

Introduction to the COTF System for Community Transformation

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The COTF System of Community Transformation has been designed to fill the void in theory and practice of preparing communities for a new type of society. More and more we realize that our traditional context for thinking and behaving is inconsistent with the needs of a constantly changing, interactive and increasingly complex society. Reforming old concepts and methods is no longer enough. We must conceive and develop a new way of thinking and build new capacities for a new kind of society that will be dynamic and not static. Many of the traditional ideas and undergirding principles of our Industrial Age were birthed over the 18th and 19th centuries as a result of the transformation of society in Scotland and other European countries. It was called the Enlightenment and provided ideas that still organize our society today.

We live in a period of history equally challenging as we are transformed from an Industrial Society to a dynamic Integral Society. As a result, we need no less than a 2nd Enlightenment. The COTF System for Community Transformation attempts to introduce leaders of local communities to a framework of innovative ideas, methods and techniques which will help them step into the ambiguity of an uncertain future. Its objectives are to allow local citizen leaders to anticipate the impact of transforming trends, to develop new capacities leading to community transformation, and to introduce radical elements of change as appropriate.

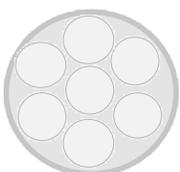
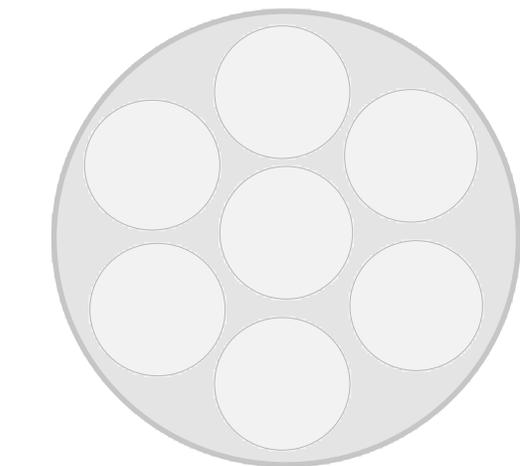
*We are a nation and world of action. Few have recognized that action within an obsolete **context** will add to problems and frustration. We need to stop and think about how the impact of trends of the future is transforming the context of our society and world. Until leaders at all levels learn to think in ways consistent with the needs of our transforming society, there is no reason to act differently, and no reason for our communities to insure vitality and sustainability in a constantly changing world. With this in mind, we offer The COTF System of Community Transformation...a continuously evolving framework of principles, concepts, methods and techniques able to support the development of new capacities for community transformation. We wish each community its own special journey into the future.*

Rick Smyre and Andrew Cohill

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<http://www.knowledgedemocracy.org/>



COTF System for Community Transformation

Essential Capacities

- *Consensus-based decision process*
- *Generative dialogue with broad participation*
- *Leaders as transforming capacity-builders*
- *Transformational, not reformational change*

- Identify future trends and their impact
- Develop connective "and/both" thinking
- Use the Internet for reciprocal learning
- Emphasize individualized learning and learning leaders
- Evolve an evaluation system that emphasizes core competencies, asking appropriate questions, and connecting diverse ideas

- Continuous innovation
- Nanocorps and netpreneurs
- Internet-based income opportunities
- Collaborative connectedness
- Framing transformative economic processes

