



## **Overview of responses from the Transition movement evaluation survey**

### **Relevance and potential of the Transition movement**



*Image: Kyle Glenn on Unsplash*

**March 2021**

In November 2020 Transition Network launched an evaluation of the impact, relevance and potential of Transition. Our survey was open during November 2020, gathering 377 responses from 32 countries. **This document presents an emerging, “rough analysis” overview of the survey responses, in relation to Relevance and Potential.**

A separate companion document presents the overview in relation to Impacts.

There are other aspects we will continue to analyse, including evaluation reports sent in by Transition groups, the discussion groups held in December 2020, and academic papers. We will also be organising further ways to explore and discuss the emerging analysis.

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The first section of this report describes the story so far of the Evaluation project, where we are in an ongoing process.

After this, there is an overview of the responses to each of the questions within the Relevance and Potential sections of the survey.

This document then examines what survey responses reveal about the possible futures that people are expecting and preparing for.

The document concludes with the eight emerging themes and tensions that we saw and described from the survey responses ahead of the December discussion groups, which still feel relevant. What do you think?

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## The story so far, of the Evaluation project

This evaluation project is inspired by people from Transition groups and Hubs, and funders, who are asking questions about about what the Transition movement has achieved and how it might need to adapt to the challenges that are coming towards us.

In July 2020 Transition Network staff and trustees discussed some aspects of how we could do this evaluation. We introduced the evaluation project intentions to the Transition Hubs Heart Circle and we met with and gained advice from a small number of particularly interested Hubs representatives. Most of the first phase of the evaluation project was then coordinated by Transition Network's Feedback Loops role (Nicola Hillary), Practice of Change role (Deborah Benham) and Hubs Heart Circle Link (Sarah McAdam); and, to add much needed capacity and expertise, Jo Hamilton joined us as a research contractor.

During the design process for the evaluation work, we realised that if we are to assess the impact, relevance and potential of the Transition movement, we need some shared understanding of the areas where the Transition movement is collectively seeking to have impact. Bringing together many sources, including the Transition principles and essential ingredients, Deborah led on compiling the following **draft list of characteristics of the Transition movement**, [shared here](#).

People in the Transition movement come together to:

- Raise awareness – support people to engage with the interconnected challenges of our times (climate change, loss of biodiversity, social injustice and other impacts of the global growth economy);
- Create positive narratives – create and share positive, motivating visions and narratives of a healthy, resilient and equitable future;
- Support inner transformation – build psychological resilience and wellbeing through connection with ourselves, others and the natural world and explore how mindsets, attitudes, emotions and worldviews can contribute to or block social change;
- Take practical action – design and implement practical projects which reduce carbon emissions and increase local resilience e.g. in areas such as food, energy, waste, transport, shelter, mutual aid, disaster relief;
- Connect and care for each other – practice and celebrate creativity, mutual support, fun and friendship, bridging divides and decreasing polarisation to create caring and equitable communities and cultures;
- Contribute to a wellbeing economy – innovate and collaborate to create economic models and opportunities focused on wellbeing and inclusion e.g. new social enterprises, currencies, livelihoods;
- Broaden & deepen participation – model and promote approaches to participation and decision making which value and accommodate multiple perspectives and life experiences;
- Bring people together – convene and energise broad alliances which agree and work towards a common purpose;

- Address injustice – increase awareness of social justice issues within and beyond our movement and find ways to decolonise, heal and make reparations for historic and current injustices, becoming good allies to those who have been doing this work for many years.

We are using the evaluation process to test these draft characteristics and can already see a need to make some adjustments in the light of feedback received last year and new insights gained through our analysis of the survey. As we update the characteristics we will share them on the Transition Network website and explain the reasons behind the changes, continuing to invite comments and questions from the wider movement.

As we started the Evaluation exercise we were lucky to be able to draw on a range of excellent recent feedback from different parts of the movement, including a strategic evaluation conducted by Transition US, the recent survey carried out by the new international circle for Training for Transition and last year's survey of Transition groups in Britain. Jo also started an ongoing review of over 250 academic papers on Transition published in the last 5 years.

This [Initial Analysis document](#) brought together **a summary of this recent feedback**.

We planned to combine a survey, for breadth, with discussion groups and case studies for depth.

During November we gathered responses to a survey [shared here](#), available in 9 languages (with thanks to the translation support from many Hubs who sourced and provided translation and tech support from Liza Zijlstra Jovanovska at Transition Network). Survey respondents were also able to send us existing case study and evaluation reports that their group had done.

As the survey period concluded in December, we held three open international online discussion groups (in different time zones), with thanks to facilitators Sarah and Anahí Beatriz Pacheco Araneda. The evaluation team prepared a document, [shared here](#), to inform these discussions, available in English and Spanish, which drew on the survey responses we had received by 22 November. This [Exploring what's emerging from the Transition movement survey](#) document starts to pull out the important themes and tensions we can see in the survey responses (reproduced at the end of this document).

A rough analysis of the full survey responses is now available, and a summary of that rough analysis is the main part of THIS document.

What's next in the Evaluation project?

- Analysing the case study and group evaluation reports we've been sent.
- Analysing the December 2020 discussion groups.
- Exploring how to frame and support people to engage with the different worldviews and perspectives on current and future context which underpin the feedback we've received.
- Inviting feedback on the role and activities of Transition Network, which could include online meetings with Hubs representatives and a session with critical friends.
- Further discussion groups with invited participants, to more deeply explore specific themes and tensions (potentially using deep democracy processes to help illuminate areas of difference).
- Progressing Deborah's work on mapping the place and practices of the Transition movement/ Transition Network in the wider ecology of change..

- Informing and feeding the co-creation of funding proposals and new directions of work by Transition Network and with the distributed circles and teams in the international movement.

## Overview of survey respondents

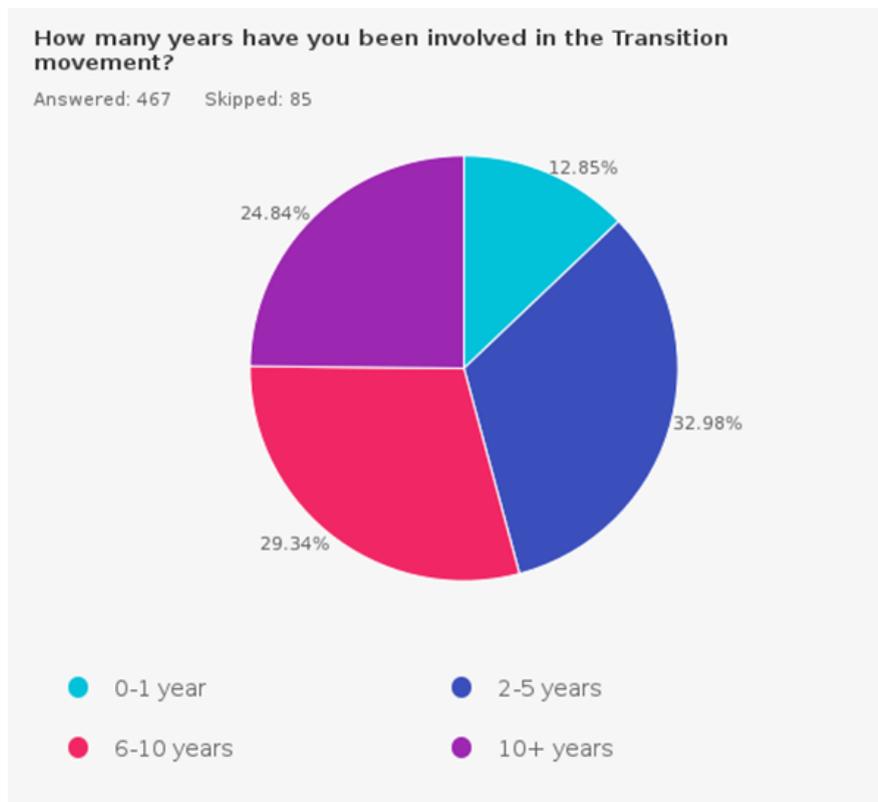
### Survey overview:

