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Scaling Up the Transition Town Movement

Using Strategic Niche Management as a prospective theory of change to assess the role of regional hubs in England

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Abstract

Community response to climate change can be highly innovative, motivating and relevant to local context and is recognised to be important alongside Government and business initiatives to assist communities towards a more sustainable future. As a result, technical innovation theory has evolved to include social aspects in an attempt to consider civil society based innovations, individual behaviour and the interactions between community actors to increase the impact and pace of innovation development for sustainability. One such civil society based innovation is the Transition Town Movement. Started in 2006 in Totnes, England, the Transition Town Movement is “A movement of communities coming together to reimagine and rebuild our world” through empowered local action. The Transition Town Movement has grown rapidly around the world, with 260 groups, or “Initiatives”, now active in England. However, connection between Initiatives in England has been intermittent and informal. This study aims to analyse how the Transition Town Movement can have a greater impact in assisting communities to transition towards a more sustainable future through developing regional networks using a comparative case study approach. Strategic Niche Management is a socio-technical innovation theory highlighting learning processes for the innovation to function well in the regime, expectation management to develop the innovation to fulfil potential and network to manage and facilitate the process as key conditions for innovation development. Using strategic niche management as a prospective innovation theory applied to civil society and new empirical data from 9 focus groups in different regions of England, recommendations can be made for the development of both theory and practice. The study indicates community as the key influence on how this grassroots innovation is developed through learning, expectation management and network in three ways. First, developing region scale aggregated identity, purpose and values towards a shared narrative to increased confidence. Second, committing time to build resources towards better support for mutual benefit of local projects across the region. Finally, for theory and practice to evolve the importance of Regional Network Events to stimulate community across the niche, allow space for niche development and share best practice towards shared rules.

Key Words:

Grassroots innovation, Transition Towns, scaling up, regional networks, community, England, Strategic Niche Management

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1. Introduction.

1.1 Global Context.

Global responses to climate change comprise both large-scale international co-operation, for example the Paris Agreement (UNFCCC, 2015) and trends towards decentralisation and local empowerment (World Bank, 2011; Ahmed, 2007). The UK Government has emphasised community as playing a key role in the transition to a low carbon future (Aiken, 2015) reinforced by cross-party support for localisation (MHCLG, 2011). However, support for grassroots innovation is not substantial (Bergman et al, 2010). Despite this, Community response to Climate Change through innovative grassroots groups has thrived (Seyfang and Smith, 2007; Ahern, 2011) in contrast to slower pace of Government action (Scott Cato and Hillier, 2010; Seyfang and Smith, 2007).

Local communities have in-depth knowledge and experience of their locality and therefore a key role to develop and enact appropriate strategies to increase local resilience (Forsyth, 2013; Massey, 2004). However, this must be understood in a wider strategy and context over a variety of scales (Ayers and Forsyth, 2009) towards adaptation to future climatic conditions (Adger et al 2004). Societal and economic actions become important components of progress (Ayers and Forsyth, 2009) as well as environmental. In that complexity, community actors all become “Agents for Change” (Breeze, 2015)

This thesis will therefore focus on one example of community action through grassroots innovation, taking the Transition Town Movement as a case study. The origins and mode of operation of Transition Towns will be introduced in the next section, followed by an introduction of grassroots social innovation. Finally, this introduction will be concluded with a presentation of the aims and objectives which frame the entire study.

1.2 Grassroots Social Innovation

Social Innovation, although difficult to define (Bergman et al, 2010) is rooted in place and time, involving ordinary individuals and groups to re-organise socio-economic forms within the current technical regime (Aiken, 2015). Social Innovation addresses specific social and environmental needs (Seyfang, 2009; Scott-Cato and Hillier, 2010, Mulgan, 2006) to produce robust and long lasting social change (Bergman et al, 2010).

Geels (2004) proposed social innovation is evolutionary, not revolutionary, incrementally creating change and improving the probability of wide adoption in the process. However, radical grassroots innovations seeking alternative visions to the current regime have become an emergent field of academic research (Seyfang and Smith, 2007). Grassroots innovative activity has created the possibility of a protected space for experimentation – a niche (Seyfang and Smith, 2007) and a greater degree of change beyond the “status quo of incremental efficiency improvements” (Hargreaves et al, 2013). Activity such as community currencies (Seyfang and Longhurst, 2013, 2016), community energy (Smith et al, 2016), the sharing economy (Martin et al, 2015) and sustainable housing (Seyfang, 2010) emphasise the highly social, inter-personal collective process amongst diverse actors within grassroots innovations (Smith et al, 2005).

The field of sustainability transitions has seen an exponential rise in peer-review papers since 1998 (Markard et al, 2012) with increasing attention paid to niche innovations (Geels, 2005). However, the majority of those studies have focused on “market-based innovations designed for competitiveness” (Hargreaves et al, 2013, Geels, 2005) as opposed to alternative processes and visions for success. Hargreaves et al (2013) identifies the “Grassroots” area as being a rich area for developing niche-based innovation theories.

1.3 Transition Town Movement

The Transition Town Movement, started in 2006 in Totnes, Devon, emphasises a positive, community-led response to both climate change and peak oil (Hopkins, 2008; Haxeltine and Seyfang, 2009) and defines itself as “a movement of communities coming together to reimagine and rebuild our world” (Transition Network, 2016a). The Movement has rapidly grown and spread across the world. In the UK, local groups, or “Transition Initiatives”, number 260 (Transition Network, 2016b). Initiatives act as innovative communities of practice, couched in social innovation, motivated by social, environmental and economic need (Seyfang and Smith, 2007; Scott Cato and Hillier, 2010) and defined by the spatial characteristics and societal context of community and place (Aiken, 2012). Transition Initiatives enable practical action in response to the slow pace of Government (Scott Cato and Hillier, 2010; Seyfang and Smith, 2007) and a volatile and unpredictable global economy (Barnes, 2014; Haxeltine and Seyfang, 2009). Activities and organisational forms are hugely diverse (Seyfang and Smith, 2007; Ahern, 2011) highlighting a unique combination of a holistic global brand that encompasses diverse, mutable form and function at the local level, bringing together disparate people facing the complexity of climate change with many different outputs and solutions.

1.4 Aims and Objectives

Transition Network is currently a grassroots social innovation niche with aims to be more influential and make a greater impact in assisting communities to transition towards a more sustainable future. As a participatory action research, the aim of the Transition Network is also the aim of this research.

Objective 1 of this research is to use the three key conditions of Strategic Niche Management identified by Seyfang and Haxeltine (2012) in their previous analysis of the scaling up of the Transition Town Movement: learning, expectation management and network; as a framework to understand the issues raised by developing regional networks.

Objective 2 is to understand if there are any other issues, such as perhaps a tension between local community focus and regional focus competing for time, energy and commitment.

Objective 3 is then to propose next steps for scaling up the Transition Town movement so that it can meet its aims.

In Section 2, grassroots social innovation will be briefly described in the context of the Transition Town Movement. This is not intended to be a comprehensive account

of community grassroots social innovation literature, but it is hoped will set the scene for the study. The conditions of Strategic Niche Management, notions of niche, regime and landscape in the Multi-Level Perspective, proposed roles for Intermediaries, models to scale-up and risks, vulnerabilities and critique when for grassroots innovations are described in detail with reference to the Transition Town Movement to complete the literature review. Section 3 presents the methodology and methods and in Section 4, primary data is presented based on Transition Towns practitioner's response to the question, "What could be the roles and themes of a Regional Network?" from 9 Focus Groups in England. In Section 5, the data will be critically analysed using thematic analysis and Strategic Niche Management will be used as a comparison theoretical frame. Finally, in Section 6, conclusions are drawn to offer insights in response of the research aims and objectives.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Grassroots Social Innovation and the Transition Town Movement

“If we try and do what needs to be done on our own, it’ll be too little, if we wait for Governments it’ll be too late, but if we all come together with the people around us, it might just be enough and it might just be in time” Rob Hopkins (Transition Network Sweden, 2017)

Grassroots innovation is a bottom-up approach to innovation, mostly, although not solely, identified as an approach that is socially minded and lead by civil society (Hossain, 2016, Bergman et al, 2010). Climate Change is recognised as a strong motivator for communities, (Scott Cato and Hillier, 2010; Bailey et al, 2010) resulting in communities focusing activity on localised social need in a global context (Seyfang and Smith, 2007) and in the process, addressing behaviours towards a low carbon future (Aiken, 2015). Communities operate with local spatial knowledge and at a small enough scale to experiment safely (Seyfang and Smith, 2007; Ahern, 2011). The Transition Town Movement brings a holistic approach to grassroots innovations (Aiken, 2015) and has captured the imagination of communities across the world leading to empowerment, innovation and engagement in climate adaptation beyond purely technical solutions (Bergman et al, 2010, White and Stirling, 2013).

Grassroots Innovation Groups vary in organisational form and include informal community groups, co-operatives, social enterprises and voluntary associations (Martin et al, 2015). In the DNA of Grassroots innovations is an acceptance of the relative randomness of participation (Coenen et al, 2010) and subsequent risk of a lack of representation of the local community within core groups (Grossman and Creamer, 2017), The Transition Towns Movement has been criticised for being overly middle class and lacking in a diversity of actors (Aiken, 2012) however, Grossman and Creamer (2017) found that diversity and inclusivity could be achieved through collaboration with other local projects. Community organising of this nature develops in diverse ways over time, finding, through experimentation, a natural rhythm to meeting and doing (Geels, 2011) and leads to differing levels of support and degrees of professionalism (Seyfang and Smith, 2007).

“Humans are capable of a unique trick, creating realities by first imagining them, by experiencing them in their minds” (Eno, 2002)

Visioning is an integral part of the process of setting up and developing a Transition Initiative over time (North 2010) using imaginative and participatory methods to engage and empower members of the community (Deakin and Allwinkle, 2007). Visioning characterises Transition Initiatives as agents for change, able to experiment with alternative models for their communities without revolution (Gibson-Graham, 2008) by first imagining a vision for the future before plotting activity to achieve it. Scott Cato and Hillier (2010) suggest this participatory method could widen the reach of Transition to those marginalised by the formal economy and start to realise alternative, sustainable livelihoods and subsequently begin to address intrinsic diversity challenges.

Community can have an external, or outward face to catalyse change (Aiken, 2015). Transition Initiatives have encouraged and supported members to be

involved in policy change (Barnes, 2014) and the Transition Network guidance highlights the need to engage with Local Authority and inject practised social innovations into policy making, critically on its own terms (Hopkins, 2008 p.144). In short, Transition supports the notion that we can work within current structures to instigate change (Deakin and Allwinkle, 2007; North, 2010) and build resilience through making innovative ideas the norm (Hopkins, 2011, p.53).

Community can also be built around a common theme or practice, not bound by geography (Wasko and Faraj, 2005; Aitken, 2014). These “Communities of Practice” can develop with regular interaction to share experience, knowledge and ideas (Cabinet Office, 2014). Communities of Practice tend to be communities of individuals rather than groups, who share a passion identified by a common domain of interest (Wenger, 2011, Wasko and Faraj 2005) that is personally felt and surpasses organisational connection (Wenger, 1998). Theme-based knowledge develops as a knowledge commons for all (Wasko and Faraj, 2000). However, people in society tend to be involved in a number of Communities of Practice in varying degrees from periphery to leadership (Lave and Wenger, 1998). Communities of Practice operate with few rules, but rely on a tacit understanding of personal connection to a communal process and therefore self-edit, to a degree. Communities of Practice are maintained equally by the simple enjoyment of sharing knowledge and a degree of enhancing professional reputation (Wasko and Faraj, 2005), contrary to earlier studies, which found reciprocity was of high importance (Lave, 1991; Wenger, 1998).

Whilst concepts like Community Based Adaptation have been discussed in academic circles for over 10 years (Forsyth, 2013), the Transition Towns Movement has been embracing the “power of just doing stuff” (Hopkins, 2013) as a community-driven, participatory process, making climate change locally relevant (Ayers and Forsyth, 2009). Further, projects delivered as activity are hugely diverse and highly sustainable but quantifying the impact of Transition Towns more generally, particular in terms of a reduction in carbon emission, has been absent (Bergman et al, 2010). Recent Transition Towns publications, such as 21 Stories of Transition, go some way to addressing that, telling compelling stories alongside variable impact statistics (Hopkins, 2015). Grassroots activity is commonly developed outside of the commercial or state sector (Yalçin-Riollet et al, 2014) and yet is also recognised as a hotbed for multiple entrepreneurial innovations (Seyfang et al, 2013; Seyfang and Smith, 2007; Hua et al, 2010).

Finally, Communities can identify by location with a felt sense of belonging where actors can imagine together (Aiken, 2015, Neal, 2016). Peer to peer support across communities goes beyond definitions of the workplace into friendships with a shared aim (Aiken, 2015). Transition Towns appeal to intrinsic values in its focus on local empowerment (Connors and McDonald, 2011) and contextualises localisation as a family of community scale initiatives, nested within regional, national and international responses to climate change (Hopkins, 2011, p.53; Massey, 2004; North, 2010). Transition Towns’ emphasis on the individual and community scale is evident not only in the activity undertaken but also in the space given to personal emotional journeys through Inner Transition (*Transition Network, 2016c*). However, communities are also transient, with people coming and going over time and can contain social divisions challenging the romantic view of a cohesive whole (Forsyth, 2013).

The incremental nature of community-based adaptation, although arguably inevitable to achieve a sustainable future (Lindblom, 1979) amplifies the challenge of sustained and resilient activity over time (Aiken, 2015) and supports the notion that not all grassroots innovations are appropriate to be scaled-up requiring careful critical analysis and practical application of research findings to specific cases (Hargreaves et al 2013, Seyfang et al, 2013). Transition Towns in particular are supported by the dedicated few (Smith et al, 2013) and lack significant resources (Feola and Nunes, 2014; Seyfang and Longhurst, 2013; Seyfang, 2009), a common trait of organised community activists, with many struggling to survive and become resilient prior to any perceived ability to diffuse or scale-up (Hargreaves et al 2013). The Transition Network does offer resources for groups based on best practice from Transition Initiatives around the world (Transition Network, 2016d) who have found greater success when practising these overarching principles (Feola and Nunes, 2014).

The Transition Town Movement has often been criticised as being politically naïve (Chatterton and Cutler, 2008) and ineffective to challenge the dominant political regime (Scott Cato and Hillier, 2010) due to a lack of regional or national strategy (Seyfang and Smith, 2007). Despite the increased recognition for the effectiveness of community-led initiatives (Aiken, 2015), the role community-based adaptation plays in a co-ordinated policy environment is unclear (Ayers and Forsyth, 2009). This is due to the perception of policy makers of the radical intention of Transition Towns (Seyfang and Smith, 2007) and the intensely local nature resulting in significant barriers to scaling-up new ideas (Smith et al, 2013; Seyfang and Smith, 2007).

Regional Networks for Transition Towns may provide some answers by identifying regional activities that would benefit both Transition Initiatives and geographical diffusion challenges (Seyfang and Haxeltine, 2012) whilst maintaining Transition Town's core identity of self-defined community response (Smith, 2011). In the UK, the trend of Government has recently been to focus ever more on economic growth as the main driver for area-based decision making (Deas, 2013). A requirement for congruence in this political environment limits transformative potential (Haxeltine and Seyfang, 2009; Chatterton and Cutler, 2008) and risks dilution due to a clash of ideology and values.

2.2 Theories for Scaling Up Grassroots Social Innovation

Innovation theory has grown to include both technical and social aspects to better comprehend systems holistically (Rip and Kemp, 1998; Geels, 2005, Seyfang et al 2014). However, Markard et al (2012) noted the incremental nature of innovation due to "lock-in" and path dependencies restricting the magnitude of development steps within the dominant regime. More radical innovations are possible within innovative niches operating outside the dominant regime (Hargreaves, 2013; Seyfang and Longhurst, 2016), such as the Transition Town Movement.

In the review of sustainability transition frameworks, Markard et al (2012) noted four socio-technical innovation pathways of particular interest to sustainability transitions: transition management, strategic niche management, multi-level perspective on socio-technical transitions and technical innovation systems. All four theories "adopt systemic views of far-reaching transformation processes of socio-technical systems" (Markard et al, 2012, p956).

This research will take one of those socio-technical innovation pathways, strategic niche management, as a framework to understand the issues raised by Transition Towns practitioners for developing regional hubs, building on the work of Seyfang and Haxeltine (2012). Socio-technical transitions generally reach maturity over “50 years and more” (Markard et al, 2012) giving particular significance to theoretical proposals for next steps to the Transition Town Movement given its relative infancy. The next section will give an in-depth description of Strategic Niche Management and the multi-level perspective, focusing on the three key conditions of learning, expectation management and network to stimulate niche development of the Transition Town Movement.

2.2.1 Strategic Niche Management as a Socio-Technical Innovation Pathway.

Strategic Niche Management is a theoretical methodology developed in business to protect development of innovative technologies, or niches, to encourage experimentation (Schot and Geels, 2008; Bergman et al, 2010). Niche innovations are aggregated across multiple local experiments to recognize and develop patterns, develop shared rules and, ultimately, diffuse the innovation into the mainstream in order to become influential (Seyfang et al, 2014) (Figure1). This research proposes that as a grassroots innovation, Transition Towns may be understood in the same way – looking for the development of patterns and shared rules at a regional level, which enables it to influence and change the mainstream.

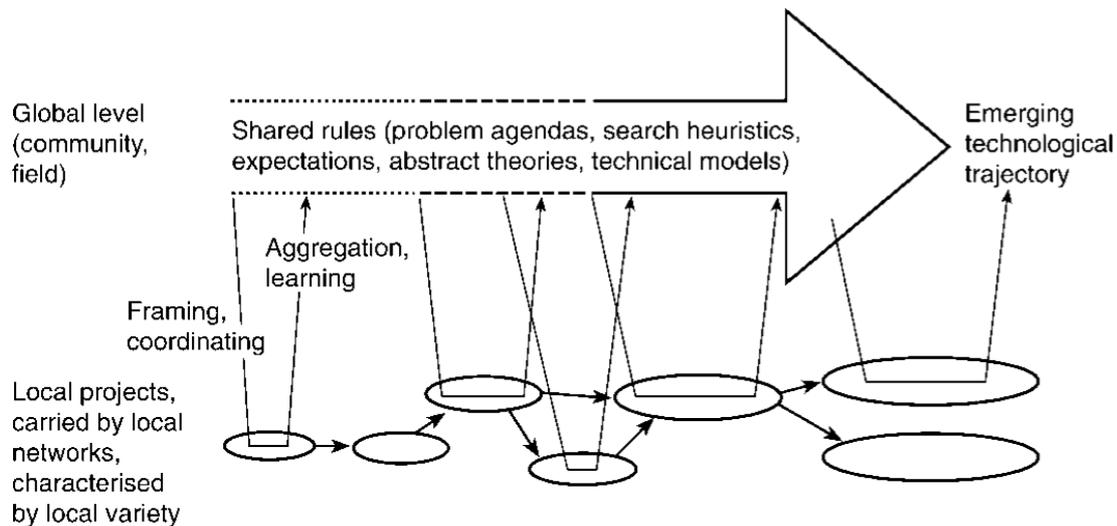


Figure 1: Illustration of technical Niche Development of multiple local projects (Schot and Geels, 2008)

Strategic niche management evolved to include socio-technical innovation (Kemp et al, 1998; Hegger et al 2007). Shared learning, expectation management and the development of networks are seen as critical elements for effective niche development (Figure 2) (Kemp et al., 1998; Geels and Raven, 2006) and are practiced currently in Transition Initiatives (Seyfang and Haxeltine, 2012).

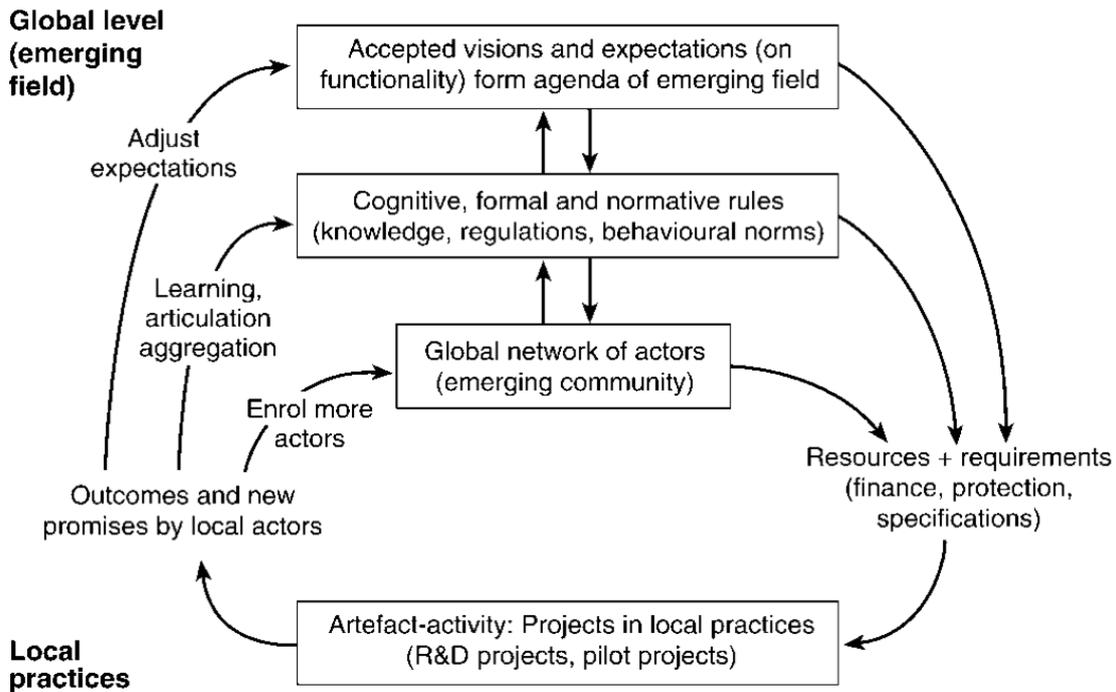


Figure 2: Networks, Shared Learning and expectation management as key variables in Niche Development (Geels and Raven, 2006)

2.2.1.1 Niche, Regime and Landscape

A niche

A niche is a space within the regime where innovation can emerge, protected against selection pressures of the dominant regime (Kemp et al, 1998; Smith and Raven, 2012). They are *platforms for interaction* (Kemp et al, 1998) where the notion of an *experiment* is relatively benign (Coenen et al, 2010). Niches protect an innovation from *shocking* the regime, risking rejection before a shared language is developed. Who creates this protected environment for the innovation to develop is a key question to any application of this theoretical method (Bergman et al 2010). Niche innovation strengthens most easily through duplicated local initiatives, linked through networks and intermediary organisations (Geels and Deuten, 2006; Raven, 2005). The impetus for scaling up Grassroots niches is local social need and fit within community ideology, rather than from profit-driven market motives (Seyfang and Smith, 2007) and therefore, by definition endeavor to radically develop the regime. They are categorically different to mainstream innovations through organizational culture, operating model and values (Hossain, 2016) and develop new ways to solve problems to societal challenges (Feola and Nunes, 2014).

The regime

Key to Strategic Niche Management is an understanding that current socio-technical systems are carried out within the rules and structures of a dominant regime and incremental innovations occur within the logic of that regime (Markard et al, 2012). Rules in the dominant regime guiding technical development are further augmented by social groups such as end users and policy makers narrowing innovations towards simply improving a dominant design (Mourik and

Raven, 2006; Socio-technical innovation that shift the current regime, so-called radical innovation, is a fitting description of the Transition Town Movement that pertains to be a “movement of communities coming together to reimagine and rebuild our world” (Transition Network, 2016a; Seyfang and Haxeltine, 2012) and to scholars of Strategic Niche Management (Kemp et al, 1998).

The landscape in the Multi-Level Perspective.

The landscape refers to the context within which the regime and niche operates but have little influence and is more commonly referred to in multi-level perspective theory (Geels and Schot, 2007). Van Driel and Schot (2005) identified three ways for Landscape to shift: slowly - such as changes in the economic climate; suddenly and unanticipated, highly impactful changes creating possibilities for relatively rapid niche development, such as natural disasters or wars (Geels, 2002, Deas, 2013); and finally, trend based and perhaps influenced, over time, strategically by the regime (Geels, 2011). The interplay between landscape and regime creates opportunity and option of innovation pathway, allowing a transition for a niche innovation to influencing and challenging the dominant regime. (Seyfang et al, 2010; Geels and Schot, 2007; Aiken, 2014) (Figure 3).

