

Transitioning out of the Niche

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ABSTRACT:

The failure of governments and individuals to act effectively on emission reduction has led to a decentralised, community-based approach, most notably the Transition Movement. However, while these place-specific entities have mushroomed since the inception in 2006, individual initiatives are struggling to grow. Seyfang and Haxeltine (2010) borrow (SNM) Kemp *et al.*'s (1998) strategic niche management theory of managing expectations, networking and second-order learning. Applying their additional suggested frameworks of social movement and social practice theory, this paper focuses on two inner-London Transition Initiatives and how they have addressed niche management. This shows that while scaling-up and mainstreaming can be achieved through strategic niche management, activities are dependent on the relationships, capabilities and dynamics within groups, and that by addressing one activity others may be sacrificed. Additional emphasis on the use of public space also compliments social movement and social practice theory.

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INTRODUCTION

The failure of governments and individuals to act effectively on emission reduction has led to a decentralised, community-based approach, most notably the Transition Movement. However, while these place-specific entities have mushroomed since the inception in 2006, individual initiatives are struggling to grow. Seyfang and Haxeltine (2010) addressed this by applying the strategic niche management (SNM) theories of Kemp et al (1998), who see niche-growth through replication, scaling-up and translation to a mainstream audience. The activities of 'managing expectations', 'networking', and 'learning' are key to movement growth. They also suggested the additional theoretical frameworks of social movement theory (SMT) and social practice theory (SPT) to further understand these processes.

This paper intends to develop the framework by incorporating SNM, SMT and SPT and applying them to two case-studies. In-depth interviews with members and non-members of two geographically similar yet operationally different Transition Initiatives provide the material for this study. This shows that while scaling-up and mainstreaming can be achieved through strategic niche management, activities are dependent on the relationships, capabilities and dynamics within groups, and that by addressing one activity others may be sacrificed. Additional emphasis on the use of public space also compliments social movement and social practice theory.

The paper begins with an introduction to the Transition Movement and the various theoretical frameworks before developing them further. The methodology is followed by the case studies, presented separately. The discussion draws comparisons and differences between them and the implications for group growth. The paper will conclude with further research recommendations.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

As governments across the world grapple with the transition towards a low-carbon future, calls for a low-carbon energy system have become mainstream. In 2010 the UK passed the UK Climate Act, committing to cuts of 80% by 2050. However, there appears to be little faith in government targets among both academics and the public, especially given the failure of internationally legally-binding and effective emission reductions.

THE TRANSITION MOVEMENT

The Transition Movement emerged as an alternative to government-led top-down energy transitions, aiming to mobilise local communities to take action and transition to low-carbon practices, building social capital and relocalising currently globalised systems and practices (Bailey et al 2010). Rather than working with current socio-technical systems, Darley et al (2006) envisage a Parallel Public Infrastructure that will eventually replace current carbon-reliant practices.

The ‘transition’ is in response to both climate change and peak oil. The movement’s founder, Rob Hopkins, said “climate change says we *should* change, whereas peak oil says we *will be forced to* change. Both categorically state that fossil fuels have no role to play in our future, and the sooner we can stop using them the better.” (Hopkins, 2008:37).

At the heart of the transition is the adherence to the specificity of location. Each Transition Initiative (or Transition Town) is geographically distinct – be it a town, city, borough or even forest – providing the foundations for place-based identity.

Begun in Totnes in 2006, there are – at time of writing – 321 initiatives across the world (those approved as ‘official’ initiatives) and 219 ‘Muller’ initiatives

(those 'mulling over' whether to become official). The UK has 69 initiatives with 10 in inner-London (seven more are currently mulling).

The Transition Initiatives Primer (<http://www.transitionnetwork.org>) sets out 12 steps to become a Transition Town, the first to establish a steering group to "put a core team in place to drive the project forward during the initial phases" (Brangwyn and Hopkins, 2010:24).

LACK OF GROWTH

The Transition Movement literature shows a clear problem with growth. While they appear to be replicating – shown by the high number of initiatives – 76% of TIs surveyed said their biggest problem was growing their group (Seyfang, 2009b). This difference between replication and scaling-up can be viewed through combining the lens of socio-technical innovation with grassroots innovation, employing a framework of strategic niche management.

The growing research into socio-technical transitions and sustainable development (Rip and Kemp, 1998; Geels, 2005; Smith et al, 2010) focuses primarily on technology. However, Smith and Seyfang (2007) built on the sustainable transitions literature and applied it to the social economy. Using similar tools and frames, they identify grassroots practices such as local food projects or local currencies as 'grassroots innovations'¹, existing alongside mainstream practices but protected from the dominant mainstream regime. Smith and Seyfang integrate Schot and Geels's (2008) strategic niche management theories to evaluate mainstream diffusion. Importantly, it apportions agency with the social movement – in this case the TI.

¹ According to Seyfang and Smith (2007:585), grassroots innovations are "innovative networks of activists and organisations that lead bottom-up solutions for sustainable development; solutions that respond to the local situation and the interests and values of the communities involved. In contrast to the greening of mainstream business, grassroots initiatives tend to operate in civil society arenas and involve committed activists who experiment with social innovations as well as using greener technologies and techniques"

Within strategic niche management, diffusion of innovation occurs in three ways: replication (spreading the number of niches), scaling-up (growing individual niches) and translating (from niche to mainstream). The movement is replicating but struggling to scale-up or translate. Seyfang and Haxeltine (2010) explored this issue by drawing again on strategic niche management, borrowing from Kemp et al. (1998) to distinguish three key processes necessary for niche-growth: managing expectations, building social networks and learning. Expectation management (the outward image presented to the public, promises made – and whether kept) is most successful if expectations are widely shared, specific and viable; networking activities should try and embrace all stakeholders, who then employ their own resources and networks to support the niche; learning processes should facilitate 'second-order learning' by questioning dominant mainstream practices and their accompanying assumptions.

COMPLIMENTING STRATEGIC NICHE MANAGEMENT

All three areas are important to for niche-growth, yet as Seyfang et al (2010) show, the Transition Movement and individual initiatives are not technological innovations attempting to break into the market. Rather, they attempt to replace market practices. Therefore Seyfang et al (2010) explored other theoretical fields to analyse niche-growth. They apply social movement theories and social practice theories.

SOCIAL MOVEMENT THEORIES

Social Movement Theories (SMT) fall into two recent schools, both useful in understanding niche-growth: Resource Mobilisation (RM) and New Social Movement (NSM) theories (for a comprehensive literature review, see Bate et al., 2005). RM theories emerged in the 1970s and 1980s in response to the discord between deprivation and the outbreak of movements, concluding that emotional motivations “will not produce a social movement unless they are organised and properly resourced” (Bate et al., 2005:17). Assuming humans

as rational actors, RM theories see movements shaped and constrained by resource mobilisation and how they can impact incentives, society and political processes. Edwards and McCarthy (2004) identify five categories of resources: moral (solidarity and support), cultural (prior experience, grasp of issues i.e. cultural products), socio-organisational (organisational strategies, social networks, infrastructures), human (volunteers, skills, leaders), and material resources (money and physical capital).

NSM theories, reacting to the economism of RM, focus on cultural issues and framing processes. The politics of identity creation through shared cultural expressions is key to forming and sustaining social movements, through existing cultural artefacts and the creation of new ones (Jasper, 1997). Movement creation is a cultural enterprise, propelled through dialogue and discussion to create identity and purpose (Bate et al., 2005). Framing is pivotal within this, presenting the image to the outside world and reinforcing internal identities (Benford and Snow, 2000). According to Snow and Benford (1988), the core tasks of diagnostic, prognostic and motivational framing are key to creating a successful collective action frame, and tackling the dual-tasks of consensus mobilisation and action mobilisation (Klandermans, 1984). However, frames are also constructed and elaborated through discursive, strategic and contested processes, which are facilitated and constrained by political and cultural opportunity structures (Benford and Snow, 2000). So, a locality's dynamic contextual characteristics may determine a frame's resonance and success of the social movement. How a frame draws on extant cultural values – Swidler's (1986) metaphorical 'toolkit' – may determine its success. According to Walsh et al. (1993), framing is more important than variables such as socio-economic status or level of discontent.

SOCIAL PRACTICE THEORY

Seyfang et al (2010) highlight the importance of Social Practice Theory (SPT). Striking a balance between the individualist understanding of behaviour change and determinist approaches, SPT views the social practice as the

appropriate unit of analysis (Giddens, 1984). The information-deficit approach of government campaigns² assumes humans to be rational actors (HM Government, 2005) while ignoring the socially constructed systems of practice that cause behaviour (Shove, 2003). Like Foucault's (1979) governmentality, practices are perpetuated through an iterative process widely-held as 'normal' (Shove, 2004). Therefore as new practices are formed, norms must be challenged. By unpackaging the process, niche-managers see the workings of current practices as entry-points for new practices. Shove and Pantzer (2005) see practices constituted by the continued interaction between images, skills and stuff, i.e. meanings and symbols, competence and procedures and the materials and technology. Therefore while three arenas of contestation exist, there is the possibility of reframing (rather than replacing) current images, skills and stuff to form new practices. The framing literature discussed above has particular relevance in the use of extant cultural meanings and narratives, as well as their use in the creation of new ones.

SYNTHESIS

Both SMT and SPT fit within the strategic niche management model proposed by Kemp et al (1998). The Transition Initiative's management of expectations rests on framing: what image is presented and how it resonates, i.e. which existing cultural meanings and artefacts are employed and create shared meanings. Resources mobilisation diffuse the chosen frame and determine public perception of viability judged on credibility and outcomes, influencing their willingness to join.

Construction of social networks depend on the perceived local relevance of a TI's identity and purpose, as well as the efficient and innovative use of resources. A combination of Edwards and McCarthy's (2004) socio-organisational and cultural resources determines the success of network building.

² The latest being Act on CO₂, informing the public both of the long-term danger of climate change and also the money-saving potential of cutting carbon

Learning combines SMT and SPT, focusing on the provision of alternative practices. The imagery, skills and stuff are linked to the mobilisation of resources and the new cultural meanings provided with people's willingness to accept them.

METHODOLOGY

The research into the growth of grassroots innovations and the Transition Movement in particular is in its infancy. While Seyfang et al (2010:15) have identified various theoretical and conceptual lenses, “more research is also needed on how processes of networking, learning and expectation-management play out within innovative social movements”.

Transition Finsbury Park (TFP) and Transition Town Tooting (TTT) were chosen for the similar characteristics of their localities and age: Finsbury Park was formed in October 2008, seven months after Tooting.

Both initiatives centre on postal codes – SW17 for TTT and N4 for TFP – but dissect numerous electoral wards. TTT falls within the borough of Wandsworth whereas TFP straddles Islington, Hackney and Haringey.

According to the census (ONS 2001), 65% of both sets of residents were born in the UK, compared to the UK average of 94%³. 45% of those living in Finsbury Park consider themselves White British, as do 50% in Tooting, compared to 60% in Greater London and an 87% average across England.

Tooting is home to a large Asian and British Asian population (20%) as well as Black and Black British Caribbean and African populations (10%). Finsbury Park has a large Black and Black British Caribbean and African population (17%), as well as a large non-British White population (18%). Both areas are religiously diverse.

According to the latest multiple deprivation indices (DCLG 2008), both areas fall within the bottom 10%.

On the ground, commerce is dominated by small independent businesses, specialising in textiles and fashion, groceries and low-end consumer goods,

³ Statistics were gathered through amalgamating ward totals

as well as cafes and restaurants. Both have good public transport links, combining busy underground, overground and bus services (Finsbury Park station is one of the busiest multi-mode transport hubs outside of Zone 1), as well as heavily-used A roads dissecting both areas.

An ethnographic approach has been adopted, conducting in-depth semi-structured interviews with five key steering group members from each group. Interviews lasted between one and one-and-a-half hours, conducted both face-to-face and over the phone⁴. Beginning with the chair or co-chair, members were then asked for voluntary involvement.

As the research centres on TI interactions with their locality, testimony of interactees was collected. Five individuals in each area with an awareness of the TI or experience of their activities (but not members) were interviewed. Participants were found through recommendations of TI members – friends or neighbours – as well as a request in the newsletter. Interviews lasted 15-25 minutes and focused on their impression of the TI, any activities, what may motivate or hinder further involvement and their own personal position on environmental and community-based activities.

Interviewees were self-selecting and therefore potentially unrepresentative of the local demographic makeup, yet represented a range of ages, genders, religions, ethnicities, political persuasions, employment statuses and durations of residency. Qualitative methods were preferred to the quantitative approach adopted by Seyfang (2009) in Norwich, as the interview criteria was more refined and allowed greater flexibility in identifying specific impressions. All TTT steering group (TTT-SG), TTT non-members (TTT-NM), TFP steering group (TFP-SG) and TFP non-members (TFP-NM) were guaranteed anonymity.

A thorough analysis of online content and newsletters was also conducted, complimented by direct experiential evidence through attending activities of both groups. Ethical and moral questions are important in this context

⁴ See Appendix IV for the questionnaire and an example interview transcript

(Jackson, 1983), but accepting them provides further insight into the internal dynamics of TIs, their modus operandi, and the public response.

The results chapter examines will look at:

- 'Managing Expectations' examines the TIs presented public image, focusing on framing and local resonance, vehicles of delivery, and the creation of collective identity (making it identifiable, desirable and accessible to all parts of the community). Closely linked to image is viability and the mobilisation of resources to instil belief in the movement through tangible outcomes.
- 'Building Social Networks' focuses on active networking: approaches adopted, partnerships made, and resources mobilised. Specific attention will be on local businesses and local authorities, as well as the importance of individuals.
- 'Learning' explores how each TI both challenges current practices and provides alternative images, skills and stuff. As the Transition Movement aims to build community resilience, community learning (re-discovering community practices) is as important as socio-technical learning (towards new low-carbon ways of living). The use of space is also addressed.

The resulting discussion compares both TIs and finds potential synergies. The conceptual framework outlined above also provides further insight into the strategic niche management of grassroots innovations

CASE STUDIES:

FINSBURY PARK

Transition Finsbury Park (TFP) is project-oriented, focusing on hands-on, family-friendly activities across the community. There are 300 individuals and 200 organisations on the group's mailing list, around 30 attend regular activities or meetings. There are five working groups, (growing, skilling, buildings and energy, transport, and heart and soul), by far the most popular – and active – is growing. Most growing projects focused on food production in public settings, seeing fruit trees, bushes and shrubs in train stations, nurseries, primary schools, libraries and faith houses. A knitting group recently started, as part of the skilling group, but other groups have been less successful.

