Tagore and Transition: Saving the World for Fun

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Abstract

How do we respond to seeing our world under threat: from climate change, resource depletion, species extinctions, land degradation? We surely want to do what we can to save it, but what for? Do we aim to avert the most extreme threats in order to continue abusing the world, and probably making most people miserable? Perhaps we can find ways to save the world and make people happier at the same time. Two initiatives a century apart – Tagore and Transition – make conviviality, creativity and celebration central to their approach to world change. The poet and polymath Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941) aimed for cooperative self-reliance for Indian villages, seeking to overcome caste, class and religious divisions. He emphasised the importance of arts and crafts, including performing plays and music together. A similar ethos is evident in today's Transition Initiatives – now numbering thousands in over forty countries. A study has shown that participants value conviviality and enjoyment equally with making progress towards the goals of moving their local economy away from dependence on fossil fuels. There is a circumstantial connection between Tagore and Transition in that the first Transition Town was established in Totnes, near Dartington, where Tagore's colleague and friend Leonard Elmhirst carried out his own experiment in rural reconstruction, modelled on Tagore's. In this paper, I examine the aims and approaches of Tagore and Transition to test the idea that community self-help focussed on personal freedom and satisfaction is a viable and attractive solution to today's social and ecological crisis.

Keywords

Rabindranath Tagore, Transition, Permaculture, community, culture, climate change

How do we respond to seeing our world under threat: from climate change, resource depletion, species extinctions, land degradation? We surely want to do what we can to save it, but what for? Do we aim to avert the most extreme threats in order to continue abusing the world and perpetuating human misery

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among billions of the poor and vulnerable? Perhaps we can find ways to save the world and enhance people's wellbeing at the same time. Two initiatives a century apart – Tagore and Transition – make conviviality, creativity and celebration central to their approach to world change. The poet and polymath Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941) aimed for cooperative self-reliance for Indian villages, seeking to overcome caste, class and religious divisions. He emphasised the importance of arts and crafts, including performing plays and music together. A similar ethos is evident in today's Transition Initiatives – now numbering thousands in over forty countries (*The Power of Just Doing Stuff* 65). A study has shown that participants value conviviality and enjoyment equally with making progress towards the goals of moving their local economy away from dependence on fossil fuels (Feola and Nunes). There is a circumstantial connection between Tagore and Transition in that the first Transition Town was established in Totnes, near Dartington, where Tagore's colleague and friend Leonard Elmhirst carried out his own experiment in rural reconstruction, modelled on Tagore's.

Before examining the two particular models of local community self-help, we need to consider how relocalisation can be an effective response to social and ecological concerns, with the potential to have an effect globally. The relevance of relocalisation to either social or ecological issues in the modern urbanised and globalised world is not immediately apparent, due to the understandable assumption that big problems require action by big players at national and international levels.

If we take "social issues" first, a serious and persistent problem is global poverty, hunger and malnutrition, seen mainly in developing countries. Professor of geography Bimalendu Bhattacharya begins his study of "Deprivation [in an] Unfair World" by showing how difficult it is to define and measure poverty (1-11). He expresses regret at the need to resort to measures such as earned income per day in order to produce comparative statistics of hunger and malnutrition suffered by a minority of the population in the poorest countries (36). When income is used as the main measure, it appears that the poor do better in city slums than in villages, and that economic growth reduces poverty (39). Indian government statistics include "marginal and vulnerable" as a measure of poverty, and with this category included the proportion of the population officially classified as poor grows from around a quarter to some eighty percent (19). Bhattacharya reports on human needs besides hunger, some of which cannot be bought, and are lost without the community support and cohesion of traditional rural life (168).