Increasing structuration
of activities in local practices

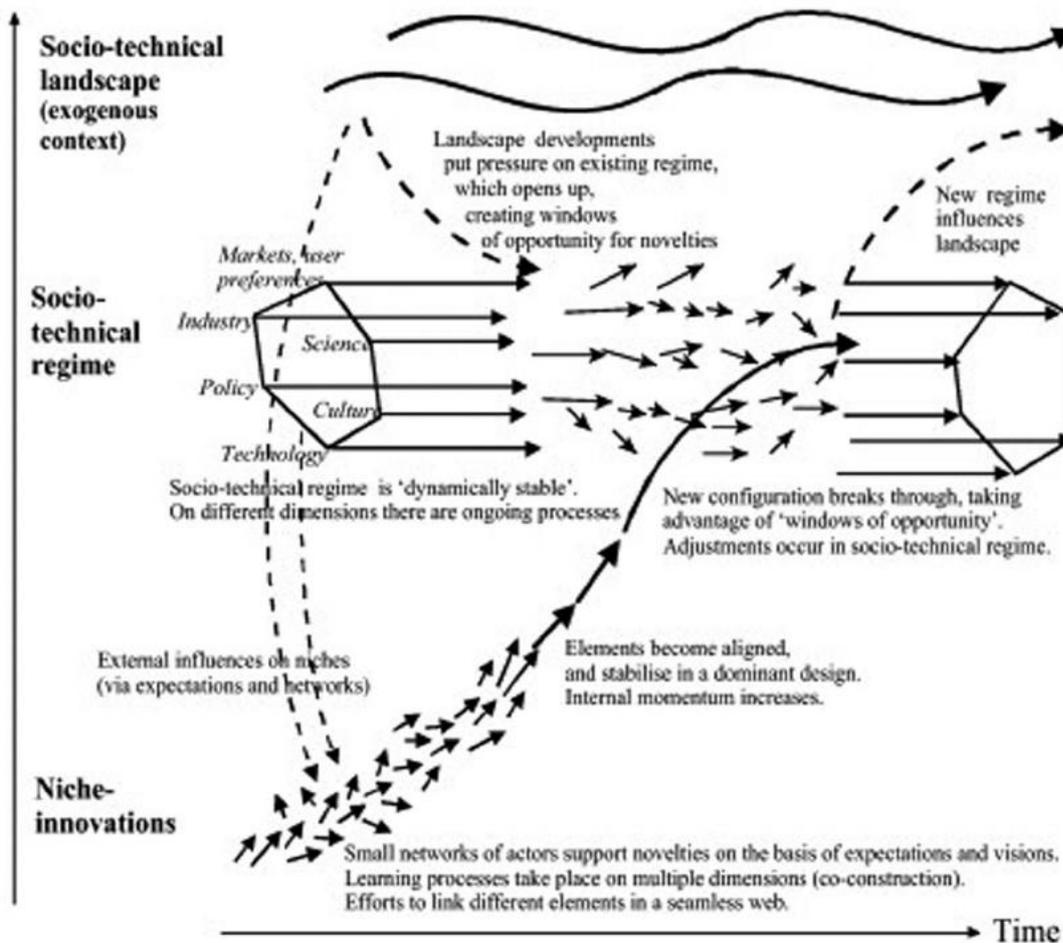


Figure 3: Multi-Level Perspective showing the niche innovation exploiting a landscape intervention in the Socio-Technical Regime (Geels, 2002)

This research aims to discover how UK Transition Towns, a grassroots social innovation niche, can make a greater impact through scaling up to impact the socio-technical regime and to understand the challenges and opportunities to that aim.]

2.2.1.2 Strategic Niche Management Key Conditions *Learning*

Learning processes make the innovation function properly within the regime (Mourik and Raven, 2006; Kemp et al, 1998), ensuring the innovation is ready for application in the complex environment of deployment. Shared learning accumulates practices, data and impacts of the niche innovation as well as second order learning to develop an alternative set of values and cognitive frames to optimise niche development (Kemp et al, 1998; Smith, 2007; Coenen et al, 2010). Any innovative development requires instrumental, conceptual and social learning, defined by the innovation (Weber et al, 1999; Kemp et al, 2006).

For innovations developed by and for the community, trust is a key driver for engagement and learning (Walker et al, 2010), different to commercial environments (Barnett et al, 2011). Trust is an important element of social cohesion, developed through a process of deep understanding and consultation (Hielscher et al., 2011) leading to greater possibility of future projects and better distribution of learning (Hoffman and High-Pippert, 2005). The consequent enhancement of social capital and increased possibility of co-opting new members (Walker et al., 2010) is evidence of desirable outcomes for grassroots initiatives. Trust and local relevance creates the opportunity to reverse the trend of Grassroots Environmentalism of a small numbers of dedicated individuals vulnerable to burnout (Hargreaves et al, 2013; Smith et al, 2013; Seyfang et al, 2013). Conversely, it is recognized that a strong coordinating group increases chances of success (Seyfang et al, 2013) indicating vulnerability in early stages of project development.

Expectation Management

Expectations are used to define what the innovation is to do in order to define what it must do, developing the technology to be expected (Kemp et al 1998, Mourik and Raven 2006). Expectation management is useful when evidenced across the niche, specific and demonstrated by on-going projects (Seyfang et al, 2014) creating alignment, aggregating purpose and learning across the niche (Mourik and Raven, 2006). This helps to reduce uncertainty and influence positively the confidence and development of the niche (Coenen et al, 2010) and for the niche to attract resources and actors (Mourik and Raven, 2006). Strategic Niche Management offers a process to manage this difficult aggregation for a niche to become cohesive and interact with the regime and landscape (Mourik and Raven, 2006) as well as a forum for working through disagreement (Caniëls and Romijn, 2006).

Networks

Strategic Niche Management outlines diverse networks with a range of skills, experiences and approaches, enabled to contribute substantial resources are integral to the development of the niche innovation (Seyfang et al, 2014; Raven et al, 2010), including providing an effective environment for learning and expectation management (Mourik and Raven, 2006). Networks aid innovation by articulating scale of application, identifying and managing risk, investment and uncertainty and

reducing complexity by engaging both actors within and without the Sector (Kemp et al 1998). Engaging a diverse network at a formative stage will help legitimise the process of niche innovation (Kemp et al 1998, Mourik and Raven 2006). Strategic Niche Management is recognised to have benefit in providing a management structure for multiple Local projects within a given niche (Mourik and Raven, 2006; Raven, 2005), providing a framework for engagement of the network. The ability to carry new knowledge from local to the global level (Geels and Raven 2006; Geels and Raven 2007) shows possibility of innovation development with wider networks (Roep et al, 2003).

Policymakers are seen as key niche and regime actors to support the network and aid diffusion into the mainstream (Mourik and Raven 2006; Kemp et al 1998) by engaging and supporting grassroots initiatives through consultation, connecting with funding and resource opportunities and providing space for networking across the dominant regime (Boyer, 2015). Demonstration projects and outreach through networks are key to creating dialogue between actors in the regime and those more directly associated with the niche innovation (Coenen et al, 2010), with some scholars emphasising the need for developing institutional structures for the purpose of promotion (Hargreaves et al, 2013).

In the UK, Transition Towns currently exist as local projects with Internationally focused guidance from the Transition Network. Increasing complexity by introducing regional networks can raise questions of what the optimum performance can be (Ostrom, 1999) and how power is authentically devolved (Marshall, 2008) through the relationships between hierarchical levels. However, multi-level perspective has been noted to be a model that mitigates the effect of hierarchies (Seyfang et al, 2010) and, perhaps ironically, challenges community initiatives to be part of the mainstream, rather than be defined as opposing it (Aiken, 2014).

2.2.1.3 The role of Intermediaries

Intermediaries play an important role here, either as individuals or organisations to aggregate and share learning and best practise across local projects resulting in iterative improvement of the innovation (Seyfang et al, 2014). Through clarifying niche development, Intermediaries can help build confidence and competence (Hargreaves et al, 2013) as well as creating space for creativity and new relationships across local projects (Howells, 2006). Intermediaries help increase diversity within the Network by building relationships with National and local Government, funders and the private sector to make the niche become more robust (Seyfang and Smith, 2007).

Intermediaries, therefore, play a vital role in progressing the innovation from the local phase to the inter-local and trans-local phase of development (Figure 4) (Geels and Raven, 2006; Raven et al, 2010). This process of connection and aggregation is key to the ultimate diffusion of the innovation into the mainstream and systematically increases the number of flows of information, learning and expectation management across local projects, upstream and downstream via the intermediaries to the regime, in a co-ordinated and cohesive manner. Intermediaries aid broad alignment of innovative ideas with the dominant regime to create popular development of societal norms, or even transform the regime altogether (Coenen et al, 2010; Seyfang et al, 2014) whilst increasing capacity to upscale (Kemp et al, 1998).

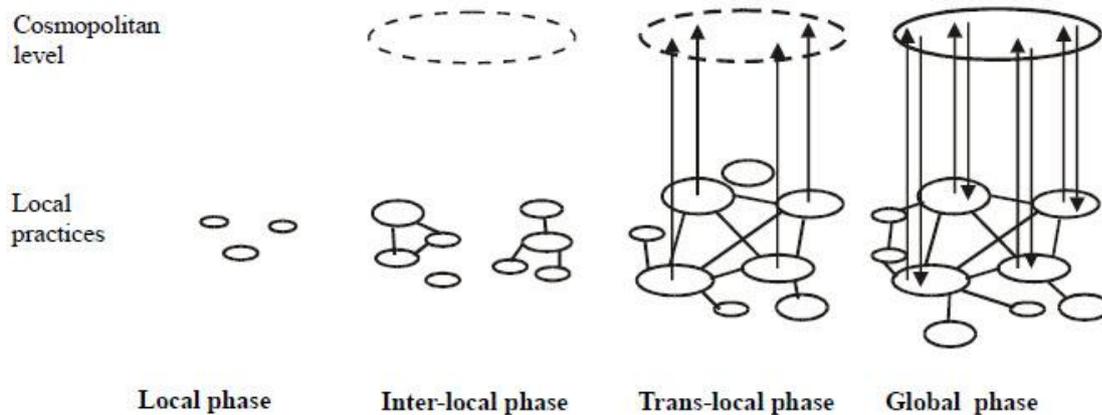


Figure 4: The growth of shared rules, aggregated learning and co-ordinated presentation through Strategic Niche Management of a Niche Innovation (Geels and Deuten, 2006)

2.2.1.4 Scaling-Up

In order to grow and diffuse ideas and practices into the mainstream, grassroots innovations can *replicate* local innovative models, *each local project can grow* in size or the model behind the local projects can be *translated* into the regime (Seyfang and Haxeltine, 2012; Mourik and Raven, 2006).

Replication is the most common observed method across grassroots innovations, involving the repetition of the same approach to different geographic locations (Seyfang and Haxeltine, 2012). The Transition Town Movement as a social innovation applies to small-scale and local level innovation (Aiken, 2012) and has been observed as achieving success through replication (Seyfang and Haxeltine, 2012) with 260 Initiatives across the UK currently registered with the Transition Network (Transition Network, 2016b).

Scaling up through *local projects getting bigger* has been noted in technical innovations such as installation of solar panels (Boyer, 2015), but is not in evidence as an effective method for the Transition Town Movement in England where Transition Towns are often supported by a small number of dedicated, hard working individuals (Smith et al, 2013). However, projects delivered by local Transition Towns have succeeded in inspiring a wider demographic of participants for discrete moments – for example, Sustainable St.Albans Week engaged Local Authority, education establishments, the business sector as well as community actors in a week of sustainable activity in St.Albans (Sustainable St.Albans, no date). Fewer examples of regular discrete projects within Transition Initiatives include the Award Winning Crystal Palace Food Market (Hopkins, 2015, pp80-85), which identifies as a Crystal Palace Transition Town Project and champions local producers, small, sustainable farmers, local growing project, community and local employment. Crystal Palace Food Market has wide appeal and is now delivered as a not-for-profit creating income for critical staff and donating any profits to Crystal Palace Transition Town but these examples of are few and far between.

Finally, *Translation* could be seen as evidence of near-completion of an innovation pathway as it represents the original innovation being adopted at higher institutional levels by the regime or re-defining the regime and becoming the norm (Boyer, 2015). Raven et al (2010) highlighted the importance of translation of the niche innovation to avoid discord. For the Transition Town Movement, and perhaps by definition, this is more difficult to measure. The Transition Town Movement, started in 2006, is still in its infancy and ideas and practices are encouraged to be part of a knowledge commons, open to all, both inside and outside the Movement (Seyfang and Haxeltine, 2012). One direct example of translation has been found at the Local Authority level in Ungersheim, France where the Mayor has adopted Transition principles, re-orientating public policies to create a real sense of civilian ownership (Hopkins, 2015 p.93-96).

2.2.1.5 Risks, Vulnerabilities and critique.

The significant danger of Strategic Niche Management for Transition Towns is that of co-opting. The journey from grassroots innovation to diffusion across the regime can be great and the original ideological vision be compromised (Boyer, 2015). The task of constant evaluation, feedback and questioning of niche innovation development with the original niche definitions is prime requirement. Indeed, questioning whether or not the niche innovation is well suited for regime-scale diffusion is also valid (Hargreaves et al, 2013; Seyfang et al, 2013). Shared learning and expectation management could not only dilute the initial innovative, but could also oversimplify both the multitude of socio-technical configurations for the sake of ease of communication and fit with the regime, as well as defining the regime as homogenous (Shove and Walker, 2007; Seyfang et al, 2014). With specific reference to community innovations, Seyfang et al (2014) went on to ask if its possible for a collection of local projects to form a cohesive niche.

Protection in the initial stage to enable the formation of a cohesive niche is seen as a key requirement (Caniëls and Romijn, 2006) creating space and time to develop the innovation, without the pressures of market conditions. Protection can take three forms: shielding, nurturing and empowerment (Smith and Raven, 2012). However, the idea of early-stage experimentation as a positive method to protecting the niche innovation and communicating a benign message to the regime, whilst initially championed by scholars has been criticised as being too comfortable, restricting the rate of development of the niche innovation unsatisfactorily and causing the innovation not be taken seriously, weakening feedback loops (Hoogma et al, 2002; Geels et al, 2008; Coenen et al, 2010). Building protection around the niche needs substantial resources (Seyfang et al, 2014; Raven et al, 2010) noted as lacking in Transition Towns (Feola and Nunes, 2014; Seyfang and Longhurst, 2013; Seyfang, 2009), therefore challenging the ability for robust diffusion.

Strategic Niche Management has also been criticised as a theory for its own sake with difficulty in application to real world scenarios (Bergman et al 2010). Lovell (2007) points to the dominant role of Governments as innovation engineers, wielding disproportionate influence that is not represented in theory resulting in an imbalance across actors within the necessary networks. If innovations take time to develop, the regime will inevitably have evolved during that process, introducing another dimension to an already multi-faceted model (Bergman et al, 2010).

3. Methodology and Research Methods

“Transition Towns” is a social innovation niche, mobilising community resilience and enabling action on sustainability (Seyfang and Haxeltine, 2012). The Transition Town Movement is our unit of analysis. Grassroots-led action on climate change empowers and introduces a greater diversity of participants into action through largely self-directed activity. However, investigating “activity” is not the purpose of this research. The focus is on inter-local organisation of Transition Town Initiatives as networks to develop the innovation and influence a greater diversity of actors in wider society. As the organisation and governance of Transition Towns is non-hierarchical and community based, evidence will be gathered by qualitative means to enable exploration and analysis of this emergent niche.

Geels noted the “multi-dimensional nature of sustainability transitions” (Geels, 2011 p.25) and the process of structural change. Within-regime innovations are destined to be incremental given the complex nature of lock-in mechanisms (Seyfang and Haxeltine, 2012). Looking at multi-level perspective as a holistic theory of change, rather than a specific technology of practice, Geels highlighted the complexity and inter-dependency of socio-technical transitions and innovation forms and reacts to criticisms of this approach using qualitative methods. Smith et al (2010) highlighted the challenges to methodology for studying socio-technical challenges due to the dynamic nature of change on this area. Geels (2010) noted numerous philosophical approaches to Multi-Level Perspective in order to discover synergies between this approach and social ontologies. Considering Transition Towns as an innovative niche enables an investigation into the potential for rapid and revolutionary change (Smith et al, 2010).

3.1 Participatory Action Research

A Participatory Action Research approach allows the research process to be carried out *with* participants rather than distanced from them and enables a duality of field research alongside active development of Transition Towns for practitioners (Chevalier and Buckles, 2013) and is motivated by solving real-world problems (Denscombe, 2010 p.127) Although the Transition Network offer guidance resources, decision making about organisational processes, activities and governance are decided by Initiatives. A feminist approach to Action Research is well suited to the empowering nature of the Transition Town Movement (Punch, 2005, p137). Furthermore, the research occurred in partnership with the Transition Network’s funded programme to explore the emergence of Regional Networks to support Transition Initiatives in England. Taking inspiration from the Movement’s Participant-led nature and the Author’s experience as a Transition Practitioner, a participatory action research approach allowed a collaborative design to the overall workshop in which the Focus Group data was collected. Approaching the research process in this way allowed primary data to be gathered as well as directly benefitting practitioners – a key aim for the research.

Costs for facilitation and overheads for the workshops were covered by Transition Network. The Author’s on-going involvement as a Transition Practitioner both at the local and regional level are both a benefit and a risk to the research allowing improved access and an insiders view, whilst challenging objectivity of research and perhaps blinding the researcher to the obvious (Denscombe, 2010 p.131).

3.2 Comparative Case Study

A case study is a study that looks in detail at one thing (Thomas, 2016 p3; Punch, 2005 p.144). The area of interest for this case study is the Transition Town Movement, specifically in England as a defined set of local projects based in grassroots social innovation. To maximise the opportunity for generalisations within the Transition Town Movement, the study includes data from 9 Focus Groups held in England. Looking at all 9 focus groups will enable comparison (Thomas, 2016, p.37) and highlight differences as well as similarities. This case study aims to achieve a better understanding of scaling up the Transition Town Movement (Punch, 2005 p.144), however it is not the aim to expand this generalisation beyond the Transition Town Movement although there could be learning for wider grassroots innovation movements (Punch, 2005 p.145-148).

3.3 Data Collection:

3.3.1 Focus Groups

Focus Groups encourage group interaction and conversation to generate data (Kitzinger, 1994; 1995; Morgan, 1996). Both agreement implying consensus and disagreement or minority views are important sources of data (Kitzinger, 1994). The technique is particularly useful to find out participants knowledge and experiences as well as the underlying reasons for viewpoints (Kitzinger, 1995, Powell and Single, 1996) as well as empower and increase morale of participants if they feel valued by an overarching organisation (Powell and Single, 1996) – relevant here as the research was a collaboration with Transition Network. Regional Networks in England are undefined and complex when applied to Transition Towns where activity and organisational form of Initiatives is hugely diverse which also suggests Focus Groups as a research approach (Powell and Single, 1996). Focus Groups, however, are resource-intensive (Morgan, 1996) and are liable to generating large amounts of data that is difficult to analyse (Bryman, 2012 p.517). Group dynamics can influence the effectiveness of focus groups through dominant participants and the researcher having less control (Bryman, 2012, p517).

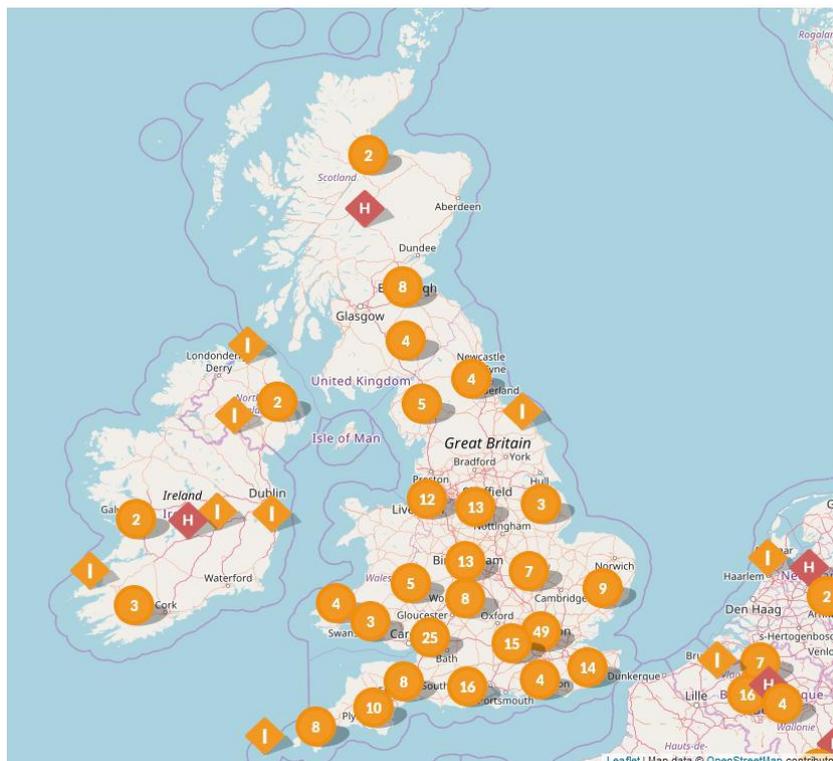
The source for primary data was 9 Focus Groups. Focus Groups are appropriate for exploring a theme in depth with a group (Bryman, 2012 p.501) in order to produce a holistic picture and gain a sense of group decision-making or disagreement (Bryman, 2012 p.501). The Participants were homogenous in the sense that they were all involved in the Transition Town Movement and therefore had a good knowledge, although variable experience (Kitzinger, 1995). The unstructured nature of focus groups (Bryman, 2012 p.503) and emphasis on facilitated discussion between Participants rather than discussion led by the Researcher suited the study's aim of gaining a Practitioner's beliefs and understanding of the opportunities to scale-up (Thomas, 2016 p.192) through building regional networks to allow trends and themes to emerge suited directly to a movement rooted in localisation. Group size varied from 6 to 20 participants and was not restricted by the author, perhaps resulting in variability of depth in data collected for the larger Focus Groups (Bryman, 2012 p.507)

The Focus Groups were Co-Facilitated by a Chairperson who utilised group facilitation techniques to mitigate the risk of individual participants dominating conversation and encourage less confident participants to participate (Bostrom et

al, 1993), During the focus groups, the author drew a graphic illustration to serve as a focus for conversation and to gain a sense of group preference through the process of cumulative voting, or “dot democracy”. Cumulative Voting is a process where each participant is given an equal number of voting dots to place on his or her choices, to gain a sense of preferential intensity across a group (Laukkanen et al, 2004). Participants can place their dots on one, on some or distribute their dots evenly across outcomes and they are encouraged to decide for themselves. The Cumulative Voting process resulted in 4-6 key themes interpreted by the Co-Facilitators and reflected back to the participants for approval. By Chairing effectively using graphic illustration, the Co-Facilitators could keep the conversation on-topic (Bryman, 2012 p.517, Thomas, 2016 p.192))

3.3.2 Workshop Location, Attendance and Reasoning

The focus groups formed part of a series of workshops developed in collaboration with the Transition Network and delivered as part of the UK Regional Connecting and Peer-to-Peer Support Project funded by Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust. As part of the project, extensive mapping of Transition Initiatives in the UK revealed 260 registered Transition Initiatives (Figure 5).



It was decided to offer the Workshop to Transition Initiatives as opposed to local Grassroots Actors identifying with other Movements or Networks to empower and boost morale of Transition Town Actors (Powell and Single, 1996) and ensure a common basic understanding of the Transition Town Movement (Kitzinger, 1995).

Locations for the workshops were chosen based on density of Transition Initiatives, good transport links, informal connections between Transition Initiatives (evidenced in Berkhamsted, Cornwall, the North West and the West Midlands) and a local Initiative offering assistance with logistics

This resulted in workshops being delivered as shown in Table 1 and Figure 6.