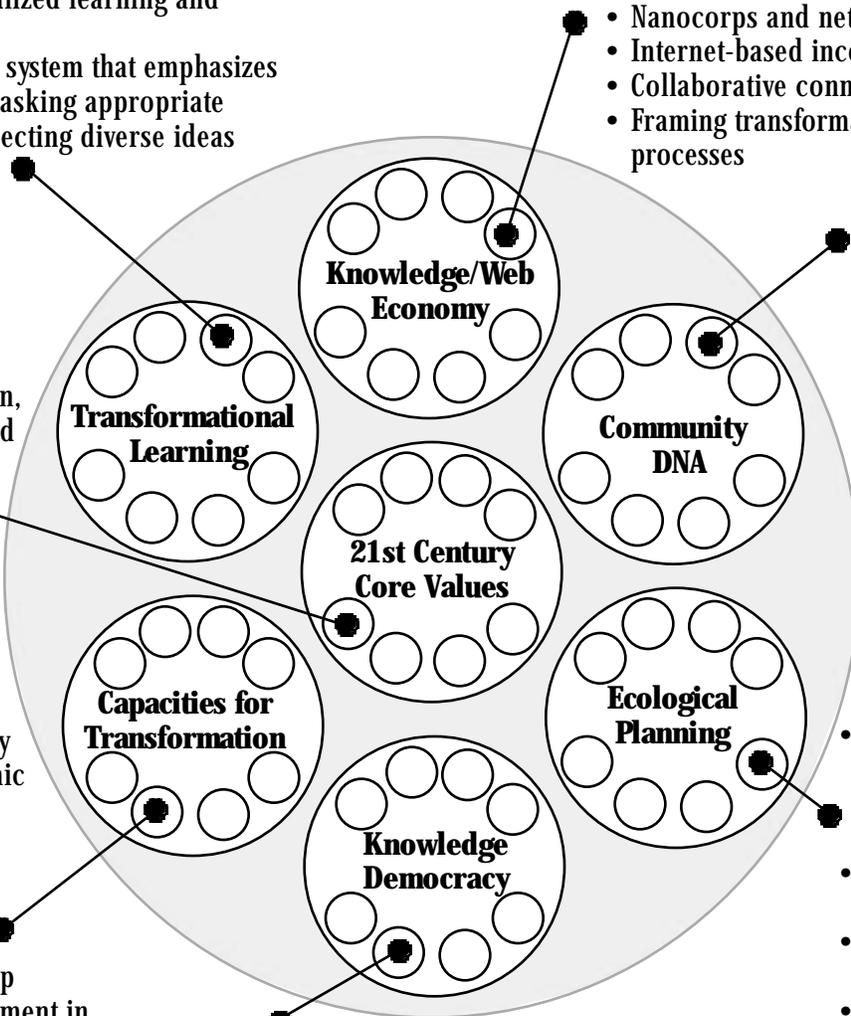
- A balance of the human, spiritual, economic and moral
- An openness to new ideas
- Integration of multiple factors to deal with an increasingly complex society
- Self-reliance and connected individuality
- An emphasis on dynamic sustainability

- Futures context
- Process leadership
- Community investment in technology infrastructure
- Help each other succeed
- 21st century basic skills
- Coach leaders to be transformative facilitators

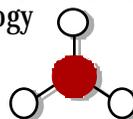
- Understand changing relationship between citizens and leaders
- Use direct consensus democracy to include citizens in appropriate decision making
- Use the Internet to support citizen dialogue
- Understand speech, copyright, and privacy rights being challenged by new technology

- Build webs and networks
- Deepen relationships and spirituality
- Look for value in what others say
- Interdependent focused
- Nonlinear and living systems as models for transformation

- Parallel processes that emphasize reforming and transforming change simultaneously
- Emerging truth that changes as context changes
- Establish initial conditions for transformation
- Build nodes of early adopters in multiple webs
- Develop process projects to seed transformation



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21st Century Core Values

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Key concepts

- Balance human, spiritual, economic, and moral values
- Be open to new ideas
- Use nonlinear thinking to integrate multiple ideas
- Embrace “connected individuality”
- Focus community efforts on dynamic sustainability

Openness to new ideas

- No transformation can occur if diverse people think they alone have “the truth.” Our ability to transform our society and local communities will be dependent on our ability to be open to new ideas.

Integration of multiple factors in an increasingly complex society

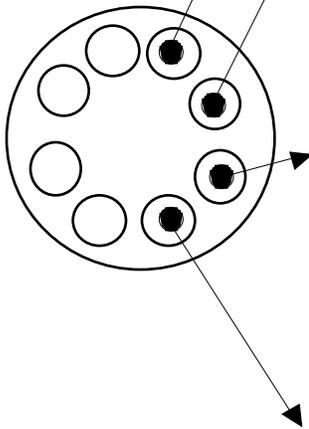
- Our existing society is based on linear thinking and finding the one best answer. As we move to a more complex and more inter- dependent age, we must integrate the best of what works. There will never again be the simple, one best answer for most of our reality. Our ability to think systemically and work in collaboration will be undergirded by our acceptance of the value of linking multiple factors when appropriate.

Self-reliance and connected individuality

- The Industrial Age stressed competition and self-sufficiency. We were strong and worthwhile if we didn't ask for help and learned to do it for ourselves. The strength of this in the Industrial Age is its weakness in the Information Age. Self-sufficiency in an interdependent society leads to alienation and distress. Self-reliance will be recast in a new context of “connected individuality,” which reflects the need to build mature individual capacities at the same time that one connects in deeper, authentic relationships with others. It is not either/or.

An emphasis on dynamic sustainability

- Of great importance in the future will be the ability of communities to build different and deeper human relationships, to create a culture conducive to continuous learning of new ideas, and to see meaning in the collective collaboration of a community's people as they develop a sustainable and vital society based on fairness and a balance of values.