Since the economic crisis in 2008, inequality in developed countries has been on the rise, and light is shed on the complex causes by columnist and broadcaster Owen Jones in *The Establishment: And How They Get Away With It*. Jones exposes the ludicrous (if it were not so tragic) conspiracy between big

business and the unaccountable network of people which supports it, manipulates public opinion to blame the victims, and uses legislation and policing to prevent opposition. The solution which Jones advocates in his conclusion is "A Democratic Revolution" (294-314). Democracy, in Jones' terms, is not only electing a more socially responsible political party into government, but also giving more power and participation to the people in the businesses and services which supply our needs. It is all very sensible and worthwhile, but the chapter is liberally scattered with the words "should" and "must," and although the readers of a book such as this will admire and agree with its sentiments, the victims of "The Establishment" conspiracy would be largely untouched.

A similar impasse exists where "ecological issues" are concerned. Given that a threshold was passed in 2010 whereby more than half the world's population lives in cities (UN), we can now say with certainty that *most* people in the world depend on their needs being met from remote systems of production. Food staples such as wheat and rice come from vast, industrialised monoculture plantations, which also produce feed for animals confined in industrial units. Mineral resources are extracted from massive opencast wounds in the earth. Scientific evidence mounts that action is needed to address anthropogenic climate change from carbon dioxide released by burning fossil fuels in power stations and by industry and transport. Targets and pledges are made by political leaders but business goes on as usual. There is little recognition that clearing forests and depleting fertile soils also contribute to climate change by destroying natural means to sequester carbon dioxide.

The machinery of the modern world today is vast and awesome. There is a disconnect between the machinery and the problems it gives rise to. In the more developed world, we depend on these systems whilst having little control over how they operate. Rural people in developing countries have been deprived of access to all but marginal scraps of land from which to make a living. They cannot help contributing to land degradation by working fragile soils and using trees for firewood. There are books exposing the problems, such as Lester Brown's *World on the Edge: How to Prevent Environmental and Economic Collapse*. Brown sets out an alternative "Plan B," an "economy for the twenty-first century" (99-180), and in his final chapter says that such a plan is "our only hope" (183). He urges readers to get informed, become politically active and get together to put pressure on their political representatives. Both Brown and Jones rely on a "democratic revolution," but the latter's study shows how the Establishment makes sure that the public will not unite to challenge the status quo. Interestingly, Brown describes one form of popular response which does not require political action at national or international levels, the "Local Food Movement" (175-78). It is this kind of response which has led to the success of the Transition movement.

The Transition movement began in 2006 with the launch of "Transition Town Totnes" (TTT) in Devon, and spread around the UK and beyond. Transition Town Totnes was started as a response to Climate Change and Peak Oil, inspired by work Rob Hopkins had carried out in Ireland at Kinsale Further Education College (*Localisation and Resilience at the Local Level* 139-40). Hopkins further developed a student project, the "Kinsale Energy Descent Action Plan" (*Transition Handbook* 122-30), for the town of Totnes. A central aim was to involve as many people as possible from the town, who were encouraged to attend workshops where the aim was to imagine what a less energy dependent future might be like, then draw up plans for how to get there over twenty years, and embark on the actions identified to reach the goal (*Power of Just Doing Stuff* 78-80). Hopkins published two manuals, *The Transition Handbook* in 2008 and *The Transition Companion* in 2011, both focussed on building local resilience "in uncertain times," a reference to the twin concerns of climate change and peak oil.

Hopkins' latest book *The Power of Just Doing Stuff: How Local Action can Change the World* is inspiring and practical, full of anecdotes about lively local action taking place, still mainly in the UK, but also highlighting initiatives in other countries. The "Energy Descent Action Plan" is mentioned as a "sophisticated way" to develop a "community vision," but not the only way (78-79). In response to the 2008 economic crisis, Hopkins had a new "Big Idea" (11). The emphasis changed to a more constructive vision: how to address and reverse economic austerity. In 2013, Totnes published its "Local Economic Blueprint," planning to relocalise ten percent of the town's economy – an ambitious target worth big money (38-40).