Map Reference Number	Location	Region	Dates
1	London	London and the South East	Saturday March 5 th 2016
2	Lancaster	North West	Saturday May 13 th 2017
3	Berkhamsted	South East - mid	Sunday May 14 th 2017
4	Bristol	South West - central	Sunday June 4 th 2017
5	Leicester	East Midlands	Saturday June 17 th 2017
6	Lewes	South East - east	Saturday June 24 th 2017
7	Southampton	South Central	Sunday June 25 th 2017
8	Cambridge	East	Sunday July 9 th 2017
9	Exeter	South West - west	Saturday September 23 rd 2017
10	Cornwall	Cornwall	Sunday September 24 th 2017
11	Worcester	West Midlands	Saturday 11 th November 2017

Table 1: Location and date of Regional Network Workshops



Figure 6: Locations of the 11 Regional Network Workshops. Workshop Numbers refers to Table 1

Of the 11 workshops carried out, 9 are included in this study due to time constraints disqualifying Workshops 1 and 11 (Table 1). However, the workshop structure drew heavily from the learning and methods of Workshop 1 and subsequent meetings of the London and SE Hub.

Although the first 2 workshops were considered as pilots, designed to test and improve logistics, content and process, (Van Teijlingen, E. and Hundley, V., 2002) the section that directly pertains to this research was unchanged. Primary data from all 9 focus groups will be presented and analysed. Data was captured through transcribed audio recording and graphic illustration. The workshop outline is presented in Appendix 1.

Over the 9 workshops used in this study, 56 Transition Initiatives and 105 participants contributed their time and experience to co-designing a Regional Network for their area.

3.4 Coding

This research uses thematic coding generate form the constant comparative method (Thomas, 2016 p.204). Coding is a process of deconstructing data to extract principal themes to be used as building blocks for analysis (Thomas, 2016 p.206, Bryman 2012 p.577). Through constantly comparing data from each focus group, common themes, or differences were observed and the principle themes emerged (Punch, 2005 p. 205). Care was taken not to loose context following coding (Bryman, 2012 p.578) by also referring to graphic illustrations of the transcribed conversations and aggregated themes across all focus groups

3.5 Method of Analysis

Thematic analysis is an exploration of themes within a data set (Fereday and Muir-Cochrane, 2006) where themes are patterns of meaning, both implicit and explicit within the data (Joffe, 2012). Thematic Analysis has been used extensively for analysing qualitative data (Clarke and Braun, 2014) but has been criticized for robustness by some (Bryman, 2012 p.578). Rabiee (2004) suggested taking a framework analysis approach to increase robustness and outlined 8 criteria to interpret coded data, furthering criteria developed by Krueger and Casey (2000). Rabiee's 8 criteria are: words, context, internal consistency, frequency, intensity of comments, specificity of responses, extensiveness and big picture. Thematic analysis also will be influenced by the Researcher's a priori theoretical and experiential knowledge of Transition Towns (Ryan and Bernard, 2003). The purpose of thematic analysis for this research is to compare emergent themes with Strategic Niche Management theory to critically analyse similarity and difference in order to achieve the aims and objectives of this research.

Geels (2010) highlighted both evolution theory and interpretivism as ontologies that resonate with the multi-level perspective, arguing that niche innovation is influenced by the intention of actors based on vision and beliefs, a multi-dimensional selection environment and the active retention of good ideas through interpreting between "creative and heterogeneous actors" (Geels, 2010 p.504). The use of focus groups to facilitate dialogue between intentional niche actors builds on Geels' conclusions, however, the critical analysis in this research may challenge Geels' theoretical viewpoint when applied to Transition Towns.

4. Data Presentation.

Data will be presented from each of the 9 workshops in three ways. First, by description of the coded annotated focus group conversation about themes and roles of a regional network. Second, by photographic record of the graphic illustrated notes of the conversation, showing participant choice of principal themes by dot democracy. And finally, by tabular review of themes chosen by participants for each focus group. For each focus group, invited and attending Initiatives, the workshop location and number of participants from each workshop will be shown. Finally, themes aggregated across all 9 focus groups will then be presented to show National trends.

4.1 Workshop 1: Lancaster (North West) - pilot

4.1.1 Workshop Information

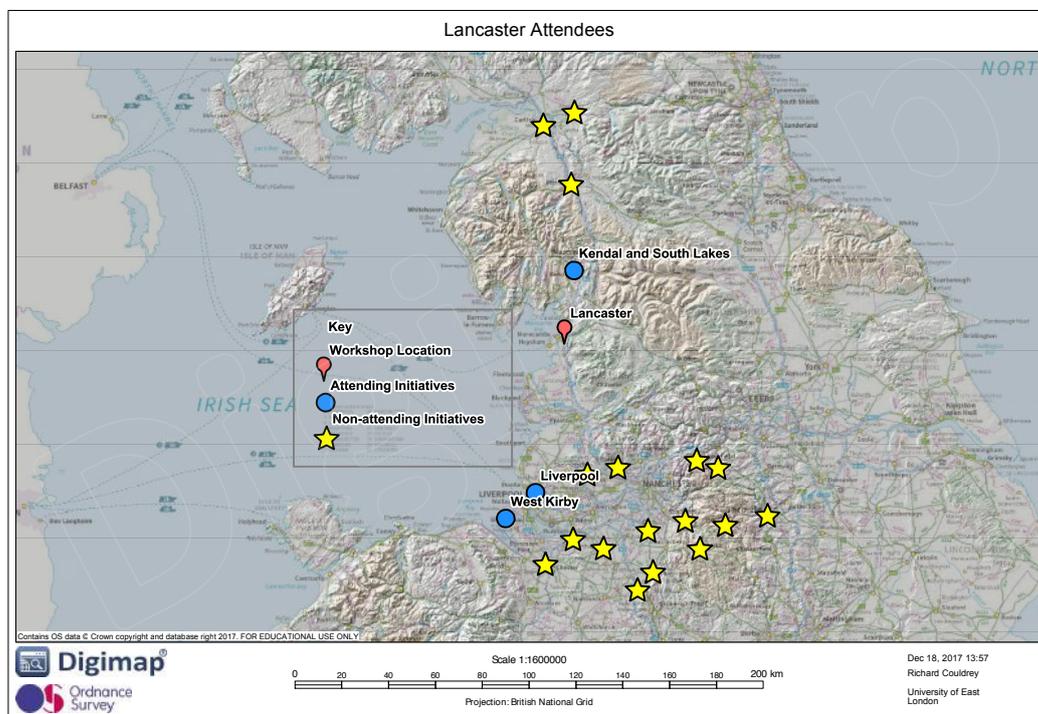


Figure 7: Location of Lancaster Workshop, attending and invited Initiatives

Initiative	Number of Attendees
Transition City Lancaster (host)	3
South Lakes Action on Climate Change	3
Transition Liverpool	1
Transition Town West Kirby	1

Table 2: Number of attendees and Initiatives present in Lancaster

21 Groups were invited covering an area approximately 200km North to South and 50km East to West.

4.1.2 Data Presentation

Theme	Sub-theme	Frequency in Conversation
Sharing	Sharing	8
Network Building	Network Management	10
	Resources	8
	Training	1
	Network Building	0
Visioning	Visioning	12
	Scale	5
	Shared Narratives	0
Joint Projects	Joint Projects	7
Other Organisations	Other Organisations	9

Table 3: Summary of coded themes of a Regional Network and frequency in Conversation in Lancaster

This Focus Group occurred in the first of two pilot workshops and followed a meeting of North West Transition Initiatives in 2016, although participants were not consistent.

Network building was prominent in the discussion, with most attention being paid to Network Management and Resources within that area. Developing vision for the region was of equivalent priority for this group, with conversation focused on, “what would be the unique qualities of a North West Regional Network?” There was a spread of conversation across all subject areas, with sharing, joint projects and connection with other organisations all featuring (Table 3).

Mapping regional assets, Transition and non-Transition activity, supported by online infrastructure to aid communication and sharing was thought to be important by the group. All of the participants had active relationships with non-Transition Groups in the region and had completed projects with other organisations. Observing current systems and complementing those systems to work at scale across the region received a lot of support, particularly in reference to food and working with Sustainable Food Cities, a network supporting urban food growing, to generate more local food production for urban areas from rural areas in the region. Some participants suggested mapping skills across the region to find specialist areas of activity in order to focus local project work in specific areas, although consensus wasn't reached. The idea of strategic planning on a regional level in this way was discussed, with a focus on developing a regional vision and an associated regional identity and definition of Transition Towns activity on the regional scale. The group saw value in aggregating narratives to better define what Transition is and who it is for across the region and creating shared tools for capturing data and aggregating shared aims suggesting a flat governance structure and co-designed processes. Transition activity on this scale would include support for smaller or struggling Initiatives and joint fundraising to increase capacity.

Furthermore, in developing a regional vision for Transition Towns collaboratively, the group felt that they could then define an “endgame” or desired outcome to this

grassroots innovation and use the Transition Towns approach, being apolitical, to engage a wider constituency. Livelihoods and housing were significant elements of desired regional activity, creating more inclusivity and recognising social need as well as suggesting a more business-minded approach.

A third element to defining a regional vision was looking beyond Transition to regional and National movements and projects, such as the Incredible Edible Network (community building through food growing in the public domain) and to see how Transition can work alongside other organisations when values, aims and objectives are similar. The group had a significant number of active projects and connections with Further Education Institutions such as the University of Lancaster with Transition City Lancaster and Zero Carbon Liverpool with Transition Liverpool. This was felt to be an opportunity to develop and build capacity through shared projects.

Approaches to external communication through celebration and creative practice were found to be effective, creating a sense of community and personal identity to the products and services used in the region.

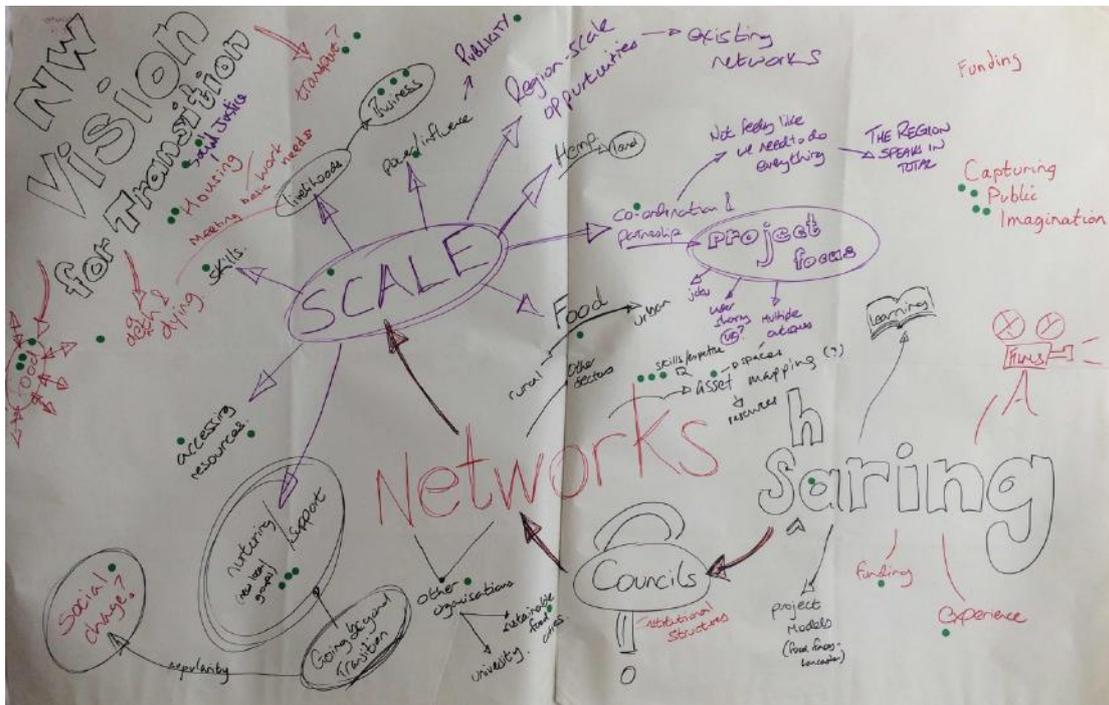


Figure 8: Graphic Illustration of the Themes and Roles of a Regional Network Discussion in Lancaster

The main themes of North West Vision for Transition Towns, working at scale and networks are obvious in the graphic illustration. However, sharing has greater prominence than in the discussion. Table 4 shows the principle themes decided through the cumulative voting process, dot democracy.

Workshop	Themes
Lancaster: May 13th 2017	Education (for Transition groups in the region) Inspiration (for Transition Groups in the region) (Shared) Projects Infrastructure (to support the Network) Sharing (group to group learning) Communication (internal and external)

Table 4: Showing Principle Themes decided by Dot Democracy in Lancaster

4.2 Workshop 2: Berkhamsted – pilot.

4.2.1 Attendees Map:

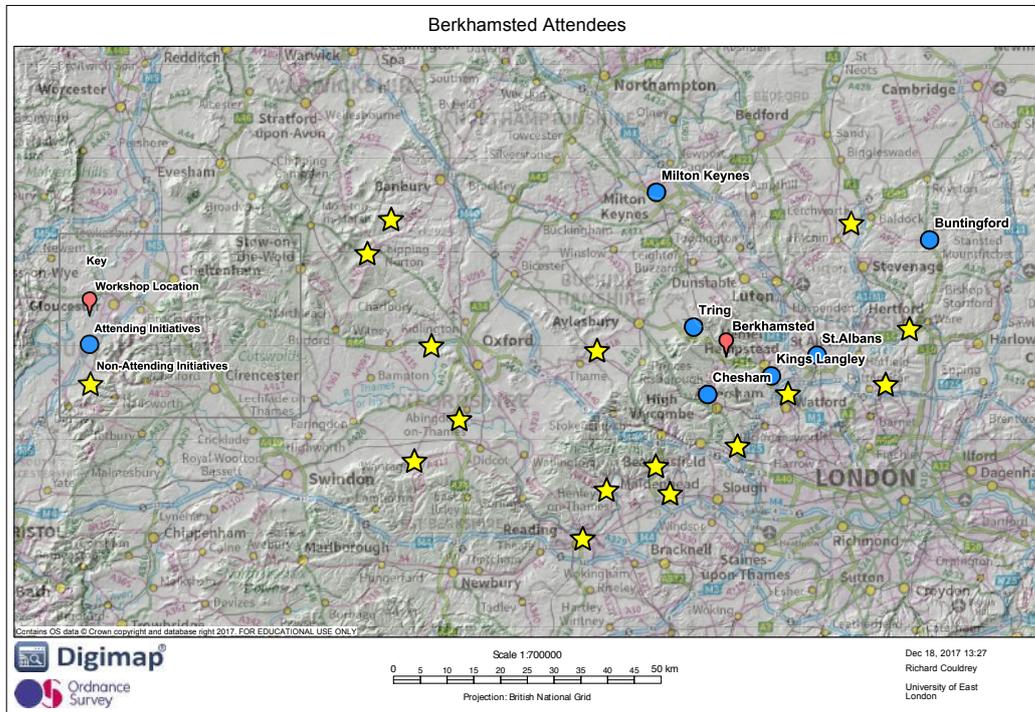


Figure 9: Location of Berkhamsted Workshop, attending and invited Initiatives

Initiative	Number of Attendees
Transition Berkhamsted (host)	1
Transition Milton Keynes	2
Tring in Transition	1
Transition in Kings	2
Buntingford in Transition	1
Transition Town Chesham	1
Transition St.Albans	1

Table 5: Number of attendees and Initiatives present in Barkhamsted

23 Initiatives were invited covering an area approximately 65km North to South and 100km East to West.

4.2.2 Data Presentation

Theme	Sub-theme	Frequency in Conversation
Sharing	Sharing	6
Network Building	Network Management	12
	Resources	12
	Training	
	Network Building	
Visioning	Visioning	
	Scale	2
	Shared Narratives	
Joint Projects	Joint Projects	6
Other Organisations	Other Organisations	

Table 6: Summary of coded themes of a Regional Network and frequency in Conversation in Berkhamsted

There was a clear emphasis on network building during the Berkhamsted conversation, with over 60% of conversation points about resourcing or management of a regional network (Table 6). Transition in Kings and Transition Berkhamsted evidenced the resource efficiency and success of working together on a joint project. Although the group did frequently reflect the time and energy it takes to keep local projects going and questioned the return on investment of a regional network, one participant said, "Time and people were the major thing that's holding us back from saving the world". This led to the suggestion of joint fundraising for regional paid staff in order to increase capacity and expertise to deliver the building blocks of a regional network. However, there was also a hesitance by some towards paid staff, as one participant said, "You change it into something else, as soon as you start paying someone", referring to power and influence as well as centralising ideas and practises. Evidence from previous project was offered to show the benefit of a paid position, the group finally developing values around the idea of employing someone to fit with the Transition Town model, whilst recognising the necessary development of network management to create an employment contract.

Wider notions of network management were addressed, noting the value of meeting face-to-face, but also the balance to be struck in terms of energy, time and the delivery of local projects. A frequency of half a day once or twice a year hosted by different groups was suggested, with complimentary online meeting. Organised network events, either social, thematic or network management featured heavily as a way to practice the regional network and give value continuously. The efficiency and value of working together to improve external communications was discussed, with both points for (shared best practice, shared identity) and against (time to contribute for a shared website, loss of local identity) being aired.

There was discussion around the network's purpose and a determination for the network to make things easier, not harder. Should it be there for the sake of being there, or for increasing the efficiency of delivering projects, activity focused. With

Thematic projects that require a larger geographical scale were greeted with agreement (i.e. greater population and larger market, such as a County/region wide local currency) with some participants recognising that a deliverable project could help define shared rules and working practices at a regional scale.

Finally, sharing best practise and relationships to re-energise, feel like your part of something bigger, cross-pollination of ideas, mentoring and build trust and relationships were shown to be valuable for participants.

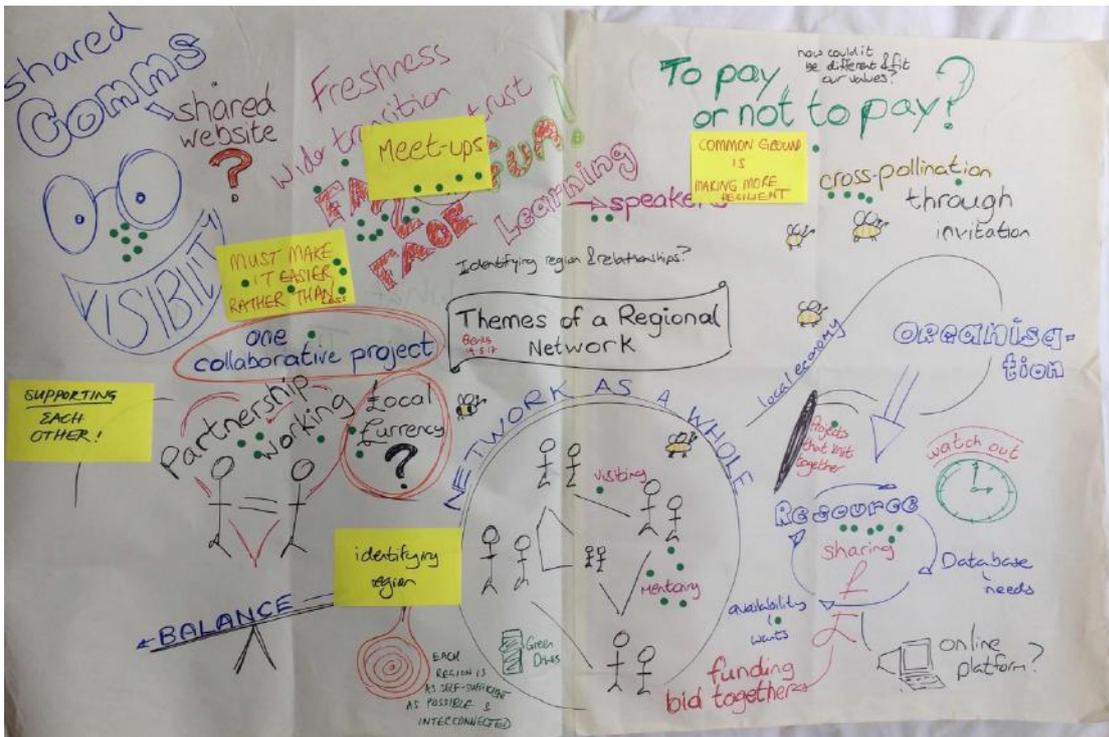


Figure 10: Graphic Illustration of the Themes and Roles of a Regional Network Discussion in Berkhamsted

Figure 10 shows an emphasis on viewing the regional network as a whole, partnership working to increase visibility and the challenge of pay and resources as well as face-to-face meeting up as principle themes. Table 7 shows the principle themes decided through the cumulative voting process, dot democracy.

Workshop	Themes
Berkhamsted: May 14th 2017	Visibility (of Transition activity in the region) Cross Pollination (across the region, of ideas, the bumblebee) Resource Sharing Partnership Working Whole Network (shared narrative, co-designed future projects) Meet Ups (staying connected face to face)

Table 7: Showing Principle Themes decided by Dot Democracy in Berkhamsted

4.3 Workshop 3: Bristol

4.3.1 Attendees Map:

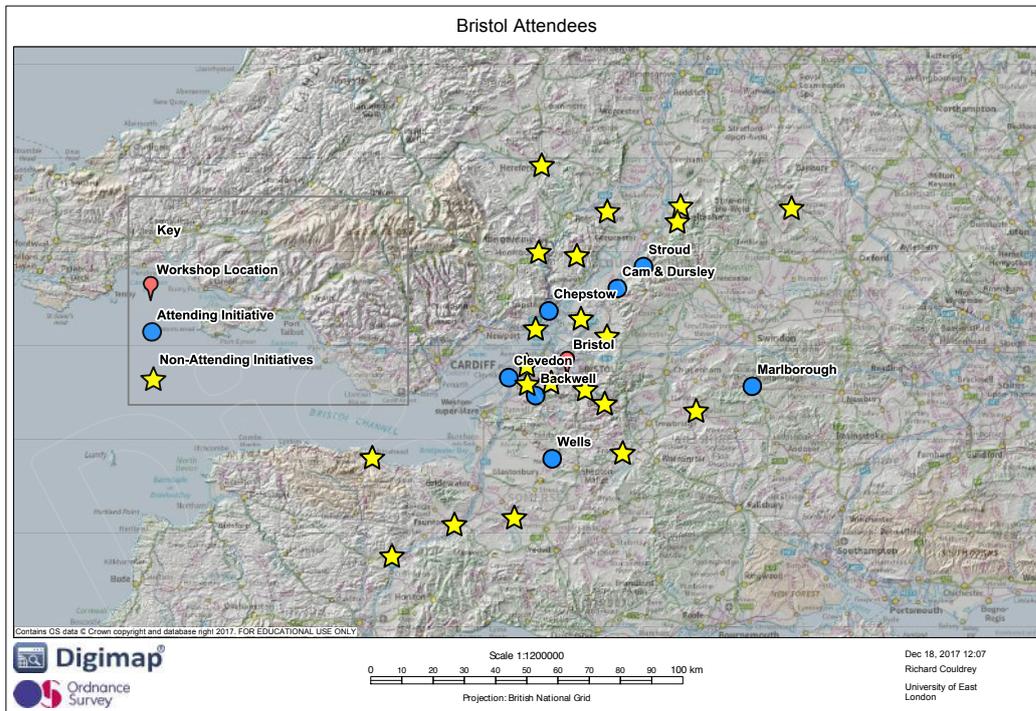


Figure 11: Location of Bristol Workshop, attending and invited Initiatives

Initiative	Number of Attendees
Transition Bristol (host)	4
Transition Wells	2
Transition Cam & Dursley	2
Sustainable Backwell	1
Transition Marlborough	2
Transition Stroud	2
Transition Clevedon	1
Transition Chepstow	1

Table 8: Number of attendees and Initiatives present in Bristol

28 Initiatives were invited covering an area approximately 130km North to South and 135km East to West.

4.3.2 Data Presentation

Theme	Sub-theme	Frequency Conversation	in
Sharing	Sharing	5	
Network Building	Network Management	21	
	Resources	4	
	Training	1	
	Network Building	0	
Visioning	Visioning	2	
	Scale	1	
	Shared Narratives	3	
Joint Projects	Joint Projects	3	
Other Organisations	Other Organisations	3	

Table 9: Summary of coded themes of a Regional Network and frequency in Conversation in Bristol

Overwhelmingly, the Bristol group saw value building the network, interrogating technical infrastructure by way of balancing face-to-face contact with online resources and forums. Skills in the group around technical infrastructure were clear, with platforms for developing online sharing being offered and interrogated to support different ways to connect across the network, thematically or overall (Table 9).