Values is a term that is often used and little understood and appreciated. In its most simple meaning, values is that which we determine to be important. It reflects who we are as individuals and as a culture. Within the last year, the need to reassess our values has risen to a level of consciousness not seen in many years. The cry of 9/11 and the distaste evident when Enron is mentioned remind us that there is more to meaning in life than money and power.

The center circle of COTF's System of Community Transformation is surrounded by the other principles and ideas. Without an appreciation and commitment to values that will enhance and support 21st century community transformation, any of the categories identified as a part of the system will, at best, evolve without coherence.



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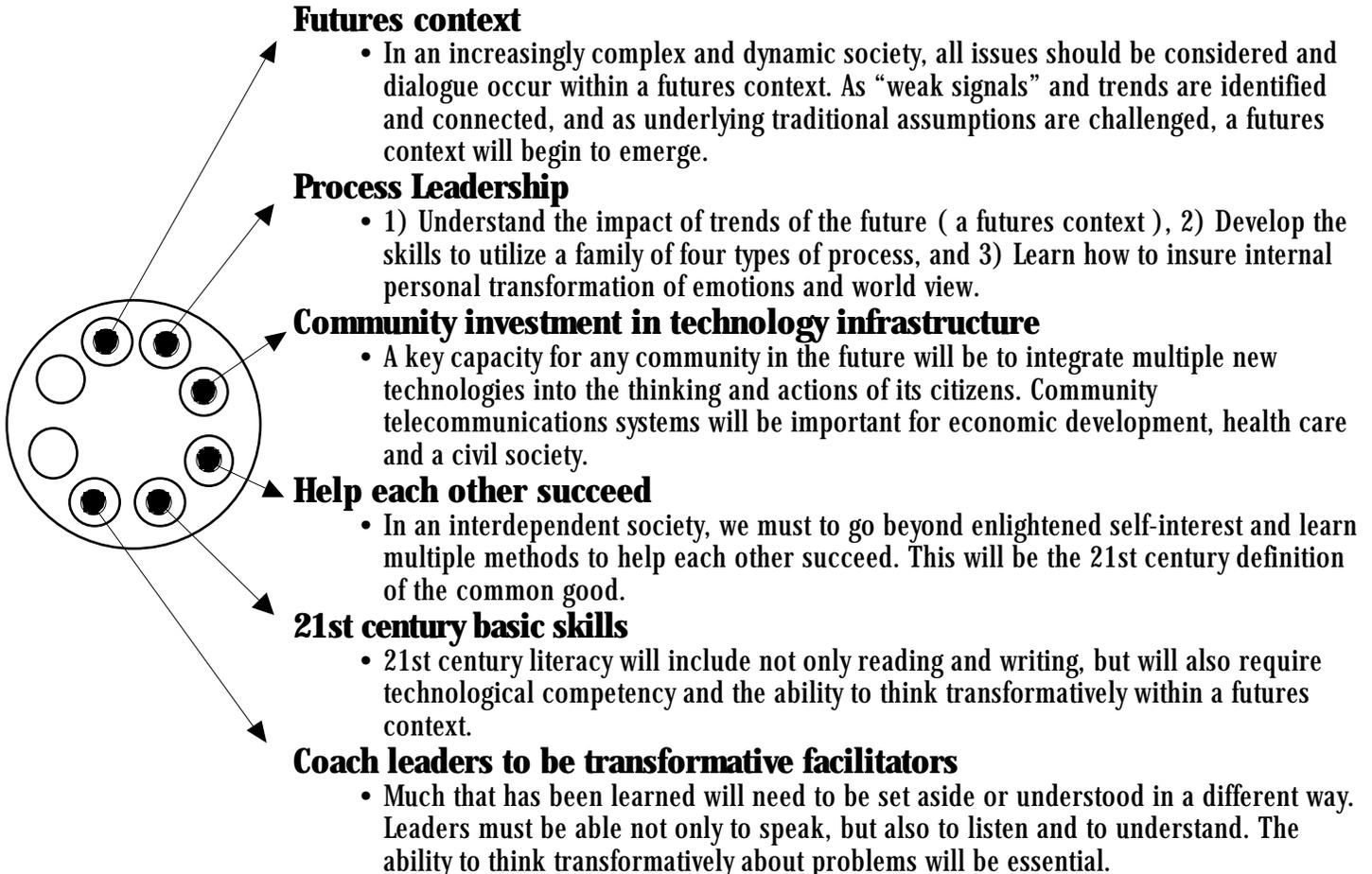
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Capacities for Transformation

part of the
COTF System for
Community Transformation

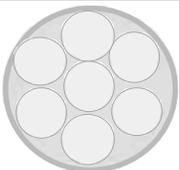
Key concepts

- Process leaders think and plan in the context of the future, not the past
- Community investment in telecommunications and technology is critical
- Work for the common good by helping each other succeed



As it becomes apparent that old ways no longer work, there will be a pause in every community as someone recognizes the need to develop new capacities for the 21st century. We call these new needs and abilities *capacities for transformation* .