The Transition movement will face many challenges if it is to increase participation beyond the conscientious minority. There may be little opposition from business and government when the aim of a Transition Initiative is to relocalise just a small proportion of the local economy. There may even be support from government, as with a new venture in Totnes which has been able to take advantage of the "Community Right to Build" in the 2012 Localism Act in the UK (Atmos Totnes). Some Initiatives have already found themselves locked into struggles with big corporations (Gordon-Farleigh).

The two phases of the Transition movement – the first addressing climate change and peak oil, part of the ecological crisis; the second addressing economic austerity, part of the social crisis – constitute a combined response to the problem areas covered by Brown and Jones respectively. A crucial aspect of the progress which has been made by the most successful Transition Initiatives is that participants have found the process enjoyable. This factor has been recognised from the start. In a Foreword to *The Transition Handbook*, Richard Heinberg from the Post Carbon Institute in California wrote that Hopkins "has found a way for people worried about an environmental apocalypse to invest

their efforts in ongoing collective action that ends up looking more like a party than a protest march" (10). A recent study at Reading University of the failures and successes of Transition Initiatives internationally has shown that participants value conviviality and enjoyment equally with making progress towards the goals (Feola and Nunes).

The "Well Oiled" event, 2010, Finsbury Park Transition, photos by Katerina Antonopoulu

The aims of Transition seem to have resolved themselves into three parts: save the planet, save the people, and have fun. This is reminiscent of Tagore's aim of bringing "life in its completeness," integrating humanity and nature, as well as making room for the delights and arts of life. On his travels around the world to over thirty countries on five continents, Tagore lost no opportunity to warn of the dangers of the machine age, especially in his visits to those countries he saw as still young, and free to choose which path they would take. One such country was Canada, where in 1929 Tagore gave a lecture entitled "The Philosophy of Leisure," in which he urged people to resist the drives towards material prosperity, progress, profit and bureaucracy. Since that time the world has largely chosen, or succumbed to, the "western" path Tagore warned against. The challenge now is to recover from that, and find the true path again, and it is well to bear in mind that Tagore often referred to joy being

the test of truth, wherever truth is sought in any aspect of life, in science as well as in human relations.

Transition Initiatives in the UK and other developed countries typically start from a situation where people sleep in one place and work in another. Relocalisation enables them to "live where they live." In Tagore's time, India was a country with a vast number of villages and few cities. People did "live where they live," but not well and not cooperatively, as they were divided by caste, class and religion. Traditional society and its once prosperous economy had been disrupted or dismantled by British rule. Rural people were helpless, hopeless and fatalistic, in thrall to absentee landlords and moneylenders, scratching a living on scraps of land with primitive tools (Elmhirst 15-16). They were looked down upon by an urban middle class of professionals and administrators and an English educated elite. Tagore's activities included setting up an agricultural bank, health and welfare societies, cooperative grain stores, training and research centres and schools, and much else (Das Gupta, "Rabindranath Tagore on Rural Reconstruction").

If we take Tagore's starting point as the 1890s when he took over management of the family estates, the two models of relocalisation are 120 years apart and embrace the heyday of oil and petroleum. It is as if the two models form brackets around the period of rapid expansion in the industrial age. Tagore attempted to steer his country onto a different path, which he regarded as the norm: "the moral world" of humanity ("The Second Birth" 80). Comparing what Tagore tried to do with the stated aims of Transition suggests that the latter may be doing the right things for the wrong – or insufficient – reasons.

The initial aim of Transition was to build local resilience "in uncertain times," a reference to the twin concerns of climate change and peak oil. Tagore, of course, had no knowledge of those concerns. He was enthusiastic for modern science and technology, as long as it was part of an integrated social life. In an essay introducing to western audiences the aims of the Eastern University he had founded, Tagore wrote:

> Our centre of culture should not only be the centre of the intellectual life of India, but the centre of her economic life also. It must co-operate with the villages round it, cultivate land, breed cattle, spin cloths, press oil from oil-seeds; it must produce all the necessaries, devising the best means, using the best materials, and calling science to its aid. Its very existence should depend upon the success of its industrial activities carried out on the co-operative principle, which will unite the teachers and students and villagers of the neighbourhood in a living and active bond of necessity. This will give us also a practical industrial training, whose motive force is not the greed of profit (*Creative Unity* 200-1).