This brings together the themes from analysis of 377 full survey responses received by the survey close of 6<sup>th</sup> December 2020. It does not include documents and links to websites that were included in the survey, nor the detailed evaluation from specific projects such as Municipalities in Transition, nor the initial analysis of the discussion groups.

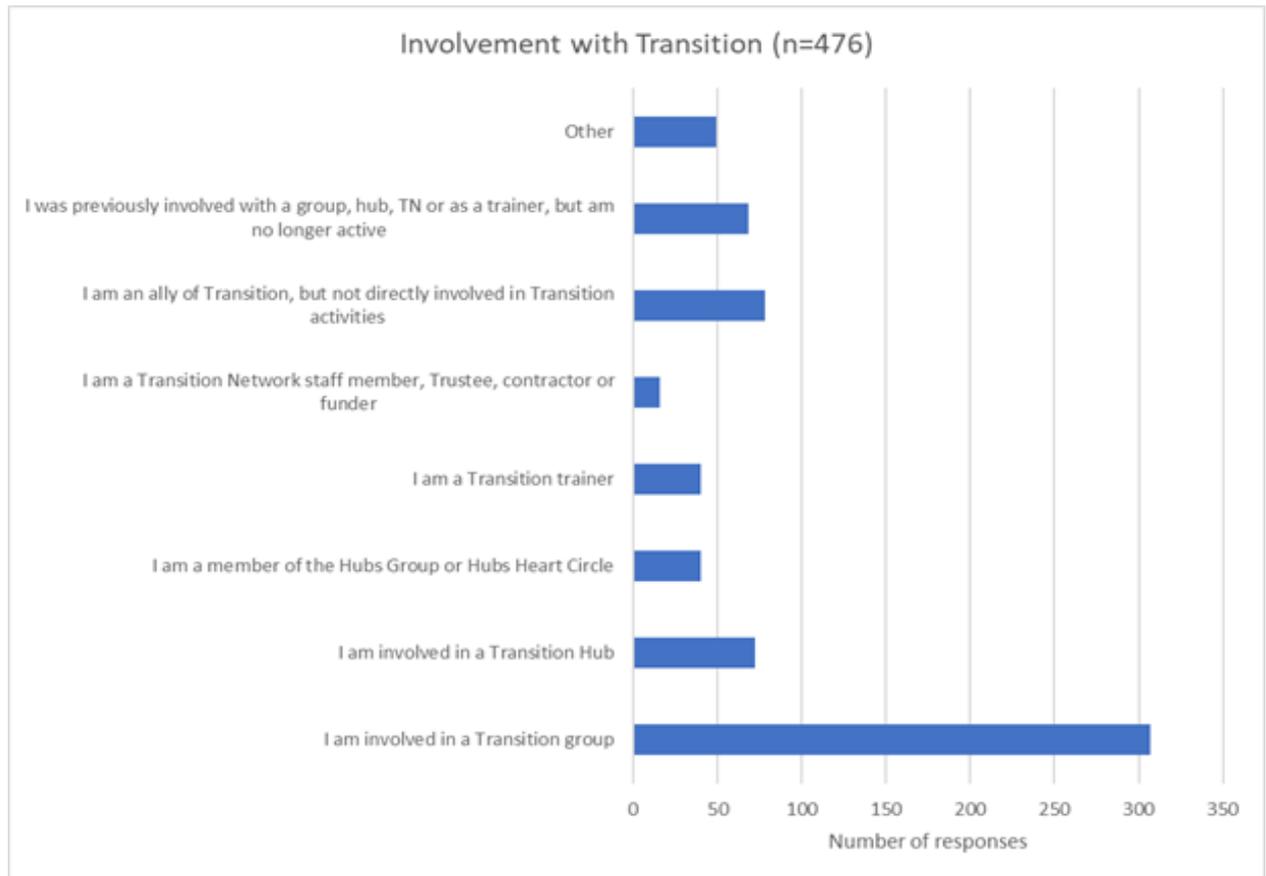
This analysis was prepared by Jo Hamilton and edited by Nicola Hillary.

### Brief overview of survey respondents:

- ~ 377 full responses from [32 countries](#)
- ~ Years of involvement and type of involvement: (note: this includes partial responses)