MANAGING EXPECTATIONS

PRESENTING IMAGE

The strongest message from TFP is community cohesion and improvement. One respondent explained: "Everyone can see the common sense of it – they want Finsbury Park to be a better place." While peak oil and climate change feature on the website, few mentioned them. Some felt uncomfortable with the concept, while others felt activities – and their audience – did not need it: "even if you ignore climate change and peak oil, it's just a more attractive way of being" (TFP-SG).

Groups have taken different approaches. The growing group attracts people to take part, especially the borough's diverse immigrant population: "you don't have to persuade people who come from a rural Turkish background how great it is to be growing stuff and how easy it is to grow stuff because that

knowledge is already there and that interest is already there. There's a real passion." (TFP-SG).

The buildings and energy group (B&E) decided on a money-saving approach, while the transport group emphasises cycling rather than the wider transition agenda. However, the 'Well-Oiled Festival' planned for September – an umbrella for many of the group's activities – has clear peak oil branding.

TFP made a concerted effort to be as broad in membership as possible, yet found it difficult to move away from the 'usual suspects'⁵. The steering group has a local vicar of a predominantly Afro-Caribbean working-class congregation and a member of the steering group of the local Mosque. The introductory leaflet was translated into Turkish. With over 60 languages spoken (McBride, 2007), TFP intends to use Haringey Council to translate it further. However: "every time we do a Wilberforce Gardeners event, we get loads more people on our mailing list that are white middle-class. It's almost like you can't stop that!" (TFP-SG).

Events have avoided 'eco' labels and overtly 'eco' venues, while jargon has been avoided in materials: "We didn't want to build up a body of people who identified themselves with TFP who were from a particular section because then we knew if other people turned up to an event, they would go 'argh, this isn't something I can identify with'. So we kind of avoided doing too much 'stuff'". However, limited success saw a shift towards projects in order to retain existing members: "Things like sitting at a table, or selling the Transition idea at a local event, that wouldn't definitely be my choice role".

VIABILITY

Most growing projects were been successful with a core team of 15, while attendance increased through member contacts at the local primary school. The emphasis on children-friendly activities featured in the knitting, which takes place at the Homeless Families Project with children involved. Skilling

⁵ Seyfang (2009b:2) labels them 'post-materialists', who "eschew high-status jobs and consumption in favour of personal fulfilment and (in particular environmental) activism"

events in school proved popular, and the upcoming Festival will be family-oriented. The group know the events they want: “If you simply try and organise events that are fun, good for families, with refreshments – and that are free, so you’re not charging people – and you’re not asking people to go out of their way particularly, so they’re already going to be there – like after school, or at a church or a mosque – then you’ve got a better chance of success.”

The transport group started with a well-attended meeting, but lacked follow up attendance: “The first meeting had about 16-20 people – the launch event – and we agreed that people go away and research things, then the follow up had 4-5, and the next had 4-5, but the third meeting had completely different people to the first one!” (TFP-SG) As the head of the working group works for a sustainable transport charity, they secured £5,000 from the London Cycling Campaign to provide bicycles and train two youth groups at the Muslim Welfare House. Unfortunately a change of management has stopped the project, but the intention is to do the same with a group of mothers and children at the local primary school.

The B&E group suffered from a lack of direction, leadership and, meaning little was done. However, a recent £1k grant from Islington Council to conduct energy reduction auditing has given new impetus, which they will tie in to the Festival.

The heart and soul (H&S) group run meditation events for members, but do not publicly advertise, while the monthly social is advertised on Project Dirt as well as emails.

The group identified real commitment as an impediment to growth: “we’ve got a surplus of project ideas but a deficit of people who can actually manage them” (TFP-SG). That need for commitment proved daunting to non-members: “It felt like the group needed a lot of input... and I didn’t have the time at that moment” (TFP-NM). Meetings – at various locations around N4 dictated by availability – often suffered low attendance; the growing group

responded by integrating them into practical activities. The tension between group needs and individual commitment led to the communications group stopping.

TFP have no links with the local media lack of time among the communications group meant little press coverage.. A monthly email goes out, but the newsletter – with more details, pictures and stories – was abandoned.

Word-of-mouth is the principal means of awareness-raising and bringing new members, but the group struggles to publicise events, limiting public awareness: “Our methods aren’t particularly consistent in the way we advertise and market these things – it’s all done on a volunteer basis – it depends on the time we’ve got and the publicity material we have at that time available.” (TFP-SG)

NETWORKING

TFP networked widely across the local area, success determined by the nature of the project and members’ networks and qualities. Strong links were formed with other voluntary and sustainability organisations (including fledgling relationships with other local TIs), but less with the local authorities and none with the local business community.

Two projects planned to engage businesses through loyalty discounts remain in the pipe-line, while a perception of difficulty in organising the predominantly independent establishments – also noted by Martin Stockley Associates (2010) when examining regeneration opportunities – prevented widespread thinking around their engagement. However, the transport group identified a potential easy-win through the council installing free cycle hoops outside shops, potentially attracting more customers and encouraging cycling.

The upcoming festival attempts to engage businesses and has appealed for £1,200 for carrying the logo as well as stressing TFP's support for the local economy. The local service providers approached include larger corporate entities like Tesco, Barclays, Transport for London (TfL) and Arsenal Football Club, and some local independent businesses.

Contact has been made with community-led social enterprise FinFutures, a "membership organisation representing local residents, businesses, and voluntary sector and community groups" (<http://www.finfuture.co.uk/>), but the Finsbury Park Business Forum – over 100 members from small independent businesses to the larger Rowans Bowling Alley and Arsenal Football Club⁶ – were not approached.

Local authorities provided some funding and support, but the geographical division between three boroughs made forging relationships difficult and dependent on project locations. Haringey Council support the Festival, but all three implement environmental and community-led projects, including Islington agreeing to provide two cycle trainers for the Muslim Welfare House. While some members are hesitant towards closer 'establishment' involvement, others are warily enthusiastic: "there's a real zeitgeist in local authority thinking of letting the community speak for itself. If that *is* the local authority agenda, then we really need to be engaging with it as a movement." (TFP-SG)

Members' existing networks and attitudes were important to TFP. The steering group was assembled by its chair with networks in mind, while members' professions – in sustainable transport and other third sector organisations – provide links to funding and resources. Members used their children's schools to network and the local church. The local mosque has been twice approached unsuccessfully "I suspect the reason was that we didn't talk to enough of the stakeholders. I spoke to the Imam, assuming he

⁶ Telephone conversation on 20.08.2010 with Jeremiah Bentley, Co-ordinator at Finsbury Park Business Forum

was in charge, but actually there was a board of trustees and you have to get their buy-in as well.” (TFP-SG)

Members’ attitudes helped the growing group: “it’s mostly women who are active in that group organising stuff, and thinking about the way that they are with people, they seem to be equally happy to just talk to anyone, which is what it comes down to – being friendly and welcoming to anyone who is wandering by”.

TFP members have different approaches to networking; one member sees themselves as “an unpaid community outreach person. I’m connecting up lots of different parts of the community” (TFP-SG), another won’t “go out and look for other groups, I’m not one who goes out to try and convert” (TFP-SG).

LEARNING

TFP have primarily adopted a social and experiential approach to learning, although the Well Oiled Festival is also educational. Project-based events have challenged old understandings and present alternatives, combining images, skills and stuff to create new social practices, but often without low-carbon images.

PRACTICE

Positive long-term images from visioning and the Transition Network literature are relayed by the group: “you just have to just keep on giving that out, regardless of how much people want to ignore it, or not come along, you just have to be relentlessly positive.” (TFP-SG) Films are wanted by already-committed environmentalists but newer audiences found them overwhelming: “Sometimes people need to be built up to face reality, rather than have it right in your face” (TFP-NM). However, attendances have been low.

The group has challenged by doing on the micro-level: “It always surprises people when you show them how much space there *is* in London – you don’t need a farmer’s field to provide food” (TFP-SG). Similarly in the transport group: “Until people do it, they need convincing” (TFP-SG).

TFP’s activity focus has brought knitting, cycling, energy-efficiency and cob-building skills. However, the community emphasis means many practices lacks overarching imagery: “I feel fostering a positive attitude towards the community as being more useful than someone knowing that they’re doing it because one day they may *need* to know that skill” (TFP-SG).

TFP ensured ‘stuff’ (materials and technologies) for practices have been free, provided through material donations, grants and funding, and partnerships.

TFP have also borrowed existing cultural norms and practices. The growing group have piggy-backed it’s rising popularity (Vidal, 2008), while the normalisation of thrift, recycling and intolerance to pollution also supplies ready-made images if not practices which prove an easier ‘sell’. The B&E group plan to distribute fake banknotes at the Festival as a metaphor for money wasting: “It’s quite an intellectual leap that the whole movement wants us to go in to – we have to nibble at the edges to get people interested and engaged; we’re going for the sensational rather than the carbon counter.” (TFP-SG)

SPACE

TFP also challenges conceptualisation of public space through holistic public growing projects. A collaboration with Transition Crouch End will transform a disused garden and rooftop into a social space for reading, reflection, meditation and exhibitions; engaging current users (staff, pensioners, schools, under 5s, resident associations) and engaging the wider community. Regaining ownership of the locality can foster identity: Food foraging has

worked similarly: “It gave me a sense of ownership; a new sense of understanding of a space I walked every day.” (TFP-SG)

TOOTING

TTT focused on a few large events staged in public spaces celebrating Tooting. At the recent Trashcatchers' Carnival, 700 people paraded down the High Street in costumes made of trash, while the annual Tooting Harvest Foodival (in September) enlists local restaurants to cook locally grown food and serve it on the High Street. An Earth Talk Walk visited the different faith houses along Upper Tooting High Street to discuss the issues of climate change, sustainability and resource scarcity.

TTT only recently formed working groups following its 'Unleashing', or launch, as the large events focus meant less project diversity. The decision to remain as one group meant sharing responsibilities between members, although individual capacity and commitment to organising events has been instrumental, as have specialisations, e.g. in film editing, networking. There are nearly 500 on the mailing list, but a core group of around 24 regularly attend meetings.

MANAGING EXPECTATIONS

PRESENTING IMAGE

Peak oil (and to a lesser extent climate change) is prominent among TTT communications and events. The 'petroleum interval' (see Appendix III) features on its home page. Comments and links to peak oil reports⁷ and Hopkins' blog provide intellectual justification. Preparatory Carnival workshops included peak oil presentations and activities with expert guest speakers like Jeremy Leggett. This was mainly for active members. "I tend to say to people now that Transition is another word for community engagement, which is what I believe... You don't need to know the ins and outs of science to behind an initiative which is building bridges between us." (TTT-SG) The community frame allows the engagement of a wider audience: "Forget doom and gloom,

⁷ For example Osborn's (2009) peak oil report for Bristol City Council

and climate change, and 'oh the world's going to end the next day'. People don't understand that – but community initiatives, people like that sort of thing because it improves the area they live in." (TTT-SG) Non-members all commented on the positive community element, with some reservations about peak oil and climate change.

Community improvement is framed as celebration. "We're saying 'how can we celebrate Tooting, what an extraordinary and amazing place it is, how can we strengthen those ties between us?' That's pretty much the message." This engagement and celebration of locality drives events, but messaging is within activities, including waste-reduction (Carnival), food localisation (Foodival) and community inclusion (Earth Talk Walk).

TTT found it difficult to expand beyond the 'usual suspects: "While Tooting has a broad ethnic base, those who are involved in Transition [meetings] are well-educated and white." Through events involving faith houses (Earth Talk Walk), local restaurants (Foodival) and schools and community groups (Carnival), TTT tried to foster a place-specific, shared 'Tooting' identity, building on the area's diversity: "It's not easy, you have to be vigilant, vigilant, vigilant, asking yourselves the whole time: 'have we asked so and so to get involved, how are we going to do that'". Using simple language helped: "The word transition can confuse people – the whole idea that there's some kinky movement; people can get quite wary of there being a 'movement' that you have to join. Discerning people can be quite reluctant to feel that they're joining in with something and can get quite suspicious. If you say it's another word for community engagement, it's a more on the ground reality, that doesn't have weird words around it." (TTT-SG)

VIABILITY

The Carnival – a highly-visible, physical manifestation – was a game-changer, raising the group's profile and perceptions of capacity: "It was impressive! Really well-made and colourful – much better than I thought it might have been. And *long!* It gave me the impression that Transition Town Tooting was

bigger than I'd thought." (TTT-NM) Local business leader Indrajit Patel said: "before the carnival the businesses community didn't get it – there was no precedent. But positions are moving: people have been shown it's possible."⁸ This year's Foodival aims to consolidate success and move away 'alternative' imagery: "The more events we put on, the more mainstream and acceptable it becomes – maybe even the word is professional, so it's not amateur people sitting round and doing nothing." The previous Foodival failed to attract new members.

Perceptions of professionalism and a shift towards the mainstream were helped by credible affiliations from local political figures (MPs; councillors; the local Mayor), partnerships with respected community institutions (local hospitals, the council, faith centres, Balham and Tooting Community Association⁹) and winning local and regional 'green awards'. The recent affiliation with Able & Cole and Fairtrade confirms this.

However, much depends on resource mobilisation: a £20,000 TippingPoint Commission¹⁰ raised belief and expectations: "Until they won the award for the Carnival, I couldn't understand what the whole idea was behind it. But that's when I got excited - that it could *really* be good". Partnerships allowed more events to be organised with fewer resources: "The thing to remember is that we're just a catalyst – we don't have to organise everything."

The focus on green-events and talks – while popular – limited the group to the environmentally-minded, making it harder to shake off the 'alternative' image. Appealing to non-green motives (fun; interest; curiosity) increased participation. Enjoyment and creativity was mentioned by members and non-members as a big incentive. Appeals to curiosity hope to draw people in for a

⁸ Indrajit Patel, quoted at the Tooting Trachcatchers' Symposium, 'How do Societies Learn?', 5.07.2010, Sivayogam Hall, Tooting, London SW17

⁹ According to one member, "BACTA is a good partner because they're very respected, they have the faith communities, although they're not exclusively about bringing the faith communities together. There are many overlaps in terms of what we're working towards

¹⁰ TippingPoint, a not-for-profit arts organisation that aims to 'energise the creative response to climate change', gives annual commissions to 'to develop a critical mass of performance-based work conceived in the context of climate change' (<http://www.tippingpoint.org.uk/>)

planned green film festival staged in ex-cinemas – one of which is now a car show room.