One of the changes Tagore was keen to bring to farmers in India was the pooling of their land on a cooperative basis so they could share the latest agricultural methods and machinery. Tagore himself drove a tractor around the Sriniketan experimental farm. The population of any town, village or city neighbourhood in the UK would have to reduce its dependence on machinery powered by fossil fuels very considerably – but not to zero – to match the level Tagore and his colleagues at Sriniketan envisaged. Such a reduction is not impossible as a by-product of relocalisation, but the aim itself may be a "red herring," a distraction from the benefits of rebuilding community to bring security and wellbeing for all members of society.

In any case, climate change and peak oil are perceived as future threats: problems foreseen but not yet manifested. The response to any future threat, of resources "running out" or some looming catastrophe, is first of all denial of the facts, followed by predictions that technological fixes will be devised. Most people's priorities are short term, whether coping with work and family pressures, or maximising profits. We can see one outcome in a recent article in *New Scientist* by George Marshall, founder of the Climate Outreach and Information Network (COIN), reporting on psychological studies of how people currently respond to the threat of climate change (24-25). They found that most people are "loss averse," and any apparent uncertainty in climate science results in paralysis. Only around 15% of the population "fully accept the threat and are willing to make personal sacrifices to avert it." Marshall observes that this minority consists mainly of left wingers or environmentalists, and the climate change narrative fits their criticism of industry and growth.

If one is part of this minority, "sacrifices" seems the wrong word. Actions like growing one's own or buying food locally, not eating so much meat, supporting local businesses, using public transport rather than driving, and not flying, do restrict one's choices but in a satisfying way. It is good to feel one is on the moral high ground. Getting together with others who are doing the same is a particular bonus – as the Transition movement has shown. Transition has grown remarkably fast, and yet its potential constituency is probably still that fifteen percent minority which Marshall wrote about. The "sacrifices" idea is expressed positively by deep ecologist and teacher Stephan Harding's appreciation for the *Transition Handbook*, as a "hugely important book" which "will help us transition into a materially leaner but inwardly richer human experience" (2).

In the two Transition manuals, Hopkins describes "relocalisation" or "localisation" as inevitable because of peak oil (*Handbook* 68-77; *Companion* 44-53). Liquid fuels are essential for transportation, and the price of oil post-peak seemed certain to rise. Hopkins, writing in 2008, mentions some of the "unconventional" liquid fuels that are alternative to the "sweet crude oil" which has passed its peak in many oil-producing nations. Five years on we gather from

online discussions that the use of terms such as "total oil supply," combining conventional and unconventional liquid fuels, plus low demand caused by the economic downturn, as well as the issuing of misleading figures on reserves and costs of production, obfuscate the peak oil picture (Cobb). The driver for inevitable change seen by Hopkins and his authoritative sources six years ago seems to have disappeared from sight.

Hopkins took pains to explain in his first book that relocalisation did not mean aiming for self-reliance or complete self-sufficiency. The aim would be "building the capability to produce locally those things that we can produce locally," such as "seasonal fruit and vegetables, fresh fish, timber, mushrooms, dyes, many medicines, furniture, ceramic, insulation materials, soap, bread, glass, dairy products, wool and leather products, paper, building materials, perfumes and fresh flowers" – but not, for example "computers and frying pans" (*Handbook* 68). In *The Power of Just Doing Stuff*, Hopkins puts Transition forward as an economic approach, facilitating localised enterprises which are low-carbon and recognise natural limits, and are not "purely for personal profit" but "value social return as much as financial return" (58-59).