Without new capacities that relate to how we lead, how we manage economic development, how do we learn, how do we govern? There is only the experience of tradition on which to fall back....and in a time of immense change, one does not cling to what no longer works. Therefore, many new capacities will be needed to prepare for a dynamic society.



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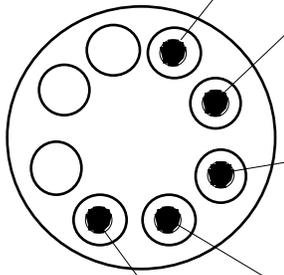
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Transformational Learning

part of the
COTF System for
Community Transformation

Key concepts

- Develop the capacity to see connections and emerging patterns
- Use the Internet to find information, collaborate with others, and create workspaces
- Measure institutional and individual effectiveness by creativity in a futures context
- Measure educational effectiveness by core competencies, not standardized testing



Identify future trends and their impact

- Citizens will need to know trends and weak signals (new discoveries and ideas before they become trends) so that current issues are considered and strategies developed within a context of what is coming and not what has already passed.

Develop connective, “and/both” thinking.

- Traditional education looks for the one best answer and evaluates what is known using true/false or multiple choice questions. This leads to either/or thinking, inhibiting innovation and preventing true collaboration.

Use the Internet for reciprocal learning

- As the speed of society increases, the ability to learn from anywhere, at any time will become absolutely necessary. Transformational Learning will emphasize the combination of face to face interaction with asynchronous learning.

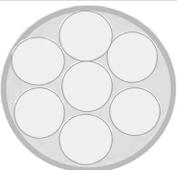
Emphasize individualized learning and learning leaders

- Traditional education will shift from standardized classes, and teaching by lecture, to that of individualized learning, guided by learning leaders who emphasize core competencies--how to identify appropriate content, ask questions important to the situation and connect disparate information.

Evolve an evaluation system that emphasizes core competencies, asking appropriate questions and connecting diverse ideas.

- Standardized testing and quantification will still be used for accountability when appropriate. Of increasing importance will be the use of ad hoc evaluation as well as the use of mind mapping for new creative capacities. There will be greater emphasis on transformative and nonlinear thinking.

Transformational Learning is different from traditional education. Transformational Learning is based on connective and nonlinear thinking. As one's knowledge becomes broader and deeper, it simultaneously becomes easier to form better questions and to strengthen the ability to see the connections between disparate concepts and ideas. In an age of rapidly emerging knowledge, knowing how to ask an appropriate question and where to look for answers will be just as important as the answer itself.



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Knowledge/Web Economy

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Key concepts

- The Information Economy is already over
- The “dejobbed small business person” will be the driver of the economy
- Successful economic development strategies will emphasize collaboration
- Community investment in telecom infrastructure will be essential to success

Continuous innovation

- The ability to connect new knowledge in a process of continuous innovation will be at the core of both a Knowledge and Web Economy.

Nanocorps/netpreneurs

- Individuals working out of the home are expected to be 40-45% of the work force by 2040. The “dejobbed small business person” will be the driver of the economy.

Internet-based income opportunities

- As the term “job” fades into the economic sunset, individuals will need to learn how to develop multiple income streams, creating linkages with other small networks of electronic entrepreneurs. Ubiquitous, affordable broadband network access will become essential community infrastructure.

Collaborative connectedness

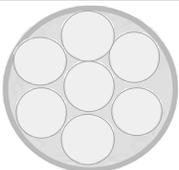
- Whether working as a core team within a “competency center” for a transnational corporation, a link in the web of a network of nanocorps, or an “initiating integrator” for a Knowledge Economy Idea Incubator, the capacity to be a “collaborative connector” will be of great value and significance.

Framing transformative economic processes

- Local economic developers will need to be able to a) see potential in a new idea or discovery, b) know what questions to ask within the context of a strategic matrix, and c) judge whom and what to connect to insure potential development of Knowledge Economy “process projects.”