The family-friendly environment attracted parents, but involvement is usually time-dependent. Four of the five core members interviewed were self-employed, and all non-members interviewed listed time as the biggest barrier to involvement. TTT is looking for alternative ways of contributing: “The challenge is to work out how can people come to this on their own way and not overlook the help that people are prepared to give and want to give. But starting from where they are.” (TTT-SG) Meetings proved the greatest disincentive, but having monthly meetings with an event proved popular. The creation of working groups will mean more projects on the ground.

Good links with local media and a professional approach meant widespread coverage of events. Maintaining a large visual and multimedia presence – including twitter and a youtube channel – raised awareness and bolstered perceptions: “It probably looks bigger than it is, from what you can see on the web. There seems to be lots going on in the whole organisation but actually there's lots of recording, and photographing, writing about green stuff - anything that might be tangentially relevant”.

However, word of mouth and successful events still prove the most effective means of presenting the group's image and perceptions of viability.

NETWORKING

TTT networked widely across the locality, including businesses and local authorities, accessing wider networks through partnerships. Members' existing networks were pivotal to group activities. TTT's approach is described as “blitzkrieg” (TTT-SG), although one member admits, “It's an endless process of research and discovery, and I'd say we haven't even scratched the surface.” (TTT-SG) A database exists of all organisations involved in the carnival, as well as the mailing list, but “it's not systematic” (TTT-SG). Strong

contacts exist with community and environment organisations, while business and local authority links improved through the Carnival.

The business community was hesitant in engaging, although the Foodival forged links with local restaurants – six last year, eight so far this year – gaining familiarity through repetition and experiencing positive outcomes. Collecting trash for the Carnival was a vehicle for networking, while its success “recalibrated the movement upwards” in the eyes of the business community (TTT-SG). The support of business leader Indrajit Patel – a key community figure – has been an important link, but there is no evidence of the ‘bloc recruitment’ described by Oberschall (1973).

Networking within Wandsworth Council brought support from Labour and Tory councillors (Tooting is a Labour ward in a Tory Council) and the council leader. Some members are sceptical of real support: “the council is only interested in what we can do for them – they spend no money in the community, have the cheapest council tax in Britain! All they care about is trying to look good.” (TTT-SG) The Carnival brought the group into contact with numerous council departments, their support has varied: an unused space was offered at pepper-corn rent for Carnival workshops, but rates were then raised to £75/hr, forcing the group out. Town Centre Manager Audrey Help said “buy-in has been achieved at the local [ward] level, but not the top level”¹¹.

TTT forged links with similar interest organisations, like the local hospital – whose staff demanded a Carbon Management Plan – or Wisdom in Nature, who offer ‘Islam and Permaculture’ courses. Partnered events facilitated network building and provided access to partners’ own mobilising structures.

Approaches to networking differ within the group: some “stay clear and leave it to other parts of the group” (TTT-SG), while the two co-chairs excel. Professional networks have helped: “I can phone [the council] up and because I've known them from a business perspective, even if they think it's

¹¹ *Ibid.*

namby-pamby, they take you seriously”; the co-chair’s background in arts provided contacts and resources but also knowledge in creating and imagining the Carnival.

LEARNING

TTT’s larger celebratory events provide social and experiential learning while others emphasise education.

EDUCATION

The emphasis on peak oil – through the website, public talks, films and carnival workshops – is seen by many in TTT as a key learning tool. They try to add to people’s awareness “a few small blocks at a time”, believing that behaviour change comes from awareness. They recognise the need for action, “to turn conversations into reality”.

PRACTICES

Experiential learning is through participation in events. However, while meanings and practices were challenged, alternative skills and stuff were not provided to move proto-practices into reality. The celebratory nature of events is itself a challenge to the ‘doom and gloom’ surrounding environmental problems, positing an alternative vision in keeping with the Transition Movement ethos. “We celebrated something at a time when actually it’s quite hard to make a celebration out of peak oil and climate change.” The physical manifestation lets participants and spectators see that such practices belong in Tooting and *should* be normalised; celebration is the vehicle for transition. The Carnival brought Tooting’s diverse demographics into one event, showing new possibilities and challenging the stereo-type of white middle-class environmentalists.¹²

¹² Recounted by Simone Jaeger at the Tooting Trachcatchers’ Symposium

The Foodival similarly challenged notions of possibility: of self-sufficiency (while playing on food miles), and how food could be used, “people went ‘god, this food was made out of my aubergine by [local restaurant] Spice Village!”

Leadership from professional artists has been instrumental in bringing ideas to life, but also sowing seeds of imagination and *how* the carnival could look: the transformation from “rubbish into beauty” (ITV, 2010) using half-a-million crisp packets, making sustainability creative. These physical manifestations challenged existing images and integrated them: pre-Carnival myth and story-telling workshops collected stories from the community and brought them to life through carnival characters like the Lady of Tooting alongside newly created sustainable fables.

Events concentrated on fun: “Most of the people who came to a workshop and made something had immense enjoyment, ‘God this is insane, what am I doing - making a bit of bunting?! crikey!” TTT’s desire is to “build a vision of low-energy Tooting and have fun in the process”; emphasised in the Transition Handbook (Hopkins, 2008).

Workshops preceding events – in bunting-making, planting and costume-making – transferred skills and tied them to the wider meanings of the event. Artist involvement in workshops showed people they *had* the skills while giving them the creative confidence to use them. However, as TTT has few practical projects, it is premature to speak of skill provision. Yet one skill mentioned as important – by members and non-members alike – is how to collectively maximise the impact of films and talks: sharing the experience and emotions allowed a healthier reaction.

Stuff for activities is provided through member donations (seed swaps, bring and takes), donations from businesses and social enterprises (gardening tools, catering, space, trash), grants, and recently commercial endorsement, like Able & Cole and Fairtrade at this year’s Foodival. Member generosity has been instrumental.

Events specifically challenged existing uses and interpretations of space. The Carnival closing Upper Tooting Road showed it was for people as well as cars, something most thought impossible: “You would have been laughed out of town – ‘you can't close the highroad’”. The Foodival challenged the highstreet’s use, becoming the location for communal practices, while showcasing local restaurants and the richness of local amenities. The Earth Talk Walk explored buildings forming a connection to the local area. TTT hope the upcoming film season in curious locations will have a similar effect, appealing to the sense of loss – as the buildings are no longer cinemas – and of regeneration. Mapping the local area with the Wellbeing team from NEF has helped re-imagine space and its uses.

TTT does not spread practices, but through celebratory events and awareness raising tried to catalyse learning, aiding the imagining of a positive future and providing the intellectual justification.

DISCUSSION

Despite their geographic similarity, Finsbury Park and Tooting approached Transition in entirely different ways. This reflected the character of the individuals involved, especially the leaders. Structurally, Tooting remained a core group until its Unleashing, while Finsbury Park created working groups from members' interests.

Using the theoretical framework of strategic niche management, combined with SMT and SPT, it is possible to gauge progress and draw lessons both for inner-London Transition Towns.

MANAGING EXPECTATIONS

According to Kemp et al (1998), managing expectations relies on image presented to the public and perceptions of viability. This can be synthesised with Social Movement Theories of framing (Benford and Snow, 2000) and Resource Mobilisation (Edwards and McCarthy, 2004), both influencing image viability and therefore willingness to participate.

FRAMING

Both TIs successfully frame their movement aims as community improvement. However, while the message changes depending on audience, TFP is less inclined to include diagnostic framing around peak oil and climate change. In contrast, TTT has tried to include it where possible, while not overloading: "sometimes you just have to trust that the message is there" (TTT-SG). The salience of the community improvement frame plays on people's desires. Successfully invigorating existing values and beliefs – as well as mobilising consensus (Klandermans, 1984) – is particularly important for counter-culture movements like Transition (Berbrier, 1998)

Both TIs present themselves through events: TFP focussed on many small gatherings – mainly growing – TTT put on larger spectacles interacting with the public.

With diverse populations, both groups attempted to create an identity that appeals to all, but neither core membership moved beyond the usual suspects. Both engage with the wider community through practical projects, particularly community hubs like schools and faith centres.

As many members are parents, TFP made events child-friendly, bringing in other parents. TTT worked with local schools for the carnival and the growing involvement of parents has given activities a greater family-focus. Both have a clear environmental identity. TTT caters for it intellectually, staging talks and screenings. FPT fails to address the environmental audience, risking missing potential mobilising structures (individuals with resources or networks) and pigeon-holing themselves as a growing and knitting group.

The frequency of events in Finsbury Park appealed to those wanting action, while in Tooting, “some meetings are so dull and dry and boring, I’m not surprised people run a mile.” (TTT-SG) However, Tooting’s recent launch should mean more activity-focused projects. Changing the meeting format may also make them more accessible.

Making events desirable as well as identifiable is a key aim of both groups and a clear motivation for participation. TFP appealed to existing enthusiasm for growing and parents’ need to find activities that are fun and safe. This focus on action succeeded within groups that have enthusiasts, but that approach may demand too much commitment too early. The transport group’s idea of homework after the first meeting saw few people return. An emphasis on collective cohesion and bringing people in slowly may serve the group better. Both groups need to ensure activities are enjoyable rather than onerous, and further commitment might grow. Creating interest and personal bonds will be key to converting initial enjoyment into commitment

TTT have celebration at the heart of their events, so regardless of underlying green messages or particular interests, enjoyment – or often curiosity – get people involved.

Both groups aim to create a shared common identity based on locality. The contrasting nature of events has led to different outcomes. Through the use of multiple ‘carriers of meaning’ (Jasper, 2010), TTT intentionally creates shared bonds between those involved: the meaning-laden rituals of public celebration perpetuates an emotional energy among participants that empowers and propels them (Collins, 2004). According to Jasper (2010:74), coordinated action is “deeply [emotionally] satisfying”. For those participating – in any form – the sense of purpose from the conferring of a role furthers a collective sense of belonging.

Finding ways for people to contribute – however small - can forge a bond that may lead to greater commitment. The creation of narratives to bond is employed through the TTT blog – asking in photos of vegetables for the Foodival – fosters anticipation and collective endeavour, while creating a sense of community without the need for meetings.

VIABILITY

The contrasting approaches of TTT and TFP have led to different outcomes. While summary conclusions can be made, both are relatively young and still learning through trial and error

The heavy emphasis on projects in TFP gave those involved in successful groups a sense of empowerment, belonging and collective endeavour which motivated further involvement. However, those involved in transport, B&E and to some degree skilling, are less motivated.

The focus on action engaged new audiences, but the lack of success in some areas may have damaged wider perceptions of viability regarding overall capacity as a Transition Initiative.

Successful projects come from good organisation and the involvement of key stakeholders. The time, resources and energy needed from members means only projects embraced by members have gone ahead.

In Tooting, the successful carnival lifted perceptions of viability which resulted in increased interest in the Foodival and brought more people to meetings. However, it was only possible with the TippingPoint commission, getting participatory artists to work with school and 30 years of carnival experience from a co-chair. That experience in arts event management provided the contacts and networks to make it possible and the experience to provide vision and expertise in organising it.

TFP have moved towards larger events to compliment hands-on activities. Although more taxing to organise, they can have a far greater effect on perceptions of size, awareness and credibility, as well as enforce the group's image and collective identity through shared experiences.

Both groups made their events free and provided refreshments, but TFP also translated materials. Tooting is an area, in which language has hindered uptake of children's services (WCEN, 2007), and addressing this need may grow the movement. TFP's focus on public growing has also meant greater inclusion for people without gardens.

Both groups have done so to an extent, but resources limitations can lead to the easy option rather than meeting community needs.

Overcoming resource deficiencies is best tackled through partnerships, reducing the burden and capitalising on external mobilising structures. However, some partnerships may distort the group's desired image.

While TTT is driven by a core of three individuals, most activities in the group are collective, TFP's division into tracks weakened bonds across the group. While a monthly social is intended to bridge the gaps, the division of energies isolated certain members and prevented synergy emerging between the groups.

Centralisation of TTT strengthened bonds between the group, but made it less welcoming. The shift towards working groups should facilitate greater inclusion.

TTT took a systematic approach to awareness raising, liaising with local media and ensuring events were well publicised, TFP has done little. The problem was identified, giving birth to the communications group, but a lack of commitment halted activities. The difference is structural: responsibilities in TTT were shared primarily between the three core members, who had media contacts; TFP had no contacts and the creation of the communications group meant others took no responsibility. The prioritisation of hands-on activities meant events were rarely publicised or followed up. A reconfiguration of resources – or finding someone to take it on – may solve this.

Involvement of local figures of authority and partnerships with respected organisations gave TTT credibility., This is less the case with TFP. For both TIs, most new members come through personal contacts, and those who regularly attend do so because relationships have been established. Both have large mailing lists, but it is the personal contact that makes the difference.

Given their infancy, it is hard to evaluate the long-term effect of wider awareness raising. In both cases, gaining a reputation as a group that can deliver is the most important factor in viability, and will lead to greater uptake. Maintaining a frame that people can relate to, while ensuring activities are fun, family-oriented and well organised, ensures expectations are realistic while outcomes are achievable.

NETWORKING

Networking in both groups has relied on existing networks to provide opportunity structures, as well as an individual's willingness to look further into the community.

Both have good links with numerous community organisations, providing useful partnerships and access to new networks and resources. Finding common interests can conserve energy and resources – as well as reduce the risk of duplication: growing and knitting groups already existed within Finsbury Park, so working together while retaining identity may increase the group's reach.

Both localities have mainly independent businesses, making networking more difficult. Despite TTT's links with the Chair of the Tooting Business Partnership, most success has come through the Foodival's engagement with local restaurants.

TFP have begun engaging the business community; the slow success of Tooting shows small easy steps that provide clear incentives for businesses can be built up through growing personal relationships.

When Transition Town Brixton set up their local currency, they found it time consuming with little guarantee of wide-spread buy-in¹³. While some businesses are environmentally-minded, most are "struggling to make a living" (TTT-SG). However, establishing key stakeholders and potential forums, such as the Finsbury Park Business Forum, reduces transaction costs and offers new networks.