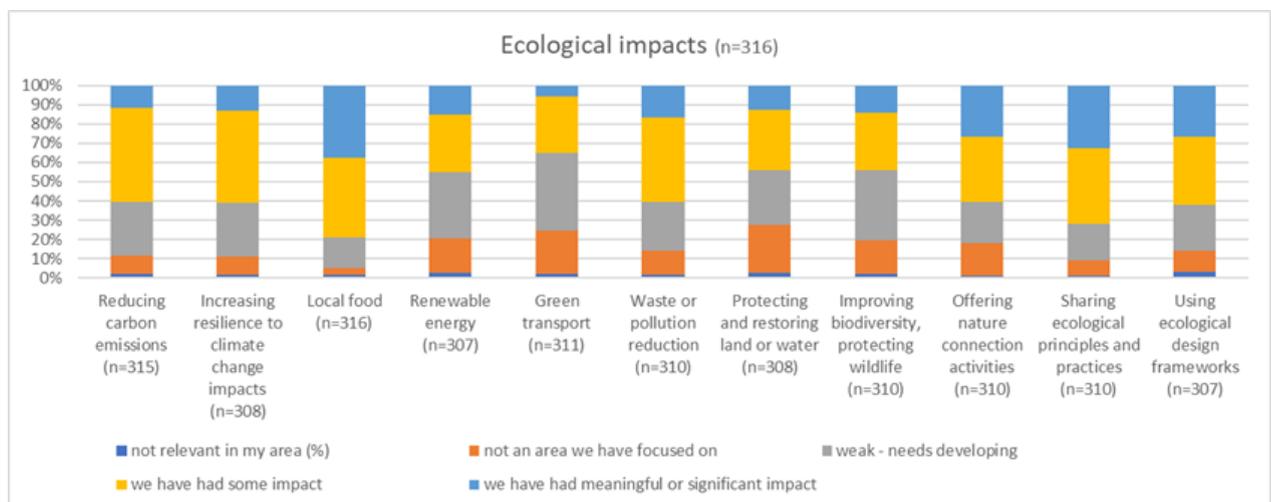
## Type of involvement with Transition

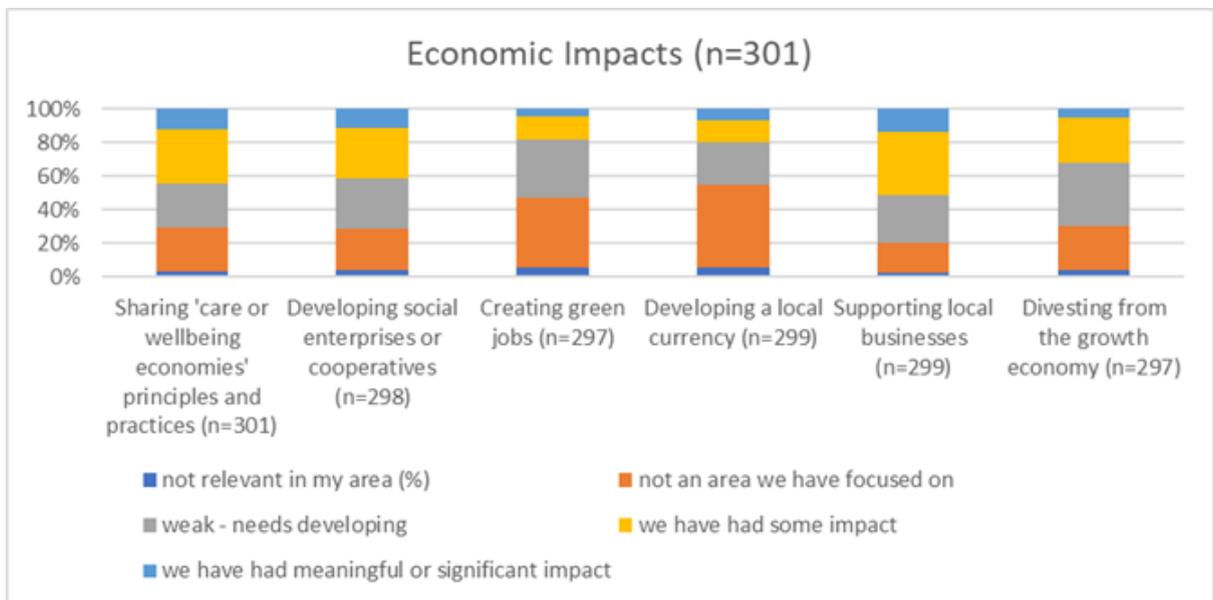
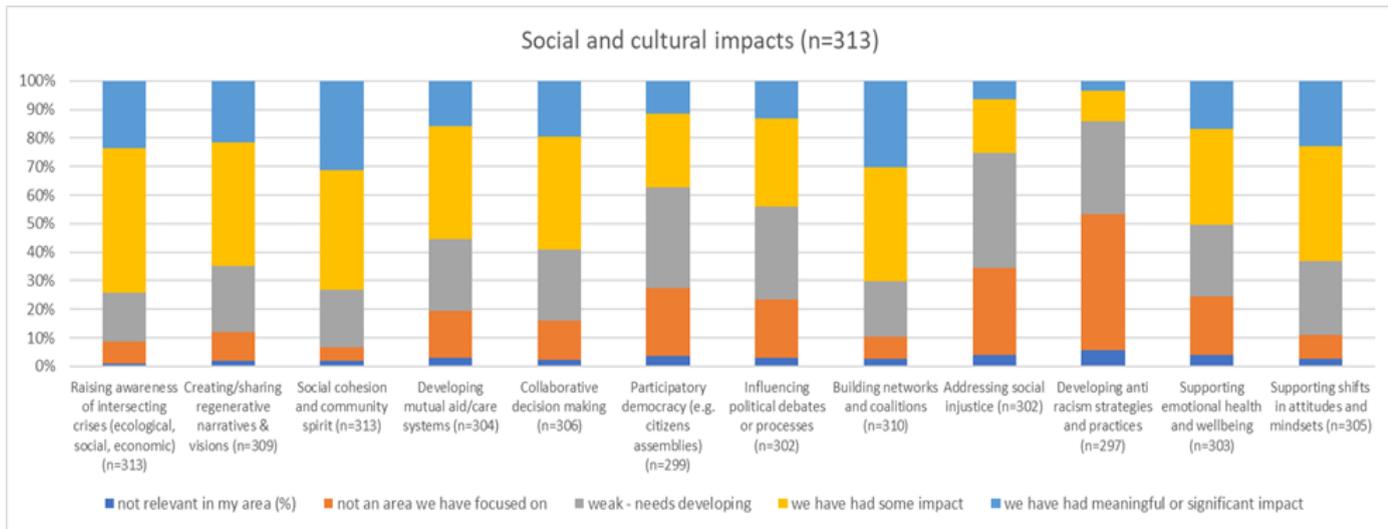


## Impacts of Transition

Impact matrices (Q 9-11). Each item (on the bar graph) was answered by between 297-315 respondents, which is a fairly consistent number of answers across the matrices.

I have inserted the tables, which give the number of respondents (n=XX) for each item on the bar graph.





For more details about the overview of impacts of Transition groups and Hubs, please see the companion document, ***Overview of responses - Impacts - from the Transition Network Evaluation survey.***



- ~ Importance of movement narrative and story-telling about the movement
- ~ Opportunity for creativity, stimulating imagination, thinking differently and staying creative in face of challenges
- ~ creating and sharing positive visions, inspiration, motivation and meaning-making
- ~ *“Imagining and intentioning positive, creative, reconciliatory futures (even 'nows'). As opposed to a narrow focus on potential negative scenarios. Less of what doesn't work with the world, more of what does.”*[383]
- ~ importance of the clarity of Transition messaging. Some respondents particularly highlighted how they were attracted to the clarity and simplicity of the original Transition messaging.

### **3. Support Inner transformation**

- ~ Respondents mentioned the importance of expanding and disseminating the positive aspects of Inner Transition., mitigating despair and dealing with the emotional impact of climate change, practices for healthy groups and the support needed for individuals and groups, such as coaching. The need to reframe Inner Transition to make language and approaches more accessible was also apparent. From the discussion groups, participants raised the importance of integrating Inner Transition into all activities, and not polarising between inner/outer.

