies have functioned on a national scale--building the local economy by maximizing circulation of trade within a defined region.” (source untraceable)

Thus, “the people who choose to use the currency make a conscious commitment to buy local, and in doing so take a personal interest in the health and well-being of their community by laying the foundation for a truly vibrant, thriving economy.” “The members of BerkShares, Inc. envision a diverse and resilient regional economy that supports and prioritizes responsible production and consumption, wherein community members rely on the land and each other to fulfill the basic needs of food, culture, clothing, shelter, and energy.”

(Quotes above from http://www.berkshares.org/what_are_berkshares)

“There are 400 businesses in the Berkshire region that accept BerkShares.”

(detailed in graphic at http://berkshares.org/how_to_spend)

And further:

“As well as potentially stimulating the local economy it can create stronger bonds within the community; by increasing social capital. Buying locally can decrease emissions as locally produced goods require less transportation. Local trade through the use of complementary currencies can be a resilience strategy; reducing impact of national economic crises and dependency on international trade, and enhancing self-sufficiency. It can also increase the awareness of the impact of one's economic activity.”

[From the [Wikipedia webpage for the Bristol Pound](#) (in the “Theory” section)]

How a Local Currency can help--

--all local residents (especially unemployed people) who volunteer and assist with local Community Visioning Initiatives and Neighborhood Learning Centers—and/or in general support and sustain the local “constellation of initiatives” solution-oriented activity--could receive, as encouragement, local currency.

Thus, the possibility of massive “transformation unemployment” can be reduced to a minimum... because such local currency can, in its turn, be spent in ways which are helpful to building stable and sustainable local economies.

Further, the many citizen organizations, groups, and networks who currently do much community service work without getting paid could be compensated--with local currency.

In addition, there are also many different kinds of barter, swap, and time banks--

[see <https://timebanks.org/> --who also offer TimeBanking software (Community Weaver 3) available for [very reasonable biannual fees](#)]

--which can help people who don't have secure incomes... and these community practices also build close ties among residents, and make for a close-knit community. Close-knit is good; it is surely a most helpful kind of resilience. And so is being honest and reliable and fair.

Are you, the reader, beginning to see a picture in your mind of what downsizing can result in?

We can use just enough of all this advanced technology we have to return to small communities like towns and villages, and have a very good and conscience light life of it. Can we tell when our consciences are light? Do we know when we have been wise... kindhearted... sensible... helpful....?

We may do some of this out of survival, but one has to admit some of the remedies may not be such bad medicine after all. Good medicine.

7) The Re-Emergence of Community Journals

If we were to choose to accelerate the cultural transformation necessary to resolve--or at least significantly reduce--the convergence of unprecedented challenges we now have, there would be much positive and constructive happenings for a Community Journal to both record, share, and provide a space for.

Initially, Community Journals could report on the

- a) the clearinghouse of 5-10 page overviews on how to achieve Zero Carbon ASAP (and clearinghouses associated the resolving the convergence of unprecedented challenges we now face)
- b) the surveys of at least 150 key local leaders
- c) the different stages of the local Community Visioning process: surveys of local leaders; assembling a steering committee; planning and coordination with key local leaders; brainstorming meetings identifying challenges; workshops prioritizing the challenges; brainstorming meetings identifying solutions; workshops prioritizing the solutions; priority solutions and action plans displayed in a large meeting center (for citizens to mark preferences and decide where they will participate)(see 7/17)
- d) the countless workshops, and other informal learning, at Neighborhood Learning Centers
- e) the job fairs at the end of the Community Visioning process

In addition, a special section could be included in Community Journals--which might be called "Neighbor to Neighbor Community Education"--for highlighting and accumulating stories, personal experiences, and other forms of reader contributions which identify helpful people and valuable resources, and reinforce important community goals.

8) Reforming Human Nature

As readers might imagine, we must be very wise, compassionate, and careful about our efforts to reform human nature. We will want to see developments which are similar to what is described by this passage: "Many things will become possible as the wisest leaders move with ease into ruling positions. Such people are so magnanimous and progressive that even the most evil elements change for the better."

[from the hexagram #11 "Prospering" in R.L. Wing's interpretation of "I Ching" (ancient Chinese philosophical "world view" which is a foundation piece in the structure of Chinese culture)].

However, as Mark Twain once said: “Nothing so needs reforming as other people’s habits”. We don’t want vigilante groups self-proclaiming themselves as enforcers, and using this cultural transformation as an excuse to beat people over the head with a stick. *What we need to is educate our citizens, from grade school up (and in the process of our cultural transformation efforts), to be better people.*

Moral education has been successfully done within religious, spiritual, and moral traditions, but such education obviously needs to be better... and now it also has to be better in pluralistic societies, where there are many different belief systems in any given community. A common sticking point in pluralistic societies is who decides what the educational curriculum will be. Below is a survey question which will help readers think about this very difficult sticking point....

Survey Question

Working Definitions for “Right Livelihood”

Consider what ways of earning a living you would identify as “right livelihood.”

Now imagine a local community resource guide relating to employment, apprenticeships, training, and volunteer opportunities association with “right livelihood.”