Businesses are a good opportunity to translate into the mainstream through increasing acceptance (Seyfang and Haxeltine, 2010), but conflicts of principles can compromise the group's framing. TFP's approach to Tesco – a

¹³ Personal conversation with Susannah Steed, Steering Committee of the Brixton Pound, 10.04.2010

local service provider – undermined the notion of supporting the local economy, given the low community return on money spent at supermarkets (Simms, 2007). Links with Arsenal Football Club – who already do community work across Islington – could bring resources, but also allow a mainstream actor to adopt transition practices.

Both groups face challenges networking with local authorities: Tooting have a cost-cutting Conservative council while Finsbury Park cuts across three boroughs. Wandsworth Council is hesitant, but persistence has increased contact and council's awareness, reducing the transaction costs of future projects. TTT's links with the Wandsworth Environmental Forum amplifies their voice when addressing the council. TFP have been in contact with all three boroughs for different projects, but N4-wide campaigns that rely on council resources are difficult to conduct. Attempting to find synergies between council policies may help identify projects that could do so.

With the Big Society¹⁴ and slashed council budgets, community groups may have a chance to redefine their role: Lambeth Council Leader, Steve Reed, recently declared Wandsworth's neighbour a 'co-operative council', involving community in service delivery. The effect on councils and community groups is uncertain (Cobb (2010) dismissed it as 'empty rhetoric'), but good council relations and a reputation for delivering could facilitate mainstreaming. The strength of the group's collective identity may also prevent co-option (Seyfang et al. 2010).

In both groups, networking is left to individuals, their contacts and their willingness (time permitting). The Carnival was an impressive gathering of organisations, but all 15 schools were delivered through one well-connected contact and many other local organisations did not participate. TFP has not networked extensively: the upcoming Festival has not tried to engage local businesses due to stretched resources. However, strategic project-management can ensure it is prioritised, identifying key stakeholders and other mobilising structures.

¹⁴ The government's drive to increase civic volunteering

LEARNING

Both groups, but particularly TFP, have adopted experiential and social learning strategies. However, there is a distinction between low-carbon learning and community learning. In both TIs, the framing of activities as community improvement has meant practices may be low-carbon but accompanied by community images, seen as the first step: “community and environmental agenda as very closely linked, but you need to have the first – community – in order to influence and educate people around the second” (TFP-SG). Fostering a place-specific identity has been the first step for both groups.

TTT's emphasis on peak oil (more than climate change) rests on its impact with the core members, but some non-group members have been put off. TFP has been less inclined towards education, but the upcoming Festival will have stalls. Information should be accessible but supplementary too attract a wider audience.

PRACTICES

TTT's experiential learning focused on imaginatively challenging images; however they present a future rather than present. TFP focus on the present, providing symbols through new practices: planting and harvesting fruit trees relay self-sufficiency, seasonality and sharing of limited resources.

TTT's emphasis on public celebration redefined practices, but not equipped its members with the skills and stuff to carry them out – although this year's Foodival included a planting workshop. TFP's emphasis on practice has meant skills and stuff are provided, but only in the public realm – domestic practices have not been addressed. TTT only focused on practices in private realm, despite the public nature of their events. To successfully address the

private realm, partnerships for skills and stuff will be needed to ensure access for low-income members.

TFP's borrowing of extant cultural meanings (growing, thrift, recycling) leaves the different task of super-imposing transition images, which if done with mainstream actors such as Arsenal Football club could benefit credibility, frame salience and ultimately scaling-up and translation away from a niche. As Shove (2004) notes, the message transmitter is as important as the framing.

An emphasis on practice with extant meanings – or due to group affinity/collective identity – can grow the group while carefully offering alternative transition meanings. Ensuring the information is available can help foster greater learning once practices are underway. Films and speakers can provide this, but a positive outcome must be ensured, either by carefully selecting films, or framing the following discussion towards practical local solutions.

Social marketing sees behaviour change as the first step towards value-changes, rather than vice versa, and they need to frame images at certain values (Rose, 2009). McKenzie-Mohr (2000) sees identifying and removing psychological and material barriers as the way to change behaviour.

SPACE

Both groups challenge preconceptions about the use of public space. As arenas in which practices occur, they can lock-in some while suppressing others – not just systems and infrastructure, but what we think of as possible: a carnival down a busy highstreet; a train station growing food. Such symbolic re-interpretation strengthens the movement's identity (Jasper, 2010). Spaces can be part of narratives and reinforce frames (Jasper, 2010), cementing a sense of place and continuing the transition journey. Tooting's cinema season

enforces the sense of loss from the absence of an actual cinema, as well as providing a motivational frame for the future.

In Finsbury Park, the opening of a community theatre in 2012 and TFP's involvement with regeneration developers will contribute, as will TTT's goal of a cultural centre. The redefinition of public space will depend on how effectively resources are mobilised, as well as the existing political opportunity structures. Success will also depend on the users of the space and their own buy-in to the project – as TTT found out to their detriment. If the use of space can be described as a practice in its own right, therefore alongside the images (of what it is used for), skills (of the new ways of using it) and stuff (the space itself), it will be necessary to identify barriers and how they can be overcome to allow new practices to take place.

SLOW PROCESS

Both groups have accepted the process of transition is not immediate (Hopkins (2008) sees it as 15-20 years) and therefore small steps – forwards and backwards – are normal. Failure is as important as success through learning from mistakes, but while different the groups can also learn from each other. As TTT embarks on a new phase and TFP hosts its first festival, they are beginning to cross paths from different beginnings.

CONCLUSION

Both groups have approached transition differently: Tooting centrally, focusing on the bigger picture and bigger events, Finsbury Park through decentralised working groups, focusing on hands-on activities and immediate impacts. Both managed expectations, yet inevitably disappointed those looking for a different approach. Networking leads to greater mainstreaming, but is dictated by projects and individuals. Second-order learning is most effective when experiential, but motivation is more effective when reinforced by collective identity. Both groups followed recommendations by Seyfang and Haxeltine (2010) – network more broadly; manage expectations more realistically via tangible opportunities; embrace community-based, action-oriented model of social learning – but group dynamics both enable and constrain. Each group needs to know its own strengths and weaknesses to understand the optimal approach to expanding and mainstreaming, while balancing group needs against those of individual members.

It is too early to pass judgement on either the Transition Movement or the individual TIs, but the next year is vital for both: TTT launches working groups, TFP moves to bigger events. If they retain their key skills while learning in new areas, the slow organic process that is Transition should continue.

However, as NSM and RM theories show, both the ‘why’ and ‘how’ are important in attracting new people and expanding influence, and each group will be different.

Much depends on external factors: as climate change and peak oil become more mainstream, framing will grow in salience. The challenge is ensuring the Transition Movement remains the suitable answer, which means defining what the group wants to be and how it intends to achieve that. Will it be a service provider, or is that the role of the local authorities? How will cuts to councils affect existing services and will the TIs be in a position to take

advantage? Growing and mainstreaming while remaining aware of the community's needs can provide legitimacy.

Greater research is needed into the individual stages of niche management when combined with social movement and social practice theories, to give a fuller understanding. Another area of research that would compliment the overall framework – touched on in this paper – is the use of space: it both complements social movement literature by providing symbols, meanings and narratives and challenges current understandings and bundles of practices, while enabling others. Given the importance of place-specific identities to TIs, appropriation of space provides a key mechanism in creating this.

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London Transition

www.london-transition.org.uk

Transition Finsbury Park

<http://transitionfinsburypark.org.uk>

Transition Town Tooting's Trashcatcher's Carnival

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Transition Network

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Transition Town Tooting

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Transition Town Tooting's Foodival

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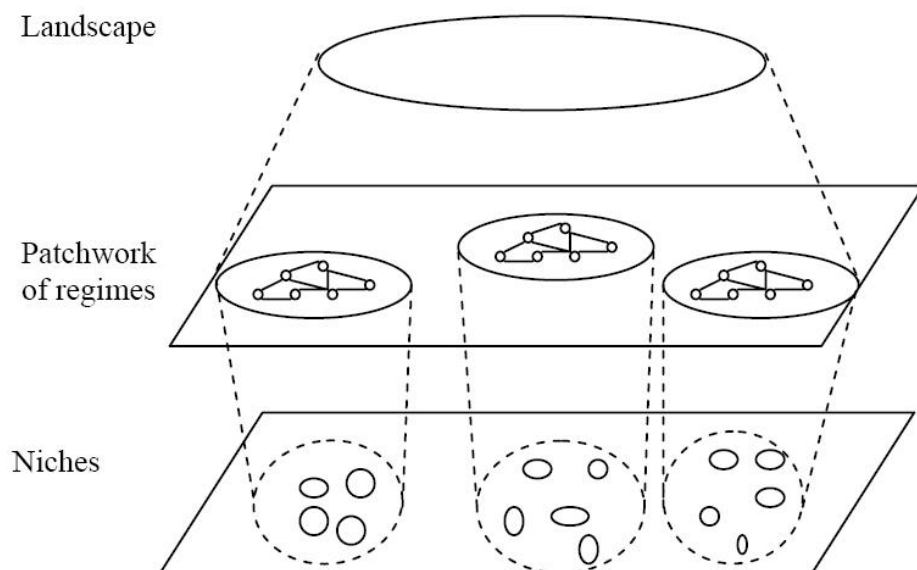
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Appendices:

APPENDIX I

Multi-level perspective on socio-technical changes (Geels, 2002)

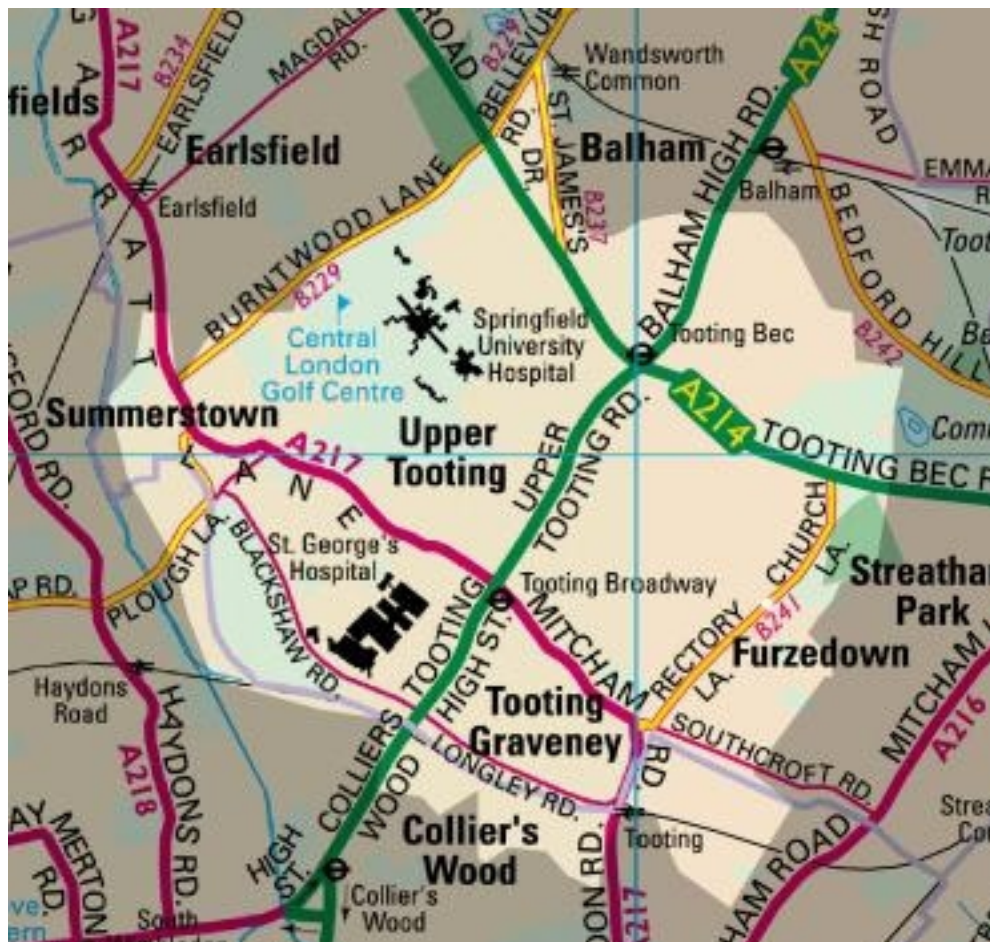


Appendix II – Maps of Transition Initiatives

Geographical boundaries of Transition Finsbury Park (N4)
(<http://www.transitionfinsburypark.org.uk>)