### **4. Take practical action and enabling agency at a local level**

#### *Starting up*

- ~ simple, practical solutions
- ~ a-political
- ~ how to start: tools, processes, ideas, inspiration, group support
- ~ Tools for community building and community resilience

#### *Localisation, agency and empowerment*

- ~ Decentralised, grassroots organising and empowerment, bottom-up approach
- ~ be the change
- ~ Self-directed - made by the people. Generating and developing local agency
- ~ community building, support, practical approaches to achieving positive change, supported by cohesive vision
- ~ adapted to context

#### *Take practical action and generating impact*

- ~ Practical community sustainability and local resilience,
- ~ Practical action backed up by accessible wisdom and experience
- ~ reference to specific projects such as food sovereignty, economic cohesion, climate mitigation, practical application of degrowth through projects

- ~ Leveraging impact
- ~ Pathways to meaningful actions

#### *Sharing examples*

- ~ sharing success stories
- ~ templates for approaches

### **8. Bring people together**

- ~ Cohering, convening, creating community and catalysing at local level
- ~ ability to unite, connecting people, building relationships
- ~ attention to spectrum of society, inclusive, social cohesion, connecting across communities and societies

#### *Networking – between local groups and wider movement*

- ~ local action, regional, national and global networking
- ~ collaboration
- ~ networking aligned groups
- ~ Connection to wider movements: conference, inspiration.

#### *Relationship to councils and government*

- ~ intermediary to councils, bridging / non adversarial
- ~ localisation, apolitical
- ~ collaboration with local government
- ~ application of participatory governance
- ~ creates "politics of delivery" - top down and bottom up
- ~ pressure on Government

### **Systems thinking and holistic visions**

#### *Holistic approach*

- ~ broad spectrum of activities, umbrella
- ~ holistic vision, supports loose involvement, enables local decision making to decide which projects to implement according to contexts

#### *Systems thinking*

- ~ connection of vision and action - systems thinking to support grassroots action
- ~ approach to complexity and challenge: resilience strategies
- ~ practical and systemic thinking

- ~ collecting ideas, making accessible / packaging for people to take action
- ~ connection to theory - science, psychology, change, relevant tools
- ~ global challenges translated into local action
- ~ application of permaculture principles
- ~ demonstration of sustainable regenerative movement
- ~ utilising social technologies
- ~ agile pace, flexibility

### **Process, innovation, building and sustaining a movement**

- ~ skills and infrastructure: Support, Facilitators, education, training, resources,
- ~ supporting the commitment of Transitioners
- ~ Collector and disseminator of wisdom: sharing ideas, info and solutions; open source, collective intelligence
- ~ Community building across difference.
- ~ Transition Methodologies
- ~ Equal and credible group-building practices, resilient and strong groups, generating mutual support
- ~ Examples of shared governance/power/democracy
- ~ Frameworks for creating and experimenting with alternative systems (e.g. MiT, REconomy)

*“I am intrigued by the grassroots level engagement and work (including approaches you have scaled like Transition Streets) running alongside the system level initiatives like REconomy and Local Government partnerships. I am curious what the relationship is between the two, or if perhaps they take place in isolation from each other? Why is it that some communities can move to scale and system impact work while others stay in a more boutique, on the fringes position in community?”*

### **Q17. Is there anything we should let go of, or which no longer serves our aims as a movement?**

105 responses to this. Key themes are:

**Keep it all:** 25 respondents said should keep the breadth, let go of nothing. Often followed by stating the importance of letting local groups decide the focus of their work according to the local context. A few responses highlighted that broadness reduces clarity or increases ‘mission creep’. A few responses related to the need to keep raising awareness, or that we should let go of awareness raising, and some focused on dropping anything not climate related.

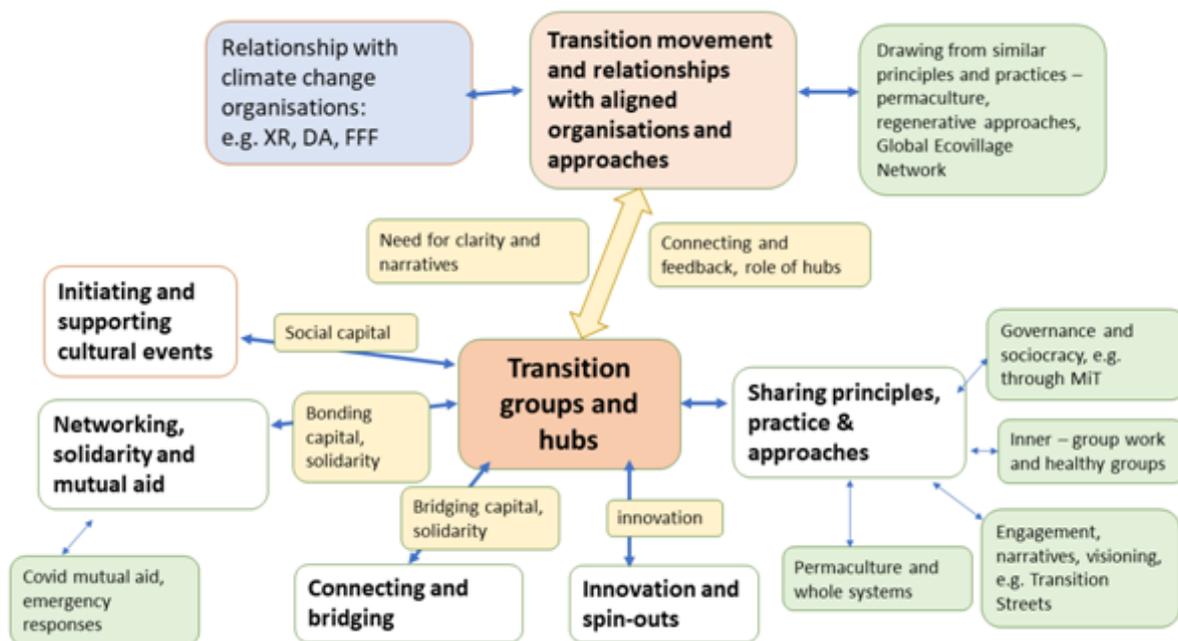
**Isolation and distinction of Transition as movement:** twelve respondents suggested giving up working in a way that is isolated, distinct or separate from other movements, and the distinction about what is/ isn’t ‘Transition’. At a smaller scale, this was reflected in the distinctions between us/them, and activist/not, and right/wrong attitudes.

**Peak oil:** Giving up the emphasis or focus on peak oil was mentioned by at least 10 people. Some suggested replacing this with net zero.

**Q18. Have you seen or experienced Transition principles or practices being useful to, or adopted by, other groups?**

The responses illustrate the variety of ways that the Transition movement contributes to, learns from and develops within the wider ecosystem of change, at all levels of scale. Answers to this question show the learning that occurs through movements, and the value of social processes and praxis (or practical application of theory) that Transition contributes to. These processes are often harder to map as definitive ‘impacts’ that can be solely attributed to Transition, yet what emerges from the survey and discussion groups overall are clear patterns of impact that Transition contributes to.

Many of these relationships can be viewed as forms of social capital - the networks of relationships, trust, reciprocity and flows of information – that can unleash the collective skills and expertise of a community, and harness them in service of the common good.