Three types of economies are presently in churn in the US...the last visages of an Industrial Age Economy, a growing Knowledge Economy and the early, “weak signals” of a Web economy. The Web Economy is not the World Wide Web, but instead refers to the web of personal and business relationships that will underpin economic development in the next thirty to forty years. All those associated with economic development in a local community will need to:

- Become familiar with concepts and underlying principles appropriate to each type of economy,
- Understand how to build parallel processes and to allocate time to ensure the effective development of each type, and
- Build a context within your community that allows capacities for the Knowledge and Web Economies to emerge.



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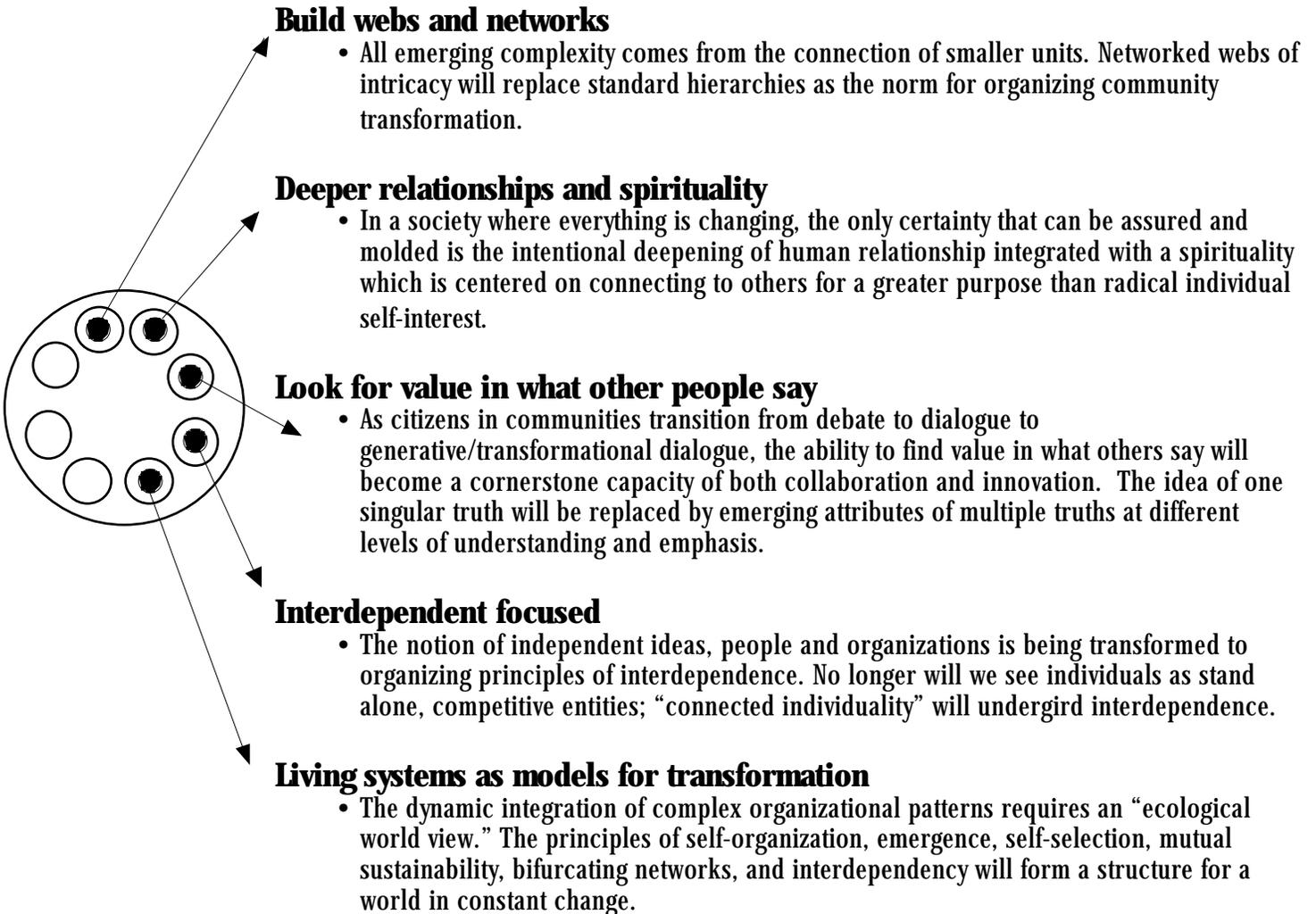
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Community DNA

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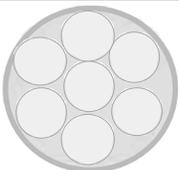
Key concepts

- Webs of relationships will be central to our business and community endeavors
- All public and private organizations will be interdependent, rather than independent
- Living systems will provide the dynamic models we need to transform our communities



Local leaders need to become conversant with the principles and elements of DNA. We believe that organizing principles found in the DNA of cells (as well as organizing principles in physical ecology) will be useful models for the organizing principles of community transformation.