And further: imagine a committee commissioned to produce such a “right livelihood” resource guide....

And the individuals who make up the committee commissioned to produce such a resource guide....

- a) What background (qualifications, experiences, etc.) would you like such individuals to have?
- b) What local institutions would you consider most appropriate to commission such a resource guide, and oversee its production?

[Note: the above question is #7 in the 14 question [“‘Holding Together’ During the Climate Emergency Era”](#) Climate Emergency Questionnaire (10 pages; August, 2019)]

And the above question is just one of many questions which we need to be discussing and debating-- respectfully, and by making our points with trustworthy and reliable evidence. However we are having difficulties, as we well might, sorting through the vast amounts of information and communications coming to us every day from seemingly endless quantities of media channels, devices, and other sources. We may have, at one time, thought that the proliferation of social media would result in a more democratic “global village”, but we are finding out is that--

Widespread access to the search engines on the Internet; Wikipedia; YouTube; Social Media (Facebook, Twitter, etc.); professional networks, etc. on Ning Platforms; iPhones and iPads; television networks; cable networks; newspapers; and radios mean that however carefully schools--and other educational institutions--attend to their social responsibilities, *there are countless ways in which unworthy features of our complex world can counteract, rather than reinforce, important educational goals.*

[and in the meantime, we are accumulating more and more discarded electronic devices (“A record 53.6 million metric tonnes of e-waste worldwide--discarded products with a battery or plug such as computers and mobile phones--has been reported in 2019, up 21 per cent in five years.” --according to an [introductory webpage](#) to “The Global E-Waste Monitor 2020”)... certainly not part of the circular manufacturing, recycling, and Zero Waste regime which we so urgently need....]

The essential truth of our circumstances... which leads to being hopeful, or despairing of everything... and thus which we cannot do without no matter how many technological innovations we have... is that **we need people who are dedicated to being good people.**

Thus, we need pathways for learning how to be wise, loving, kind, understanding, sympathetic, forgiving, etc. We also need to be thankful that we have many people making a sincere effort to be good people--each according to the cultural identities they have been brought up with. And we need to learn how to cultivate the time-tested sources of wisdom and compassion so that the sources yield the treasured wisdom.

[All readers have to do is think of what kind of difficulties we may face, or will face, in the unprecedented cultural transformation ahead of us... and it will dawn upon them how much they will be hoping that the people they need to cooperate with in their local community have been inspired--somehow--to think carefully, act honestly, work diligently, and have compassion for their fellow human beings, in all the circumstances of their lives.]

So... what do we have in our “tool box” which might help with Reforming Human Nature?

a) Currently, we have access (by way of the Internet, and the collections of spiritual scriptures and stories by advanced practitioners of religious, spiritual, and moral traditions) to the storehouses of wisdom and compassion which have accumulated over the many centuries of human experience, and which have been confirmed again and again as essential to individual well-being and social harmony by the saints, sages, spiritual leaders, and sincere practitioners of all religious, spiritual, and moral traditions.

That’s good. Anyone who has looked through some of the real treasures of spiritual wisdom from many cultures can see: there has been advanced practitioners (and Spiritual Personages) who enlightened

(brought the light of spiritual understanding to) hundreds and thousands and even millions of followers, disciples, devotees, adherents, or seekers... and people have learned, and have become better persons.

We should, at every opportunity, let young people see "... how many good people there are, how many ways there are to do good, and how much happiness comes to those who extend help, as well as to those who receive it".

And that--

Even now, as you are reading this, truly inspiring contributions of genuine goodwill are being generated in a variety of ways--and in a variety of circumstances--by countless numbers of people in communities around the world.

Consider the following:

The cross country torch relay for the 1996 Summer Olympics in Atlanta, Georgia (USA) began April 27 in Los Angeles and ended July 19 in Atlanta.

Of the approximately 10,000 torch-carriers, about 5,000 were "community heroes selected by local United Way panels based on nominating essays." Thirty-seven of the eighty-five torch-carriers in the Greater Washington D.C. area were "community heroes."

A graphic--in the newspaper article referenced for this information--listed all thirty-seven "community heroes." What follows are some of the brief descriptions, included in that graphic, of those "community heroes":

"who does volunteer work with the elderly"; "who is active in the Big Brother program in the District"; "who does volunteer work with AIDS patients and people infected with HIV"; "who does volunteer work at hospitals"; "who is active in literacy programs for children"; "who does a range of neighborhood volunteer work"; "who helps abandoned, 6 orphaned and disabled children"; "who does volunteer work with children and elderly in poor neighborhoods"

[From an article titled ["Blazing an Olympian Trail"](#) by Paul Duggan in The District Weekly section of the Washington Post, on June 13, 1996. The brief descriptions of "community heroes" are at the end of the article, in a section titled "Olympic Torchbearers".]

Do we really want to ask for peoples' religious credentials before they can do community service work?

b) And (continuing on with the question “what do we have in our ‘tool box’”)--we have the advantage of knowing that we need to be at our best at this time of cultural transformation. Because we know this, we will naturally want to have discussions with other people in our communities about what local religious and spiritual leaders can be doing to help.