Hopkins makes clear in his recent book that encouraging "local entrepreneurs" is key to where Transition will go in future (115). Local food, alternative power generation, making homes more energy efficient, and the introduction of local currencies have been the bread-and-butter of Transition so far, all directly relevant to the aim of achieving local resilience and reducing oil dependency. How will future "local entrepreneurs" be persuaded to concentrate on local needs and agreed plans? Some new small businesses may not be viable unless they expand into markets beyond the boundaries of the Transition Initiative, and without transportation becoming unaffordable due to peak oil, that is what they will do. Might the "local economic blueprint" model struggle to grow beyond its ten percent target? Could the new Big Idea prompted by Austerity be another red herring? Tagore's experience suggests that it might. His original aim of bringing "life in its completeness" to Indian village society was lost sight of when his colleagues shifted the operation towards the establishment of commercial craft industries, leaving the aged poet in despair (Das Gupta, "Rabindranath Tagore on Rural Reconstruction" 376-77).

I stated earlier that Tagore's efforts to revive Indian village society ultimately failed because the currents of the world were driving in the direction of urban industrial society and the nation state. It may seem that the decision taken by Tagore's colleagues (including his own son) to set up local craft industries, bringing training, jobs and wages for rural people, was worthwhile and completely benign. Tagore would have thought so himself if this change of emphasis had not had the effect of undermining his primary goal of making the villages self-reliant (Das Gupta, "Rabindranath Tagore on Rural Reconstruction" 373-74). When Tagore stated that his university would

demonstrate an economic life for his country whose "motive force is not the greed of profit" he intended that principle to operate throughout society. He saw commerce and the profit motive as part of the dehumanising system brought in by the West. In one of his lectures, "Nationalism in the West," Tagore wrote:

> In the West the national machinery of commerce and politics turns out neatly compressed bales of humanity which have their use and high market value; but they are bound in iron hoops, labelled and separated off with scientific care and precision. Obviously God made man to be human; but this modern product has such marvellous square-cut finish, savouring of gigantic manufacture, that the Creator will find it difficult to recognize it as a thing of spirit and a creature made in his own divine image. (6)

There is a connection between Tagore's coupling of nationalism and commerce and the parallel I see with Tagore's aims and those of Transition. We have seen from Jones's study how the Establishment works in the interests of big business. The ideologues of the neoliberal capitalist system may advocate the rolling back of the state, but Jones points out that "British capitalism is completely dependent on the largesse of the state," which protects its rights, funds its research and builds infrastructure (168-71). Tagore pointed out in 1904 that Indian rural society differed from the nation state as it operated in England. He began by making the point that in their own country, rulers waged wars and defended their territory, but everything else "from the supply of water to the supply of knowledge" was traditionally provided by society operating at local community level. In contrast "England relegates to State care all the welfare services in the country; India did that only to a very limited extent" ("Society and State" 49-50).

Tagore's hope was that the Age of Nations would come to an end. He declared that the people of India were not a Nation, and did not blindly believe "in the salvation which machinery offered to man," but cherished the hope that power would become "ashamed to occupy its throne" and the morning would come for "cleansing the bloodstained steps of the Nation along the highroad of humanity" ("Nationalism in the West" 46).[2]

It is almost a century since Tagore spoke those words in a lecture he delivered over twenty times in America. Since that time the vast and awesome oil-powered machinery of the modern world has brought about a disconnect between the systems which supply our needs and the problems they give rise to.

[2] Tagore's view of nationalism has been discussed widely by critics. See, for example: Ashis Nandy, *The Illegitimacy of Nationalism*; Quayum, "Imagining 'One World': Rabindranath Tagore's Critique of Nationalism"; and Aikant, "Reading Tagore: Seductions nad Perils of Nationalism."

Hopkins' hope was that the end of cheap oil would render such systems less and less profitable, and bring people back to meeting their needs locally. In *A Political Theology of Climate Change*, an impressive study of the connections between climate change and the history of western ideas, professor of ethics Michael Northcott points out that measures to address climate change at national and international levels are ineffective. There is no agreement on restraining exploration and extraction of fossil fuels; indeed, there are government subsidies (121). Carbon dioxide emissions have continued to rise because of flaws in the system of national carbon accounts and emissions trading schemes (124).