The capacity to recognize these principles and know how to build strategies and processes using and applying their common elements will be a core capacity for local citizen leaders.



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Ecological Planning

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Key concepts

- Nonlinear, parallel processes are a necessary condition for success
- Adopt an *I win/you win* collaborative strategy
- Plan using a futures context, looking out thirty to forty years

Parallel processes support concurrent reforming and transforming change

- With competing world views and different assumptions, concepts and methods, parallel needs can only be met using parallel processes. Short term needs require action and strategic planning methods. Longer term needs require constant seeding of transformation, immense patience and the nurturing of small, early adopter groups

Emerging truth that changes at the context changes

- There are three types of truth: a) core truths that are immutable b) peripheral truths that must be flexible, and c) wild card truths that appear without warning. Leaders need the ability to identify and work with each type of truth simultaneously.

Establish initial conditions for transformation

- A) identify key factors in generative dialogue with networks of interested people, B) look for the value in what is said and build process strategies to help each other succeed, and C) always think and act within a futures context.

Build nodes of early adapters in multiple webs

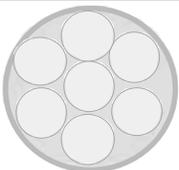
- Community Development is based on setting goals, objectives, tasks and outcomes that can be measured for accountability. Community Transformation emphasizes bringing together diverse early adopters who self-select to be involved with generative dialogue.

Develop process projects to seed transformation

- As multiple networks of interest emerge, new ideas will be developed and will need to be tested. At this point in the transformation process, new ideas need to be converted into projects that have a specific structure and actions. See what emerges as you progress and define initial success anecdotally.

Effective planning must now look thirty to forty years ahead. Traditional strategic planning is typically focused on a maximum of five years because of the need to identify outcomes and to know what resources are available. This allows the two assumptions of strategic planning to remain valid--that specific outcomes can be predicted and that processes can be controlled to reach any outcome. However, as the length of the timeframe increases, the ability to predict with certainty is lost, and a new concept of planning is necessary--one which integrates trends of the future.

Thus a key change in long term planning is moving from benchmarking and best practices to developing principles and building innovative connections when appropriate. This is the basis of *ecological planning* .



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The Knowledge Democracy

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Key concepts

- Technology is changing the relationship between citizens and leaders
- Citizens must be involved in appropriate decision making
- The Internet can support citizen dialogue
- Speech, copyright, and privacy rights are being challenged by new technology

Make equitable use of information technology to gather, interpret, and disseminate information

- Use the Internet and ubiquitous connectivity to widely distribute all opinions and information about an issue to those interested individuals and organizations.

Use Direct Consensus Democracy (DCD) to include citizens in appropriate decision making

- DCD transcends “brainstorming” and traditional referenda to involve citizens in an ongoing process to reach consensus and make decisions about community issues.

Make a commitment to place the highest priority on human relationships

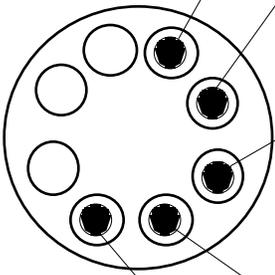
- Human relationships are the basis of a healthy community, and no amount of technology will replace the need for them. Technology must serve human needs, not machine and system needs.

Vigorously protect privacy, free speech, and property rights

- Restrictive commercial contracts and intrusive government requirements threaten basic rights. Communities and elected officials must commit to preserving our freedoms.

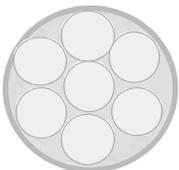
Seek out and support technologically literate local leaders

- Communities need leaders who will use technology appropriately to support generative dialogue and consensus-based decision making.



Telecommunications and the rise of the Internet have permanently altered the way people acquire and use information. As information has become inexpensive and ubiquitous, power can no longer be tightly held by those who have (formerly) scarce information. A civil society trying to make decisions will be most effective when the process of finding the common good is regarded as a mutually interdependent effort. This approach requires constant maintenance of relationships through mutual respect of the opinions of others, gained by speaking, listening, and understanding.

