

Conceptual Framework

Transition Theory

- Based on studies of socio-technological change: suggests the development of protected 'niches' for new innovations may be important in seeding change in incumbent socio-technical regimes [1];
- Beginning to be explored in relation to 'green niche social innovations' (e.g. local food initiatives) [2];
- Has prompted attempts to strategically manage sustainability-focused transitions; have been critiqued for ignoring politics and power [3].

Social Movement Literature

- Concepts of 'grounded utopian movements' [4] and 'working utopias' [5] that experiment with alternative practices provide theoretical link to idea of niches;
- Exploration of 'new' social movements and their repertoire of non-state oriented strategies provide a potentially useful perspective on the politics that niche-regime relationships might involve [6].

Social Practices Theories

- Draw attention to the relationship between resource use and social practices, and thus the potential importance of 'new' social movements that attempt to transform modes of everyday living [7].

Empirical Research Questions

- **How is the Transition movement attempting to challenge socio-technical regimes that support carbon-intensive social practices?**
- **From Transition Town perspectives, what opportunities, obstacles and achievements have been experienced so far, and what lessons do these suggest for community-led niche-based social innovations that aim to promote a low carbon future?**

Proposed Research Approach

Project learning histories

- Development of brief 'learning histories' [8] for 30 Transition group projects, focused on energy, food or transport, based on thematic analysis of in-depth interviews, Transition websites & discussion forums, and project visits & participation in events.

Place-based case studies

- Three place-based case studies of well-established Transition groups that are implementing a number of projects in order to explore innovation-innovation, innovation-niche and niche-regime relationships in more depth.

Transition Movement

Community-based relocalisation

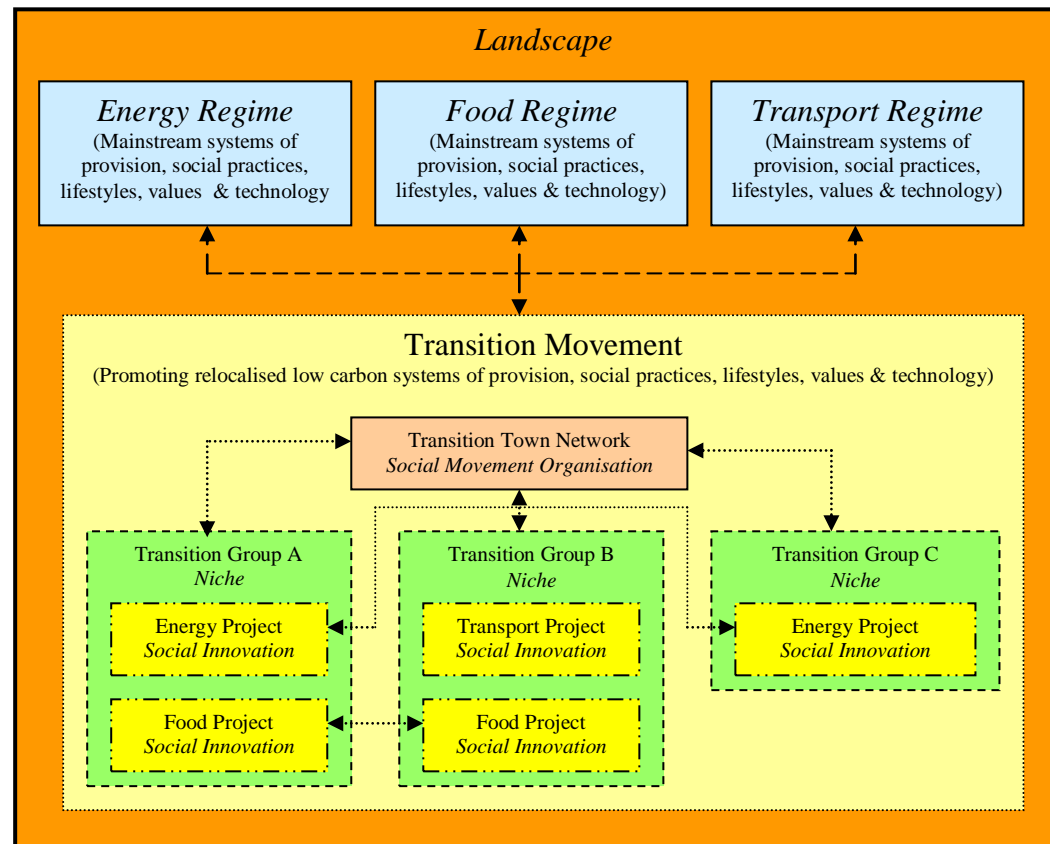
- A 'community-led' initiative to promote a resilient low carbon future based on relocalisation.

Peak oil and climate change

- Response to twin threats of peak oil and climate change.

Attempting to 'go viral'

- Over 100 'official' Transition Town groups set up in UK in 3 years, and spreading to Europe and beyond with the help of a small, funded civil society organisation.



Abbreviated References (full references available on request)

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| [1] F. Geels & J. Schot: Typology of Sociotechnical Transition Pathways (Brunel BRESE seminar paper 2007). | [5] N. Crossley: Working Utopias and Social Movements: An Investigation.... (Sociology 33. 1999) |
| [2] G. Seyfang: The New Economics of Sustainable Consumption: Seeds of Change (Palgrave Macmillan 2009) | [6] W. Parkins & G. Craig: Slow Living (Berg 2006) |
| [3] E. Shove & G. Walker: Transition Management and the Politics of Shape-Shifting (Env & Plan. A.40. 2008) | [7] E. Shove: Efficiency & Consumption: Technology & Practice (Earthscan Sust Consum Reader 2006) |
| [4] C. Price, D. Nonini & E. Tree: Grounded Utopian Movements: Subjects of Neglect (Anthrop Quart 81:1. 2008) | [8] M. Gearty: Southampton District Energy Scheme: A Learning History (Bath workshop paper 2008) |