Northcott sees hope for a solution in the phenomenal growth worldwide of the Transition Movement (307-13). He suggests that a global movement committed to sustainability might put pressure on national and international leaders to agree to controls on exploration and extraction and limits to carbon emissions which are effective. That assumes that the world will continue to be governed by nation states. We know that Tagore predicted that this system would end and there are indications that this is happening. A recent leading article in *New Scientist* invites the reader to "imagine there's no countries" and explores:

> a growing feeling among economists, political scientists and even national governments that the nation state is not necessarily the best scale on which to run our affairs. We must manage vital matters like food supply and climate on a global scale, yet national agendas repeatedly trump the global good. At a smaller scale, city and regional administrations often seem to serve people better than national governments. (MacKenzie 31)

The author reminds us that nation states arose as recently as 1800, as "imagined communities" which "far outnumber our immediate circle and we will never meet them all, yet people will die for their nation as they would for their family." The ideological process of nation building is associated with "the development of far-reaching bureaucracies needed to run complex industrial societies." Studies by complexity theorists and social scientists suggest that these systems are already mutating into novel political structures, which they characterise as a "neo-medievalism" (MacKenzie 32-34).

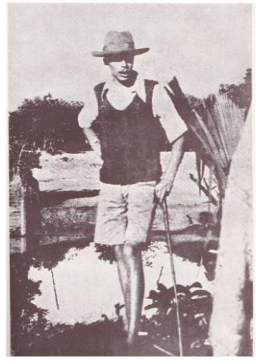
This term suggests new forms of hierarchy starting at the local level with genuine communities. It also brings to mind Northcott's exploration of the root cause of climate change denial. He observes that before the Enlightenment, in the Middle Ages, and as far back as the beginnings of agriculture as described in ancient Hebrew texts, people believed in a God who was in control of the living world. People felt involved in animate nature: the success of crops depended on God's will and he had to be appeased. But a shift in attitudes took place in the seventeenth century to a perception of the Natural World as the "stable

backdrop" of human activities (190). Denialism, according to Northcott, is an inability to accept that human activities could be having a serious impact on planetary systems.

In one of the first lectures Tagore delivered to western audiences, "The Relation of the Individual to the Universe," he contrasts "two different points of view": the Indian tradition of living in the forests and being in harmony with nature, and the western tradition of living in cities separated from nature. The former led to a "spirit of sympathy, with a large feeling of joy and peace," the latter to "scientific curiosity or greed of material advantage" (*Sadhana* 3-5). Tagore wanted his own country to follow its traditional forest path, and not the route leading to dehumanising bureaucracy, industrialism and the nation state. There is much to learn from his experience over fifty years of demonstrating the alternative, which might help the Transition movement grasp the opportunities offered by the bureaucratic machinery weakening as neoliberal capitalism demands the rolling back of the state.

A highly topical instance of how big business seeks to free itself from government regulations is the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP), the subject of a series of trade negotiations being carried out mostly in secret between the EU and the US. It is thought that if these deals are successful, the new regulations introduced under the auspices of TTIP would threaten public services such as the NHS, weaken food standards and environmental protection, and become an "assault on democracy" (Williams). This is certainly a serious concern for a society relying on services "relegated to State care" as Tagore put it, but if Transition came to mean progress towards our needs being met locally under local control, then the state, big business and "The Establishment" would become irrelevant.

If we examine Transition literature, both online and in Hopkins' books, we find no mention of Tagore. And yet there is a circumstantial connection between Tagore and Transition. Hopkins wrote in his PhD Thesis that "Transition Town Totnes owes some of its success as a pioneer to Totnes being seen nationally as 'a unique cultural centre,' due in part to the 'radical experiment in rural regeneration involving the arts, heritage and culture' set up by Dorothy and Leonard Elmhirst in 1925 at Dartington" (*Localisation and Resilience at the Local Level* 98).