### Sharing knowledge, principles, practices and approaches

Transition knowledge about inclusive and collaborative group work and healthy group processes is being used in newer organisations such as XR and Deep Adaptation, usually via the people involved in Transition being involved in these projects too.

*E.g. “CAG Oxfordshire is a good example. now 85 groups and organisations in Oxfordshire. Until recently (and Transition Bounce Fwd Funding!) only 3 were registered transition groups ... lots of people have taken inspiration, practices etc from transition movement (directly and indirectly through other groups and our staff team, incl. me) - directly from using guides, attending events/training,*

*reading books, etc. Particularly around visioning and participatory processes, inner, more recently 'what if' etc". [314]*

Principles and approaches to group organising are being used in many groups and aligned networks, such as: COVID Mutual Aid groups, XR, community land trusts and coops, community energy groups, local food producers, campaigning groups, Fridays for Future, Parents for Future, Deep Adaptation.

*"Over the course of about 10 years I've noticed that slowly, almost all protest-based climate activist groups in the country adopted some or many of the positive practices they got from various Transition groups. From practical projects in community that include "dirtying your hands" to self-reflection and even some inner-transition practices." [426]*

### **Connecting and networking groups**

The approach to collaborative working with wider groups / appreciation of an 'ecosystem' were also evident.

- **Networking, solidarity and mutual aid:** These are examples of bonding capital, building relationships between or within groups / communities of practice, and acting in solidarity with aligned organisations) was evident, e.g. by working closely with neighbouring Transition or aligned groups for information and skill sharing, providing mutual support and solidarity to aligned organisations, and networking with wider organisations to come up with local solutions.

*"Feels as though we've created a successful base and track record for tackling anything we choose to. Teaming up with local XR, Black Lives Matters and mutual aid groups in addition to long term change makers (cycling groups, air pollution groups; Green New Deal/green jobs groups etc) feels latent with potential at present" [522]*

*"We are providing the same principles and methodologies to other organizations, institutions, other movements like Extinction Rebellion, Fridays For Future, Parents For Future, political parties, schools ..." [22]*

- **Connecting and bridging:** These activities are examples of bridging capital, building bridges and relationships between different groups, classes and organisations. This was evident through cultural activities that brought a wider section of the community together (e.g. carnivals and artistic events), and also through convening emergency responses.

### **Supporting and initiating cultural events**

There is plenty of evidence of Transition initiatives being convenors, catalysers and contributors to other local projects which might not come under the Transition 'brand': carnivals and arts events, schools projects, local energy, food and other projects.

### **Innovation and spin-out projects**

Transition groups have contributed to feasibility studies, initiated projects that have spun out to projects that are connected to, but larger than a Transition group.

### **Questions about relationships with wider organisations at a local level**

For some initiatives, the presence of many similar organisations presents a challenge, seen as a competition for scarce resources (people and time).

For other groups, ways to connect with existing groups was found through working with and alongside groups, finding niches that Transition could inhabit, and adding what is missing and needed.

### **Relating to aligned groups and organizations**

Synergy with Transition and other approaches – permaculture, eco-villages, Work that Reconnects – was noted, alongside the reflection that many groups are aligned with Transition approaches, but not part of the Transition movement. There is an acknowledgement that many of the working principles have been packaged as Transition, but come from a variety of sources, and are shared through their practical application. The question arising from these approaches is what can best enable learning and development across movements, regions, territories and continents? It also relates to the [trickle becomes a river](#) article shared by one respondent about cultural creatives, and highlights the importance of seeing Transition as part of a flowing and growing movement.

*“I really love XR, it feels like they are the other side of the same coin, highlighting negative, worrying problems in our world and demanding the government do something about it. They have been amazingly helpful I think to the transition movement. Funnily enough though, when I speak to people involved in XR, they seem ready to want to concentrate on the solutions too, more like a transition concept of looking locally for community sustainability. I hope they don't change XR's aims too much as their role is important too, maybe more people will just be part of both movements.” [474]*

*“The so-called "Transition practices" encompass a whole set of tools that, for the most part, do not even originate from the transition movement, but have been adapted and condensed. These practices and principles are visible in several groups, which have appropriated them both from Transition and from other cultures of collective organization. For example, sociocracy, non-violent communication and the use of ecological principles in the organization of collectives exist in various groups, whether or not they are connected in any way to the transition.” [476]*

### **Language and clarity**

Some mention of ‘Transition’ as a phrase not resonating in some cultures (e.g. Germany, France, Austria), and acknowledgement of different approaches to transition wider than the Transition movement, such as ‘Just Transition’ which is gaining more traction.

Some respondents appreciated the clarity of recent collation of principles. Others mentioned confusion about what Transition principles and practices are, and desired more clarity and simplicity – and ways to measure.

*“No, because they are not clear enough for anyone to copy. Website is confusing, resources are hard to find, 10 steps became ingredients that then were distilled down to 7, and it all felt too confusing and not stable enough to trust. Tools, skills and workshops were hard to access and some amazing techniques were not shared well unless you were lucky to be a prof trainer.” [14]*

## Q19. How could the Transition movement relate better and more effectively with other organisations and strategies within the wider movement for regenerative change?

There are themes that pop up throughout all the questions –

- the need for connection within, between and beyond Transition
- The role of practices and processes for collaboration
- The need for clarity within the movement and the tension between focus/breadth (or holding breadth and focus but with a clearer narrative)

### **The need for connection within, between and beyond Transition:**

#### **Within Transition: Connectors/ troubadours**

- ~ influencers to promote movement, Transition ambassadors, connectors, 'troubadours'
- ~ Strengthened hubs, talks, trainings
- ~ “the links exist between a set of passionate 'heroes' , but something is preventing this really taking off as a wider movement for change. Need to create the conditions and spaces for relationships and connections to happen”

#### **Between Transition and other organisations**

*“The question is: Is a movement which is continuously changing strong enough to collaborate?”*

- ~ Ideas about a platform with partners, to share information and solutions, to promote projects who share similar principles, to carry out coordinated, concrete and consensual actions linked to emergencies and current events
- ~ Arrive at a clear definition of the different positions between positive cooperation with the authorities and a protest position. Clear understanding of strengths of different groups within wider movements - so each plays to strength.
- ~ Transition needs to understand its role to play for the next decade, as part of something bigger. Bringing the strength of community building, participation, Inner Transition, local action. Work with more diverse networks, increased role in ECOLISE and Communities for Future. Create a shared vision for how we go forward together, a common to-do list.
- ~ Many organisations out there - partners with strengths and weaknesses, sharing principles, not glossing over differences.
- ~ Creating synergies, facilitating assemblies between aligned organisations, increasing diversity, reaching across organisational boundaries. Example of Red de Transición (Spain) organized an event called “Re-Thinking Transition” to connect with other activist groups such as Fridays for the future and Extinction Rebellion, which was well received.