The value of network events, building community through solidarity, support and sharing experience as well as peer-to-peer learning concluded in general agreement for meeting once or twice a year. Project Management skills were offered for a range of activity. The purpose and values of Transition across the region was also chosen as a key area to share approaches and aggregate across all groups. Delivering value continuously through mechanisms to share best practise was raised.

How this regional network connects with other regional networks to increase the lateral exchange of ideas and practices to influence good change through sharing best practice was also suggested, further underlining the sharing of rules, methods and approaches in projects and infrastructures such as governance and administration to increase impact with least effort. Skills training came up less so and only in relation to reaching new people indicating a confidence in approach, but need for increased capacity for groups to do more good things.

The group introduced the need for resource building in terms of conventional money; an alternative exchange to money and the need to increase capacity and the ability to deliver a more substantial network towards livelihoods would be key to early steps of network building. Joint projects within the Transition Town region and with other organisations to meaningfully tackle politics and engage with inter-local projects were clear benefits to working together. A shared vision was introduced, mostly in terms of external communication and the need to keep messaging simple and consensual, despite co-designing a complex network.

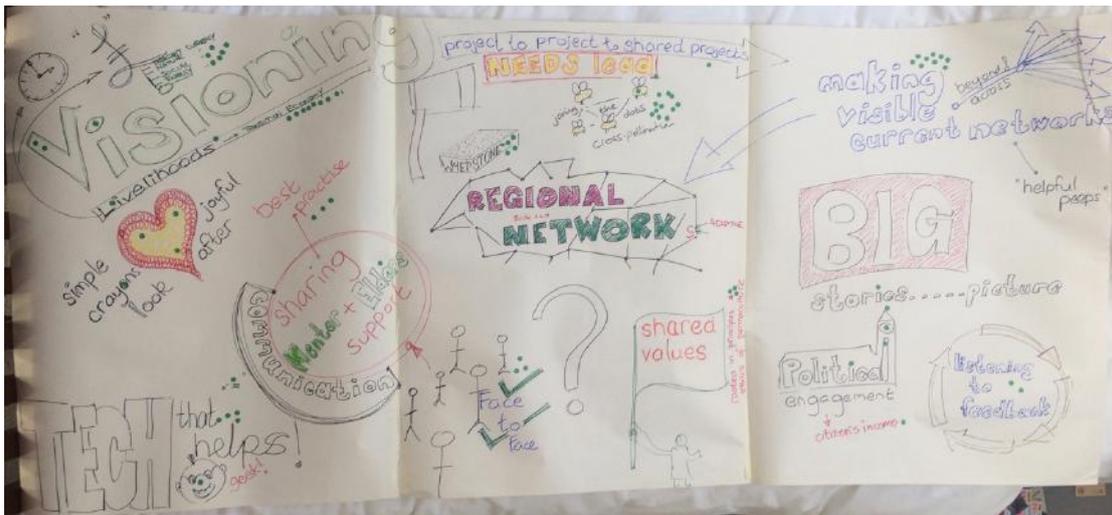


Figure 12: Graphic Illustration of the Themes and Roles of a Regional Network Discussion in Bristol

Figure 12 shows visioning, inter-personal connection through face-to-face meeting, sharing and support, political engagement and developing big stories to be significant. “Tech that helps”, referring to online infrastructure and recognising the value of current networks also feature. The chosen themes following the cumulative voting process of dot democracy are shown in Table 10.

Workshop	Themes
Bristol: June 4th 2017	Current Networks (current connections with other organisations and each other) Shared Values Joining the dots (shared narratives) Staying connected (as a network) Visioning together (for the region) Technical Infrastructure (to support the network)

Table 10: Principle Themes decided by Dot Democracy in Bristol

4.4 Workshop 4: Leicester

4.4.1 Attendees Map:

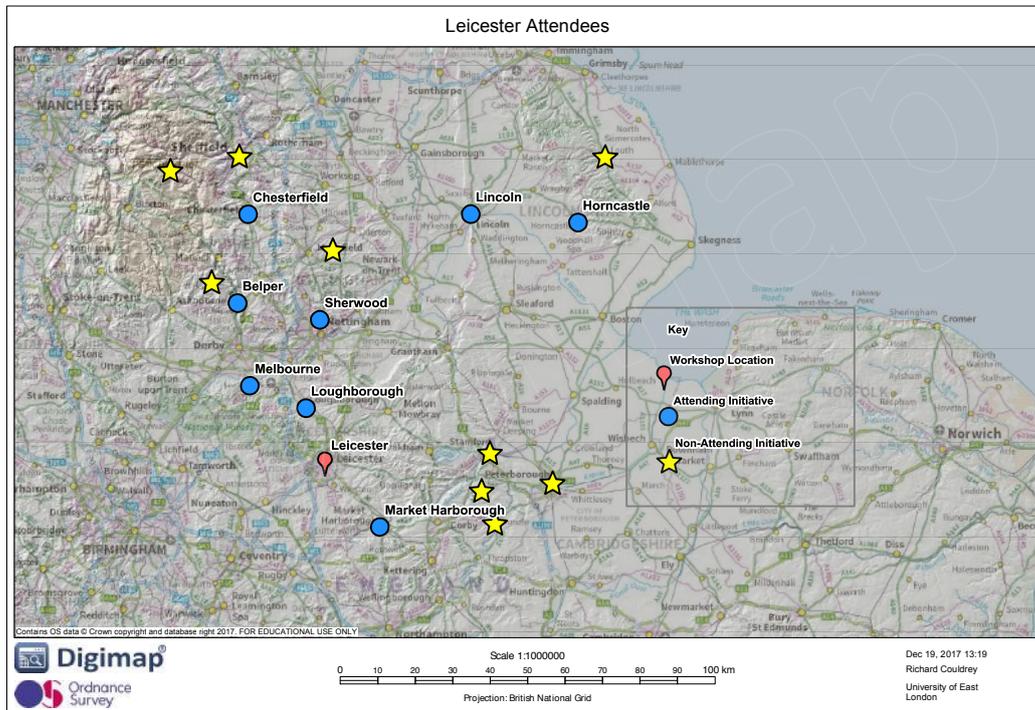


Figure 13: Location of Leicester Workshop, attending and invited Initiatives

Initiative	Number of Attendees
Transition Leicester (host)	4
Melbourne Area Transition	2
Transition Loughborough	1
Transition Lincoln	4
Transition Belper	1
Transition Chesterfield	1
Transition Town Horncastle	1
Transition Sherwood	1
Transition Harborough	1

Table 11: Number of attendees and Initiatives present in Leicester

18 Initiatives were invited covering an area approximately 100km North to South and 115km East to West.

4.4.2 Data Presentation

Theme	Sub-theme	Frequency in Conversation
Sharing	Sharing	7
Network Building	Network Management	22
	Resources	3
	Training	1
	Network Building	1
Visioning	Visioning	1
	Scale	5
	Shared Narratives	7
Joint Projects	Joint Projects	0
Other Organisations	Other Organisations	0

Table 12: Summary of coded themes of a Regional Network and frequency in Conversation in Leicester

Network Building was prominent in discussions, perhaps reflective of a more experienced and larger group (Table 12). The creation of an online resource to easily access information on projects, practices and governance processes of the Transition Initiatives in the region was suggested by the group, with the ability to access and navigate this online library easily and increase local Initiatives ability to learn, contribute and deliver value more easily. However, it was also recognised that developing and maintaining such a resource is a capacity challenge. To address this, the group discussed the idea of joint fundraising to create livelihoods and paid positions for the network, although the complexities of employment were seen as a barrier. Using existing infrastructures and building slowly were championed; most notably the idea of online presence for a regional network as a signposting service was evidenced by work one participant was involved in as an effective service to offer. Sharing resources to access Transition-relevant resources such as insurance, governance support and advice seemed like an obvious benefit, as was shared celebration for encouragement and shared case studies for increased impact and the idea of not reinventing the wheel.

Overall identity and “brand” was seen positively, although not unanimously, with some fearing the danger of co-opting and dilution of individual identity. This also influenced discussion around the focus and governance structure for a regional network, with both forced and observed pathways being supported – do you go where the energy is? Or agree with the majority and “tow the line”?

Organisational structure recognising the value of community, relationship building and sharing support was discussed, for some, with permaculture design principles in mind. This could be manifest in regional network events, connecting Transition Groups to build community, share best practice and introduce greater diversity from outside the region and outside the network. The geographical connection of region over national networks was seen as being beneficial, increasing the possibility of activity having greater local relevance.

Second to Network Building was Vision (Table 12). Shared Narrative, with the possibility of a network greater than constituent parts to increase impact of external communication with public, media and politicians would go some way to addressing the barriers many in the group felt about attracting new members and improving working relationships with local authorities. Community building through shared vision was also seen as beneficial on a personal level – participants wished to know that they were “not alone” and they were contributing to a larger story of change. Finally, the group saw benefit in sub-regional, inter-regional and national network connections to increase diversity, create possibility of shared action and maintain inter-local relevance.



Figure 14: Graphic Illustration of the Themes and Roles of a Regional Network Discussion in Leicester

The graphic illustration (Figure 14) shows a tuning fork signifying a desire to create resonance across Transition Towns activity in the region and a clear leaning towards permaculture as a design system for the regional network. Creating more entry points for newcomers, developing a shared brand and story and connecting with other regional networks indicate a keen sense of acting at all scales. Shared best practice was manifest in the sharing resources and knowledge in a Library. The key themes, decided through cumulative voting, or dot democracy, are represented in Table 13.

Workshop	Themes
Leicester, June 17 th 2017	Wider Networks and Organisations Sharing Resources and Knowledge Designing the Network – Permaculture Staying Connected Stories and Narratives

Table 13: Principle Themes decided by Dot Democracy in Leicester

4.5 Workshop 5: Lewes

4.5.1 Attendees Map:

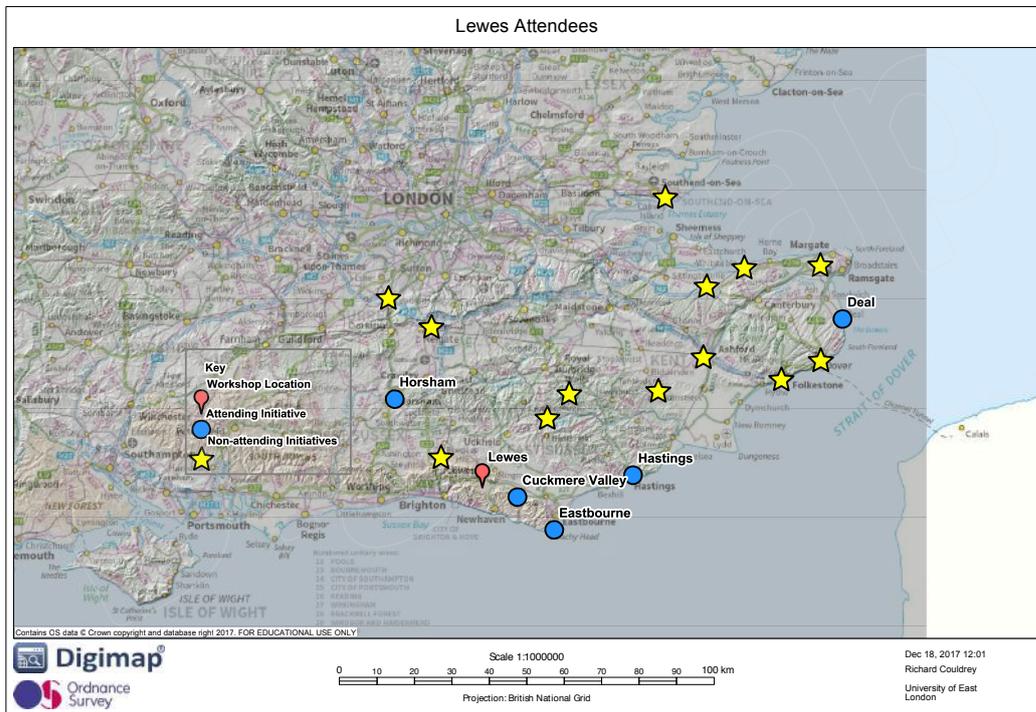


Fig 15: Location of Lewes Workshop, attending and invited Initiatives

Initiative	Number of Attendees
Transition Town Lewes (host)	1
Eastbourne Transition	1
Deal with It	1
Hastings Transition Town	1
Transition Horsham	1
Cuckmere Valley Transition	1

Table 14: Number of attendees and Initiatives present in Lewes

19 Initiatives were invited covering an area approximately 90km North to South and 120km East to West.

4.5.2 Data Presentation.

Theme	Sub-theme	Frequency in Conversation
Sharing	Sharing	10
Network Building	Network Management	8
	Resources	5
	Training	0
	Network Building	0
Visioning	Visioning	0
	Scale	3
	Shared Narratives	6
Joint Projects	Joint Projects	10
Other Organisations	Other Orgs	4

Table 15: Summary of coded themes of a Regional Network and frequency in Conversation in Lewes

The conversation in Lewes was much more balanced between Sharing, Network Building, developing vision and Joint Projects (Table 15).

Sharing best practise across projects, governance processes, communication and solution finding was felt to have immediate benefit. The collective ideas, experiences and knowledge, or “hive mind” (Figure 16), of Transition Initiatives across a region and user-friendly access to that was attractive to the participants. Some participants had already connected regionally and benefitted from informal mentoring and sharing through attendance at meetings and over the phone advice. Although, it was also recognised that context from town to town changes, the group recognised the skill in applying greater shared knowledge to their own Transition Initiative. This also fitted in to a larger narrative of obsolescence, noting the success of the green movement in Brighton and the lack of Transition Initiative there.

Regional Network events were also highlighted as being of benefit with recognition given to the Community-building nature of gathering face-to-face. In previous years, a network had emerged in East Kent, mostly focused on sharing inspiration and co-ordinated by one Initiative, however this network collapsed when that initiative failed highlighting the vulnerability of putting too much power with too few actors.

Capacity for a Regional Network was a shared concern, with the group showing concern for the ability to deliver based on previous experience. One participant said, “it shouldn’t add, it should add value but it shouldn’t consume energy from the groups...” although the group didn’t offer any solution to this.

Shared external communication and signposting for people new to Transition was discussed with the added ability to induct new people with a shared understanding of what Transition looked like in this region. The group felt benefit from outside actors coming in to offer and facilitate the workshop and felt this could be a function of the Regional Network going forwards. Also, external communication to connect with the media, either for a common project across the region, or identifying local projects as being part of a larger network was seen as being beneficial.

Delivering value continuously was shared numerous times throughout the workshop – how can practitioners benefit from a Regional Network was a key question. Shared resources in physical terms were also currently practiced on the inter-local level, with projectors and transport being offered effectively through networks.

The group felt a need to balance a common narrative across the region with intensely local application of the Transition Towns model, fearing dilution and a lack of local vindication as a potential negative effect of a heavy handed regional approach. However, the benefits of being seen as part of a bigger picture regionally, nationally and internationally and finding an impactful method to communicate that at a local level were attractive for both local projects and relationship building with local authorities, larger organisations and political actors – being part of a larger narrative had perceived greater impact for local media and external communications as well as the ability to attract inputs such as speakers and films to the region, creating more effective use of available capacity across a wider and more diverse skills base in the region.

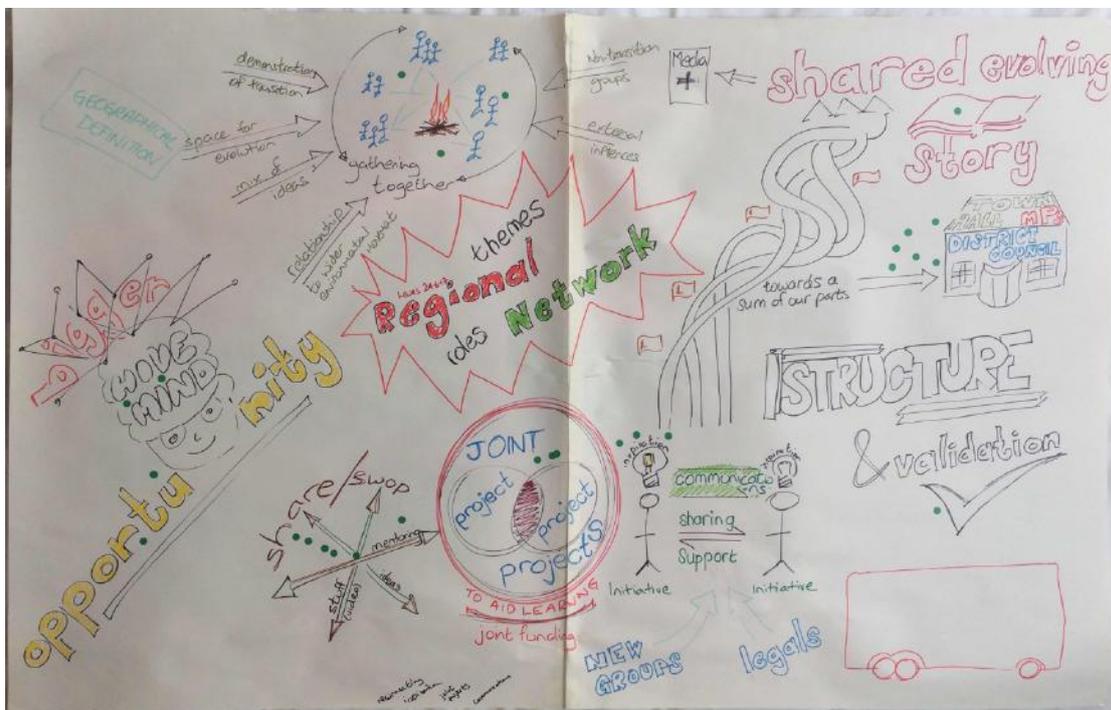


Figure 16: Graphic Illustration of the Themes and Roles of a Regional Network Discussion in Lewes

Observing the graphic illustration (figure 16) highlighted the opportunity of collective experience, knowledge and ideas in the “hive mind” to gain a sense of individual initiatives being part of a bigger picture. Gathering and conversing together is also seen to have multiple benefits, including sharing and supporting and seeding new project ideas, perhaps leading to joint projects. The collective nature of many elements of the graphic illustration relate to creating a shared and evolving story, co-written by all Transition Towns in the region. Finally the structure of an emergent network and the validating nature of being part of a network were noted. Table 16 highlights the 4 themes that emerged through cumulative voting.

Workshop	Themes
Lewes: June 23rd 2017	Sharing Inspiration & Support Staying Connected Joint Projects Acting as a Region (influencing local Government etc.)

Table 16: Principle Themes decided by Dot Democracy in Lewes

4.6 Workshop 6: Southampton

4.6.1 Attendees Map:

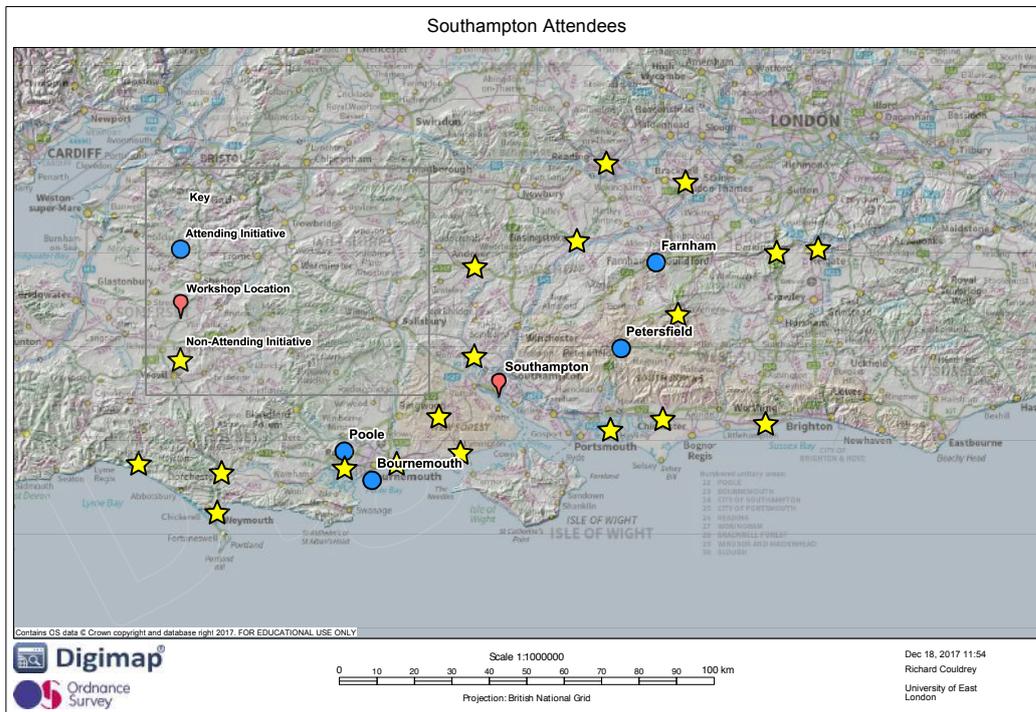


Figure 17: Location of Southampton Workshop, attending and invited Initiatives

Initiative	Number of Attendees
Transition Southampton (host)	3
Transition Bournemouth	3
Transition Farnham	1
Transition Poole	1
Petersfield	1

Table 17: Number of attendees and Initiatives present in Southampton

24 Initiatives were invited covering an area approximately 90km North to South and 160km East to West.

4.6.2 Data Presentation

Theme	Sub-theme	Frequency in Conversation
Sharing	Sharing	6
Network Building	Network Management	16
	Resources	0
	Training	0
	Network Building	0
Visioning	Visioning	0
	Scale	2
	Shared Narratives	3
Joint Projects	Joint Projects	0
Other Organisations	Other Organisations	6

Table 18: Summary of coded themes of a Regional Network and frequency in Conversation in Southampton

Network Management was the major discussion point in Southampton with a group that contained a range of experience (Table 18). A shared resource, or library, for the common items that would be of most use across the region, such as templates for marketing materials, constitutions or best practice for delivering projects were discussed as was methods to maintain such a resource, with the group suggesting shared fundraising to support that maintenance and to mitigate the danger of drawing capacity away from local action.

The development of shared rules to aid definition of Transition Towns locally was seen as beneficial, despite a mixed reaction to the idea of a regional “brand”. The group were in favour of a flat governance structure for the regional network and a process of iterative development for the network, allowing time for definitions and purpose to emerge. A secondary benefit to a flat structure was the perceived openness of the Transition Movement to new ideas and new people, highlighting a tension between a common, shared identity and direction with local innovation and personal preferences within local projects. Indeed, one participant summarised the direction of the conversation as being a “communications structure... for a network of ...Transition Groups with the possibility of empowerment through celebration”.

The idea of celebration was seen to benefit the community and inter-relational aspect of participants experience with Transition. Gathering in a spirit of celebration increased the diversity of experience, re-energising participants, providing inspiration and a shared sense of purpose. The group saw benefit in gathering in the context of a the workshop and thought a regional network would offer a good platform for arranging future gatherings of this nature.

The regional network also felt like a more appropriate scale to address the larger challenges of the dominant regime and political and media narratives as well as introduce approaches from different organisations and sectors for the benefit of strategic planning at the regional level. Connecting with other organisations and discourses would also help to define what Transition is and what role it has to play and creating more interface with a greater diversity of ideas, approaches and actors in different sectors of the regime as well as connection with other Transition regional networks.

