

Maximizing Citizen Participation and Accelerating Solution-Oriented Activity in a Time of Unprecedented Challenges

17 Tweet Series Summarizing the “Constellation of Initiatives” Approach
of The Community Peacebuilding and Cultural Sustainability (CPCS) Initiative

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(10 pages; June, 2020)

(Note: document sized at 8.5" x 14" to accommodate text boxes)

Introduction

We have entered into a profoundly serious time here on Planet Earth, with most countries far from making the cultural transformation to a Zero Carbon economy fast enough to hold Global Warming at 1.5°C (see [“We interrupt this broadcast....”](#) Climate Emergency Op-Ed for 20 point overview of the need for urgent Climate Emergency Action); COVID 19 deaths and worldwide stresses on economies, employment, health care, food security, etc.; an increasing disastrous extinction event in process [“UN Report: Nature’s Dangerous Decline ‘Unprecedented’; Species Extinction Rates ‘Accelerating’”](#); and many other very serious unresolved challenges (see Tweet 1/17 below).

We need collaborative problem solving and community education, in communities around the world--
a) which will exponentially increase solution-oriented activity
b) which will help people discover for themselves how much we really need to be on the same side, helping each other.

This thread highlights one “constellation of initiatives” response to the convergence of unprecedented challenges we face, and can serve as a starting point for discussions on how local communities can maximize citizen participation in solution-oriented activity at this critical time.

Special Note on the Community Visioning Approach This Writer Prefers

Once the need for unprecedented forms of collaborative problem solving and community education become more commonly accepted; once the natural creativity and capacity for innovation which we human beings have shown ourselves capable of becomes more focused on designing collaborative problem solving and community education models; *and once Community Visioning Initiatives are implemented on a scale which matches the urgency of the times--*

--there will surely be numerous examples of Community Visioning which prove to be comprehensive and effective.

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1/17

Thread

re Unprecedented Challenges

re “constellation of initiatives” response:

1000s of key orgs worldwide provide 5-10p overviews on challenges, solutions
overviews support local key leaders surveys, which catalyze Community Visioning and = exponential
acceleration of solutions

Convergence of Unprecedented Challenges include, but are not limited to...

Climate Emergency; COVID 19 deaths and stresses on economy, employment, health care, food security; 6th extinction event; toxic air in cities; cultures of violence, greed, corruption, and overindulgence; race and gender issues; government debt, municipal debt, and household debt; economic systems which require growth; media literacy; information overload; water and sanitation issues; migration and displacement; religiously motivated violence; floods and chemical sites; meat, dairy carbon emissions; plastic pollution; widespread cancer causing chemicals (see www.ewg.org) cement carbon emissions; thawing permafrost; cyber threats; cynicism and despair

[Sources: “Unprecedented Challenges Ahead--March 2020” (2p) <https://bit.ly/3fsiybs> ; “Harvest Song” (first two chapters) (78p) <http://bit.ly/2Ggo3t4> ; “Introduction to Chapter 4 of ‘Harvest Song’” (4p) <https://bit.ly/2wCml16> ; “Recalibrating Our Moral Compasses...” (esp p.9-20) (85p) <http://bit.ly/2fAhaP6> ; “Brainstorming Zero Carbon ASAP” (157p) <http://bit.ly/321sn60>

[All links in this 17 tweet thread accessible in document version at top of the homepage for The Community Peacebuilding and Cultural Sustainability (CPCS) Initiative at www.cpcsi.org]

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We have solutions

We need collaborative problem solving and community education initiatives

a) which will exponentially increase solution-oriented activity

b) which will help people discover for themselves how much we really need to be on the same side, helping each other

Solutions include, but are not limited to...

Worldwide Surveys of Positive Tipping Point Organizations (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; Gender Equality; Relocalization; Village Industries/Cottage Industries; Food Sovereignty; Agrarian Reform; Circular Economy; Zero Waste; Lifelong Education; Appropriate Technology; Community Supported Manufacturing; Community Supported Agriculture; Community Land Trusts; Transition Towns; Ecovillages; Agroecology; Permaculture; Energy Storage Systems; Renewable Energy; Energy Returned On Energy Invested (EROEI); 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) <http://bit.ly/2Ggo3t4>

“Growing Wisdom and Compassion in Small Communities (13 Steps)” (78p) <http://bit.ly/2JOpl7N>

3/17

Although COVID 19 virus has caused 430,000 deaths (est. 6/14/20) + created very significant and widespread damage to economies, this tweet gives specific attention to Climate Emergency (which if not mitigated sufficiently, could make “large areas of Earth uninhabitable”).