The American model of democracy works best when approached as an ongoing set of conversations about issues, leading to a consensus within the community about the best course of action. These processes and conversations can be complemented and supported by technology and Internet-based systems and services.



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Recommended Reading

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Books

- *The Third Wave* – Alvin Toffler
- *Birth of the Chaordic Age* -- Dee Hock
- *Visions* – Michio Kaku
- *The Future Of Life* – Edward O. Wilson
- *The Rise Of The Creative Class* – Richard Florida
- *The Future Of Success* – Robert Reich
- *Learning Organizations* – Chawla & Renesch
- *Community Networks: Lessons learned from Blacksburg, Virginia* – Andrew Cohill
- *The Clash Of Civilizations* – Samuel Huntington
- *Chaos* -- James Gleick
- *The Green Imperative* -- Victor Papanek
- *Lila* -- Robert Pirsig
- *The Diamond Age* -- Neal Stephenson
- *Cryptonomicon* -- Neal Stephenson
- *Dialogue* – William Isaacs
- *Bowling Alone* – Robert Putnam
- *Digital Futures* – Edited By James Wilson
- *All Connected Now* – Walter Truett Anderson
- *The Future Of Leadership* – Editors Bennis, Spreitzer & Cummings
- *Tomorrow's Energy* – Hoffman
- *Stopping The Clock* – Katz And Goldman
- *The Invisible Future* – Edited By Peter Denning
- *Creating Learning Communities* – Ron Miller
- *What Went Wrong* – Benard Lewis
- *The Venture Café* – Teresa Esser
- *After The Clockwork World* – Sally Goerner
- *The Fourth Turning* – Bill Strauss And Neil Howe
- *The Coming Plague* – Laurie Garrett
- *The Web Of Life* – Fritzhof Capra
- *The Rapids Of Change* – Robert Theobald
- *American Renaissance* – Marvin Cetron
- *Emotional Intelligence* – Daniel Goleman

Magazines and newspapers

- The Futurist
- American Demographics
- Atlantic Monthly
- Business Week
- Wired
- Wall Street Journal
- USA Today

Articles

- *Trends Now Changing the World* ; Cetron & Davies, The Futurist, Jan-Feb '01; Mar-Apr '01
- *The WebCentric University* ; Dunn, The Futurist, Jul-Aug '01
- *The Transformed Workplace* ; Challenger, The Futurist, Nov-Dec '01
- *New Directions for Leaders*; Wagner, The Futurist, Nov-Dec '01
- *How the Internet is Changing Our Lives*; Henderson, The Futurist, Jul-Aug '01
- *GM's Billion Dollar Bet* ; Baum, Wired Magazine, Aug '02
- *America's Secret Weapon* ; Business 2.0, Stewart, Dec '01
- *Nanotech*; Special Issue, Scientific American, Sep '01
- *The Truth About the Biodiversity Crisis* ; Scientific American, Nov '01
- *Energy*; Special Issue, MIT's Technology Review, Jan-Feb '02
- *Beyond the Genome* ; Special Section, MIT;s Technology Review, Oct '01
- *The Next Frontiers* ; Special Report, Newsweek, June 24, '02
- *Rethinking the Economy* ; Special Report, Business Week, Oct 1, '01
- *State of the New Economy* ; Special Issue, Fast Company, Sep .01
- *Welcome to the Next Church* ; Trueheart, Atlantic Monthly, Aug '95
- *Social Insecurity* ; Peterson, Atlantic Monthly, May '96



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Web Sites of Interest

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21st Century Values

- <http://www.communititesofthefuture.org/>
- <http://tartan.communititesofthefuture.org/>

Capacities For Transformation

- <http://www.communititesofthefuture.org/>
- <http://pcpli.org/>

Transformational Learning

- <http://www.communitiesofthefuture.org/>

Knowledge/Web Economy

- <http://www.sohodojo.org/>
- <http://ke.communitiesofthefuture.org>

Community Dna

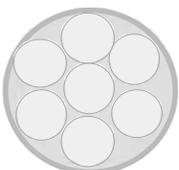
- <http://www.communitiesofthefuture.org/>
- <http://grnp.org/>

Ecological Planning

- <http://www.communitiesofthefuture.org/>
- <http://narfi.org/>

Knowledge Democracy

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About the Authors

About Rick Smyre

Rick Smyre is a nationally recognized futurist specializing in the area of building "capacities for transformation" in local communities. He is president of the Center for Communities of the Future and is the architect of the new field of "process leadership." Mr. Smyre is the past Chairman of the Board of the American Association of Retirement Communities and is on the staff of the National Economic Development Institute.