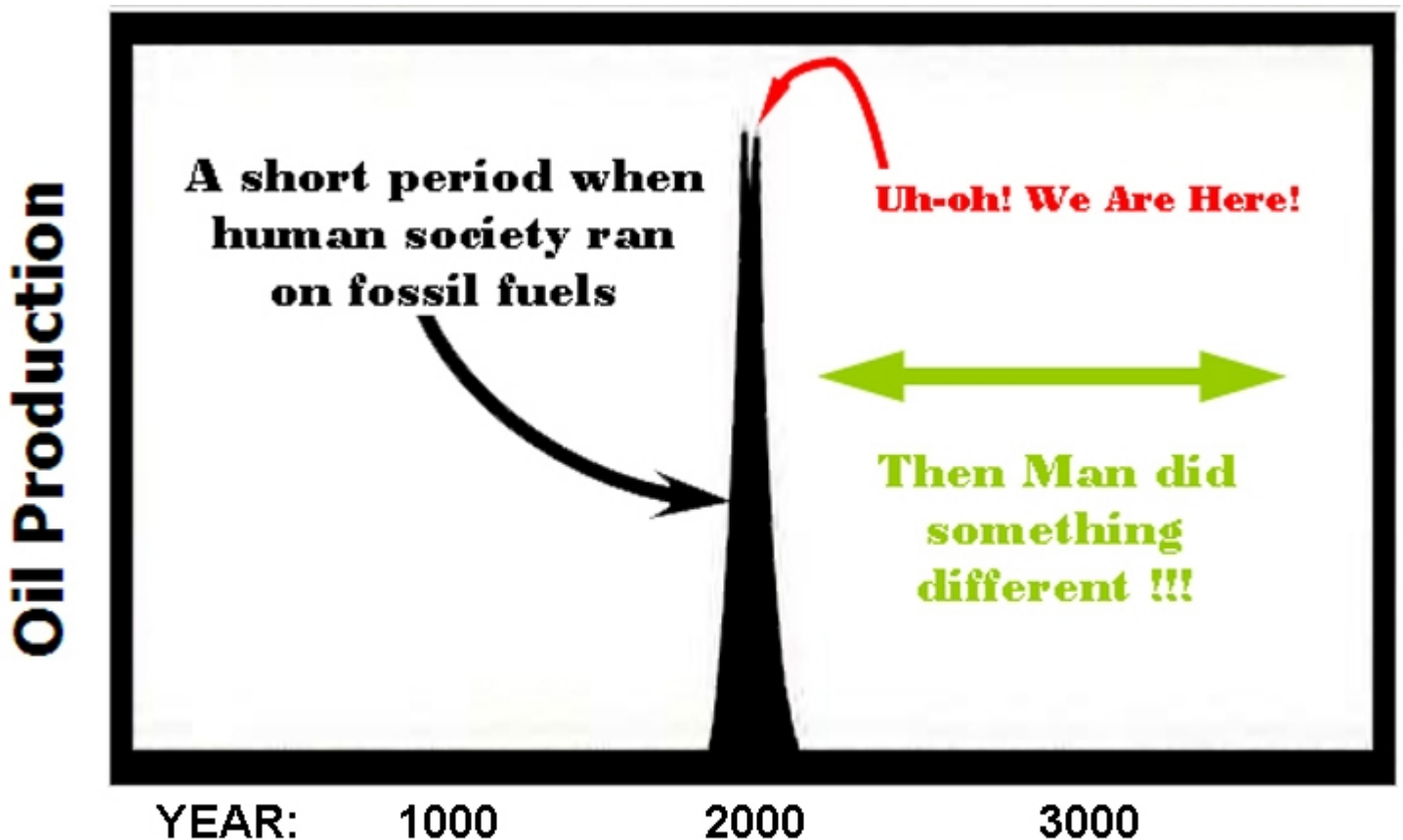


Geographical boundary of Transition Town Tooting (SW17)
(<http://transitiontowntooting.blogspot.com/>)



Appendix III – Images

The Petroleum Interval (as seen on the Transition Town Tooting Home Page, <http://transitiontowntooting.blogspot.com/>)



"The Petroleum Interval"

**Tooting
Trashcatchers'
Carnival, 2pm
4 July 2010**



Imagine...

a summer's day. Quiet descends on Tooting's busy High Street. In the distance the beat of a drum. On the waves of the breeze, the Sankofa* Bird floats down from the sky. The plumed creature looks forwards and backwards in a single glance, and is searching for a haven to hatch the egg beneath its wing. Today it sees something that's got its eyebrows raised... something never seen before...



Sankofa's gaze falls upon a carnival parade, hundreds strong, of

women and children and men – stories of the living earth, water that sings and rubbish that shines like new. There's music, a quick step and hops from the brave. Seagulls that perch on the heads of a few, a grand Lady of Tooting and a caterpillar ready for butterfly flight. Seeing these things, Sankofa descends to look for a roost and join the parade... and YOU can come too! Follow, come along and see the hatching

of a lifetime. The Trashcatchers' Carnival has come to town.

“At Fish Ponds I will find my flock and fly in formation and nest on our Rock.”

*The Sankofa is a mythic bird that flies forward while looking backward with an egg – symbolizing the future – in its mouth. Sankofa is derived from King Adinkera of the Akan people of West Africa, and expressed in the Akan language as “se wo were fi na wosan kofa a yenki” or “it is not taboo to go back and fetch what you forgot”. “Sankofa” teaches us that we must go back to our roots in order to move forward. That is, we should reach back and gather the best of what our past has to teach us, so that we can achieve our full potential as we move forward. Whatever we have lost, forgotten, forgone or been stripped of, can be reclaimed, revived, preserved and perpetuated. The Sankofa bird embodies change and transformation, viewing past and future in the same instant, as we do in the Carnival.

Image: Jennifer Lewis, EEA for Balshakhi Mela, Tower Hamlets

APPENDIX IV – EXAMPLE QUESTIONNAIRES AND TRANSCRIPTS

IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE

Name:

Age:

Gender

Ethnicity:

Religious Denomination:

Who did you vote for in the last local/EU/General Election?

Profession:

Full-time?

How long have you lived in the local area?

How long have you been a TT member?

Which working groups are you part of?

How many people are there in those working groups?

What's your role within the TT?

How much time do you spend on TT per month?

Managing Expectations:

Framing

- Why did you want to become involved in TT?
 - community? CC? other?

- How did you get involved in TT?
 - Know people before hand?

- When trying to get people involved in TTT, what core message(s) do you try and get across?
 - Environmental? Community – a shared identity? Celebration?
 - How do you get the arguments to resonate with people's loves in Tooting? How make them relevant to people?
 - How responsive are people to 'green' arguments? Peak oil, CC?
 - How does the message change depending on the audience? (young people, faith groups, parents etc.)

- What is the outward image that TTT presents to Tooting? What would you like to be seen as?
 - How was it decided upon? (vision of leadership?)
 - How well known do you feel you are in the local area?

Practical

- What activities have been most successful (in attracting people and getting buy-in) and why do you think that is?
 - What benefits do you think people derive from taking part?
 - Why were these particular activities decided upon? (leadership)

- What skills and resources have been used to get them going? (RM)
 - What previous experiences have helped you in making these events happen? (RM)

- What do you think might stop people getting involved?
 - Particular reasons or factors?
 - Different parts of the community?

Learning

- What do you feel has been most effective at raising awareness about the need for transition and becoming involved?
 - Films, talks etc? (cognitive)
 - Activities, celebrations? (emotional level – experiential learning)
 - Media coverage, newsletter, blog, flyers, posters? (resources)

- How do you challenge current understandings? (e.g. carbon-intensive practices?)
 - What behaviours have been targeted
 - Where has there been resistance and why?
 - How have external events shaped your approach? (e.g. recession)

- How have you found getting people (who may not be environmentally minded) to return?
 - How build on initial contact?

Networking

- How would you describe your local area? (communities)
 - What is at its heart?

- How have you gone about networking in your local area for TT?
 - Businesses? Local Authorities? Schools? Community Groups? Social enterprises? Faith? Youth?
 - Has it been a coordinated effort? How kept track?

- How has your own experience before/outside TT helped in networking?
 - Experience of working in/with community
 - Green?
 - Own networks? Professional AND Social?

- Where have you been most successful networking and why?
 - Which partnerships?
 - Contact with community leaders – those with large networks?

- Where have you been less successful?
 - Which parts of the community have you found it harder to convey your message? (businesses, LA, youth, faith groups, BME)

- What do you think could improve your TT's ability to reach a non-green audience?

IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE

Name:

Lucy Neal

Age:

53

Gender

Female

Ethnicity:

White British

Religious Denomination:

N/A

Who did you vote for in the last local/EU/General Election?

Labour – but for Sadiq Khan – TTT = overtly apolitical – will work with anyone; first time in my life I realised my voting intention had to remain a personal thing

Profession:

Freelance arts practitioner

Full-time?

When is it work and when is it not? – Self-employed

How long have you lived in the local area?

24 years

How long have you been a TT member?

2 ½ years

Which working groups would you LIKE to be part of?

Arts, local economy, energy, learning, health – all of them

How many people are there in those working groups?

N/A

What's your role within the TT?

Co-chair

How much time do you spend on TT per month?

50-60 hours

Managing Expectations:

Framing

*Why did you want to become involved in TT?
community? CC? other?*

Looking for a meaningful response I could make as an individual to the overwhelming challenges that had to be faced

Transition was the first movement that had a coherent way in which one could respond

How did you get involved in TT?

Know people before hand?

Knew there was an initiative in Brixton – in September 2007, I heard there was an initiative, but it was very meaningful at the time because it wasn't what I was actively looking for at that time

November 2007 I was at Schumacher College and went to Totnes and heard Rob Hopkins speak and Transition Totnes

Thought there must be something nearby – went to Brixton and a couple of their meetings and started to talk about it

I had a really seminal moment – if I was looking for Transition Tooting I couldn't find it, I thought it would be quite easy to find if you asked around, and I realised that there probably wasn't one and I had to do something about it... There was a key moment when I had to cross a line and become an initiator of something rather than a joiner of something

Quite a scary moment, as I didn't really know what it was, didn't understand it that well, but I was acting more on instinct and impulse. I didn't experience it as an interest in Transition Town Tooting, it was more an instinctive sense of how does this start – it starts with saying 'oh god, how do we do this?' At first people met at my house and that was the beginning

When trying to get people involved in TTT, what core message(s) do you try and get across?

Environmental? Community – a shared identity? Celebration?

How do you get the arguments to resonate with people's loves in Tooting?

How make them relevant to people?

How responsive are people to 'green' arguments? Peak oil, CC?

How does the message change depending on the audience? (young people, faith groups, parents etc.)

Don't really think about core messages – I tell people what we're interested in doing. Both what we're doing but that you also always referring to the wider network so that... I say to people, if this is interesting for you, there's a lot in your own time, you can look at the transition network, you can look at Rob's blog, gain your own sense of what this can be about.

It's only meaningful for people if it's meaningful for them, at a personal level – there's a lot of learning they can do in their own time as I did myself. It's more about building a relationship to that person – saying is this interesting to you, do you think about these things, finding out about where somebody's coming from themselves and they might have got a bee in their bonnet about something

Usually they've been thinking about something for a while themselves, and then I tell my own story, this is how it's changed, how I see things, how I find being positive, it feels very creative

I talk a lot about my own children, how everything in Transition is about having a daily practice from which my own children can learn or take something from so they're not just looking at a future thinking 'oh fuck, what's that about', so they're thinking 'well hold on, there's something happening here'. Talk about my own family and my own views and things

Building community feature quite heavily?

I tend to say to people now that Transition is another word for community engagement, which is what I believe

The word transition can confuse people – the whole idea that there's some kinky movement – people can get quite wary of there being a 'movement' that you have to join. Discerning people can be quite reluctant to feel that they're joining in with something and can get quite suspicious

If you say it's another word for community engagement, it's a more on the ground reality, that doesn't have weird words around it

How responsive to green arguments? Peak Oil and CC

Depends so much on individuals

Find it easier if you have a really practical project to hand – rather than talking in theory – 'what do you think of peak oil', it's far easier to be practical and say 'if we do this foodival, can you think of a way your shop or restaurant could provide something, if we provided you with vegetables could you make a dish' You're asking for practical engagement – obviously within a context, which is dealing with the bigger stuff. But I think the bigger stuff is so big for people, in their day to day lives, it's not an easily engaging conversation – which is where the magic of Transition comes in, as it's another word for community engagement, another word for it is spaces making, so that these very tough and difficult things can be looked at but collectively

I think the reluctance of people to engage with it is kind of understandable – I find myself more and more sympathetic to people who don't want to talk about it – we're all on personal journeys, all doing lots of learning...

You can rant and rave that 'oh god, no one wants to talk about this stuff', but actually I feel quite sorry for people – it is rather big a broad and a tall order – I understand why people don't want to be bashing on about it all the time

Talking as community first = much easier for people to then approach the ideas – fun first

Or do you just pointing to the hinterland of the wealth of information that there is there – those of us who are very keen, have read the transition handbook, go through the blog – I find Rob's blog very good to refer to a lot – particularly if there's something happening recently and I can't quite put my own knowledge together around it...

Last summer Ed Miliband's Low Carbon UK Report – what's the analysis? Rob's was spot on... Great that you've done this, but you don't even mention peak oil... That is a fantastic digest of a very wise person's views on the matter. I'm always referring to that as a resource to people – if they're interested in learning more – some are and some aren't. You don't need to know the ins and outs of the science to be completely behind an initiative which is building bridges between us, we're getting to know each other better, we're just humbly step-by-step, day-by-day, how do we celebrate Tooting, what an extraordinary and amazing place it is, how can we strengthen those ties between us. There are a million and one ways we can do that, but you change the conversation if you join it... Would you like to join it. That's pretty much the message

Everyone has the same approach, message?

No idea – we don't have an office, we don't work together – I think that there's a very good word – Liquid – there's a liquid quality to how the thing hangs together – there's a shared goal but even at an individual level people with name and define that goal slightly differently we know that we're part of a wider movement, so that also helps us have our focus – shaped by that wider movement – we're not doing it alone, we're not doing it in isolation

But there are different weights and balances for everybody – for somebody they just think food's the absolute singular important thing, everything can be built around food

but everyday you do it more, there's a contradictory tension – you have to go fast it's an emergency, but everyday you go forward you realise how long it's going to take – it's going to take 100 times longer than you originally thought, you've got to then step backwards a bit, go slow enough so everybody can see where they can take part. It's a complex process, you're dealing with a lot of uncertainty, and nobody's paid – so everyone's a volunteer, everyone's got full-time jobs, everyone's got families, everybody's got normal day-to-day pressures of everyday life, so you're making it up from little bits of patchworks of time

It's co-created, so is it appropriate for any one person to say 'this is the message, this is the branding, this is what we have to say'... We've got a logo, we had really good fun one summer – we had a number of different workshops drawing what the logo could be – we had a designer taking them away, it went backwards and forwards for about three months. I'm really proud of the logo because when I look at it I know we didn't commission the logo – it came out of a process... there was a broad ownership of it, and in leadership terms that broad ownership is the most important thing to be sustainable

How well known do you feel you are in the local area?

Indrijit Patel – Chair of the Community and Partnership Board – head of the Tooting Business Network, knows a lot of the local businesses, particularly on the parade of the shops... Got up and said ‘After the carnival all the local businesses have recalibrated your movement upwards’. That was very inspiring.

The carnival was a visible manifestation. It was so obviously in the community’s interest that there just be an event that was fun and everybody could join in

Because those shops operate on a traffic corridor, and their business is very severely disrupted by that road, the road does not serve their businesses – it erodes their businesses... They all knew how difficult it had been to close the road... You got respect – you got the road closed...