For my contribution, I suggest that local leaders of religious, spiritual, and moral traditions step up on every frontline possible to help people understand the urgent need to--

- i) sacrifice personal desires for the greater good
- ii) find contentment and quality of life while consuming less material goods and ecological services
- iii) prefer peacebuilding which supports and actualizes mutually beneficial understandings, forgiveness, and reconciliation—*and which abstains from violent conflict resolution*—as a way of bringing cycles of violence to an end
- iv) use resources carefully, so that there is surplus available for emergency assistance
- v) support community life and cultural traditions which “... bring to the fore how many good people there are, how many ways there are to do good, and how much happiness comes to those who extend help, as well as to those who receive it”.

c) This would also be a good time for religious, spiritual, moral leaders, educational institutions, and newspapers to ask for essays from congregations, students, general public, etc. on how we can create “waves” of genuine goodwill. Such essays can be a supplement to the 5-10 page overviews from exemplary practitioners in specific religious, spiritual, and moral traditions--and from very credible and trustworthy organizations associated with such traditions--which will be compiled and organized by the clearinghouse website project.

d) Specifically, inspired by the teachings of an Indian Spiritual Personage (Sri Sathya Sai Baba 1926-2011), I have explored this question of how to grow wisdom and compassion in pluralistic communities (communities which have many different faith communities) for the best years of my life, and I have compiled and written a document titled [“Growing Wisdom and Compassion in Small Communities \(13 Steps\)”](#)

Here are the 13 steps--

1. “Community Good News Networks”
2. “Community Faith Mentoring Networks”
3. “Spiritual Friendships”
4. “Interfaith Peace Vigils”
5. “Recalibrating Our Moral Compasses (ROMC) Surveys”

6. "Community Visioning Initiatives"
7. "Neighborhood Learning Centers"
8. "Spiritually Responsible Investing"
9. "Ecological Sustainability/Permaculture/Ecovillages"
10. "Appropriate Technology"
11. "Food Sovereignty/Food Waste/Local Food Councils/Community Supported Ag"
12. "Local Currency"
13. "Neighbor to Neighbor Community Education (NTNCE) Projects in Local Newspapers"

[It is worth noting that these steps can contribute significantly to achieving Zero Carbon economies, and contribute significantly to creating supply chains which support socially responsible businesses.]

There will be many approaches to how to teach morality in pluralistic communities, and there needs to be many approaches, as we all have cultural identities of some kind, and many of us have cultural histories which go back thousands of years... and we need to be morally and spiritual at our best, at this critical time. So there will be many approaches. *The point here is that we urgently need to learn how to cultivate the time-tested sources of the treasured wisdom of religious, spiritual, and moral traditions, so that the sources yield the treasured wisdom.*

9) Interfaith Prayer Vigils

One more suggestion: we need *sacred spaces dedicated to appealing to a Spiritual Entity higher than ourselves when we are at one of the most critical crossroads humanity has faced since the dawn of civilization.*

If we are comfortable with the sacred spaces we have, fine. Use those.

But also, consider creating special sacred places which are just right for the new cultural identities we are creating, establishing, re-discovering....

And then....

With an emphasis on silence, participants could use these sacred spaces to silently pray for--

--a compassionate response to all forms of suffering

--forgiveness, reconciliation and *abstaining from violent conflict* as a way of bringing cycles of violence to an end

--pathways for attaining wisdom and compassion which are accessible to all

and/or bring into being any kind of silent practice or silent spiritual discipline

which is relevant and appropriate for a *sacred space dedicated to appealing to a Spiritual Entity higher than ourselves when we are at one of the most critical crossroads humanity has faced since the dawn of civilization.*

One inspiration for Prayer Vigils in a sacred place is the 24/7 Prayer Vigil for World Peace at Kunzang Palyul Choling (KPC), a Tibetan Buddhist Temple in Poolesville, Maryland (USA). The Prayer Vigil at Kunzang Palyul Choling (KPC) began in April, 1985 and has continued 24/7 all year round ever since. (Some details about the KPC's Prayer Vigil are at <http://www.tara.org/ourprojects/prayer-vigil/>).

Concluding Comments

Listen...

"... there are truths which none can be free to ignore, if one is to have that wisdom thru which life can become useful. These are the truths concerning the structures of the good life, and the factual conditions by which it may be achieved...."

[From "[General Education in a Free Society](#)" (The Harvard Committee; 1945--see p. 57) (Internet Archives)]

Listen...

If many people could see and feel the practical value of carrying out the kind of collaborative problem solving and community education initiatives advocated for in this pamphlet, such collaborative, solution-oriented activity could become a common experience... a common cultural tradition... a cultural tradition which can link many diverse communities of people together, in a fellowship of people working towards the greater good of the whole... and a cultural tradition which can help pass on to future generations the most treasured wisdom human beings have accumulated in more than 5,000 years of human history.

And so--

--as we are at one of the most critical crossroads humanity has faced since the dawn of civilization

--I will now go to one of the sacred spaces I have in my apartment

--invoke the Spiritual Entities which have helped me learn about wisdom, compassion, and faith over the years

and silently pray....