### Climate focus

- ~ Deep Adaptation 'gets it'
- ~ collaborate with XR - demonstrate new possibilities in areas they choose
- ~ Connections with existing orgs, carbon abatement strategies - Local Enterprise Partnerships
- ~ greater focus on climate change mitigation
- ~ Work proactively with other groups / movements towards COP26?

### Issue/ sector focus

- ~ coalitions for political pressure
- ~ work together, younger audience, social media
- ~ gap between new young movements and transition
- ~ GEN, Economy of happiness, Permaculture, Pachamama alliance
- ~ partnering with local farmers and farming organisations
- ~ circular economy, Donut economics

### The role of practices and processes for collaboration

- ~ Strengthen skills for facilitating collaboration. Transformative leadership mindsets, practical tools for decision making
- ~ Using prosocial processes, team up Prosocial and Transition
- ~ Needs for processes and resources were highlighted. These clustered around two key areas:
  - o **Skills:** training for new / shared governance models, facilitating and supporting techniques for collaboration, networks, participatory and inclusive processes, application of permaculture models, and specific approaches such as REconomy and Municipalities in Transition.
  - o **Resources – time and money (often both):** appreciation that networking and collaboration demanded additional time, which was usually more than the voluntary time commitment that participants can devote to a voluntary initiative. *“would be great to have more time to build those bridges, but I guess that would require professionalisation”*

## **The need for clarity within the movement and the tension between focus/breadth (or holding breadth and focus but with a clearer narrative)**

### **Clarity of Transition**

- ~ Clearer focus, aims and objectives, clarity of basic ideas and aims. Position the USP of Transition.
- ~ Need to explain language - jargon, make it more accessible.
- ~ Clearer social justice stance, demonstrate positive impacts.
- ~ Common platform of transition groups, central coordination, regular meetings and events. Need vertical networking within Transition (local - national - international) as well as condensing updates from Hubs to make them more accessible.
- ~ Accept who we are - Communicate with and work with other movements that have come from other cultural places but pursue same goals, but don't feel we have to be them too

Visibility of Transition, and the wealth of stories and resources, was identified as a need both within and beyond the movement. Within: examples, case studies, technical expertise (e.g. supporting groups involved in planning objections), having feedback and ways to show and share impact

- ~ *“A dashboard or status map, which could help people visualize what issues are or perceived to be most prolific. Showing people where the world struggles and where the world is finding success and how. Something simple, with even more flexibility and simple goal setting/tracking is needed”*

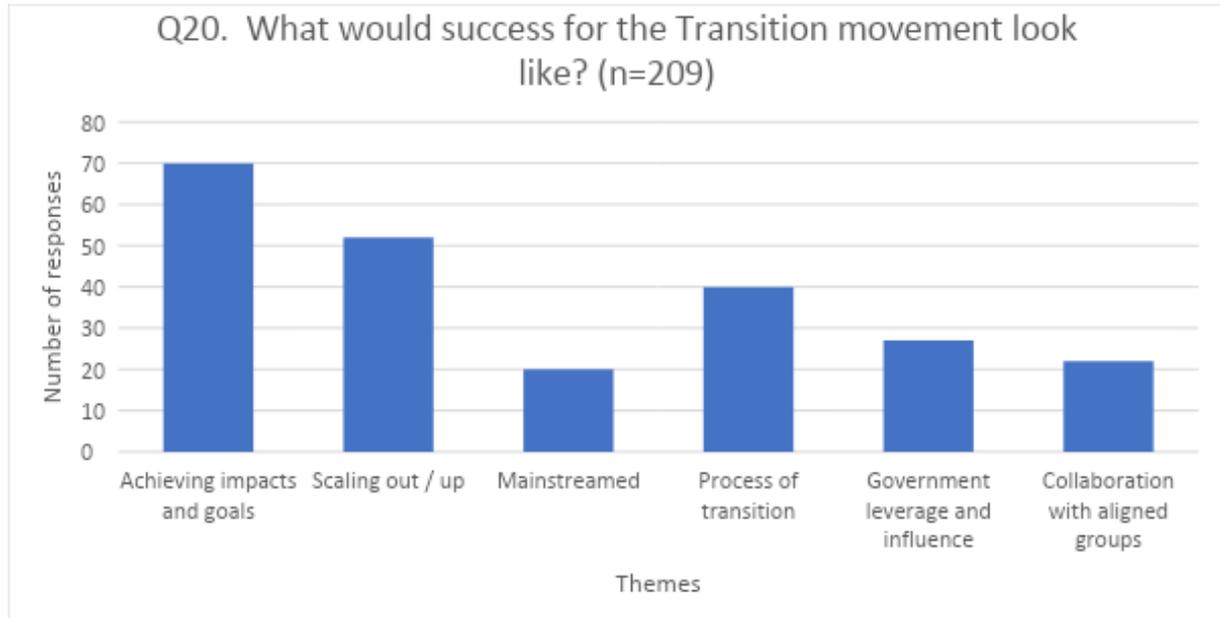
Beyond Transition – the importance of demonstrating visible alternatives, making movement wisdom more accessible and visible.

- ~ *“The narrative, the story, of “the Transition” has to evolve in times of emergency. Combine imagination with what is possible (less and less). We need to go to the next level, be braver. Transition movement has to adapt its narrative, connecting it to current times and to that of other movements. Forming a metanarrative”*

## Potential of Transition

### Q20. What would success for the Transition movement look like?

209 responses in total



#### *Achieving impacts and goals (n=70)*

- **Continuing journey that is already here (5):** "There is a life that crosses us and that throws us into the future and that's where we cry out for the whole world to wake up and see the wonders that are already there, that we are, humans, and the life that surrounds us and throbs and calls us and it moves us."
- **Paradigm shift (7):** including a 'transition of minds', 'healthy balance of masculine and feminine' and 'change of cultural paradigm'. Also about expansion of narratives and imagination.
- **"more beautiful world" (15)** : theme illustrates the importance of positive visions and narratives of change – with impacts of a "happier, healthier, diverse, inclusive society", and "living fully"
- **Climate mitigation (13)** specific impacts such as net zero by 2030.. or 2050, alongside contributing impacts , e.g. decrease in cars.
- **Community resilience (19):** focus on achieving local resilience and regenerative systems

#### *Scaling out/ up (n=52)*

Around 52 responses focused on scaling the movement. Of these

- ~ **Increased engagement (awareness and participation), wider awareness of Transition (30)**
- ~ **Replication (10):** the replication of Transition groups and a growing movement

- ~ **Breadth (16):** scaling out – increasing the breadth of the movement, including wider diversity, youth, *“how to transition those with debt, mortgages, jobs, families, lack of power and influence their neighbourhoods”*, cultural transformation and increased speed of actions

*Overall question about scale:*

“Why is it that some communities can move to scale and system impact work while others stay in a more boutique, on the fringes position in community? Coherent wholistic strategy - move beyond silos of sectors and issues?”