People like Indrijit – who thinks deeply about these things – about the environment, the future, the local economy and the health of the business community as much as the local residents community, he thinks about health, he’s a local pharmacist, I think it’s taken him 2 years – he doesn’t come to meetings but is very active on our behalf promoting transition town tooting – he’s very willing and ready to play a significant part in what we do next. It’s taken him 2 years to witness the practice and how you put the principles

It’s about resilience but it’s also about imagining the future and having that vision, so I don’t know – in the business community, there are some people who just kind of get it, some of the restaurants get it now because they’re being approached for the third time around for the foodival, it’s a superhuman thing that everyone’s trying to do together and everyone has to be kind of joyful in the minor miracles

I challenge myself everyday to not be overwhelmed by the task – it’s a crazy task! But you have to work towards it without any certainty or comfort or assurance that anything’s going to work at all

How managed to be so inclusive in the way go about things?

It’s about how you treat people – how you talk to them, the nature of the conversations you have. Ask people have they thought about something and is it interesting. Maybe they’ve been too busy to think about it. You have to have practical ways people can get engaged. People are very, very busy Iqbal who came to some early meetings – and on one occasion I had to go to his shop and I just clocked the reality of his life: he works in a pound shop, it’s open 7 days a week, from 7 till 7, he’s got a small child, he runs the Young Boys activities at the local Sunni Muslim association, and I just thought ‘my god, here I am on my bike tooting around Tooting, trying to get lots of people for the next meeting’ and I had to take in the reality of Iqbal’s life – he’s lucky if he gets home at 10 o’clock and has a cup of tea! But in his own way he made the Sunni Muslim Association available to us when we did the Earth Talk, his mother’s cooked lots

The challenge is to work out how can people come to this on their own way and not overlooking the help that people are prepared to give and want to give but starting from where they are. The carnival was fantastic at that – it released extraordinary generosity in people – Jasmine's gave us the tables, the Hindu Temple gave us rice for thousands for the Fish Ponds Feast. People were incredibly generous because they wanted to take part in it. Trying to find all those windows of opportunity of how people can connect up and get engaged and help

It doesn't necessarily mean they're going to run the energy group or something like that. So it's about trying to value how everything can be appreciated and what it all adds up to in total

Making that work intergenerationally, interculturally – it's about vigilance... you have to be vigilant, vigilant, vigilant... Asking yourselves the whole time 'have we asked so and so to get involved, how are we going to do that'

Practical

What activities have been most successful (in attracting people and getting buy-in) and why do you think that is?

People like making things – anything that gets people coming along with their hands... physically creating things

The food thing – people like sharing food, people like giving!
The Earth Talk was quite popular, but again it was practical, knowing what we were going to do, food given along the way – it lasted about 6 hours in the end... but we had a good gang – we had about 60, 70 people who followed it... They weren't having to get on board a concept, they were just walking from place to place with their feet – they were welcomed...

Somebody said at the end of the day it felt like they had been on a retreat all day – which actually, given that we were on the high road, and that it was busy and noisy and the traffic – I thought that's AMAZING! We managed to make that space feel like a retreat because there was a discourse on care of the earth from different faith perspectives, but also a secular perspective included.

There's always a kind of mystery around knowing that we've got 500 people on our database, and you get 7 people showing up to something

I think people are busy, and their lives are very, very demanding, and they go at a certain speed, and if you haven't jumped into this with your whole body and your whole life... It's a mystery how you involve more people – I think you just try and you just keep going

The carnival – we thought we would have 400 people physically being in the procession, and we had nearly a thousand... and thousands more just watching. By standing on the pavement looking at the carnival didn't make them a fully paid up member of Transition Town Tooting, we're not kidding

ourselves that – but it might have set something of a thought going, so that when we come round the next time to say ‘look, we’re planning on doing this’ and you can refer back to the carnival, you’re seeding and growing all these possibilities in people’s minds... Literally it’s possibilities

What benefits do you think people derive from taking part?

They start a new conversation with other people

Get a chance to air their anxieties or fears – or at least feel they’re not alone
We’ve been so busy with the carnival that we haven’t done many films - we did more films last year and the year before, but I think we need to go back to doing those kind of films, because when you watch something like Food Inc. in a shared context, I have found it helpful to confront these difficult things, but with other people

Works on a number of different levels – these are big difficult subjects and you need to make the shared social space to look at them and transform the negativity into a positive vision and a shared way of looking at things – i’ve gained that benefit myself

When I went to see the power of community at Brixton – there was a conversation before hand, a conversation afterwards... I found it helpful, I could go home, I could talk to Alice, she was off to Cuba, she ended up writing her dissertation on peak oil and urban food growing in Cuba – so these things have over a longer period of time...

I can only talk about myself, I have no idea what other people felt who watched that

It’s an iterative process, of learning, educating yourself, and where that learning starts to translate into changes you make yourself and the kinds of change conversation you have with... Our family went to see the age of stupid the summer before last, and we were planning to fly to Greece, go overland to Greece and fly back, and we came back from that film – we’d taken Xyanthie and Madeleine... we sat down at the table and Xyanthie said ‘that’s it, why would we fly on holiday, we don’t need to do that’, and we had to seriously come to terms with the fact that it was a child who was questioning Simon and I... So it was a very difficult and painful process to go through with the friends we were travelling with to say ‘look, we’re really taking stock of all this’ – they hadn’t be to see the Age of Stupid, they hadn’t been to see the Power of Community, they hadn’t read Rob Hopkins on flying not having any place in a low carbon future and all of that kind of stuff... but we had to talk them through and say to them – and this is really difficult personal terrain that we have to exist on... we had to say to them ‘this is just a way that we’re responding – we have to have some integrity with this child’. We took her to see the Age of Stupid! We initiated that journey that she’s now on and in fact we went through a very complicated process and ended up with the same family going by bus and train and boat and everything, with them, but we went to France and Spain and we had a big adventure, but it was part of a learning journey

for all of us for how we were going to make those changes happen. We're doing the same this summer, with the same friends and of course it's costing more, and of course it's taking longer, but once you've set yourself that idea, as a family, then you have to follow through.

Transition as a backdrop to all that has helped my family feel much more confident in how we're going to step through this day by day. Alice and Polly flew right round the world on their gap year, Madeline and Xyanthie and talking to them and saying 'what do we do? Are we allowed to fly around the world on our gap year?' we've started conversations about the adventures they'd have where they'd do maybe one flight and do it other ways.

And iterative process of where your education goes hand in hand with the practice. It takes... I'm learning, and no one learns overnight. It proves that the Transition principles are an extraordinary rich resource of carrying people through and nurturing their practice and how they can realise the choices they make – it supports their choices.

It's saying these problems are here, calmly clock all that, now look how you can respond to all those... You can reframe – this is key to Transition – it gives a canvas and a landscape, lets take that information on board, lets reframe it in terms of what it now allows us to do – that reframing is a wholly creative response, that is exciting and very liberating

What skills and resources have been used to get them going? (RM)
What previous experiences have helped you in making these events happen? (RM)

Everything I've ever done up until now...
Setting up LIFT, running it for 25 years, you can pretty much do anything you want to do if your idea is clear enough, you have to be professional in terms of how you organise it. You can propose an idea and take the risk that it's never happened before, but if you articulate the idea, people gather round the idea and it starts to happen from you saying that it could happen

You trust that by saying let's do this, and put a date in the future, that commitment to saying let's do it, activates something around it actually happening in reality and you keep going, more people hear about it, and it comes into being from your having simply committed to the idea of it, and therefore you can trust that it will happen and you can trust that people will respond and not being tearful

The carnival slightly overwhelmed some people – going 'oh my god, this things too big, it's out of control, it's going to cost too much money, it's so complicated', but my LIFT experience taught me 'it's OK! It's going to be tough and it's going to stressful at times, but it'll have a transformative effect when it actually happens, so I suppose I brought that

Maintaining the clear vision of an end goal?

It's not ducking out – there are many things to be fearful. I'm learning all the time as well, and what I'm learning is that in the current climate, the truly shit scary stuff we're looking at, it's counter-intuitive to celebrate. However, where you stumble, there your greatest treasure lies... It may be counter-intuitive, however, celebration in itself is transformative, therefore let us celebrate – it's in celebrating that we will find things out about ourselves that we didn't know were there, or in our neighbours, and the key thing which is a real challenge in the public realm, is celebration of loss...

We have to make those spaces work for loss, and that shared sense of loss, even if its that my two youngest children can't innocently book round the world flights for their gap years, I experience loss for them, but that's now not a straight forward... You can't just do that...

But, let's reframe it and there are lots of other things they can do which would be equally...

Placing the positive on what could be seen as negative?

I think we move away from anything that's to do with loss, from anything that might hurt us or be painful, but it's that which we have to stay with the discomfort of that and hold it and get on with the next step which is more positive

What do you think might stop people getting involved?

Particular reasons or factors?

Different parts of the community?

People genuinely have to go on a bit of a journey to trust that they can make a difference – my own little current theory, it might change tomorrow!

Speaking personally, I've learnt that I can make a difference, I've got confidence and I have faith in that – I'm not going to save the world, I'm not necessarily going to do anything, but whatever I do on a day-to-day basis, I know I can make a difference, so I'm totally committed to that in whatever way I can, and whilst I have breath in me

A lack of trust in themselves that they can't make a difference, that they can't change the whole thing, that their contribution will be lost, or somewhere they'll be judged – if they put themselves up to say they're going to change things, someone might turn around and point a finger at them and say 'you're not recycling your rubbish properly'... They're going to be open to some sort of scrutiny and therefore they don't make as full a commitment as they can, which I think is a pity because in the people I know who have decided to commit themselves whole heartedly, they have got all their energy, all their passion, all their creativity, comes from that decision

I'd like somebody to give me a more rounded answer – the whole psychology around behaviour change is very complex....

I think it's happening much quicker now because there's more understanding to how intrinsic values are communicated, and that's where the arts have got a huge role to play, in just dealing with intrinsic values rather than just extrinsic values, and the idea that what makes us tick and what matters to us are things on the inside and its not do with the fact that we've got three cars, or a good job and a big payroll, that's being proved daily really that those things are not what deeply matter to us. What really matters is connections, families, community, what makes us feel part of the whole – are more meaningful to us

I'm talking in quite broad terms but it could well be that as far as we are concerned in Transition Town Tooting, there could just be things that seriously put people off, and for that I'm sorry – I'd love to know what they are. Does it come across as preachy, bossy, narrow, exclusive... I don't know, it could be all kinds of things that put people off.

Learning

What do you feel has been most effective at raising awareness about the need for transition and becoming involved?

Films, talks etc? (cognitive)

Activities, celebrations? (emotional level – experiential learning)

Media coverage, newsletter, blog, flyers, posters? (resources)

I don't know – it's one of those questions that needs a million answers. I speak personally, and the most effective learning for me was around peak oil I some times fail to explain this to people – even friends – well enough, which is that learning about Climate Change doesn't necessarily completely change you... It alerts you, puts you on your toes, and you start to take account of carbon emissions and all that kind of stuff, and also what the causes are. I can remember the shock... I did a Transition Training Workshop one weekend, and I got given a card with some information about peak oil and we were given about 2 minutes in which we had to absorb the information on the card, and then not looking at it, present that information to the group. And the fundamental thing they were getting across was 'educate yourselves, absorb this information into yourself, and then become an educator, in terms of how you find a way of putting information out there so people can find their own response. You're not hammering it in, you're just putting it out there.

It was a shocking experience, but I knew little about peak oil – I had read a bit but I hadn't been told I had to become responsible for it, as information. And the effect of that peak oil workshop on me was very profound, because I took it very seriously about having to become a responsible educator. I have always found that it was the knowledge of peak oil that's had an exponentially change-making impact on me and others... I can't quite put my finger on it – it's a metamorphosis of people – I saw that in the artists that we worked with, in the carnival we did a lot of peak oil workshops early on with the artists, and there were some key artists on who it had exactly the same sort of

metamorphosis effect on them, and it affected how they worked on the carnival and they understood the point.

I can read you two very short lines – I've just come from the Lido, and someone who was part of the Lido floats has written the most fantastic article about the Trashcatchers Carnival, it describes it all and then she says: "what was it all for? [ok, this is a swimmer] Bringing different parts of Tooting together, illustrating how supposed rubbish can be used to make things of beauty, and that highstreets don't always have to be highways, they can be community spaces too. By doing something out of the ordinary, the Lido crew have helped Transition Town Tooting show that people and places can change, and that there are other ways of living in a low carbon future." That's very moving for me to read that because it shows even if it's one person, she's communicating to a thousand members, what the point of all that was, and that was about learning about peak oil, contained within the creative process of the carnival.

How do you challenge current understandings? (e.g. carbon-intensive practices?)

What behaviours have been targeted

Where has there been resistance and why?

How have external events shaped your approach? (e.g. recession)

I think you just get on with the new vision – you posit a positive vision; you concentrate on how we could imagine how it could be. That does its own trick of challenging the old...

Once you've taken the information on board and said 'ok, what's the positive vision', you've already kind of moved on, and it becomes perfectly obvious that there's a logic to it. Why would you drive your car everywhere if in fact you could walk or take a bus, or bike?

I've got a lot of hope for bikes – I really think the bike stuff's going to change a lot of things. Health, fitness, obesity, well-being, play, freedom, there's so much a bike can do really

Any resistance?

Yeah, it's difficult because there's a bit of a catch-22 – once you're in a Transition context, you slightly cross the bridge, and you're in a world where those challenges are being acknowledged and being talked about, so you're sort of going with the flow of assuming that these things are happening and we've got to respond

You're going to start being surrounded by people who are agreeing with you, and the resistance – there'll be a lot that is silent, resistance you're receiving from people who are observing and watching, it'll be silent, you'll never know that they don't agree with you

Our relationship with the council is interesting – initially when we started they were very sceptical, and a lot of what we're talking about comes as a direct challenge to their business as usual – even though Wandsworth has got a sustainability policy, it doesn't really add up to much.

If you're just talking about local economy, they're not talking about a resilient highstreet in terms of culture, wellbeing, health, engagement, community, proactive relationships – they're just talking about the shops, how to keep the shops, give them what they want, sort of thing, it's not a very imaginative response.

Somewhere in Wandsworth council, there could be resistance to what we're doing, although they kind of know we're the common sense end of things, so they'd just be churlish if they resisted us. So I think a lot of the resistance is probably silent.

The first conversation I had with someone from the economic development team at Wandsworth council, who I knew from a LIFT life, he said 'Oh god Lucy, you're not going to do one of those local currency schemes, are you?', and I laughed and said 'well, we might, what would be the problem with that?'. The problem of that for his is that it would be a direct challenge to their failures, really.

Are the council now MORE behind you guys?