Married for 38 years to Brownie Allen, Mr. Smyre has three children, Cinda (36), Deric (34), and Beth (31). In the '70s he was the CEO of a textile yarn spinning firm. As a result of his experience at the local level, to include Chairman of a NC school board, he understands the difficulty of helping people prepare for a different kind of society.

Mr. Smyre has concentrated on developing innovative concepts, methods, and techniques connected with the Communities of the Future idea in collaboration with a self-organizing network of 1500 individuals in forty + states and four countries. The focus of this work is to develop "capacities for transformation" in the thinking and activities of local communities. In 2000, his essay, *Rewiring a Community's Brain*, was published as a chapter in the book *Creating Learning Communities*. His articles and papers have been published on the web and a paper, *Beyond the Deck Chairs*, was published by the World Future Society's *Future Research Quarterly* in 1998.

Mr. Smyre focuses his work in several ways. He speaks internationally and has provided over 250 seminars, keynotes and one day retreats over the last several years to introduce these "capacity building" ideas. Mr. Smyre has spoken at the last six World Future Society Conferences, the National Scottish Foundation in Edinburg, Scotland, and the National Computer Ethics Conference at the Brookings Institute. Among the keynotes he has provided are the National Millennium Communities Conference in Houston for the US Institute of Justice; the national Council for Resource Development in Washington, DC; the Pennsylvania Rural Center State Conference; the North Carolina Community College System; the TVA Quality Communities Conference; the Economic Development Administration's Southeastern Regional Conference; the National Association of Technical Centers Annual Conference in Lincoln, NE; the Mid West Economic Development Commission Conference in Minnesota; the Institute of the Future Conference in Houston, TX; the GrandNet Conference in Grand Rapids, MI; the North Dakota Industrial Development Association; and the Mississippi-Arkansas Main Street Associations; the World Trade Center Conference in St. Louis, MO.

Of greatest interest to Mr. Smyre is his work to help local communities prepare for transformational change. He does this in two ways: 1) as a strategic networker to develop new ideas such as Transformation Learning and Futures Institutes, and 2) as a "master capacity builder" to work with leaders in local communities to develop 21st century capacities to include Process Leadership skills.

Contact information: Email: rlsmyre@aol.com Phone: 704-864-9196 Web: <http://www.communitiesofthefuture.org/>

About Andrew Michael Cohill

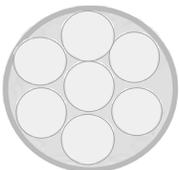
Dr. Andrew Michael Cohill is an information architect and technology consultant with an educational background in architecture, ergonomics, and computer science. He is also the Executive Director of the Knowledge Democracy Center. He served as Director of the world famous Blacksburg Electronic Village from its start in 1993 to May of 2002. He is a widely published writer, and author and coeditor of the popular book about the Blacksburg Electronic Village (*Community Networks: Lessons learned from Blacksburg, Virginia*), now in its second edition. He served as co-chair of the Governor's Task Force on eCommunities for the Commonwealth of Virginia in 2000-2001. He recently advised Hewlett-Packard on their \$15 million dollar Digital Village initiative.

Cohill has an international reputation for his efforts in connecting technology and rural communities. He is a member of the National Advisory Board for Communities of the Future, a national coalition of thinkers and policy makers concerned with the sustainability and health of communities. He served two terms as President of the Association For Community Networking and is serving his second term on the AFCN Board of Directors. He is a founding member of the International Community Learning Centers group, and is currently working on a new book on communities and technology that will be published in the fall of 2002.

As head of the BEV effort, Cohill led Blacksburg to become widely known as the "most wired community in the world." In the fall of 1999, more than 87% of the town's residents were using the Internet, and over 75% of the town's businesses had made the Internet a regular part of their marketing. Virtually all residents one or more broadband options at home, at work, or at both. As Director of the BEV, he was responsible for the design and development of electronic village services, supervised a research and development group, and managed an operations group that ran the BEV office and network services.

His telecommunications consulting and advisory efforts includes work for public and private economic development councils, community developers, and many communities across the United States and around the world. He has published numerous papers, articles, and book chapters. He is in wide demand as a speaker and consultant because of his shrewd insights and his plain-talking approach to complex technology issues.

Contact information: Email: cohill@designnine.org Phone: 540-951-4400 Web: <http://www.designnine.org/>



The COTF System for Community Transformation is a joint project of Communities of the Future and the Knowledge Democracy Center. For more information, visit:

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