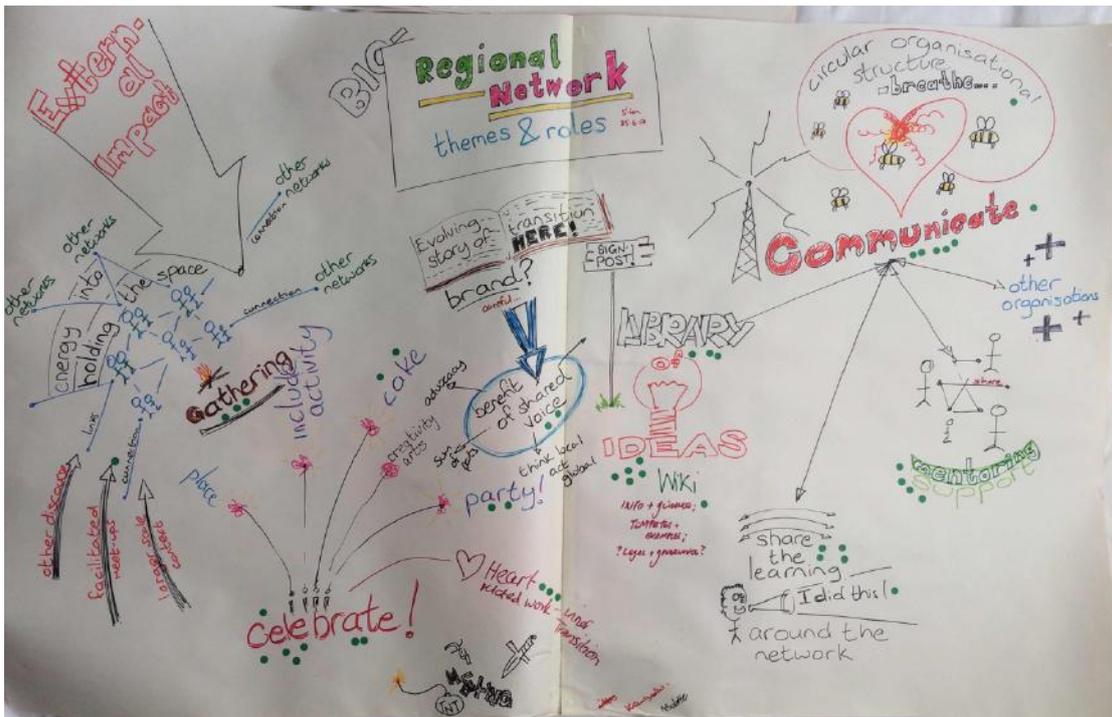


Figure 18: Graphic Illustration of the Themes and Roles of a Regional Network Discussion in Southampton

Communication, celebration, a library of ideas and external impact appear as the dominant themes of the graphic illustration (Figure 18) as well as brand as a benefit of a shared voice. Principle themes through cumulative voting are highlighted on Table 19.

Workshop	Themes
Southampton: June 24th 2017	Celebrate! Sharing & Support Communication - out Staying Connected Library of Ideas

Table 19: Principle Themes decided by Dot Democracy in Southampton

4.7 Workshop 7: Cambridge

4.7.1 Attendees Map:

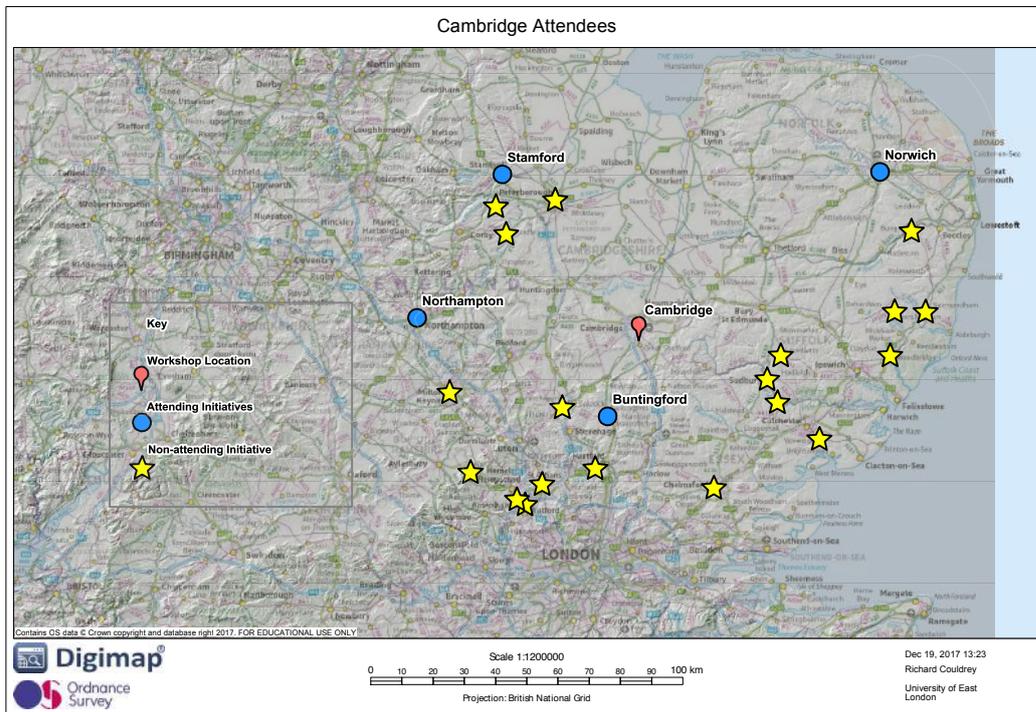


Figure 19: Location of Cambridge Workshop, attending and invited Initiatives

Initiative	Number of Attendees
Transition Town Cambridge (host)	5
Norwich	2
Buntingford	1
Stamford	1
Northampton	3

Table 20: Number of attendees and Initiatives present in Cambridge

24 Initiatives were invited covering an area approximately 115km North to South and 165km East to West.

4.7.2 Data Presentation

Theme	Sub-theme	Frequency in Conversation
Sharing	Sharing	17
Network Building	Network Management	8
	Resources	3
	Training	0
	Network Building	0
Visioning	Visioning	0
	Scale	3
	Shared Narratives	12
Joint Projects	Joint Projects	5
Other Organisations	Other Organisations	2

Table 21: Summary of coded themes of a Regional Network and frequency in Conversation in Cambridge

Sharing and Visioning were the most popular primary themes for the Cambridge workshop that had predominantly mature Transition Initiatives present, but a range of personal experiences from the 1960s to the 2010s was evident in the content of the discussion (Table 21).

The potential for benefit of Organised network events was both imagined and experience based. Community building through peer-to-peer support, increased personal connection and sharing was seen of great benefit. Even the notion of travelling together to get to face-to-face meetings would allow time to get to know each-other that was otherwise rare. Participants also felt there was a place for reflection in a safe space of a regional network meeting, the act of removing oneself from usual situations into unusual situations was seen to create possibility for reflection that wouldn't otherwise be there. Additional perspective could be gained of the wider context of regional, national and global challenges within which the Transition Town Movement is empowering local action. Sharing barriers and how to overcome them could also have a place in non-thematic regional events, as could over coming personal grief for the current state of humanity on Planet Earth. This personal approach extended to creating more opportunities for people to be involved, showing genuine interest in individual stories of change and how the Transition Town Movement might be the right context for more people to become activist.

Theme-based network events had been practiced informally and had proved to be effective ways to share best practice and increase efficiency and impact of local projects. Thematic events were process based as well as outcome based, although elements of celebration, felt by the group to be important to maintain momentum and personal resilience, were evident in public facing, outcome-based network events such as the Bright Green Energy Show delivered by one of the attending Initiatives. Theme based regional events were also seen to create good focus for participation and efficiency in aggregating learning to amplify effectiveness of participants when learning is brought back to local projects. The diversity of projects across the participants led to offers of shared learning in a variety of areas.

Shared identity was seen as beneficial, with added value gained from presenting projects with additional billing as being part of a regional network. Being clear as to the resources, vision and definition of Transition Towns in the region would, it was suggested, mitigate against the possibility of being co-opted. The group raised the question about how to define Transition Towns on a local level, before the regional level, particularly before reaching out to other organisations for collaboration. There was a mixed response to the proposal of collaborating with other organisations, some participants feeling there was clarity in purpose and vision to develop before reaching out. However, the participants saw being part of a larger narrative as being of significant benefit. Aggregated activities across the region could affect greater change, with more cohesiveness to theme-based action in a multitude of ways.

Communicating using current and available resources to good effect could benefit the regional network due to the immediacy of online tools. Social Media was offered as an effective way to gain swift support from a wider, more diverse constituency than email, for example, that would have challenges for specific personal capacity and practices. This idea of shared rules for participants in the network would need to be agreed for any online tools to be successful. Personal interests were once again raised as reasoning for deciding effective methods for communication. One participant said, "There's no point in us emailing the whole group about a subject when half the group don't even want to see your email about that particular subject." Concern was voiced about the resilience of the idea of a regional network – the initial energy waning over time quite rapidly, a concern that could be mitigated by developing and agreeing shared rules and practices.

Connection with other organisations and developing a regional methodology to Transition Towns to perhaps become a convener, an umbrella to many local groups operating in sustainability was raised with the purpose of increasing impact at moments when common projects emerge. Widening the relevance and application of Transition as an approach was seen as a way to widen appeal particularly outside the "environmentalist ghetto and try to imagine everyone who can gain by having this transition to a zero carbon world", as one participant said, in order to develop a strategy and vision to enable Transition Towns to be popular. In collaboration, a regional network could sometimes be a leader and sometimes be a supporter, negating the need for duplication.

Improved external communication as a regional network could convince more to join in. Simply showing change proves change is possible and creates more dynamism in the exchange between Transition practitioners and potential new actors.

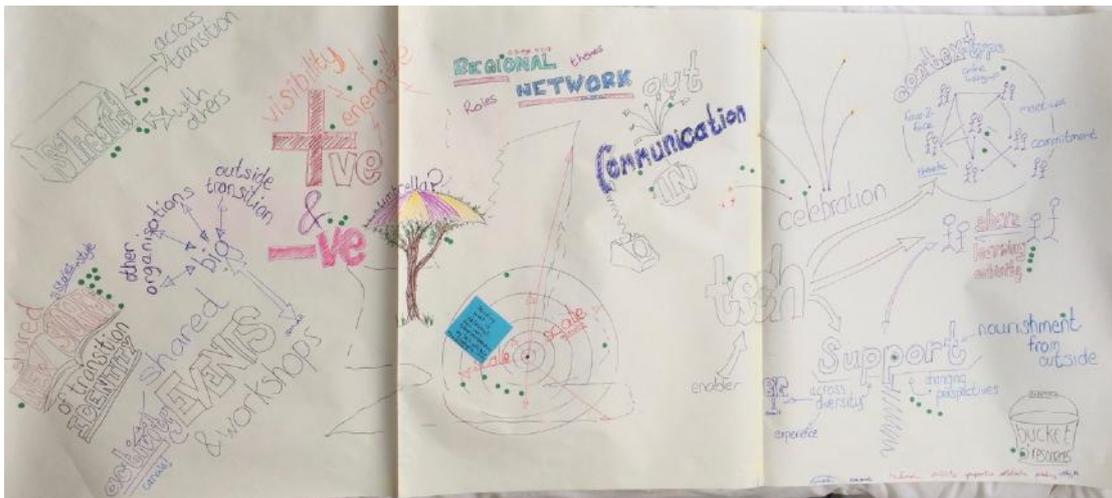


Figure 20: Graphic Illustration of the Themes and Roles of a Regional Network Discussion in Cambridge

The graphic illustration (Figure 20) shows the breadth of conversation in Cambridge. Solidarity and celebration are noted strongly along with network building elements such as “tech” – referring to technical infrastructure to support the network, communication both internally and externally and shared events. The group highlighted the importance of both positive and negative stories as well as working as an umbrella to sustainability action in the region. Finally, table 22 shows the agreed 5 key themes from cumulative voting, or dot democracy.

Workshop	Themes
Cambridge: July 9th 2017	Celebration Communication Scale - Local to International Shared Story Sharing & Support

Table 22: Principle Themes decided by Dot Democracy in Cambridge

4.8 Workshop 8: Exeter

4.8.1 Attendees Map:

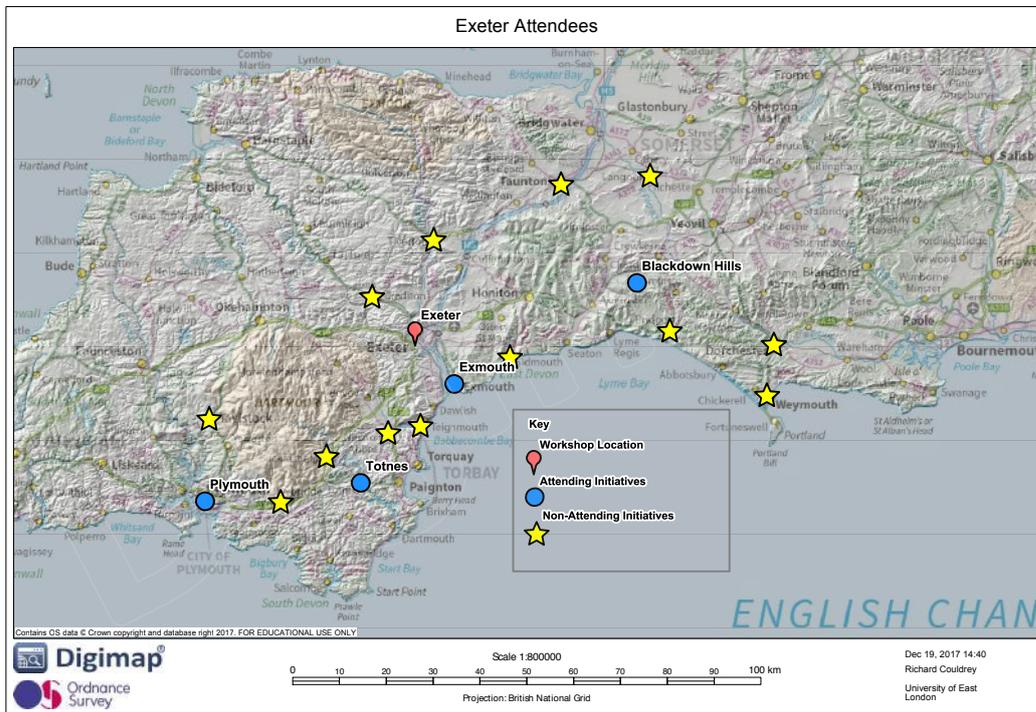


Figure 21: Location of Exeter Workshop, attending and invited Initiatives

Initiative	Number of Attendees
Transition Exeter (host)	3
Blackdown Hills Transition Group	1
Transition Exmouth	2
Transition Plymouth	2
Transition Town Totnes	2

Table 23: Number of attendees and Initiatives present in Exeter

19 Initiatives were invited covering an area approximately 60km North to South and 120km East to West.

4.8.2 Data Presentation.

Theme	Sub-theme	Frequency in Conversation
Sharing	Sharing	14
Network Building	Network Management	4
	Resources	5
	Training	1
	Network Building	3
Visioning	Visioning	2
	Scale	7
	Shared Narratives	3
Joint Projects	Joint Projects	5
Other Organisations	Other Organisations	8

Table 24: Summary of coded themes of a Regional Network and frequency in Conversation in Exeter

Visioning, Network and Sharing were the principle areas of discussion with participants from relatively experienced groups, including the first Transition Town - Transition Town Totnes (Table 24).

Promoting local workshops to the wider network to offer shared skills was seen as a quick win. The group could also see benefit in sharing newsletters, although there was concern about too much information being shared to the few people who are doing the majority of the work in local projects, risking overload. This idea was developed into a specific and relevant newsletter on a regional scale. "Shared skills" was also evident at the inter-local scale with speakers from Transition Initiatives in the region being offered to others as well as the offer of site visits to local projects.

Cumulative influence for campaigning regionally could increase influence on Local Authorities to follow a more sustainable path. The flow of influence and mobilisation from local to regional level was thought to offer benefit to practitioners through validation and to larger narratives regionally.

Specific and themed regional events were discussed and thought to have significant benefit to build Community, share skills, aggregate learning and increase impact as well as be attractive by nature of being themed, there would be a specific offer on the table.

Capacity for developing the Network was raised as a concern with one participant saying, "It needs resources, it needs people who are prepared to do the work." regional level funding was seen as a possible route to mitigate that. There was also some confusion about the role of Transition Network in a regional and national network structure.

Creating a regional network infrastructure to aid the dissemination of learning and best practise by way of an online resource or website was raised as a quick and "free at the point of use" resource. However, there was also call to grow the network slowly, beginning with those attending in an achievable way, developing a sense of purpose to attract more participants once the value of attending is clear. There was

recognition of the value of meeting face-to-face as well as creating online resources to enable swift and effective exchange across the network.

The group were interested in the inter-regional sharing of information, best practice and activity as well as the connection to the National and International Transition Town Movement. Regional connection was seen to have a specific purpose to that geographical scale, which was yet to be determined. Some participants were interested in the County scale, seeing little connection beyond, whilst others did see value in connecting across the South West. Questions about the region and the benefit of regional connection continued throughout the conversation, however, there was perceived benefit in working regionally on shared projects and extending the reach of Transition Towns beyond the “usual suspects” of Environmentalists, developing the concept as part of that process. Understanding and articulating activity and approaches across the region and developing approaches to regional Government structures seemed to clearly fit this difficult to define regional scale, despite reservations as to its effectiveness.

Inter-local and region-scale projects, developed by Transition and through collaboration with other organisations generated significant interest in the group particularly green routes that cross town and Parish boundaries and campaigning influence on County Authority policy, such as divestment of pension funds. Landscape influences, such as the Brexit, were also seen as creating opportunity at a regional scale. Connection to local partners could address issues of participant diversity and offer avenues to connect with young people as well as increase a sense of validation by being part of projects with higher profile and larger impact that fit with the values of Transition.

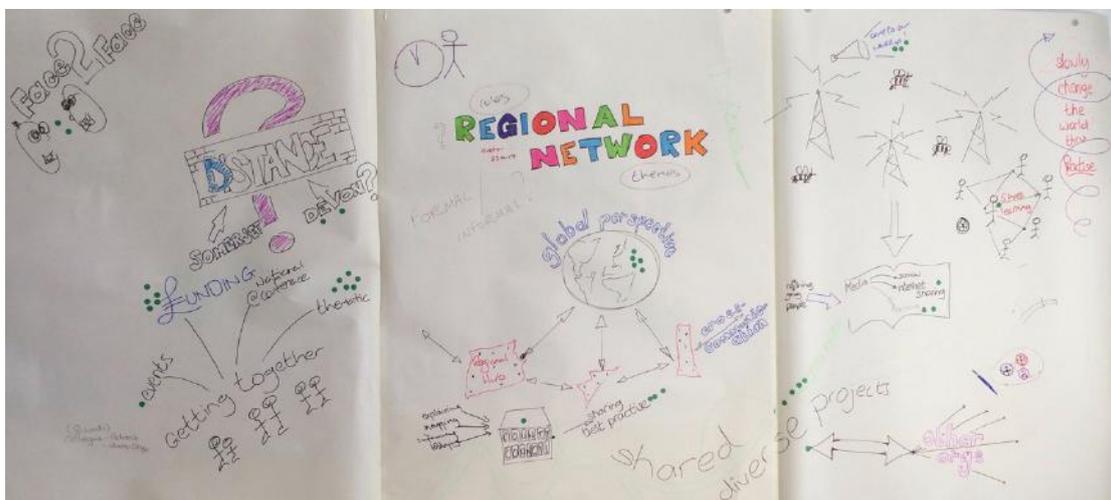


Figure 22: Graphic Illustration of the Themes and Roles of a Regional Network Discussion in Exeter

The graphic illustration (Figure 22) highlights communication between Transition Initiatives and inter-regional, National and International connection being of high importance. Getting together for regional network events and the possibilities of shared, diverse projects would improve the ability of Transition Towns to connect strongly with Local Authorities. However, distance across this region was seen as a significant barrier. Table 25 shows the key themes decided by cumulative voting, or dot democracy.

Workshop	Themes
Exeter: September 23rd 2017	Global Perspective Shared Learning/best practice/by theme Staying Connected Funding (resources) Shared Diverse Projects (multi-organisation collaborations)

Table 25: Principle Themes decided by Dot Democracy in Exeter

4.9 Workshop 9: Cornwall

4.9.1 Attendees Map:

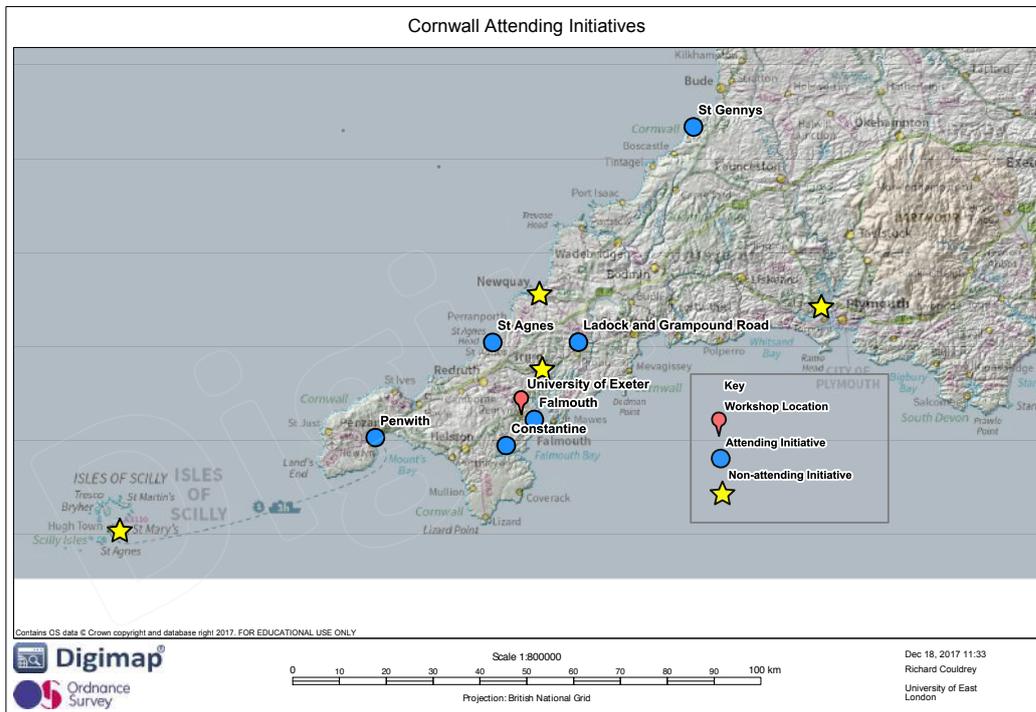


Figure 23: Location of Cornwall Workshop, attending and invited Initiatives

Initiative	Number of Attendees
University of Exeter (host)	1
Transition Constantine	4
Transition St.Gennys	3
Transition Falmouth	3
Transition Cornwall Network	1
Transition Ladock & Grampound Road	3
Transition Penwith	2
Transition St.Agnes	3

Table 26: Number of attendees and Initiatives present in Cornwall

11 Initiatives were invited covering an area approximately 85km North to South and 150km East to West. Perhaps more significantly, the Isles of Scilly were a plane ride away.

4.9.2 Data Presentation

Theme	Sub-theme	Frequency in Conversation
Sharing	Sharing	5
Network Building	Network Management	5
	Resources	5
	Training	1
	Network Building	
Visioning	Visioning	2
	Scale	4
	Shared Narratives	14
Joint Projects	Joint Projects	4
Other Organisations	Other Organisations	2

Table 27: Summary of coded themes of a Regional Network and frequency in Conversation in Cornwall

The Cornwall Workshop was the largest of the 9 workshops with 20 participants from 7 Transition Initiatives. This was in part due to the presence of Transition Cornwall Network a constituted organisation connecting democratically elected Transition Groups in Cornwall. Transition Cornwall Network used the opportunity to hold their Annual General Meeting on the same day in the hour prior to the Workshop. However, there were new participants to the group as well as significant friendships and shared histories.

Shared Narratives and Vision were the highest priority items for the network, with external communication for sharing understanding with a wider constituency to make the cultural and social shifts and combat a resistance to change being a key component to the value of a regional network (Table 27). This idea of a narrative that the vast majority can get behind was seen to be resonant with a Transition Town ethos of obsolescence – make it so popular that the “brand” is no longer needed. Narratives and story were also seen as being effective to influence personal epiphanies, individual decisions to change behaviour towards the Transition Town model. Using visual language was also felt to be very powerful in creating a connection with people and place to retain local relevance to a larger narrative. Exercising that shared narrative in Institutional structures such as the education system was discussed, although notably without the resources required to do that.