Seventy years of rural reconstruction: Tagore managing family estates; Elmhirst as Tagore's Project Manager; Elmhirst and Tagore at Dartington 1930

Leonard Elmhirst was Tagore's project manager in India from 1922-24 and helped launch Sriniketan, the Department of Rural Reconstruction, at Tagore's University Visva-Bharati. This inspired him to set up his own rural reconstruction project in Devon. Elmhirst's concern in Devon was over loss of rural employment, so his aim was to establish rural industries, for agriculture, forestry, food production, construction, furniture, weaving, glass-making. Dartington craft businesses did well for many years but after Elmhirst's death they were unable to survive in competitive markets, and Dartington is now little more than a brand and Dartington Hall a visitor attraction and conference centre.

In the 1970s, historian Uma Das Gupta discovered a neglected archive from Sriniketan, the Department of Rural Reconstruction at Tagore's university Visva-Bharati, which became the core of her research into Tagore's radical and holistic approach to rural reconstruction. Das Gupta also explored the papers on Elmhirst's involvement in Sriniketan in the Dartington Trust Archive, parts of which Elmhirst published as his memoir, *Poet and Plowman*. Das Gupta and other Tagore scholars such as sociologist Binoy Bhattacharjee in his article "Rabindranath's Ideals of Rural Reconstruction," have taken an interest in how the rural reconstruction work of Tagore and Elmhirst might be relevant to the challenges of today.

Hopkins gave a talk at the Festival held at Dartington in 2011 to mark Tagore's 150th birth anniversary and began by saying: "I confess that I know very little about Tagore but I think that he would approve of what Transition is doing" ("Transition as Cookery"). Tagore would probably have been ambivalent about Transition. He would have welcomed the general aims of relocalisation and resilience, but he had no knowledge of climate change and peak oil, and saw commercial enterprises, even on a small and local scale as distractions from the vital business of building local self-reliance. These are the

two "red herrings" I identified earlier: first, peak oil no longer serving as a clear-cut driver for change and continuing denialism or apathy around climate change, and second, the associated difficulty of keeping new local enterprises local. What then can Transition do next?

The saving grace of Transition may be that it emerged out of Permaculture, a term coined by the founders to mean both "permanent agriculture" and "permanent culture": sustainability and community. Hopkins has said that Transition was designed as a Trojan horse to smuggle in Permaculture, as a way of scaling up "a bottom-up, grassroots and solution-led approach" which has tended to be "niche and fringe" (Gordon-Farleigh). In *The Transition Companion*, Permaculture is recommended as the "Tool for Transition No. 1," which acts as a "design 'glue' to stick together all the elements" – including "local food production, energy generation, water management, meaningful employment, and so on" – which are needed "for a sustainable and resilient culture" (98).

Permaculture is far broader in scope than Transition. There is no limit to the potential of Permaculture design to devise solutions for any locality, working with particular human needs, desires and capabilities, and bioregional resources (Whitefield; Macnamara). Interest in permaculture has grown in recent years, and Hopkins' reference to Transition as a Trojan horse for permaculture suggests that the role of Transition Initiatives is to raise people's interest in the potential of relocalisation, and encourage them to look for the kinds of design solutions permaculture can offer. The "conviviality and fun" factor is vital for this process of expansion, having already done more to draw people into Transition than concerns about future threats and austerity.

Permaculture has always had an explicit ethical basis, expressed as three principles: "care of the earth," "care of people" and "setting limits to population and consumption," the latter often shortened to "fair shares" (Mollison 1-9). Tagore's goal of bringing "life in its completeness" to Indian villages also has an ethical or spiritual basis which could be expressed in similar terms, but one would perhaps replace "fair shares" with "have fun," with the aim of building into the design for a new society the need and value of leisure to enjoy the arts and creativity of life, and the joys of celebration.

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