The Town Centre Manager said to us one day, 'there's a lot of respect for you in the council'. We got the leader on board, personally, and we got a lot of councillors, significantly both Tory – a lot of Tory – and Labour, and there are a lot of departments now, because they carnival had to deal with highways, waste, environment, arts, local economic development office, waste recycling... We had to deal with a lot of the different departments, and if we had been just talking about Transition Town Tooting in a theoretical way – we'd had to have working relationships with those people, had to ring up – had to go because the council's organise all their waste people to collect everything from Broadway Studios at one o'clock, so there's a practical – you CAN'T work in theory, you have to work project by project. So I think the carnival helped us advance that

At the end of the day, everything comes down to human relationships. How do we treat each other, how do we greet each other, how do we deal with each other fairly and respectfully, the challenge for us now, very immediately, is how do we now translate the support the council gave us in the carnival to now deliver things that could be a bit more challenging for them – like a local currency, or... what are the next steps, how do we take that good will?

There's also been some shitty behaviour – the local economic development office have hounded us out of Broadway Studios and they're now charging us £75/hr to have access to it, and from their part, that's a shitty way to end what has been actually an amazing collaboration... We've taken it in our stride, like a bee sting, thanks a bunch but that's not going to put us off

They're trying to push you back and your trying to push them further

Yeah, I don't know – Local Authorities are quite dysfunctional – they're going to have to realise that communities are going to be full of volunteers who are increasingly taking up the cause of managing local assets, managing land, managing buildings, managing things on a cooperative basis, setting up community interest companies, setting up community-owned energy projects – this is happening everywhere on a daily basis in response to the challenges

Lambeth has got this thing called 'Lambeth First' where they're trying to frame themselves like a co-operative council, but I think Wandsworth have to die first – I think there's a regime that has to fall over and die and then be born again

Is that happening now with the cuts?

Wandsworth's been Tory for 31 years – and there are many benefits, they're a very well run council in some ways, but they're guided by one over-riding so called policy, which is that they've got the lowest council tax in the whole country, and that is their policy. So that shapes everything. Value for money at the lowest possible. But that's not necessarily the best place to start if you're saying 'what are the needs of our residents? What do the different people need, what are the different needs, how do we cater for them?' They're coming at everything from 'how cheap can this be'. I don't know, I think that will be very challenged over the next few years. It's a competitive approach at a time when I think collaboration is really seriously called for – and who are their collaborators? And how are they going to place a value on non-professional volunteer commitment to work with them. It's a language difference, but there's also a value difference – what is collaborative if you run it as a competitive private tender operation

How have you found getting people (who may not be environmentally minded) to return?

How build on initial contact?

Friendship – shared human – you're not paying anybody so there's go to be a positive human dynamic. The thing that comforts me is that – apparently – if you send a piece of information to 100 people, 90 will receive it and might read it, but they will not let you know anymore; nine people will receive it and say 'that's interesting, thanks'; one person will receive it, read it, and get back to you, and say that's really interesting, I'd like to do this, this, this and this – so one person in a hundred. So we have 500 people on the database, if we have five people in our group, we'd be doing pretty well... Actually we've got about 20-24 people who are very regular, hard working, committed people, trying to make things happen. So technically, if you've got 24 people, we've effectively got 2,400 people who are remotely interested

Is that latent support?

We can all be disappointed on a daily basis that we haven't got functioning groups coming out of our ears, but I don't know what's achieved by being disappointed in that. It just demoralises me, demoralises everybody and makes us think we're failing, when actually we've just put a carnival that cost £100,000, the business network have recalibrated us, the council's got respect, we've got a lot of new relationships, we had 6,000 people, we worked with the local police, we've had an incredibly positive relationship with the police... There are other things to count up and be glad about.

I guess it's a slow organic process...

Yeah, and I keep saying to people, we celebrated something at a time when actually it's quite hard to make a celebration out of peak oil and climate change

Networking

*How would you describe your local area? (communities)
What is at its heart?*

Tooting's got something quite magical – if you look for it there's an ethos in Tooting, of recognising that a tolerance of diversity is a very hard fought for prize worldwide, there's so much conflict in the world – and the conflict tragically comes from difference, of all different kinds, and the aspiration to being a tolerant society is a utopian one, but I think if you look for it in Tooting, there's a kind of quirky, odd, peculiar way in which Tooting kind of bumbles along with a shared sense of, a cooperative sense of – it's obviously not manifested by everybody, but if you talk to the shop keepers, you talk to the faith houses, you talk to the political leaders like Sadiq, Indrajit, people who are perceived leaders of their community, they will all say the same thing, which is that there's something peculiar about Tooting – it tries to pull together.

In the wake of the July bombings, which is a hideous thing, and there was huge Islamophobia at the time, and there was a response from Tooting which said 'we are not going to let these external events literally blow up in our faces, in our local community, and destroy what we've collectively built'. I always say the same thing: we're standing on the shoulders of giants. We're not a clone town, we're not smart and shi-shi, there's no Marks and Spencer's or Debenhams – I'm sure some people would quite like that. But the highstreet bumbles along – there's 400 family businesses, which mean that some are very prosperous, some are quite poor, but they do look out for each other. You've only got to look up and down the highstreet and Indrajit put all these pots out that need looking after, and you go down the highstreet you see the flower pots and they're being looked after
Tiny, tiny, tiny little signs, but the carnival, we reaped the rewards of that in terms of people just giving. Over a thousand people ate food on the Fish Ponds Playing Field, and all that food was provided free, from about 12 different sources, and it's just that preparation to be generous.

I learnt the other day that the word community means together in gift. So I think what's at the heart of Tooting is an aspiration to hold on to that strength in diversity. Not easy on a day-to-day basis, you have to be vigilant, you have to be attentive, but to have it there as an ideal or aspiration is sort of inspiring

There's also Tooting's history. If you go back in time – apparently a Toot was a lookout post... I love that, I love the idea of Tooting as a lookout post. It's where the two trams met – the trams that came from Wimbledon stopped in Tooting, if you wanted to get into town you had to get off and get another tram to get into town, and that's why all the seven... all those buildings were cinemas. Tooting was the beginning of the cinema in Britain. We had the first purpose built cinema in Britain, and there's all that history of Tooting as a lookout post, and it's got two markets and things like that.

Is that another way of creating a collective identity, via the shared history of place?

I think there's a lot we can do about what brings people to Tooting, what brought people to Tooting. It's got a relatively itinerant student population, it's got a relatively itinerant section of Tooting that comes and goes... But then also it's got people who have lived there all their lives. So that whole thing about what *brings* you to Tooting, what *keeps* you in Tooting, what are the stories – the Lady of Tooting was that, I don't know if you heard any of the stories that were in her skirt, but that idea of 'what is it that people like about it', that's how you make the common ground work – we've all got a right to be here, we all like good things about it... What are those stories?

How have you gone about networking in your local area for TT?

It's endless and exhausting – you just keep finding more routes through... If you're lucky you find one or two people who can communicate with a wider group, so we found a schools coordinator who was in contact with all the 15 schools... It's an endless process of research and discovery, and I'd say we haven't even scratched the surface.

The carnival helped us map a bit, thinking how are we going to involve people, who could we involve, and finding out what the different community groups were, what the youth groups were... Again, it's one thing to theoretically find out who these groups are, but it's another to practically come up with routes for their engagement
I wouldn't say we're systematic

Has it been a coordinated effort? How kept track?

We've got a database – we've got all the information from the carnival in terms of the different groups that got involved, who the main contacts are, their emails, addresses, and sets of relationships actually
Hilary and I have been quite leading in that, and dominant, but we're going through a process of succession, so we've said we're only charring it until next February, so we're initiating a process this autumn... And a lot of it is about handing relationships over, introducing new people – to say 'this is Transition'

these people are part of the same... it's all the same project, it doesn't have to be the same people

Do people know you as individuals or as Transition?

A bit of both

Possible to hand over these relationships when so much is down to personal contact?

I think it has to be, and in a way there is a value to being quite professional about it, to saying that anybody does things for two reasons – one is that it's part of an organisational approach, and one is because they've made a particular human connection to somebody. Anybody who's followed what the transition's capable of understands that the next person bobbing up is as able to deliver that as the last.

So I guess it's having the credibility behind it as a brand

To me it's about how you treat people – 'live simply so that others can simply live', the live and let live, it's respect and consideration... If you work as a volunteer, what else do you friggin have? You're not paying anybody, it's not a contract, it's just you, who you are and how you're dealing with people, and if you're trying to do that as best you can, then hopefully that gets through. You're not going to rip someone off, you're just saying 'look, this is a space we can work together in'.

*How has your own experience before/outside TT helped in networking?
Have you brought your own professional networks to TTT?*

Yeah definitely... I think I've made a connection between the arts world that's interested – a good example of that is Rob Hopkins rang me up last year and he couldn't find a venue for the conference, and I said I was on my way to a meeting at the Battersea Arts Centre, so I said I'd put it to them and I did, and the national conference ended up being at the Battersea Arts Centre, and as a result of that, David Micklem and David Jubb have totally taken transition on board – they're looking at how Battersea as an organisation can transition themselves, and I think there is a connection in the arts world to Transition. I'm not saying I'm responsible for that but I know I played a part in it. We got a grant from the carnival from the arts council, and that came to Transition Town Tooting, and I think we were the first TT that got arts council money for working within a transition context.

It is my intent to... Going back to your first question 'is it full-time?' – what is full time in my life is trying to bring my arts work and my transition work to be the same thing.

Some people might look at it as being separate and saying one is paid professional and one is volunteer local non-professional. But to me, Lucy,

they're the same thing... What is a creative daily practice with artists that is artist-led but that is a part of modelling change.

How possible do you think it is to take the arts to other Transition Town projects and movements – without your understanding, knowledge and belief in it, how possible is it for other TTs

I have no idea at all – I think that depends on artists, on people in those initiatives having a desire to look at what's possible
What I've also learnt – pretty much since leaving LIFT, at LIFT we were part of our own world, and although it was broad and global and international and endless in the directions it worked, it was still within the arts sector. I see that now. And what I've learnt since I left lift was how so many people don't see what artists do. And particularly when they work like a Fabio Santos [head of Phakma Arts], if they work in participatory settings – in a prison or a hospital or a school, in a community – if you were to have a plumber or builder come in an fix your pipes, people go 'oh yeah, I know what a plumber does, he fixed my pipes', but with an artist, they're not so clear, they don't quite see what the professional artist is doing. I'd like to make that much more visible. I think what the artists are doing is extraordinarily powerful, they're playing a leadership role – they're leading the aesthetic, they're leading stories, they're not just leading a creative process that allows a lot more people to become involved and to become artists, but its the aesthetic and the skills they bring as professional people, is phenomenally... It's a very rich thing that they're doing. And I suppose that's what I pin my personal colours to, that connection... to be made more and more

At the Transition Initiative – other T initiatives, it's like society – how much does society see the arts have a role to play. But I think what will happen in time, and I'm convinced of this... Peter Lipman put it very well the other day, who's the chair of the network, increasingly what will happen is that there will be an elite culture, of very wealthy patrons, who continue to go to the opera house, there'll be an arts world which exists in an elite way; and there will be a renaissance of the arts in a much more democratic way, in the sense that people become far more empowered about how we make our own culture, because we're going to have to make our own culture. We're going to have to be creative and people singing, dancing... literally making their own.

Sometimes I work as a celebrant making civil partnerships and weddings and things like that... Already if you look at the last ten years of civil partnerships, people make their own baby, they make a wedding... We've already become much more confident about how we can – we don't have to turn to professional people all the time and buy what we need, so it's true in culture as well

I think there'll be a renaissance and a reskilling of our own cultural creative talents... I think Transition is a fantastically creative process. When people have a food event, when they start producing their jam, and somebody says I'm going to design the labels and they have a rather brilliant kind of wacky creative idea about what they're going to put on the poster – they're all small

little ways on which people are getting much more confident about to be creative themselves.

People go round saying 'I'm not creative' – of course they are. I think we've professionalized so much, we've distanced ourselves

The other thing that's opened up – going back to the volunteer thing – is a professional distance that people have. I see that in the arts world as people who maintain a professional distance from where they live. So they don't necessarily – they might work at the South Bank centre, work very, very hard and do a brilliant job, but because the hours are so demanding and because the art is so all consuming, you don't necessarily have relationships locally... But what I'm completely convinced of is that the changes we're talking about – and the models – they will happen on our doorstep, they will be modelled where we are... And when professional people start to bring the skills and experience they have from their professional lives to where they live, and do what they do where they live, the changes will multiply at a phenomenal rate.

Have there been any bigger successes or any lesser successes?

With the Balham and Tooting Community Association (BACTA) has been very strong – we did something with the New Economics Foundation with them, and the BACTA is a good partner because they're very respected, they have the faith communities, although they're not exclusively about bringing the faith communities together. There are many overlaps in terms of what we're working towards

There are ones that we have yet to develop more, like the business network – all the health networks are so bloody complicated that I can't get my head around them all... Primary Health Care Trust, GPs, the whole health world – it's very networked within the NHS system, but approaching it from a Transition point of view, we haven't completely worked out how to be a catalyst.

The other thing to remember is that we're a catalyst – we're just a catalyst – we don't have to do everything. We don't have to organise everything.

You've got the doctor who spoke at the unleashing looking at health...

Wilfred – yep. He's the Race Equality Officer for St George's and their environment person.

He's a good way in there...

Yeah, but he's very, very, very busy all the time, and he's passionate and he's committed and he's supportive, and I think over the next year there's a lot of work to be done to come up with a practical project – rather like the carnival, will actually demonstrate to all those health professionals, this is a way of thinking and doing things that's got legs.

What do you think could improve your TT's ability to reach a non-green audience?

I don't know how you can label somebody a non-green...

What about just the wider community...

Again I think it goes back to an iterative process... Somebody will have heard of us, somebody might have come to one thing, and then in their own life somebody may just say something to them and they go 'oh I see'. I think it's like when they feel they need it – it's not what can they do to help something, it's when do they feel they need it.

I read the Brixton Transition Leaflet a year before I got involved and it didn't really make sense to me... I wasn't looking that way. When I was looking to set something up here, I read their leaflet word by word and it made complete sense to me. And I was hungry for it – something had happened in me to look at that leaflet differently

All I can suppose is something of that process is happening to other people. They read something we're doing, and they go 'what's that, that looks interesting', and six months later they go 'ah!'