*Mainstreaming / Transition redundant because mainstreamed (n=20)*

Mainstreaming Transition principles and practices in wider society was a popular theme, and shares much with broader engagement. However, distinct from increasing the breadth of people involved in Transition, this theme brings out the desire for the principles to be mainstreamed so that Transition becomes redundant – with no need to mention the Transition ‘brand’.

*Government leverage and influence (n=27)*

Collaboration with, influence on and integration with local and national government. This included processes of collaboration (for example Municipalities in Transition), integration of Transition principles into forms of governance, involvement in local politics, the need for new forms of government and democracy, and the need for *“progressive political support at the ballot box”* and *“The Transition network in power! Ahahahaha”*

*Collaboration with aligned groups (n=22)*

Process of collaboration theme mainly focused on collaboration with aligned groups and movements, and *“recognising allies in different territories”*. For example:

- ~ *“coordination with aligned organisations - Fridays for Future, Extinction Rebellion, Parents for Future, WWF, Legambiente, FAI, Amici della Terra, etc.”*
- ~ *“adoption of Transition principles by aligned groups”;*
- ~ *“Catalysing diverse alliances”*

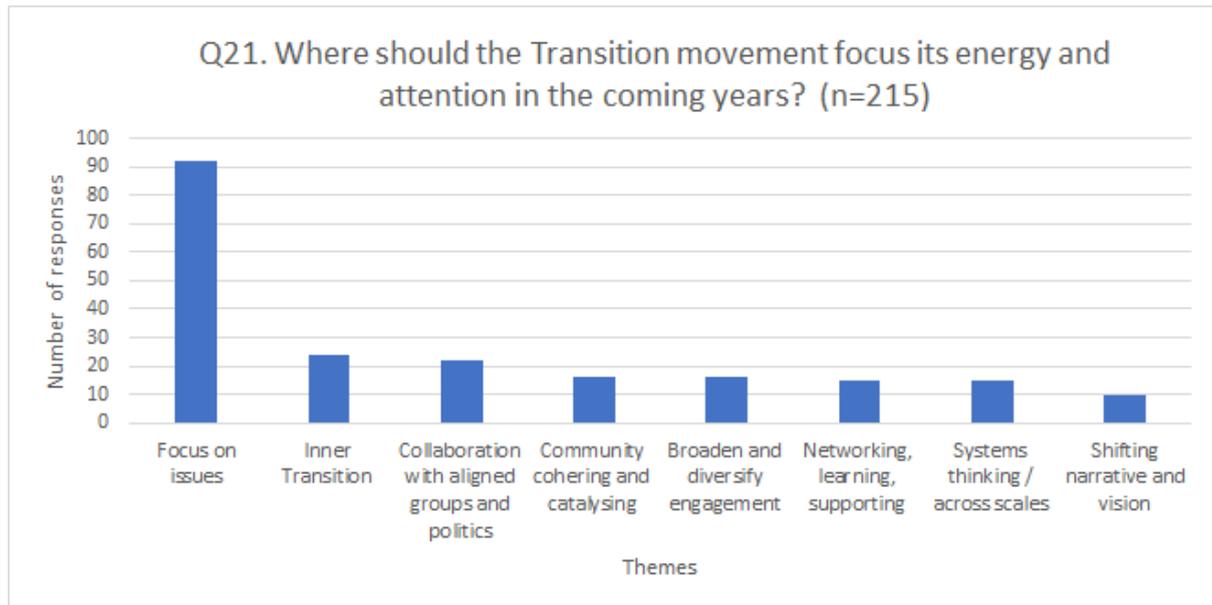
*Process of transition (n=40)*

For some, success for the Transition movement would look like Transition being able to connect and strengthen initiatives through a *“learning community and community of practice to share experiences and learning”*.

- Having accessible tools and resources, supporting those already involved, accessible knowledge base, and connections to other groups.
- *“habits of communication, organization and thinking that allow us to go to the root of problems and frame these problems at various scales, in a perspective of popular empowerment.”*
- Diversity in initiatives, making Transition relevant to differing local contexts, and *“inclusive just process, horizontal governance, focused on justice for all, which meets all social, cultural and generational benefits”*.

Q21. Where should the Transition movement focus its energy and attention in the coming years? What do you see as key areas of potential when you consider the real and pressing needs of our time?

215 responses



#### Issue focus (n~ 92)

Many responses focused on the importance of one or a range of issues, which covered as wide a range as Transition.

Within this, around

- ~ 30 included politics, economy, education and community development
- ~ 33 included climate and energy
- ~ 7 mentioned equity and justice
- ~ 22 included biodiversity, food and agriculture

Within the breadth of issues, some reinforced the importance of local context and needs for the focus of the work:

- *“different regions set own focus according to context, support relationships and learning between groups “the care, the love that we have for each other as a great family”. In Latin America a very large focus of attention is that of the protection of natural resources and communities native or indigenous to our countries”*
- keep whole spectrum, enable variety of local interests. *“Focus on everything, but keep it local, workable, doable!”*

- *"I think the Transition approach of trying to appeal to everybody limited its ability to appeal to many younger people - eg those involved in climate camp and XR".*

### **Inner Transition (n=24).**

Including conflict management, and nurturing collaborative culture that is non-bureaucratic and agile, while developing capacity to integrate minority and diversity (including decolonization).

*"continuing work to address some of the divisive discourse we see widespread across societies, by demonstrating through lived experience how communities can come together and work towards a positive agenda for our collective, sustainable future, is vital".[208]*

### **Community cohering and catalysing (n=16)**

Including "Developing facilitation and catalysing skills. Being the mycorrhizal enabler in communities", and strengthening community bonds in preparation for the hard times.

### **Collaboration with aligned groups and politics (n=22)**

This ranged from 'meaningful local partnerships' to "Collaborations with the intersecting networks of organisations seeking systems change to infuse deliberative democratic engagement in decision making".

### **Broaden and diversify engagement (n=16)**

This included widening engagement and "mass recruitment", more diverse engagement, "so any transition actions are inclusive", and "persuading mass media to include alternative future visions and Transition"

### **Networking, learning, supporting (n=15)**

- ~ *"A transition network that sees the establishment and strengthening of local groups as a task." - Mentoring and support for new Transition initiatives*
- ~ *Development of skills: "skills and trainings to scale up voluntary capacity, aid and promote good practice"*
- ~ *"sharing information, examples, experiences, creative solutions to complex problems"*
- ~ *"healthy and empowering transition leadership"*

### **Systems thinking / across scales (n=15):**

Whole systems design and applying principles across multiple scales, including supporting the empowerment of communities, creating platforms for the empowerment of communities at the political level, - so that their practices and dynamics have an expression in the local social structure itself.

*A pertinent question was "is voluntary enough? Multiplying and scaling up everything, trainers, more stories, movies, Reconomy"*

**Shifting narrative and vision (n=10):** included the value of storytelling, the importance of picking stories carefully, changing narrative of economy, working with yes instead of no.