“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”, <https://bit.ly/30gxKji> (with more than 11,000 scientist signatories from around the world) (November 5, 2019; paragraph 7)

“We interrupt this broadcast....” Climate Emergency Action Op-Ed <http://bit.ly/2N6n2EL> (1/7/20) provides 20 pt overview of need and urgency for Climate Emergency Action; and advocates for 5-10 page overviews on how to achieve Zero Carbon ASAP from 1000s of positive tipping point related orgs --which can provide clear visualization of transformations needed in every aspect of our lives (climate action; hunger; water scarcity; housing; land rights; biodiversity; civic engagement; peacebuilding, etc.)

4/17

There are 1000s of experienced, trustworthy orgs, institutions working (some for decades)(exs below) on mitigating Climate Emergency, and resolving convergence of challenges we face. We need to highlight that expertise, so that it can inform our local community efforts.

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);

Sample List of 231 positive tipping point organizations and institutions <http://bit.ly/2M8KGzW>

5/17

Local organizers, w/ above clearinghouse 5-10p overviews, can initiate surveys to at least 150 key local leaders (on challenges,solutions). Results will (inevitably,at this point) support need for Community Visioning, provide starting points for workshops at NLCs (see 8/17)

Surveys of Key Local Leaders

The results of a survey of key local leaders, posted in a local newspaper (and on a local visioning project website), will also--

- a) help create awareness that there is an urgent need for citizens to fulfill their civic responsibilities
- b) encourage residents to discover how they can contribute to the Community Visioning process
- c) help residents appreciate need for many meetings which make up the Community Visioning process

Who might these key local leaders be?

"An influential person may be a formal leader, such as a city commissioner or a well-respected minister, but may also be someone whom people in the community look up to and respect, like the owner of a well-loved local restaurant or a young mother whose activism has earned the trust of the people in her neighborhood...." From the webpage "Involving Key Influentials in the Initiative", at the website for "Community Tool Box" (see <https://bit.ly/2UNXCj9>)(paragraphs 1-4)

These local leaders are the ones who have, again and again, made key contributions to improve the quality of life for fellow citizens and/or the quality of life for ecosystems as a whole.

6/17

This writer'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) <http://bit.ly/2uE1XX5> (*highly recommended*).

Community Visioning Initiatives (CVIs)--a series of community meetings designed to maximize citizen participation in identifying challenges, and solution-oriented activity. Community Visioning with many supporting Neighborhood Learning Centers, 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. 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. [Note: This writer believes Community Visioning is most effective when there are many face-to-face brainstorming and prioritizing meetings. However, if the COVID 19 crisis persists, it is also possible to manage the many meetings through the technologies used by organizations who do online stakeholder engagement projects (Ex: see Citizen Lab resources at <https://www.citizenlab.co/platform/engage>)

7/17

1984 Chattanooga Community Visioning--
more than 1,700 participants produced 40 community goals
which resulted in 223 projects and programs
and a total financial investment of 793 million dollars.

[Screen Capture below from "Chattanooga..." 13 min doc <http://bit.ly/2uE1XX5>]



8/17

Neighborhood Learning Centers

It's not like mobilizing for war, where there will be drill sergeants and basic training, but people should begin to realize: creating knowledge base and skill sets necessary to resolve challenges of our times means there is a lot of work to do.

Creating many Neighborhood Learning Centers can provide places--in local neighborhoods--for discussion, information sharing, mutual support and encouragement, and fellowship and friendship. Neighborhood Learning Centers can be:

- a) a multi-purpose support center for implementing Community Visioning Initiatives
- b) a neighborhood meeting place and workshop center
- c) a critical part of a low cost lifelong learning education system
- d) a critical part of making best use of the knowledge and abilities each of us has to exponentially accelerate solution-oriented activity at this time of unprecedented challenges

We need more collaborative problem solving processes and community education which 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.

[Note: This writer believes Neighborhood Learning Centers are most effective when there are many face-to-face meetings and discussions. However, if the COVID 19 crisis persists, it is also possible to manage the many meetings through online technologies (Ex: <https://www.proboards.com/> and "CPCS Initiative Discussion Forum" at <https://cpcsdiscussionforum.freeforums.net/>).]

9/17

Universities, colleges, education organizations, and other organizations, could increase their existing efforts, or take up the call, to develop related curriculum and offer classes, workshops, and teacher training, to support the development of Neighborhood Learning Centers.

Universities and Colleges as Lead Organizations

Many of the steps in this 17 tweet series suggest and point to universities and colleges as very appropriate lead organizations for the collaborative problem solving and community education needed at this critical time. Collaborating organizations and/or institutions building clearinghouse websites for the 5-10 page overviews (from thousands of positive tipping point organizations) would thus be on a fast track to pioneering cutting edge educational curriculum and educational experiences which are highly relevant to resolving the challenges of our times. Internships for students--first, assisting with compiling and organizing the Global Survey Project--and then further experiential learning, as local community surveys and collaborative problem solving processes go forward, would make such students valuable persons to employ in similar projects, in communities around the world.