We've had people turn up at meetings and go 'I've been watching what you've been doing for a year and I'm really sorry I should have got engaged earlier, but here I am'. And it's like – when are people ready? I don't know Pascoe, I don't know when people are ready... One doesn't want to make it sound like some sort of kinky journey that you have to join – it's all actually quite practical stuff.

So non-green – for a lot of so-called non-greens will be waiting for the government to sort all of this out. But, in turn, the government will be affected by what we're doing. It has already been affected by what we're doing. I don't necessarily mean 'we' in Tooting, but 'we' the wider social change movement, including the Transition Network. Government – and I include Friends of the Earth and things like that – they have already affected government policy. So the whole thing is actually a study of time... time people give, time people wait, time people are ready.

To be honest, I'd really like to be one of those people who just waits for the government, I'd love to be one of those people – life would be so, so, so much easier... But there might be certain anxieties that you can't quite explain, and I find one of the great reliefs of what I'm doing is that I can name every single anxiety and I know why they're all there, I understand them, I've looked at them, and I feel I'm doing the right thing, and I'm in the right place doing it.

Perhaps with non-greens it's the community and the other elements that Transition so clearly brings that might bring them in more than the environmental realisation

That's why saying Transition is just another word for community engagement is an easier thing to say to people – who anywhere is going to say 'community engagement, why do we need that?' we need more community engagement, we need more trust, we need more bridge building – I don't think anybody would argue with that.

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR NON-TT MEMBERS (OR CASUAL PARTICIPANTS)

Name:

Age:

Gender:

Religion:

Ethnicity:

How long lived in local area (where?):

Profession (full-time/part-time):

Voting last elections (local/EU/General):

Their experience of TT

- What activities were you involved in?
- Why did you get involved? (done something like this before?)
- What elements were most enjoyable and why?
- What if anything was less enjoyable and why?
- Are you planning to be involved in any more activities?

Their impression of TT

- How did you hear about TT?
- What do you think TT are about? Main focus? Trying to achieve?
- What do you think being a member of TT entails?

How would you feel just turning up to events rather than meetings?

What may make them come back for more?

- What activities would you do more of? What would make you want to be involved again? (community? Saved you money? Was a party? Being greener?)
- What puts you off becoming more involved?
- Do you know your neighbours (why)? Local community (why)? Would like to?
 - If there was a party in your street why would you attend or not attend?

Their personal position

- (Do you consider yourself 'green') Do you do anything that might be considered green? Recycling, cycling/using public transport, growing vegetables, energy-efficient lights?
 - What motivates you to do those things?
- How difficult do you think it is to be green?
- Have you volunteered before? Been involved in any community activity? If so what got you involved/what's prevented you getting involved?

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR NON-TT MEMBERS (OR CASUAL PARTICIPANTS)

Name: XXXXXX XXXXXX

Age: 35

Gender: Male

Religion: N/A

Ethnicity: WENG

How long lived in local area (where?): 7 years

Profession (full-time/part-time): self-employed

Voting last elections (local/EU/General): Mix of lab, lib, green – Didn't vote for Tories

Their experience of TT

What activities were you involved in?

Trashcatchers carnival – I was a steward – helped last minute putting a few things together for the carnival, like stapling cloth to chairs at the workshop at the Broadway Studios

Why did you get involved? (done something like this before?)

Very good friends with one of the co-chairs, Hilary – I think I was at the pub with a few others, other people helping out

I would have helped out more but I was busy during the day

Popped in for the last hour or so, and someone said 'do you want to be a steward tomorrow' and I said alright, yeah... Went from there - snowballed

What elements were most enjoyable and why?

The carnival especially – really good feeling about the whole thing

Fact that it had taken so long to put together – they did an absolutely fantastic job of it – there was a real feeling of joy and unity – celebrating the local area and at the same time promoting sustainable growth and everything

It was the moment where we turned into the main road and that was great – like 'wow, there's loads of people', and I was stewarding a bunch of kids, an Indian dance troop, and they were fantastic

The whole thing about it was great – everyone was having a really good time, the weather was nice, and everything kind of worked out

In the workshop – how did you find that?

I wasn't particularly involved in it – it was only a couple of hours, if that – so I was kind of sitting around saying what can I, just helping out... It was just finishing off, so there wasn't anything particularly big in there, because most of it had been carted off to Faircroft school – I was properly at the tail-end of it. Everyone seemed to be in a very good mood and very excited about it... very positive feeling about the whole thing

What if anything was less enjoyable and why?

Everything about it was very positive

Only thing was waiting around on the road

Have you been involved in any more activities since?

Went to the unleashing – which was good fun. Heard Rob Hopkins – he was fascinating

Went along to the little do on Tuesday, that was nice, popped in for an hour, said hello to a few people

I get the newsletter – so when there's more stuff coming up... I'm gonna try and get more involved because the Trashcatchers thing was great and I would like to get more involved

They've got the Foodival coming up, which unfortunately I won't be here for, which I'm gutted about because I was there last year and it was great

There's talk of maybe doing another event – if something comes up then I'll definitely try and get involved in it, and go to some more meetings and things like that

Project side – those sorts of events that interest you?

I do like all that – I like the whole community feeling, it reflects well on the community as well as Transition, and it makes people more aware and people more involved – but I'd also like to get involved in the more nitty-gritty

I need to actually do more stuff at home – me and my flat mate, we've got a back year, there isn't grass there, but there's a bunch of old draws so we're filling those with soil and we're going to start growing our own vegetables and herbs, which I've got quite keen on

I'll learn a lot from it – it's much better if you can source local ingredients than go to the supermarket and buy apples that have been flown in from New Zealand or wherever – it's ridiculous really

If I keep going to meetings, within a year's time I'll be even more aware and try and buy more responsibly

What's given you that sense of responsibility? Before TT?

I think I had it but I didn't do much about it...!

I really should do that, but ah, I'm knackered, I'll just do this

I live just round the corner from Tooting Market so I'm trying to buy more stuff from the market and support local business and local growers and things like that. If I'm growing my own stuff as well, I'll try and avoid doing the whole supermarket shops... most of the time the quality's not good anyway... and it's cheaper from local things.

Just bought a bike so trying to cycle more than take the tube

I'm just trying to become a bit more aware but the Transition thing has given me a bit of a verbal kick up the arse to actually do it...

Sounds like you're turning your life around!

I want to be more aware because I'm known for faffing about and not doing things – oh I'll do that tomorrow – so I'll be at the next meeting – if it's just like little things and you get other people to do little things, that's how you turn people around

Good thing about Transition – which is what I liked about when Rob was speaking – was everyone takes it as what they think they could do in their community, what helps their community, rather than trying to work to a model from somewhere else, which I think is very, very interesting

Make it suit your needs and your wants rather than based on someone else's because that may not necessarily suit what you need to do or what you want to do, which is very interesting

More grass-roots, and seeing what people need and how you can change that And saying just try something – if it fails it fails, we celebrate failure

If you've got these movements all across the world, all the little things do help to change the bigger picture, it's doing it on the community level – it's sharing ideas, it grows, like an organic thing

It is a big movement, but it's in a small way

Their impression of TT

How did you hear about TT?

Hilary

Any other sources of information apart from newsletter that's brought them to your attention?

Not that I can think of, I hear it all through Hilary. Other than that, I don't really see much about them. I was saying to Hilary that I was very surprised that there weren't any adverts for the carnival and she was saying actually there's been quite a few posters up – but I just didn't notice them at all!

I don't know how many other people in Tooting are aware of it – but then again you don't want to force people. Join if you want to join. I think they'd benefit from a bit more awareness.

Trashcatchers would have done that – you can't really not take notice – 800 people going down the road!

What do you think TT are about? Main focus? Trying to achieve?

Local awareness – lots of little things, all the sustainability, trying to be more local, grow more stuff, transport, the economy, things about cycling, food

Trying to make things better for people – less pollution, less oil, doing things to help people do it

Lucy said we don't have an arts centre in Tooting – that would be an excellent thing – where you could have theatre, exhibitions, stuff like that. Really helps the community as well, brings people together

What do you think being a member of TT entails?

Attending the meetings, getting more involved in community projects – whatever they may be. I'm going to be away for the Foodival but I was going to offer to help out and help collect food and take it around the restaurants

I would like to get more involved – it's doing stuff in the community but it's also doing stuff at home on your own, be that growing, cycling, or whatever

Doing stuff for other people but for yourself as well

If you do discover something and think 'ah that could work', and if you do, you tell people, and if you fail you tell people.

It's a very open thing, everyone's welcome – there aren't any right or wrong answers – there's a slightly shambolic feel to it, which I like – the Carnival was fantastically organised, but the idea that things might go a bit wrong but we've got to give it a try – being free and easy

What may make them come back for more?

What activities would you do more of? What would make you want to be involved again? (community? Saved you money? Was a party? Being greener?)

If you grow your own stuff you save money, or by buying it in the market rather than Sainsbury's

Personally that's a secondary aspect, but if you save a few quid along the way then great, nice one... But I wouldn't say saving money is my primary concern

What has stopped you becoming more involved?

My own apathy! I'm a lot less apathetic than I used to be – I should have done it years ago. But now that I'm freelance – not particularly successful at the moment! – but I've got a bit of free time, so I can use that

If I find myself back in full-time work, which I'm going to have to, otherwise I'm going to be skint! I won't have so much time to get involved and things like that

Because of my self rather than Transition do... there's nothing they've done where I've thought 'I don't wanna get involved in that!'

Do you feel guilty at your own apathy – there are some strange emotions at play at why people get involved or don't get involved

I don't think I felt guilty – I got involved because it sounded like quite good fun and I liked what they were doing, but actually this is something that I've been wanting to get involved in but haven't quite known how to do it, and these are people who've got ideas that you can actually do yourself

It's quite inspiring as well – if these guys are doing it, then it's not too hard for me to do it and spend even a couple of hours a week doing something

It inspires people to do it, and the more people get involved, it's a snowball effect, pay it forward effect – you say to a friend of yours, this is good, they say to a friend of theirs... so hopefully it will attract more people.

I imagine within another year or so it will become a much bigger movement.

And the bigger it gets the more events we'll do and the more aware people will be and hopefully it'll get bigger and bigger through that.

Do you know your neighbours (why)? Local community (why)? Would like to?

Not particularly – although I've only moved into my new place in the last 6 weeks

I said hello my next door neighbours when I moved in – we exchanged names

In my old place I was living there for six years and that was my flat, and I

knew the people across the hall – if I see people I do tend to say hello

I think it's quite a London thing, or a city thing, we do tend to ignore our neighbours quite a lot – which is a shame

If you can get a bit more of a friendly feel, it's much better

Do you know Tooting – after 6 years

The good thing about where I used to live, I was about 2 minutes from the station, and over the years you go down and get to know the shop keepers and stuff, I'd always wave at them and stuff, so that was really nice... now I've got a whole new bunch of people to meet and say hello to

Gregarious person?

Yeah, I'd say so – try to be

If there was a party in your street why would you attend or not attend?

I'd definitely be involved in it – I'd love to... great fun. Everyone's out in the sunshine, lots of food, meet new people, have a laugh and meet your neighbours and you don't tend to get that in London – in Leeds especially, there was much more of a community feel to it, and you go into town and you might run into someone you know, but you go into town in London, and the chance of you running into someone you know are pretty slim – it does happen

Because it's much bigger, there are towns within towns in London, so the great thing about Transition Tooting, or Transition Balham, or Colliers Wood, you've got these communities within London but hopefully they'll spread out and bleed into each other

It shouldn't be an exclusive thing about Tooting, you should get ideas about from other people, go to other transitions, see what they're doing, sharing ideas

Their personal position

(Do you consider yourself 'green') Do you do anything that might be considered green? Recycling, cycling/using public transport, growing vegetables, energy-efficient lights?

I'm reasonably – I could be greener. I recycle my cans and my paper – it's good that Wandsworth do that. I turn off the lights when I go out of the room, try and save electricity, put my computer asleep – TV's off at the main button than remote control. Will start composting things.

What motivates you to do those things?

Being green – knowing that it's making a difference – even if it's just a tiny bit, if everyone does it it'll make a huge difference

Look at the news and see the amount of crap which comes out of car exhausts and stuff...

I saw that thing about the rubbish island which is the size of whatever it is in the middle of the Pacific – it's quite outrageous

We're more aware now – this should have happened at least 20-30 years ago – everyone's getting that way now

It's trying to spread that message, but not to be preachy – people get put off by it, you have to make that choice yourself

Someone shouting at you – it's gonna put people off – it's sharing information but not ramming it down people's throats.

Being green is restrictive? Quite a task?

I don't think so – if I was going to be uber-uber green, I could be growing everything. But the level I'm at – recycling and trying to cycle more than take the bus, turning off lights – that isn't hard, it's a piece of piss... it's really easy! All you have to do – turn a light off when you go out of a room, how hard is that?! And some people are like 'I can't be bothered'!

If you take it uber green, with an allotment, everything from the market – and if you're vegetarian rather than a carnivore – then I'm sorry, that's not going to happen with me! It could be harder but lot of it depends on how much time you've got

When I used to work in town, there's no way I was going to cycle there and back, I find it far too dangerous, so I'll take the tube . I'd rather not travel into town at all, because it's much much easier. But at work I'd turn my computer off and the lights

It can be hard but you do what you can within your limits of your own resources and time, and if you can do a bit more beyond that, maybe I could do this, which would take me two more minutes a day – and you think is this going to be that much hassle. You should try and push yourself just a little bit
Have you volunteered before? Been involved in any community activity? If so what got you involved/what's prevented you getting involved?

Can't say that I have

Reason not?

Nothing's cropped up – I've not seen anything there, but I haven't been looking to be honest with you

When the TT stuff turned up, and I hear a lot from Hilary and she updates me on how it's going, and I said to her 'I'll get involved'

It's the first time I've been properly aware of something – I'm sure there's stuff going on all the time, but because I've not been aware of it, it hasn't been on my radar

Do you have quite a few friends in Tooting?

I've got quite a few friends in Tooting but I've been living here for a good few years. So I'm friends of people already living here – and friends of mine from Leeds, they moved down to Tooting a few years ago. I know a lot of people who have moved to London and have moved to Tooting because I say to them 'Tooting is really good' – and I get the piss taken out of me because I rarely leave Tooting – I love it here!