Shared identity was also discussed, with one group recently changing their identity from “Transition Town...” to “Sustainable...” because they felt that the former required explanation, rather than the latter did not. However, the group was undecided as to how effective that was, highlighting that “sustainable” is highly co-optable and “Transition Town” generates *good* conversation, a required component of behaviour change and implies movement from one state to another. Inter-local conversation with Transition Town Groups in Cornwall was seen to benefit conversation about a vision of the network and the process of back casting to imagine steps towards that vision. This showed a Network ready to consider shared

action and shared aims towards affecting greater change, perhaps a sign of the relative maturity of Transition Cornwall Network.

The geographical scale of a regional network was brought into question, with some feeling defined personally by Cornwall and others seeing Cornwall as a nominal administrative boundary that shouldn't necessarily define a regional network, looking more towards ecological regions. Inter-regional connection was desired by the group to diversify inputs and improve practice.

Network Building through training, resources and Network Management was highlighted as a key component of this Regional Network. Both paid staff and accessible resources to relevant information and other networks were seen as being important, indeed to generate the appropriate capacity to develop the Network in Cornwall was seen as necessary with one Participant saying, "this is just pie in the sky unless we can get some money from somewhere". Clearly signposting Transition activity in Cornwall to more people and to other organisations was highlighted as being appropriate to the regional scale.

Joint projects could be seen to be beneficial to the wider group in terms of profile and of taking advantage of landscape impacts such as the Brexit. A "Transition Towns Day" of joint activity across all Transition groups on the same day could be a great opportunity to reach and engage regional media, politicians and organisations.

Finally, benefit was seen across the group of meeting once a year for face-to-face contact for Community and relationship building as well as shared best practise and dissemination of activities from outside Cornwall.

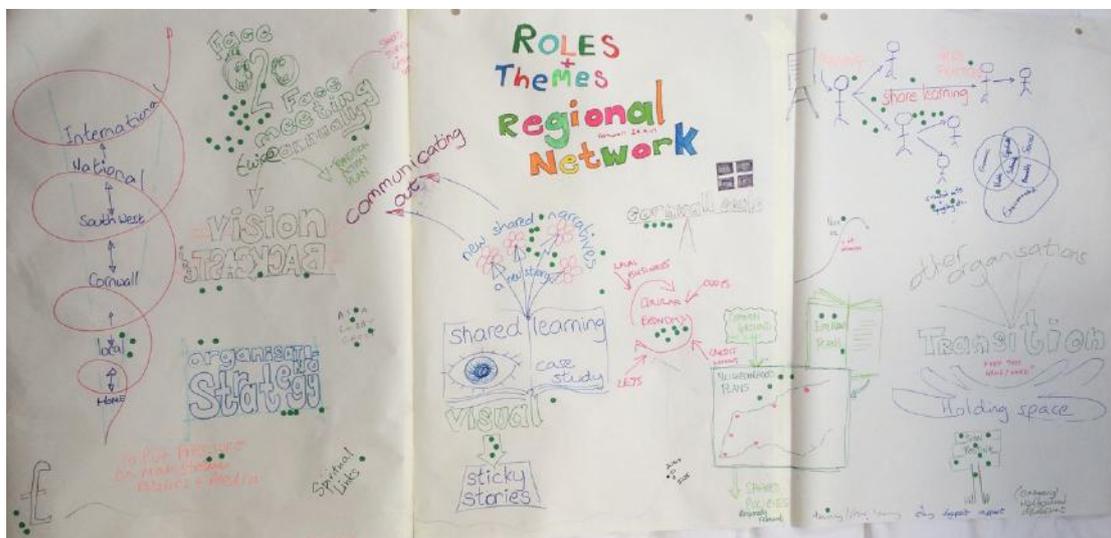


Figure 24: Graphic Illustration of the Themes and Roles of a Regional Network Discussion in Cornwall

Links from the local to the International scale and face-to-face meeting at the regional scale were both highlights of the graphic illustration (Figure 24). Developing strategy, vision, shared narrative to enable a stronger and clearer message for external communication showed a readiness to act together. Clear signposting and showing Transition Towns as a holding space for new participants also came

through strongly. Principle themes for the further development of a Regional Network in Cornwall are shown in Table 28.

Workshop	Themes
Cornwall: September 24th 2017	Links with other organisations/ narratives/ institutions Strategy & Visioning Shared Learning Staying Connected - highlighting face to face as being particularly valuable. New shared narratives & creativity (Shared story)

Table 28: Principle Themes decided by Dot Democracy in Cornwall

4.10 Aggregated Trends for Themes and Roles of a Regional Network.

Table 29 shows the coded themes summarised from all 9 focus groups showing clearly that sharing best practice, experiences and resources as well as staying connected between local projects was common to all regions. The next three categories – being part of a bigger picture/vision for Transition Towns in the region, Connecting with other organisations and communication outside the niche are all externally focused despite network management areas such as organisation and infrastructure and resources for niche development receiving little aggregated votes across all workshops, despite being recognised in conversation as being of high importance. Finally, inter-local support, partnership projects and celebration also received a low number of votes.

Coded Theme	Focus Group	Number
Sharing inside the niche	Lancaster, Berkhamsted, Bristol, Leicester, Lewes, Southampton, Cambridge, Exeter, Cornwall	9
Staying Connected inside the niche	Lancaster, Berkhamsted, Bristol, Leicester, Lewes, Southampton, Cambridge, Exeter, Cornwall	9
Being Part of a Bigger Picture/Vision for Transition Towns in the Region	Berkhamsted, Bristol, Lewes, Cambridge, Exeter, Cornwall	6
Connecting with other Organisations in the regime	Berkhamsted, Bristol, Lancaster, Exeter, Cornwall	5
Communication outside the niche	Lancaster, Berkhamsted, Southampton, Cambridge	4
Organisation and Infrastructure of the niche	Lancaster, Berkhamsted, Bristol	3
Inter-local Support	Lewes, Southampton, Cambridge	3
Inter-local partnership projects	Lancaster, Berkhamsted, Lewes	3
Celebration	Southampton, Cambridge	2
Resources for niche development	Berkhamsted, Exeter	2

Table 29: Aggregated Themes Chosen by Participants in all 9 Focus Groups

5. Critical Analysis

Based on the thematic analysis of focus groups, a clearer picture of how the Transition Town Movement in the UK can have greater impact in assisting communities to transition to a more sustainable future can emerge. Using the conditions of Strategic Niche Management introduced in the literature review, it is possible to analyse the issues raised for the development of regional hubs and to propose next steps for the Transition town Movement.

An overview of the frequency and context of specific responses shows a variance of emphasis across the 9 focus group conversations (Figure 25). Network Management, Visioning and Sharing, although varying in magnitude, were present in all focus groups as key themes for a Regional Network, with Joint Projects and Connections with Other Organisations common, but not integral to all focus groups.

Diversity in itself is championed as a key element of a Learning Processes to integrate the innovation into the dominant regime (Kemp et al, 1998, Geels, etc.) as well as aggregating a sense of purpose Nationally, as part of the internally focused condition of expectation management. Networks of individuals to support both expectation management and learning are required to be diverse in order to service the innovation effectively. When seen through this lens, difference in emphasis of each regional network could be seen to support a diverse approach to innovation development inter-regionally, across the niche.

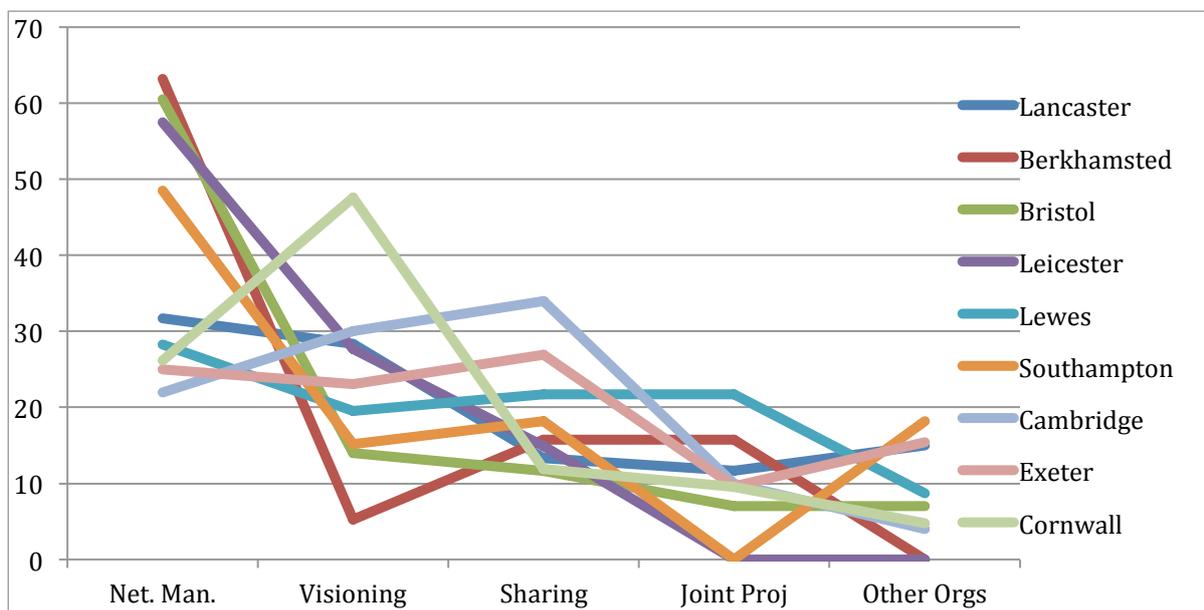


Figure 25: Relative weight and variance of theme occurrence in conversation across 9 Focus Groups

5.1 Learning through Sharing.

Sharing featured heavily in conversational frequency and intensity as well as visually in the graphic illustrations. Specificity of responses related to continued face-to-face communication, shared best practice, experience and learning, co-designing shared values, identity and narratives and peer-to-peer support. Most clearly manifest in regional network events – either thematic or holistic – either once

or twice a year. Practitioners found value in putting faces to names, sharing activity personally and having a chance for new ideas and collaborations to emerge.

Sharing in order to build trust through getting to know Practitioners in other Transition Initiatives is a key trait of building Community (Aiken, 2015) and creates opportunity for comparison of local context to create shared rules (Seyfang and Smith, 2007; Ahern, 2011; Geels and Raven, 2006). In highlighting Community, focus groups identified Networks across Transition to build a shared sense of story and narrative as being integral, mirroring strategic niche management theory of diversity within networks at the inter-local phase (Geels and Deuten, 2006). Community is a key driver for learning. Strategic niche management literature highlights “learning by interacting” – using diverse networks to generate inputs to improve the innovation - and “learning by using” – the use of an innovation in local projects, improved by active feedback loops – as key strategies to manage the learning process (Mourik and Raven, 2006). The data described sharing both in use – shared activity, and shared interaction – peer-to peer support, governance structures and processes highlighting a sophisticated interpretation of the value of sharing across the inter-local phase. Mourik and Raven (2006) outline Kemp et al (2006) description of double loop learning - the *conceptual* learning to explain a new element of the innovation before *social* learning to outline expectations and visions and adapt the network to that new concept. The data indicates that double loop learning through shared best practice would nourish local projects and increase impact.

Shared Best practice further increases the resilience of network by providing opportunity for Communities of Practice, evident in the focus groups. Whilst some participants had personally experienced Communities of Practice, others were individually motivated by inter-local, thematic connection (Wenger, 1998).

However, although connecting with other regime actors featured in most focus groups, it did not rank highly as a priority for regional networks. A heterogeneous network including other regime actors and future participants is essential to further develop the innovation to best fit with the regime (Caniëls and Romijn, 2006; Mourik and Raven, 2006). At the local level, Initiatives build diverse networks around their local projects over time (Couldrey and Transition Network, 2017). This indicates a level of development for this innovative niche, perhaps the inter-local community building needs to come first prior to a Regional outlook and invitation to others outside the Transition Town Movement to join.

The notion of “not re-inventing the wheel” was seen as a resource efficient way for a Regional Network to benefit local projects from participation in a wider network. Resource efficiency was a recurring theme as was local projects being run by the dedicated, overstretched few (Smith et al, 2013). Sharing goes some way to address this.

5.2 Expectation Management – Vision and Purpose

A sense of shared vision, story and connection with a bigger movement was evident in each focus group through specificity of response and intensity of conversation towards identifying a shared vision, particularly through inter-local aggregation across regions.

The balance of sovereignty of local projects, gaining legitimacy through a regional network is of high importance (Kemp et al 1998, Mourik and Raven 2006). A Regional Network would certainly not form a decision making body for the region, but may well be a vehicle for joint action when needs arise. This reinforces the idea within Community innovation of social-need as a pre-requisite for social innovation and would hold any regional network structure to account should it stray away from supporting local projects and the overall aim of assisting communities to transition to a more sustainable future.

Expectation Management at the niche level carries a different function to local projects, focusing on learning processes for regime convergence for elements of the innovation that most suite links to the regime to enact change (Mourik and Raven, 2006) and may well be best suited to actors other than Local Project actors. Participants did voice the benefit of “outsiders” facilitating the Focus Groups to enable all local actors to participate in the network. Indeed, there are examples of Regional Networks Internationally that are structured this way, but they lay outside the boundaries of this study. Using external actors to empower participants from local projects reinforces the idea of a regional network servicing activity at the local level and a decentralised approach to regional governance. Strategic niche management highlights protected space as essential in the early stages of niche development (Kemp et al, 1998). The reality for Transition Initiatives is opposite to that and takes place in the competitive, everyday environment to transition communities to a more sustainable future, albeit with a variety of activity, scale, resilience and effective impact. Aggregating learning in the inter-local phase gains a higher sense of urgency as a result of the apparent lack of protection if the Transition Town Movement as an innovation is to diffuse beyond the niche.

Participants highlighted values and purpose towards a shared brand/identity and aggregated definition for Transition as being an area for further work alongside ongoing local projects. The nature and definition of the Transition Town Movement as a Grassroots innovation is not homogeneous (Martin et al, 2015), however, this does not necessarily negate Strategic Niche Management as a frame for innovation. Studies relating to other Community niches have shown effective niche definition despite diversity of organisational form. Ruggiero et al (2018) investigated SNM when applied to Community Energy and found multiple organisational forms contributing to the definition of the niche. As with the development of the Community Energy field, both practice and niche incubation must happen concurrently to honour the grassroots nature of the Transition Town Movement.

This is in tune with expectation management in practice. Network development of local project actors must develop their experience first in order to develop expectations together both of the innovation, how Transition Towns function, their governance, activities and local relevance, its place in the regime, the role Communities have to play in a sustainable future, and wider landscape narratives of peak oil and climate change (Mourik and Raven, 2006). This process also helps

define the role of Transition Town Participants in developing the innovation dynamically over time and as expectations develop in reaction to internal and external impacts (Raven, 2005).

External Communication and storytelling of Transition Towns across the region were also highlighted. Developing a method of articulating Transition Towns activity as a common identity, championed by all groups shows a readiness to build confidence regionally and interact with the regime (Hargreaves et al, 2013; Coenen et al, 2010). Creating a shared narrative and vision over time is resonant with Transition Towns practice at the local level (North, 2010; Gibson-Graham, 2008) and could address issues of shared identity and aggregated purpose across the niche (Seyfang and Haxeltine, 2012). Proven participatory practice (Scott-Cato and Hillier, 2010) with an expanded network of Facilitators across the region could help support wide inclusion, furthering empowerment and validation for local actors.

The question of geographical scale was raised in most workshops – how to define the region in order to define purpose within that region and therefore define how the innovation can function properly within a given regime. The broad trend towards County or Regional structures indicates a “within regime” approach to make change happen and access resources offered by County and Regional Actors indicates a desire to diversify the network in a way that local projects cannot.

Transition Towns Movement is a movement based on activity, the “power of just doing stuff” (Hopkins, 2013) and each focus group highlighted theme-based joint projects during conversation. However, this was not evident as a common priority across all focus groups following cumulative voting (Table 29). Practicalities of delivering projects across a larger geographical area and time and resources focused mainly on local projects indicate that the reason for this is resource based. Joint Projects would be beneficial as exemplar projects to demonstrate the innovation to a wider audience and validate the notion of a Regional Network (Kemp et al, 1998). The instigation of a project idea could and would galvanise any seed of collaboration. Indeed, the Focus Groups who identified Joint Projects as a key theme had tangible project ideas to exercise that assertion.

This comes back to network infrastructure, staying connected and resources. If the mechanisms were in place for future project collaborations, then the opportunity for collaboration in new activity on the inter-local scale would be made more possible. Also, the absence of shared vision or goals and sovereignty of local projects has influence. The geographical rootedness and local relevance of Transition Initiatives (Seyfang, 2009; Scott-Cato and Hillier, 2010; Mulgan, 2006) means focus on locality is understandably a high priority. However, working at scale versus working locally is not binary and focused resource to the regional scale does not have to be large. To use the Community Energy sector as an example, both Community Energy England and Community Energy South have small teams and primary objectives to create a voice for the sector, support sector development and build cross sector partnerships (Hargreaves et al, 2013), perhaps the Transition Town Movement can take inspiration here.

Connections with other organisations, discourses and narratives would help better define what Transition is and what part it has to play in a regional and national action on Climate Change. However, the Focus Groups have shown that although Transition Towns at the local scale are well defined, they are emergent at the

Regional scale and thus need time to develop sufficient clarity in articulation to engage a wider diversity of actors in the support network. Otherwise, this may marginalise non-Transition Participants in a potential network as the innovation itself lacks specificity to contribute (Mourik and Raven, 2006). Generating on-going resources to support safe, intentional experimentation to define regional identity, values and purpose towards “alignment and consensus” (Mourik and Raven, 2006; Seyfang and Haxeltine, 2012) equitably is key to avoid diluting either the innovation itself or the impact of local projects (Boyer, 2015) and complementary to developing the inter-local community bonds strengthened during the focus groups.

5.3 Network Management

Capacity building for regional networks indicates a need for a focus on the nature and value of networks themselves to enable beneficial activity highlighted by participants. Communications structures, paid staff, increased resources, shared information, infrastructure to support both sharing and aggregation all featured by way of context and frequency during conversation, relating network capacity with the ability to perform desirable tasks to give value continuously. Network building received the most attention, resonant with Strategic Niche Management theory of Networks as one of three conditions for niche innovation.

However, there was a clear trend for the operation of a regional network to not put added pressure on local projects and local project actors. This may indicate a reticence to develop the required network infrastructure to support greater impact regionally or it may indicate that a key vision for the Network is to be lean and light in structure, developing over time to help include all Participants transparently rather than create a bureaucratic layer with the development of too much infrastructure too soon.

Network Support Infrastructure was judged to be of low priority by Participants, both during the Focus Groups and in response to the Transition Network follow-up questionnaire (Couldrey R and Transition Network, 2017). However, participants wanted to know what and who is active in the region for sharing best practise and knowledge, building community and increasing diversity of approaches to local action. Being able to access a regional network quickly and effectively was key to giving value continuously and for the network to give back to Practitioners more than they put in.

Increased resources to service such information flow is clear from all three conditions. Indeed, the notion of shared resource building to increase capacity and service innovation development was a popular discussion point, with Participants largely voicing support for a paid person, or Intermediary, to support local projects across the region. The Focus Group Participants perceived this role as doing many things – research across the network to share activity for the purpose of disseminating best practice and developing shared rules for Transition Town activity to better fit into the dominant regime highlighting and catalysing two SNM conditions – “Learning” and “Expectation Management”. Communicating both inwards to benefit Practitioners and outwards to attract regime actors and widen the opportunity to agree “shared rules” would be important contribution to this role from SNM theory. However, the idea of paid staff also received some opposition. Formalising the open structure of the Transition Town Movement and concerns about power and centralisation were the principle reasons for opposition and key areas to address. Such robust discussion is understandable with the introduction of

pay being challenging to grassroots, community-led initiatives, which largely rely on volunteer support to thrive (Smith et al, 2013) and is key to unlocking how the Transition Town Movement will increase capacity to aid diffusion into the regime.

Region or County wide scale was championed by some participants who saw benefit in connecting at scale to interact with Local Authority structures – a combined external voice (Aitken, 204) and enabling increased impact through engaging with policy makers to change the regime from within (Deakin and Allwinkle, 2007; North, 2010). Experience of political engagement with Local Authorities was both positive and negative across the 9 focus groups, providing a good opportunity for Network to not only increase the legitimacy of Transition Towns activity but also share best practice inter-locally when engaging for engagement with Local Authorities. Although not a high priority, connecting with other organisations beyond Local Authorities and increasing diversity of voices at a larger geographical scale inter-regionally and internationally within the Transition Town Movement highlights a clear need to co-ordinate across local projects (Schot and Geels, 2008). Finding the right rhythm for working together will be key (Geels, 2011), however, acting together will enable scaling-up through co-ordinated activity allowing greater impact on the regime.

5.4 Regional Network Events – the importance of Community.

Network Building was a key point of discussion across all focus groups. 8 of the 9 Focus Groups clearly highlighted regional network events as being beneficial to both the internal community of Transition Towns regionally (the inter-local phase) and to external communication, shared narrative building, connection with local media and increased diversity in regional actors witnessing the activity of local projects (niche/regime interaction). Regional Network Events work on all three conditions of Strategic Niche Management – learning to understand how the innovation can function well in the regime, building confidence, a shared sense of identity and aggregation of purpose at the appropriate scale and network diversity to increase legitimacy, engage local policy makers and demonstrate the range of skills, experiences and approaches leading to local impacts across the network.

Regional Network Events underline the importance of Community in grassroots social innovation. Face to face contact to build trust was in evidence during the focus groups, showing how important personal relationships are to understand how locally relevant projects contribute to a whole. Identity is important here. Celebrating Local Projects through regional network events would not only give legitimacy to local projects, but also give clarity and definition to what a Transition Town is – perhaps addressing the minority view challenging the title, or brand, itself and linking local action to a wider movement. A community focus to building solidarity; confidence and an aggregated sense of purpose through demonstration events would showcase the diversity within the movement. Regional Network events build on a socially minded approach lead by civil society to engage a wider constituency of actors as appropriate.

Theme-based events to share best practice and aggregate learning, building communities of practice on the inter-local scale to build confidence around specific areas would highlight the technical side of the socio-technical innovation of the Transition Town Movement. This model could be up-scaled to include inter-regional, within-niche sharing and collaboration to increase a sense of identity and solidarity across an ever-growing constituency without compromising the local rootedness of

the Transition Town Movement and the Initiatives represented. Building motivation for attendance by basing events on specific themes such as renewable energy, gardening or repair cafés could be good investment in individual skills and increase a sense of community, by theme, across the region. This expands the understanding of Community in the context of Regional Networks (Aitken, 2014). No longer is Community constrained by geography. It is defined by “Communities of Practice” specifically targeting areas of the complex problem of Climate Change and broadening the diversity of actors across a wider geographical scale. A significant challenge is how such a theme-based network is “managed” and how much is left to develop iteratively, lead by Practitioners.

Non-themed based events, such as the Focus Groups themselves, were impactful and beneficial, but serve a different function emphasising the “social” of socio-technical innovation and building community of diverse Practitioners within a geographical area. Community building is of high importance within grassroots social innovation and Transition Towns. Multiple Participants saw great value in meeting face-to-face and suggested once or twice a year as an appropriate frequency for meeting in this way (Geels, 2011). Peer support and the notion of a safe place of belonging (Aitken, 2014, Neal, 2015) enable friendships critical to building Community. Perhaps the diversity of a regional scale of Practitioners, identifiable by Local Projects and by the overarching Transition Town Movement goes some way to mitigate the transient nature of Communities and danger of social divisions (Forsyth, 2013). Disagreement and division were felt in some Focus Groups, particularly about social media and personality clashes. Without organisational infrastructure to properly facilitate conflict resolution, the resilience of Regional Networks maybe brought into question and the openness of the Transition Town Movement be compromised.

Celebration was also a common theme with personal significance for Practitioners. Many felt that non-thematic regional network events were inspirational and proved that Participants were “not alone” in their local endeavours. The positive nature of the Transition Town Movement, emphasising successes within the context of huge challenge, enables greater dialogue and practice of reciprocity as well as greater possibility, in the eyes of Practitioners, to attract new people because of the fun associated with celebration alongside the serious work of combatting Climate Change.