If many colleges and universities assisted with carrying out local Community Visioning Initiatives--with many supporting Neighborhood Learning Centers--the positive multiplier effects would be visible around the world.

10/17

Voting with Your Dollar

"... 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, economist who worked with Mahatma Gandhi (see source reference below)]

Think of what you buy and use in any given day... now multiply these everyday actions by all the days in the year, and by the billions of other consumers worldwide.

"... 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." (p. 53)

"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 <https://archive.org/details/in.ernet.dli.2015.118819/mode/2up>

(also "Vote With Your Dollar Toolkit" at <https://www.greenamerica.org/vote-with-your-dollar-toolkit>)

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 other challenges).

11/17

The job fairs at the end of the Community Visioning process provide opportunities for all key stakeholders in the community (businesses, education, government, residents, etc) to demonstrate their upgraded awareness by offering and facilitating new employment opportunities.

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 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. (Exs: see Oxfam's <https://www.behindthebrands.org/issues/>.) [Note: "There really are 10 companies that control most of the food and drinks you'll find in the grocery store." (Oxfam, with very helpful graphic <https://www.oxfamamerica.org/explore/stories/these-10-companies-make-a-lot-of-the-food-we-buy-heres-how-we-made-them-better/> Oxfam's "Behind the Brands" campaign: "We took certain issues ... (and) we saw the kind of impacts they had on the ground," Oxfam's Chris Jochnick told NPR. "We released reports about those issues and those impacts and how they're tied to the 10 largest food and beverage companies. Then we pushed the companies to begin to address them." When citizens have more awareness, "vote with their dollars" (see 10/17), and this is reflected in job fairs at the end of the Community Visioning process, people in communities around the world can bring about profound changes in local economies, regional economies, and the Global Economy.

12/17

Local Currency

"BerkShares are a local currency for the Berkshire region of Massachusetts. Federal currency is exchanged for BerkShares at nine branch offices of three local banks and spent at 400 locally owned participating businesses." http://berkshares.org/what_are_berkshares

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 also 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)

This writer proposes that all local residents (especially unemployed people) who volunteer and assist with 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. Such local currency can, in its turn, be spent in ways which are helpful to building stable and sustainable local economies.

13/17

Local Newspapers; Local Media

There are many opportunities for local newspapers/local media to contribute very valuable community services in the planning, implementation, evaluation, and follow up stages associated with Community Visioning Initiatives.

Local Newspapers could report on--

- 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
- f) --and, in addition, add a new section in their paper, 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.

14/17

We have an urgent need for "waves" of genuine goodwill.

Surely, this is a time for religious, spiritual, moral leaders--educ. instit and newspapers--to ask for essays from congregations, students, general public, etc. on how we can create such "waves" of genuine goodwill.

Local leaders of religious, spiritual, and moral traditions can step up on every frontline possible to help people understand the urgent need to--

- a) sacrifice personal desires for the greater good
- b) find contentment and quality of life while consuming less material goods and ecological services
- c) 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
- d) use resources carefully, so that there is surplus available for emergency assistance
- e) 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".

There is now a great responsibility on people who are in any way representatives of religious, spiritual, and/or moral traditions--to demonstrate what is possible along the lines of wisdom and compassion, to provide genuine instruction when sincere efforts are being made, to contribute to the greater good of the whole, and to help restore confidence in the higher values of life.

15/17

Interfaith Prayer Vigils

Another way leaders and practitioners of religious and spiritual traditions can make a significant contribution during this Climate Emergency/Convergence of Unprecedented Challenges Era is by encouraging and supporting Interfaith Prayer Vigils.

One possible goal for an Interfaith Prayer Vigil would be for all the different faith traditions in a local community to have at least one person participating in the Prayer Vigil at all times designated for the Prayer Vigil (in such time intervals as they choose).

With an emphasis on silence, participants could 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/>).

Faith helps move belief from "it hardly seems possible" to "it must be possible"
since Faith believes Love will prevail.

16/17

More about Questionnaires and Surveys

Imagine a committee commissioned to produce such a "right livelihood" resource guide... and the individuals who make up that committee.

a) What background (qualifications, experiences, etc.) would you like such individuals to have?

Organizations and communities of people often use questionnaires and surveys to build consensus for collective action. There are many questions which can elicit healthy and useful discussion at the national, regional, and local levels--which are not being asked.

Example: 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) <http://bit.ly/33KQYgk>]

17/17

“... 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....” (“The Harvard Report” of 1945)

It is now essential for us to access 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

We need collaborative problem solving and community education, in communities around the world--

a) which will exponentially increase solution-oriented activity

b) which will help people discover for themselves how much we really need to be on the same side, helping each other.

If many people could see and feel the practical value of carrying out of carrying out the kind of collaborative problem solving and community education initiatives advocated for in this 17 tweet series, 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.