When considered at the Regional Scale, local action can build a shared narrative to exploit regional-scale opportunity. Local Authority structures at the Metro or County Council level as well as media coverage could be better engaged with an aggregated approach. The Regional scale becomes important due to the possibility of multi-disciplinary demonstration events to explore how the innovation as a whole can work well within the regime. With a diversity of activity, the aggregated scale of non-theme based events enables multiple points of engagement for regime actors and a development of a meta-narrative for Transition Towns to build partnerships of possibility, combining the “doing” with innovation development.

The very nature of organising and delivering externally focused events could be seen more as collaborations, focusing on impacts and shared rules as well as resource efficiency. However, Participants felt the resource challenge of co-organising events, despite understanding the potential benefit and here lies the challenge – The Transition Town Movement has inspired a multiple replication in

England at the Local level and including local Practitioners in building a regional context ensures inclusion and co-design (Manzini, 2015), however, the hard work of a few individuals in most Transition Initiatives are struggling to survive (Hargreaves et al, 2013), and yet, Resources was not prioritised by Participants as a key element of a Regional Network, implying a skills shortage in this area. Regional network events provide an opportunity to develop the Transition Town Movement as a social innovation, taking inspiration from strategic niche management but with community values at its core. The internal niche community could develop learning, expectation management and network as well as celebrate the achievements and impacts of this radical social innovation to further the aim of the Transition Network (Figure 26).

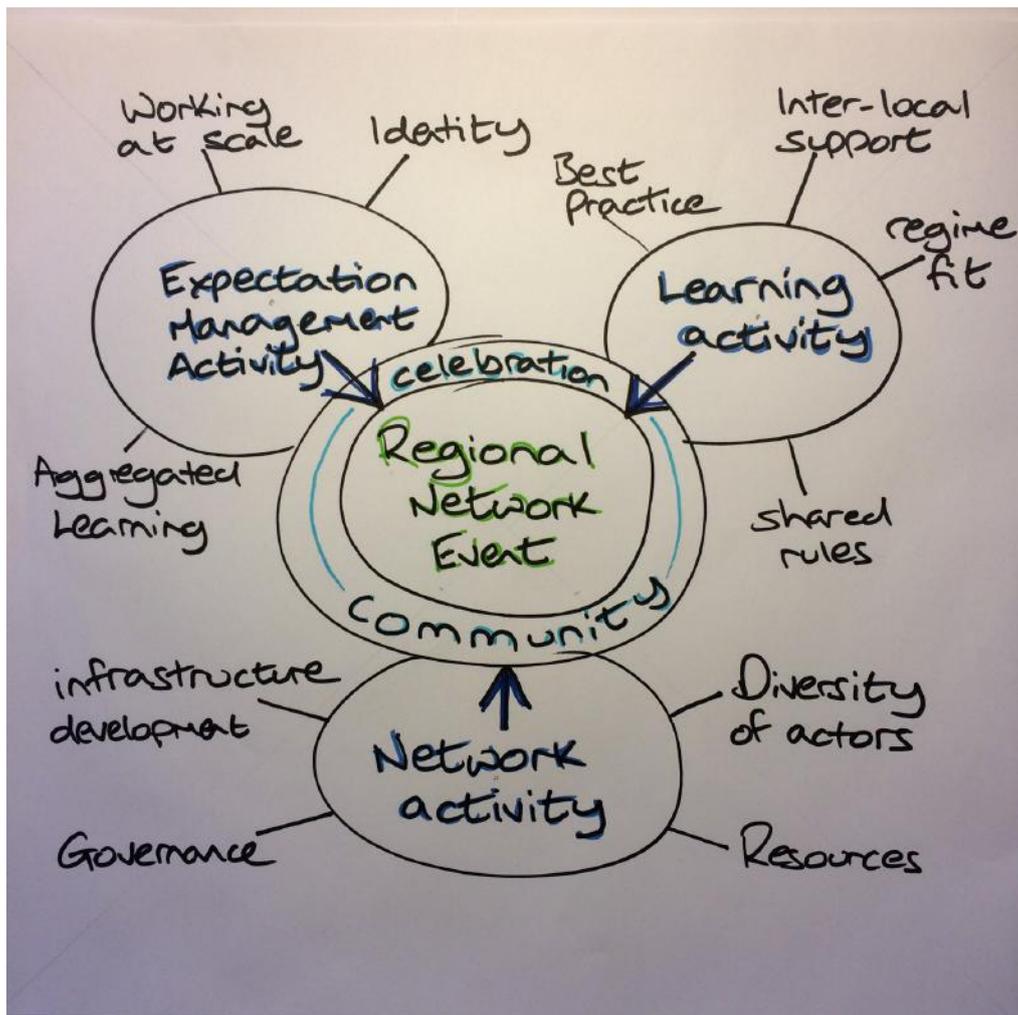


Figure 26. Strategic Niche Management conditions explored through Community and Celebration by Regional Network Events to develop the niche innovation of Transition Towns in England.

6.0 Conclusions

This research aimed to use the three conditions of Strategic Niche Management – learning, expectation management and network, as a prospective framework to understand the issues raised by developing regional Transition Towns hubs. Analysing the underlying form of Transition Towns using SNM as a socio-technical innovation pathway has exposed the potential of this civil society movement to scale-up and contribute to a more sustainable future in England as well as enabled proposals for next steps for the Transition Town Movement in the England based on the viewpoint of practitioners.

By observing the emergent themes of regional networks from 9 focus groups of Transition Towns practitioners in England and critically analysing the perceived opportunities and challenges, a clearer picture has emerged of applying Strategic Niche Management to the social innovation of Transition Towns – a highly community based, pro-active movement, performing at the local scale without niche protection.

The research has shown value in applying Strategic Niche Management as a framework by highlighting key areas in which Transition Town practitioners are excelling and other areas of deficiency. The research has clearly shown an imbalance of holistic development across the niche and therefore significant opportunity to develop the niche at the inter-local scale by applying theory to practice. Whereas the Transition Network provide a platform for learning, expectation management and network globally, this research has found the regional scale to be effective at linking Initiatives with a tangible sense of cohesive action towards greater impact.

Although the Transition Town Movement has a clear identity at the local and international scale, the research has shown that defining identity, values and purpose meaningfully at a regional scale is lacking and would enable increased legitimacy for local projects, the creation of shared rules and common goals to increase stability and impact. The grassroots nature of the Transition Town Movement necessitates an inclusive approach to innovation development, iterative and responsive to change and community-lead. The capacity to develop structure, alongside the development of an evolutionary narrative of what Transition is and does at the regional scale in England is key. Developing confidence and engaging a wider diversity of regime actors is important to unlock the potential of this wide and pervasive movement.

Although participants highlighted the requirement of capacity and resources to effectively manage innovation development, how this is achieved is unclear. Whereas Strategic Niche Management assumes a degree of network infrastructure, this is to be invented for Transition Towns at the regional level. This is both an opportunity and a significant challenge and resonant with the role of Intermediaries in Strategic Niche Management literature.

Regional Network Events hold some answers and offer a development for the practice of Strategic Niche Management in the field of grassroots, community-based social innovation. Highlighting community values, gathering practitioners at regional events would enable real-time and real-world exchange and create a regularity and focus to working at the regional scale necessary for community building. Identity,

values and purpose could be discussed within equitable governance practices. Aggregated shared learning from local projects as well as the opportunity to develop new ideas towards a shared vision could be exchanged. Whereas Strategic Niche Management suggests events as externally focused demonstrations, here events service niche development, building confidence and community towards external demonstration and communication.

6.1 Limitations of Study

The main limitation of the study was time to complete the aims and objectives of the study. Focus Groups are time consuming, but the study would have benefitted from both interviews with key actors with regional experience and research into the purpose and organisational form of Transition Towns regional networks currently operating outside of the England. Furthermore, although data was captured across a wide area of England, 2 significant areas had to be omitted – London and the West Midlands. My experience as a Transition Town practitioner offered both benefits in terms of access and insights to Transition Town activity and drawbacks in terms of maintaining an objective, data-lead viewpoint.

Finally, this research was intentionally broad for a case study, taking a wide view of the value of regional networks to scale-up Transition Towns activity and considering all three conditions of Strategic Niche Management. In taking a broad viewpoint, value gained from detail in specific areas was lost.

6.3 Further Research

This research has opened up a new research area of sub-National regional networks for Transition Towns and the further development of Strategic Niche Management when applied to overtly social socio-technical innovations. According to Kemp et al (1998), protection is key to enable a niche innovation to grow unhindered by regime pressure. We have found that Transition Towns operate within the regime, despite being often opposed to it (Seyfang and Haxeltine, 2012) and so the notion of protection holds a different connotation, worthy of further research.

Identity, purpose and values of Regional Networks of Transition Towns merit similar inclusive, practitioner based social research to aid wider diffusion and greater impact at the regional scale with a particular focus on maintaining the enabling and empowered nature of the Transition Town Movement for local communities. Research into the nature and impact of paid staff and centralisation through shared rules and aggregated shared learning is timely, especially focused on the value of individuals participating by choice. This research has shown that the relationship between local projects and regional structures needs to be carefully managed. As such, developing Strategic Niche Management theory for social innovations based in civil society to develop network infrastructures equitably would be beneficial.

Looking wider, if grassroots social innovations such as Transition Towns are going to have greater impact in assisting communities to transition to a more sustainable future, then research into barriers to diffusion and the inter-relationship between organisations in the environmental movement at the regional and National scale would be fruitful.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: The Workshop Facilitation Framework.

The workshop took place over 6 hours and was arranged in partnership with a local Transition Initiative who located a venue and advised or arranged catering for the day. The workshop had no attendance fee, although no subsidies for travel were offered for Attendees travel.

The workshop can be described in 7 sections:

- **10am – 10.30am: Arrivals:** tea and coffee, making friends old and new.
- **10.30am – 11.00am: Check-in:** Housekeeping and introducing the day along with asking every Attendee to introduce themselves, which Transition Initiative they come from and one thing they are most proud of in their work.
- **11.00am – 11.20am: Mapping in 3 ways:**
 - Exploring geographical difference and similarity of Transition Initiatives present,
 - How long Transition Initiatives have been going,
 - How long Attendees have been involved in Transition and wider grassroots action on Climate Change and Sustainability.
- **11.20am – 12.30pm: Thrives, Barriers and Local Connections:** Small group work exploring three questions:
 - What helps your Transition Initiative to Thrive?
 - What are the barriers to doing what you want to do?
 - What are your local connections
- **12.30pm – 1.30pm: LUNCH**
- **1.30pm – 2.30pm: What would be the roles and themes of a Regional Network?** A whole group discussion, chaired and graphic illustrated. Participants voted on using “dot democracy” – five sticky dots to indicate their perceived most important themes.
- **2.30pm – 4.00pm: Towards next practical steps:**
 - Asking what each attendee would give and what they would like to gain from the emerging themes of the Regional Network, critically within their real world capacity.
 - Small group work on developing each theme into practical action and deciding on the next practical step.
- **4.00pm – 4.30pm: Closing, in two parts:**
 - The Balloon Game – a fun activity to come up with a name for the Regional Network.
 - Closing Circle – thanking attendees and asking what they would say to people who could not attend.

Appendix 2: Research Design Proposal**EV7101 Dissertation Research Design Proposal Coversheet & Guidelines**

The RDP should be about 1,500-words (+-5% for guidance only). It will go towards the dissertation portfolio, worth 10% of the final dissertation mark, with the dissertation itself worth the other 90%.

Student Name: Richard Couldrey

Student Number: u1346453

Intended start date: September 1st 2017 through January 31st 2018. With preparatory work from February 1st 2017

Words: 3579

Please give your RDP title in the box below:

EV7101 RDP Assessment Criteria and Guidelines		
Research design proposal	Title: Scaling up the Transition Town Movement	Approximate content (%)
Introduction	A brief overview of the research area (c.a. 150 words)	10
Research question	What is the research Question? Why is this an important question to ask? What is the purpose of the dissertation? What will be the 'product'? [e.g. who might it be 'for'? Technical guidance? Policy guidance? Guidance for specifiers?] What 'scoping reading' have you done? (from which you identify possible questions, concepts to use, etc.) Give references. (c.a. 300 words)	20
Data and data collection	What research method(s) will you use to answer the question and why? [e.g. scientific experiment, technological testing, qualitative social research, quantitative social research, case studies, novel analysis of existing data, etc] What problems could arise with the data collection and how will you plan ahead for these? Give references (c.a. 450words)	30
Analysis of data	How do you intend to analyse the data? [e.g. descriptive statistics, correlation analysis statistics, conceptual analysis, textual analysis, etc] What problems could arise with the analysis and how will you plan ahead for these? Give references (c.a. 450words)	30
Conclusions / summary	Comment on limitations to study, research aims and objectives, logistics, timelines, barriers (c.a. 150words)	10

Scaling Up the Transition Town Movement: Using Strategic Niche Management theory to assess the role of regional hubs in England

Key Words:

Grassroots, environmentalism, UK, Strategic Niche Management, Transition Towns, scaling up, Regional Hubs,

Introduction

Global response to Climate Change has seen both large-scale climate agreement (UNFCCC, 2015) and trends towards decentralisation and local empowerment (World Bank, 2011; UNFPA, 2007). In the UK there has been cross party support towards localisation (Department for Communities and Local Government, 2011) during which time, community response to Climate Change through innovative grassroots groups has thrived (Seyfang and Smith, 2007; Ahern, 2011) in contrast to slower pace of Government action (Scott Cato and Hillier, 2010; Seyfang and Smith, 2007).

The Transition Town Movement, started in 2006 in Totnes, Devon, has rapidly grown into this political space both in the UK and across the globe now numbering 479 “official” initiatives across 6 continents (*Transition Initiatives Directory*, 2013). The Transition Town Movement emphasises a positive response to both climate change and peak oil (Hopkins, 2008; Haxeltine and Seyfang, 2009), enabling groups to act as innovative communities of practise motivated by social, environmental and economic need (Seyfang and Smith, 2007; Scott Cato and Hillier, 2010). As such, Transition Initiatives develop vision and focus based on the interests of those who are motivated to be involved, leading to a diverse range of activities (Ahern, 2011) and organisational forms (Seyfang and Smith, 2007).

Internationally, National hubs have supported the growth in the number of Transition Initiatives. Now numbering 20 (*Transition National Hub Initiatives*, 2013), these Hubs work both in their own Country and as a network, meeting annually or bi-annually. However, there is little peer review literature exploring the National Hubs and no dedicated network structure in England.

In practise, the Transition Network has highlighted Strategic Niche Management as one of four theoretical frames for growth in their document “Theory of Change” and is currently investigating the creation of an England Hub, designed by those Transition Initiatives who are enthusiastic to be involved, in tune with leadership models such as Servant Leadership (Greenleaf and Spears, 2002). This research proposal is timely, for use and benefit in practise and through partnership with the Transition Network the opportunity for shared learning is strong. Seyfang and Smith (2006) highlight the particular need for this nurturing and respectful relationship between researcher and practitioner in the field of grassroots sustainable innovation, which is of particular importance due to the bottom-up nature of the Transition Town Movement.

Aim and Objective of Research

The aim of this research is to apply Strategic Niche Management as a theoretical frame for niche innovation (Kemp et al, 1998) to the Transition Town Movement in England. Through participatory action research (PAR), this comparative case study will seek to initiate the formation of Regional Hubs to enable and empower Transition Initiatives to act together as a cohesive whole grounded in a shared “identity, belonging, purpose, and sense of community” (Seyfang and Haxeltine, 2011).

The research objectives are:

1. To collect empirical qualitative data on the perceived aims and objectives of Regional Hubs by members of Transition Initiatives.
2. To enable the development of Regional Hubs as “Intermediaries” (Kemp et al, 1998) aiding expectation management and shared learning.
3. To understand whether the application of Strategic Niche Management to the Transition Town Movement aids greater diffusion without loss of values.
4. To test and develop Strategic Niche Management theory when used prospectively rather than retrospectively.

Theoretical frame for research: Strategic Niche Management

Strategic Niche Management is a theoretical methodology developed in business to protect development of innovative ideas, or niches, to encourage experimentation (Schot and Geels, 2008). Niche innovations are aggregated across multiple local experiments to recognize and develop patterns, develop shared rules and, ultimately, diffuse the innovation into the mainstream (fig.1)

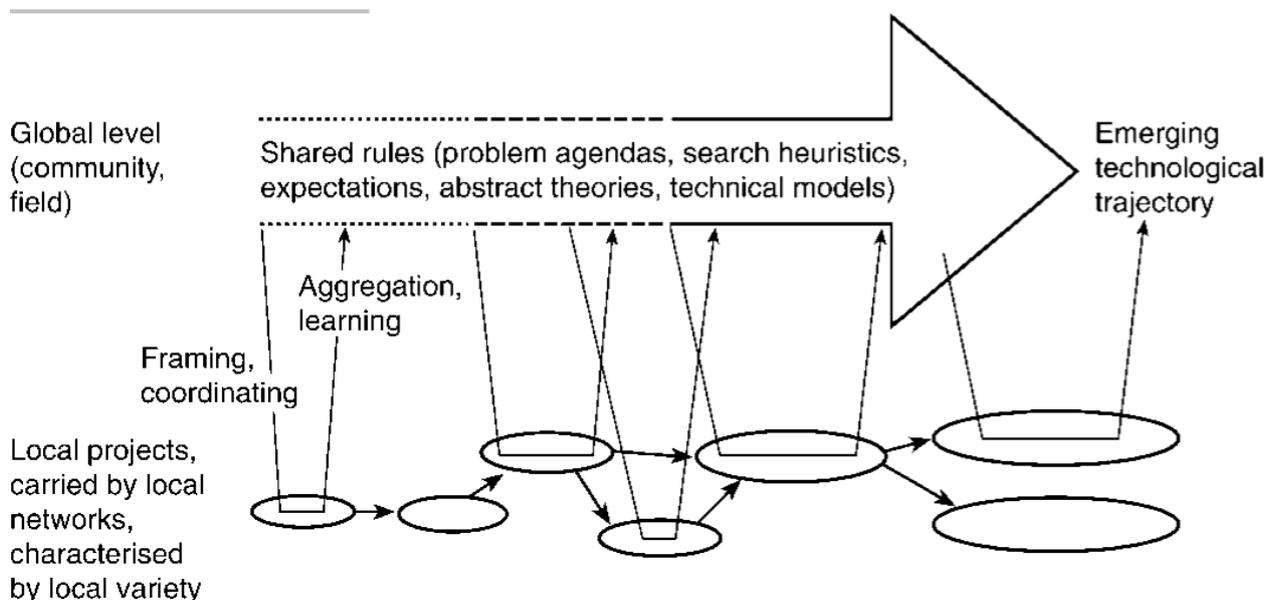


Figure 1: Illustration of technical Niche Development of multiple local projects

(Schot and Geels, 2008)

Shared learning, expectation management and the development of networks are seen as critical elements for the application of Strategic Niche Management in niche development (fig.2) and are practiced currently in Transition Initiatives (Seyfang and Haxeltine, 2012) therefore, the Transition Town Movement can be considered as a grassroots innovation.

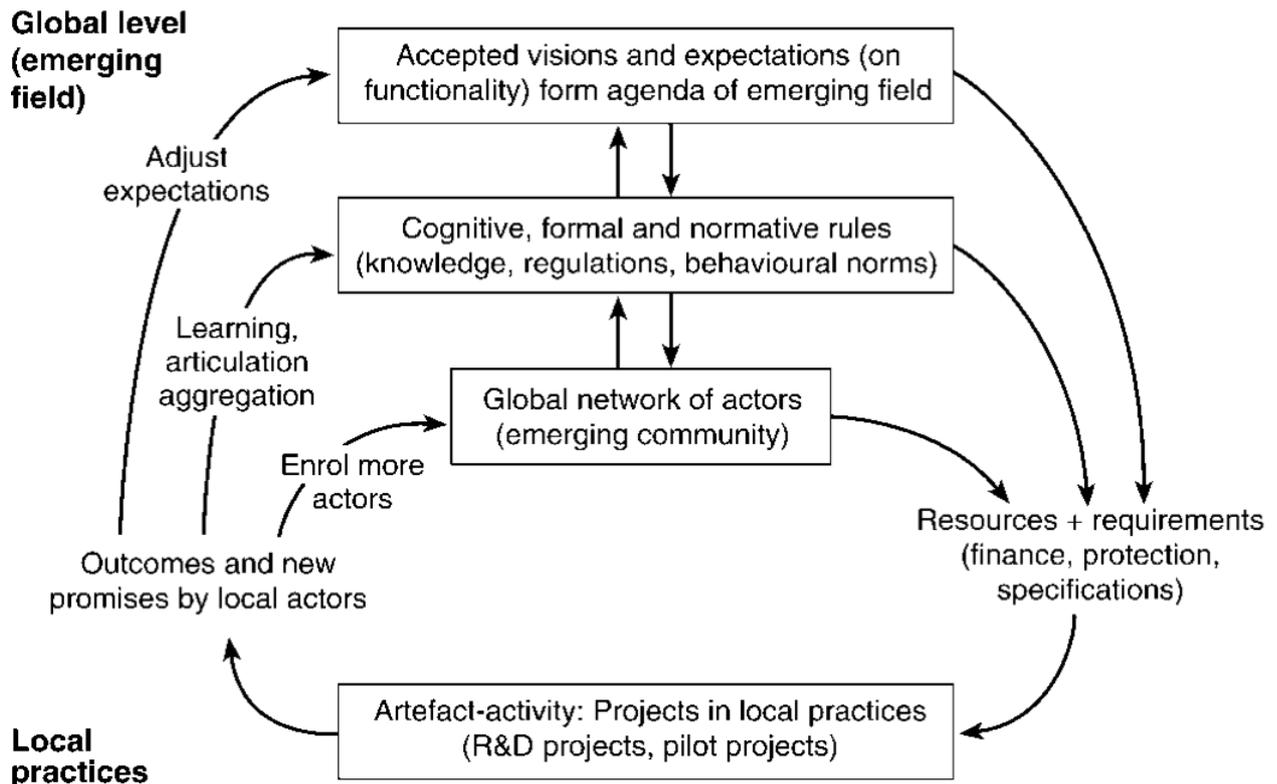


Figure 2: Showing Networks, Shared Learning and expectation management as key variables in Niche Development (Geels and Raven, 2006)

Seyfang and Haxeltine (2012) noted that the Transition Town Movement can be described as a grassroots innovation framed within Strategic Niche Management, however, little research has been done as to the role of National Hubs in developing that innovative niche. Transition Initiatives and the Transition Town Movement as a whole need to balance internal niche development with an external face to aid diffusion (Seyfang and Haxeltine, 2012) whilst it is also noted that resources are often scarce within Transition Initiatives with pressure being felt by a small number of dedicated individuals (Feola and Nunes, 2014; Seyfang and Longhurst, 2013; Seyfang, 2009; Smith et al, 2014). The Transition Town Movement has often been criticised as being politically naïve and without regional or national strategy (Chatterton and Cutler, 2008; Seyfang and Smith, 2007) and ineffective to challenge the dominant political regime (Scott Cato and Hillier, 2010).

It is this diffusion of ideas, support for Transition Initiatives, and advocating at a larger political scale whilst maintaining the core identity of self-defined community response (Smith, 2011) in the shape of a Regional Hub structure that is the focus of this study.

An Initial literature review has highlighted retrospective application of Strategic Niche Management to individual Transition Initiatives (Seyfang and Haxeltine, 2012) and in Community Renewable Energy (Hargreaves et al, 2013; Seyfang et al, 2014) particularly but has found no application of this theory applied prospectively in grassroots environmentalism.

Strategic Niche Management has also been included in a review of research into sustainable transitions as being one of four theoretical models warranting greater focus, (Markard et al, 2012) and has been the focus of more specific research into the field of sustainable innovation (Schot and Geels, 2008) and Grassroots innovations (Seyfang and Smith, 2007). It is therefore appropriate for this theory to be applied and expanded upon with a specific focus on the Transition Town Movement.

The Literature Review will examine a range of theories of social and socio-technical innovation (Geels and Schot, 2007, Markard et al, 2012) with a specific focus on Strategic Niche Management (Schot and Geels, 2008, Seyfang and Haxeltine, 2006). Strategic Niche Management informs how grassroots social innovation can become mainstream and more globally effective, this will be used as a lens to focus on the role of networks in developing social innovation within the Transition Town Movement (Seyfang and Haxeltine, 2012). The aims, objectives and activities of current National Hubs and their inter-relationships will also be reviewed through the lens of Strategic Niche Management.

Research Methodology

Data collection

Overview

In partnership with the Transition Network, primary research will be conducted as a comparative case study (Thomas, 2015) through participatory action research, focus groups, and semi-structured interviews. Focus groups will interrogate what is perceived as needed by those working in this grassroots innovative field through a facilitated process of co-design (Manzini and Coad, 2015) to establish the purpose of a regional network. Semi-structured interviews will be conducted with more established Transition Initiatives and members of Transition Network (the co-ordinating body of the International Transition Town Movement) to interrogate at greater depth the function of networks in England and investigate the participation of outsiders in Transition Town practise (Mourik and Raven, 2006), noted by Seyfang and Haxeltine (2012) as an area for further research. Finally, reflections through historical and ongoing participatory action research in the London and South East Transition Hub and personal research diary will complete the sources of primary data

3.1 Participatory Action Research

Data will be collated through participatory action research in the Focus Groups, semi-structured interviews and directly in both historic and current practise in the Transition Town London and South East Hub. Participatory Action Research is an approach to social research that places the researcher as participant, active in the practise of solving practical problems (Denscombe, 2010, Punch 2005) and is applied to this research project due to the inevitability of influence of the researcher in Focus Groups and availability of information on current networks in England on the internet placing this data collection in a wider body of best practise.

Furthermore, the democratised nature of Transition Town Movement and emphasis on iterative development through research (Denscombe, 2010) is resonant with participatory action research.

The emphasis of Strategic Niche Management on shared learning and networks (Kemp et al, 1998, Seyfang and Haxeltine, 2006) which lie at the core of the research and the nature of co-design principals (Manzini and Coad, 2015) further underline the participatory nature of this specific case.

Finally, through participation in the Transition Towns London and South East Hub by instigating research within the group, identifying and articulating trends, reflecting on the impact of changes, replanning in the spiral of self reflective cycles with the group (Punch, 2005), a cyclical approach to data collection (Denscombe, 2010) underlines the active role of the researcher.

Participatory Action Research will be practised during the Focus Groups and Semi-structured interviews as an umbrella approach to the study.

3.2: focus groups

In partnership with the Transition Network, 9 facilitated focus groups will be convened to co-design networks by practising Transition Initiative members. By the nature of Transition Initiatives, group dynamics influence the growth of the movement and the Initiatives themselves. It is recognised that group interviews can be a valuable forum from which to draw out data that might not otherwise come to light (Punch, 2005; Thomas, 2015). However, strong facilitation is key to mitigate the risk of dominant and reticent group members.

Due to the challenging technical and logistical nature of the focus groups, 2 pilot focus groups will be convened in Lancaster and Berkhamsted to refine the Focus Group facilitation in practise. 7 further Focus Groups will provide the primary data for research.

The focus groups will occur as follows:

Number	Location	Region	Provisional Dates (2017)
1	Lancaster (pilot)	North West	Saturday May 13 th .
2	Berkhamsted (pilot)	South East - mid	Sunday May 14 th
3	Bristol	South West - central	Sunday June 4 th
4	Tbc	East Midlands	Saturday June 17 th
5	Tbc	West Midlands	Sunday June 18 th
6	Lewes	South East - east	Saturday June 24 th
7	Southampton	South East – west	Sunday June 25 th
8	Exeter	South West - west	Saturday July 8 th
9	Cambridge	East	Sunday July 9 th

Each region was chosen after extensive mapping of Transition Initiatives across England and to provide a nationwide view of scaling up the Transition Town Movement. Locations were chosen for 2 reasons: to be central and accessible by public transport to that region and by Transition Initiatives who were able to aid planning and organisation with local knowledge.

Each workshop will be supported financially by Transition Network, a registered charity.

3.2.1 Structure for Focus Groups.

The focus groups are structured in 5 parts with the intent of discovering the status of Transition Initiatives present before co-designing a regional network.

1. **Welcome and Introductions**, 10am – 10.40am consent forms and housekeeping
2. **Mapping**, 10.40am – 11.10am to find out who the participants are and the nature of their particular Transition Initiative. *Data gathered by pictures, audio recording and researcher reflections during and after the focus group*
3. **Thrives/Barriers/local connections exercise**. 11.10am – 12.30pm This session will explore why participants are involved in their Transition Initiative, what allows their group to thrive and the barriers

and challenges to being successful. This will be conducted in smaller groups. *Data gathered by flipcharts, post-its and audio recording of salient points shared with the whole group.*

4. **LUNCH.** 12.30pm – 1.30pm Over lunch, a video booth will be available for participants to record their personal reflections. *Data collected by video recording.*
5. **Themes and Roles of Regional Network.** 1.30pm – 2.10pm This session will be conducted in small groups to discuss what the purpose of a regional network will be and how it could benefit the Transition Initiatives in the region. *Date collected by post-its clustered into themes by the participants and audio recording of whole group discussion.*
6. **Give and Gain Activity. 2.10pm – 2.40pm** The themes from part 5 will form sections around a wheel. Participants will be asked to reflect on what they can give to these themes in terms of skills, connections or Initiatives. Following that, they will be asked what they might like to gain from the Regional network, based on each theme. This exercise xplores how realistic and applicable a regional network might be. *Data collected by post its, flip charts and audio recording of whole group discussion.*
7. **Tea break. 2.40pm – 3.00pm**
8. **Putting the regional network into practise. 3.00pm – 4.20pm**
 - a. **Part 1:** the Balloon game. Participants will be asked to work in pairs to create a catchphrase for the regional network. Designed as a fun way to engage the participants in creating vision. *Data collected by photograph and audio recording.*
 - b. **Part 2.** For each theme, participants will be asked to self organise and discuss the purpose and activity of each theme. *Data collected by post its and photographs and audio recording*
 - c. **Part 3.** Finally, the group will be asked to identify the next practical step.
9. **Closing circle. 4.20pm – 4.30pm.** What have the participants got out of the day? Go round using a talking stick. *Data collected by audio recording.*

The Facilitators schedule for the focus group pilots is included as Appendix 1.

3.3: Semi-structured Interviews.

To complement the Focus Groups, semi structured interviews will be organised with individual actors with Transition Initiatives that attended the Focus Groups as well as actors from Transition Network. The non-hierarchical nature of the Transition Town Movement and collaborative working practises suggest use of semi-structured interviews (Bryman, 2015). The purpose of the semi structured interviews is three fold:

- to allow more in depth study into personal perspectives from individuals as to how a Regional Hub might enable greater and more popular change
- to investigate the presence of external actors – a key condition for networks as described by Strategic Niche Management (Kemp et al, 1998)

- to understand motivation and vision for the Transition Town Movement from actors within the movement in order to develop Strategic Niche Management as a theory for social innovation.

The methodology for and content of the semi-structured interviews will be designed following Focus Groups and will be conducted during September 2017. The most established Transition Initiatives who participated in the focus groups will be invited for semi-structured interviews to enable further interrogation of key emergent themes.

5 interviews will be sought:

- 2 interviews with representatives of Transition Network, the organisation who oversees the Global Transition Town Movement.
- 3 interviews with participants of local Transition Initiatives who attended Focus Groups.

3.4 Limitations and Potential Problems of Data Collection

Attendance at Focus Groups is the primary risk to mitigate, however, following the thorough mapping of Transition Initiatives across England, the author proposes to do mitigate this risk by:

- Sending “save the date” emails directly to Transition Initiatives to secure attendance prior to venues being confirmed.
- Contacting Transition Initiatives via email, Facebook and Twitter as well as encouraging local Co-hosts to promote the focus groups through local connections.
- Re-contact Transition Initiatives once venue is confirmed.
- Re-contact Transition Initiatives 1 week before each workshop.
- Use Eventbrite to assess attendance progress and collect direct contacts.

Individuals and Transition Initiatives are more likely to attend considering the support of Transition Network compared with an independent study. Similarly, access to individuals for semi-structured interviews is more likely to be successful.

Data collection is at risk through poor sound quality in recording. This risk will be mitigated in two ways. Advice and equipment has been secured from a sound recordist and two pilot focus groups will be run in Lancaster and Berkhamsted.

Third, the chosen dates and distance from Initiatives to the focus groups maybe a restrictive factor. Although this is hard to address, every effort has been made to choose locations of the focus groups for ease of access. It is possible, however, that dates and locations will need to be reviewed following feedback from local Transition Initiatives.

3.5 Ethical Considerations

Data collection requires investigation into the needs of Transition Initiatives and the individuals involved and therefore interviews and focus groups need

to be carried out sensitively. Online communications have made clear the nature of the research and each participant will be asked to read a participant information sheet and complete a consent form.

Although the locations of the regional network focus groups is of interest, the participant names and Transition Initiatives are not, for the purposes of this research. As it is unknown what will be said in response to focus group questioning and challenges of Transition Initiatives will be explored, there is potential for personal as well as pragmatic responses to be aired. A practise of anonymity will therefore be put in place and participants given aliases for the purpose of this dissertation.

Analysis of Data

The overall analytical pattern of this dissertation follows the iterative flow shown in Fig 3. Starting with a theoretical basis in Strategic Niche Management and literature review of both Grassroots Environmentalism and National Hubs best practice, a process of capturing, then observing new data from English Transition Initiatives to draw out patterns of similarity and difference with Strategic Niche Management.

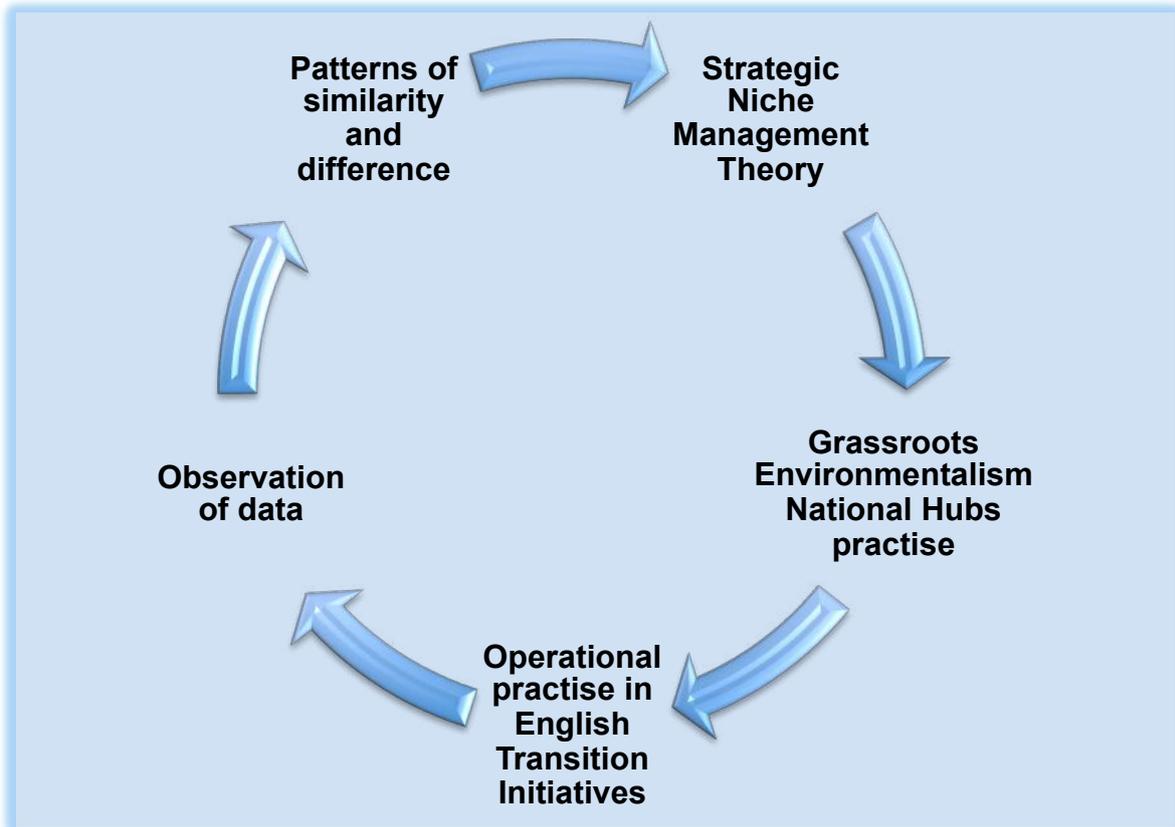


Fig 3. Process of Analysis.

Data collection methods have been designed to enable triangulation between participatory action research, semi-structured interview and focus groups and are coupled with literature review to critically analyse best fit and next steps in this emergent field.

Data will be analysed using Strategic Niche Management theory to assess whether the considered desires of focus group participants and views expressed in the semi-structured interviews are resonant with the theory or suggest something new.

Coding.

Coding will be approached by first understanding what was said in the focus groups through open coding to produce a set of first order categories (Punch, 2005) in order to understand the content within the data to draw out concepts and indicators before comparing directly to Strategic Niche Management theory.

Secondly, the process of axial coding will be used to analyse the concepts from primary data and understand the overarching themes being proposed through interconnection (Punch, 2005)

Thirdly, the concepts observed will be compared with the concepts of Strategic Niche Management and analysed for similarity and difference. Key words and terms from Strategic Niche Management, with particular reference to the “networks” process and “scaling up of the experiment” step, will be used to compare the primary data with the theory.

Conclusions

The aim of this research is to apply Strategic Niche Management as a theoretical frame for niche innovation (Kemp et al, 1998) to the Transition Town Movement in England. Through participatory action research (PAR), this comparative case study will seek to initiate the formation of Regional Hubs to enable and empower Transition Initiatives to act together as a cohesive whole grounded in a shared “identity, belonging, purpose, and sense of community” (Seyfang and Haxeltine, 2011).

This study is aiming to provide data and conclusions to the Transition Town Movement and to academic discourse on Grassroots Environmentalism. The methodology proposed is set out to provide thorough and triangulated data from as wide a sample as possible using both individual and group based data collection techniques. Following analysis, Strategic Niche Management will be considered as a theoretical frame to scale up the Transition Town Movement in England and adjustments to the theory maybe proposed.

However, there are risks and limitations. Primary data will only be drawn from England – an appropriate sample size for an MSc dissertation – and is therefore limited by not extending data gathering to Transition Towns Regional Hubs globally to explore how and why scaling up happens in different cultural contexts.

Also, the data collection period is short and whilst every effort can be made to ensure good opportunity for attendance, the study maybe limited by attendees and the iterative nature of developing regional hubs.

Similarly, the focus on the Transition Town Movement may exclude other actors within the field of grassroots environmentalism. Cross-organisational networks present across England and the influence of the activity of participants outside of Transition Initiatives maybe influential.

Timeline.

March 2016: Piloted Workshop

Key task:

- Co-facilitated workshop “England Wales Hub Gathering” forming pilot for workshop structure. (attached)

September 2016 – May 2017: Preparing the Ground.

Key tasks:

- Prima facie question
- Transition Towns across England mapped and revised contacts list generated, regional densities analysed to suggest locations for regional workshops, request for expressions of interest emailed and workshop dates proposed.
- Preliminary fieldwork
- Search literature
- Research and understand academic process
- Organise data collection
- Reformulate research question
- Complete RDP and ethics approach – achieve “green”

May 2017 – July 2017: Data collection 1, literature review

Key tasks:

- 2 pilot and 7 workshops around England as “focus groups” for research.
- Collect and log data.
- Begin coding of Focus group data.
- Write 1st draft literature review.

August 2017 – Summer break.

September 2017: Data Collection 2 & begin data analysis

Key tasks:

- Carry out Semi-structured interviews.
- Write up methodology to draft 1.

October 2017: Data analysis

November 2017 –

Key tasks:

- Process and write up all data
- Data analysis and write up findings and evaluation
-
- December 2017
- Write up abstract, introduction and conclusions.

Monday 18th December

Submit full-length draft to supervisor

Thursday 4th or Friday 5th January 2018

Final feedback meeting with supervisor

Wednesday 31st January 2018

Submit dissertation

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Appendix 1

Facilitators Working Schedule for Pilot focus groups.

Regional networks development workshop – outline and note to Transition Initiatives.

This day workshop has been developed out of work carried out in London and the South East where groups came together and co-designed a functioning regional network. This network developed through using a series of exercises to come up with ideas and plans and it is these exercises that form the basis of the workshop. London now has a really thriving network that meets regularly, shares information and has arranged events together. We want to help other networks to develop based on the great stuff that has happened there to create thriving networks throughout England.

- *You design your network*

Workshop facilitators Mike Thomas (Transition Network) and Richard Couldrey (Transition Town Tooting) have both been involved in the development of the London and SE hub. They believe that Transition groups in a region will know how best to define what their regional network does and how it functions. This workshop has been designed to facilitate this happening. At the end of this workshop, you and the other groups involved will have explored whether there is energy for a regional network, what its function should be and how to develop it.

- *We also want to learn from you and share your innovations*

As part of this project, Richard is also carrying out research into scaling up grassroots social innovation to affect greater change. The workshop will also feed back into this process to seed the next steps of the project which includes strengthening and developing regional networks in preparation for a workshop about a National Hub later this year.

- *What to expect from the workshop*

The following outlines the one day workshop in more detail to give you an idea of what to expect, this may develop between now and the workshop day.

Notes in blue added for research purposes only. For each session, purpose is described holistically and then using the three processes described in Strategic Niche Management theory: Expectation, Network and Learning. Then, data capture method is described.

Networks:

“To foster radical innovation networks need to be composed of both dedicated network builders’ and ‘reactive network actors’, newcomers and incumbents, users and non-users and insiders and outsiders.” Mourik and Raven 2006

Participants arrive 10-10.30am. Teas and Coffees, participants are asked to sign the ethics form. Details forms and consent to share contacts, filming, photographs, audio recording etc.

10.30am – 10.40am Welcome by Richard Couldrey and Mike Thomas and Co-host.

- Introduction of each other.
- Describe why the participants are here - to explore forming a Regional Network and to contribute to research. We are heading towards a National Hub Conversation starting in the Autumn, but the whole process is honouring a grassroots approach of engaging the movement to shape its own regional hubs and National Hub.
- Describe the day – what to expect and the schedule.
- Health and Safety – fire exits, loos and saying thanks to where we are.
- Thanks and recognition.

Session 1: Physical mapping exercise 10.40am – 11.10am

- The whole group will position themselves in the room based on questions related to the region, i.e. location, time group going, links to other groups, projects you are doing etc.
- Suggested Questions:
 - Where are you?
 - Rural/urban?
 - How long have you been involved?
 - How old is your Initiative?
 - What role do you think Transition Towns have to play in creating a sustainable future?
 - Revolution or evolution? How much do you think we need to work within current structures and institutional mechanisms to succeed?
 - Livelihoods – who is paying people?
 - Space – who has physical space?
 - Are you frustrated or inspired by the Transition Town Model?

This is a great short exercise that will help you to quickly get a picture of where people are from, how they are doing and more.

Purpose:

- Icebreaker
- Finding out who is in the room
- To establish the experience around the room and the roles – who are insiders, who are outsiders to Transition? Who is new and who is not.
- To find out what appetite there is develop the TT model.
- EXPECTATION: micro
- NETWORK: diversity of actors
- LEARNING: n/a

-
- Captured by:
 - Picture
 - Audio.
 - IDEA: Use camera vox pops/private speaking booth.

Session 2: Thrives/barriers/local connections exercise. 11.15am – 12.30pm
This session explores why you do Transition, what you enjoy about it and what helps your group to thrive, what the barriers are to being successful and the connections that you already have in your area. Doing this helps you to think about the common issues that affect all groups and what can be done to make Transition a nurturing experience. It also helps people to gain more of an understanding about each other and what their groups are doing, which you can then chat about over lunch.

5min - intro, 10 minute thoughts, 15 minutes discussion. 15 minute feedback.
Manage globally.

Prep - 5 pieces of flipchart paper - one for each question. Coloured dots to note weights.

You come together in groups to discuss:

- What do I really enjoy about Transition, what activities do i find myself naturally attracted to? -
 - What saps my energy and tends to lead to burnout / conflict?
 - What helps my group to thrive
 - What are the barriers to our group being successful
 - What connections do we already have in our area
 - How do you make decisions? How does this change over time?
Insiders and outsiders. Cut?? Levels - is it just about what the folks in the Initiative want to do? Gardening? Renewable energy? Perhaps - What activities is your group currently focusing its energy on? Everything you do as a group... inner transition, making your meetings better - the whole.
 - Do you have a vision of what you want to achieve in your Transition group?
 - What is the long term view of your Transition Initiative? Do you have one?

In the groups can you record on flipchart paper the main points that emerge from your discussions.

First 15 mins just thinking in silence and writing down thoughts - how many people write the same thing.

Purpose:

- Find out where each TI is up to
- Check against the conditions and processes of SNM
- Check the condition of the groups in the workshop – it's a healthcheck.
- In order to reflect on what's needed
- EXPECTATION – micro, meso.
- NETWORK: local support.
- LEARNING: How does Transition work where you are?

Captured by:

- Post its
- Mindmaps
- Audio recording – feedback into the room.

BREAK. Sharing Lunch. 12.30pm – 1.30pm. Video booth?

Session 3: Brainstorm/mindmapping of themes and role of a Regional Network: 1.30pm - 2.10pm

- This exercise helps you to identify the themes and areas the Regional Network may focus on to shape the Give and Gain wheel.

This session enables all people present to begin to identify and design what a regional network could do in your area and how it could benefit your group. This is really important session as it allows everyone to shape what a regional network could be, which will then feed into the next exercise.

What the regional network will do and how it will do it.

5mins intro

15mins - what a regional network could do in small groups - post its
Bring all post its together - cluster.

This is:

- Whole group Conversation – drawn from the morning sessions

Purpose:

- Interrogate what the group thinks a network could do for Transition in this region.
- EXPECTATION: micro – what could the network do? Meso – and why? For what impact?
- NETWORK: How does this group imagine a network taking shape?
- LEARNING: Does the group think that learning about the innovation over time to make it function properly is important?

Captured by:

- Mind-map – live scribed by the facilitator.
- Audio recording.

Session 4: Give and gain activity: 2.10pm - 2.40pm

5mins intro

- This activity enables you and the group to state what you are interested in and how much energy you are willing to give to tasks.

This session looks at the potential activities that a regional network could carry out and then analyses as a group what they are interested in and what they would be willing to give energy to. This is where you begin to assess whether a regional network is a feasible project and if it is worth doing.

Purpose:

- To check buy-in, what is the commitment level?
- To find a “Network Manager”
- EXPECTATION: Identifying what the Network could do and why – the motivation for wider engagement over time.
- NETWORK: Managing the network – towards a functioning network.

- **LEARNING:** Begins to work out what it will mean to learn about the innovation and get it to function properly.

Captured by:

- Post-its
- Audio recording

BREAK for tea and coffee. 2.40pm – 3.00pm.

**Session 5: Emergent themes: “Putting the Regional Network into Practise.”
3.00pm – 4.15pm**

15mins. Balloon Game.

Start with the fun “balloon game”! This is just for fun, but also catches a snapshot of vision for the Network.

- **Work in pairs**
- **Each given a balloon**
- **Blow it up**
- **Come up with two catchphrases for the Network – one on each side of the balloon.**
- **Bounce them around the room.**
- **End up with one, read it out.**

15mins work on each theme in groups around each theme.

2 minute summaries to the room per theme. Approx... 10 minutes?

Question: So what’s the next step?

Feedback on summaries. Offers...

- For each theme, we will be asking the question: what’s the purpose? What’s the activity? What’s the modus operandi?
- This also helps articulate what the network is and what it does - a definition of vision and mission if you like.
- Defining what should be the next steps for your network, what will you spend time on?
- This enables you dig into the detail of the emerging themes to understand them operationally, how might they play out over time.
- This helps with visioning how the network might develop through understanding what your first priorities are.
- We could imagine those who, in the Give and Gain wheel, identified an area of special interest might gravitate towards that area in this bit.

Purpose:

- Group commitment
- Operation
- **EXPECTATION:** All levels
- **NETWORK:** Overview

- LEARNING:

Captured by:

- Flip chart papers, hand written.

This final session, then takes the outcomes from the Give and Gain activity to decide on next steps together, considering who will do what and how this will happen. Then it is up to you to develop your network together into the future.

Closing circle. 4.20pm – 4.30pm. What have they got out of the day?