## Q22. What challenges and tensions do you see in relation to these areas of potential?

[n=173]

### *Yearning for Transition times past*

'The good old days when Transition was simple and local' - and perhaps when not only Transition but the world seemed less complex than it is now. References to keeping Transition very locally-focused, without the "need" for complexity or working across different scales.

*"Transition as a "structure" is not able to inspire anymore. It has stagnated into a mess of anonymous middle managers. Challenge: to revive the enthusiasm and uncoordinated coherence that only comes via local initiatives."*

### *How Transition movement relates to and works with social justice and systemic oppressions*

- ~ *"There seems to be a reluctance on the part of the Transition movement to address the interconnectedness of white supremacy, capitalism, settler colonialism, and hetero-patriarchy in the ongoing consumption/destruction of our ecosystems."*[352]

### *Resources and capacity [within the movement]*

- ~ "having enough time and energy to keep it all going!"[147] .
- ~ Time and money/ funding for roles
- ~ New members – not enough of them
- ~ "Lack of financial resources. Tension between voluntary and paid work. Hubs are crucial to support the transition process and most of them don't have capacity".

### *Tensions and challenges of scaling up/ collaboration*

- ~ *"The amount of partnerships and stakeholders to take into account is downright dizzying!"*

### *System thinking*

- ~ *Most people have not been taught to see through a whole-systems lens, nor to think or design using these approaches. Bringing new ways of seeing/doing/understanding to groups can be very challenging, so we need to make it fun and productive on many levels. [363]*

### *Leadership*

- ~ *"Les leaders ne sont pas toujours bien compris car ils souhaitent aller vite ce qui bouscule certaines habitudes et a tendance à mettre en avant les personnes. Il est donc nécessaire de bien définir ce qu'est un leader et que nous pouvons tous être aussi des leaders sur des buts définis que nous souhaitons voir aboutir. // Leaders are not always well understood because they want to go quickly which upsets certain habits and tends to put people first. It is therefore necessary to clearly define what a leader is and that we can all also be leaders on defined goals that we wish to see achieved."*[227]

### *How Transition movement relates to wider society [and power]*

- ~ Cultural challenge against new economic systems, Political tensions and growing intolerance

- ~ tumultuous dismantling of existing power structures [146] right wing status quo, powerful vested interests
- ~ *“Die zunehmende Polarisierung der Gesellschaft, den zutiefst respektlosen Umgang und den respektlosen Ton der polarisierten Gruppen, das Nicht-Zuhören, das Rechthaben-Wollen // The increasing polarization of society, the profoundly disrespectful interaction and the disrespectful tone of the polarized groups, not listening, wanting to be right”* [330]
- ~ resistance to reconciliation and integration, transition narrative of change is not radical enough to be appealing in current times

#### *Power of vested interests*

- ~ “I see 2 main challenges: 1) Economy plays with the wrong rules - As long as the true costs of production are paid by the public and not by the enterprises we as Transitioners can demonstrate that there could be another economy but we never ever will have the chance to realize it. 2) As long as more people are paid to destroy the earth according to the "wrong rules of the game" we don't have a chance either” [324]
- ~ current power structures are organized to dismantle this opposition (to Business As Usual). Need support for this process, so that these bastions of democracy have expression in local power to achieve the Transition in a structural way.

#### *Psychosocial, fear, denial, apathy, overwhelm*

- ~ *“It's hard to call an end to a party, even when everyone can see that the food and drink are running out”* [31]
- ~ *“Das man aus ANgst heraus handelt, weil es heißt wir "müssen, sonst ist es zu Spät". Angst ist kein guter Motivator. // That one acts out of fear, because it means "we have to, otherwise it is too late". Fear is not a good motivator”.* [43]
- ~ The polarization of attitudes which creates anxieties , destructive leaders try to dispel their anguish of losing the so-called advantages of the world before
- ~ The collective unconscious anchored in old paradigms: competition, patriarchy, consumerism, speed, techno-scientism ...
- ~ The need to develop ways of questioning and addressing privilege and the forms of denial that maintain privilege

### Q23. What is needed to help us overcome, or work constructively with, these challenges and tensions? (n=177)

These are all direct quotes from respondents

#### **Inclusive processes**

- ~ Decentralize power and funding within transition. better structure/capacity for hubs .

- ~ Create a strong organization but make sure most decisions are decided in a very bottom up way

### **Internal networking**

- ~ National and regional groups: people dedicated (full time) to the support of local groups so that the effective empowerment of communities and the necessary structural changes are given
- ~ Deliberate and skillful network weaving while giving up Transition as identity.

### **Visible collaboration across difference**

- ~ Organize divisive debates and reconciliations

### **Livelihoods**

- ~ Identify activities that generate sufficient economic income to finance Transition activities in a sustainable way for the people involved in it.

### **Trainings**

- ~ training and courses, conferences on difficult themes, sharing learning of success and failure across movement [295]
- ~ Individual and group training and processes e.g. inner transition, train trainers, emotional intelligence, working across difference, facilitator training, community participation skills, training on social justice & white supremacy)

### **Inner Transition**

- ~ inner transition processes for individuals and healthy groups, Strengthen alliances and groups, communities, support and collaboration
- ~ Creating culture of peace, listening and dialogue to address polarisation [330]

### **Collaboration with other organisations / government**

- ~ local collaboration and solidarity with aligned groups, strengthen movement and collaboration, mapping and relating with existing organisations, national steering for lobbying and political change [336]
- ~ Presenting those in power with working models of transition. New systems approaches, citizens assemblies, new governance models. [244]

### **Narratives and visions, widening engagement**

- ~ need for attractive narrative of life after fossil fuels, nature to be biggest influencer of politicians." We need to be the light to shine the way, keep positive, show individuals, either locally or right at the top of powerful organisations, how much better life could be."

## Worldviews and expectations of the future (quotes or assumptions drawn from Q16-23)

The survey didn't ask specific questions about how people view the times in which we are currently living or their expectations of the future, but we caught glimpses of related assumptions, questions and emotions in many of the responses. In a Transition Network event last year, we used a regenerative spiral model developed by [Resilience Earth](#) to explore people's [worldviews](#) and how these influence the way we think and feel about possible futures. As an experiment, this section highlights survey responses which speak to each of these possible futures.

There are many connections to be made between the themes – e.g. the threat of collapse is also an opportunity for change to unfold.

### Biosphere regeneration

at the Reconciliation & Regeneration layers of the Regenerative Spiral (futures in which regenerative cultures thrive, inspired by indigenous and other communities which are outside the dominant paradigm)

- ~ *“success .. more just, sustainable, and regenerative global society. Whether we can actually do this. ...nobody ever said changing the world was going to be easy!”*

### Change unfolding

Restorative layer of the Regenerative Spiral (stories of tipping points for positive systemic change being reached, significant shifts in culture, economics, infrastructure etc and regeneration accelerating - can be based on top down or bottom up solutions - or a combination of the two)

Some responses seemed to suggest that this is the aim for action, although it seemed optimistic. A 'power of community' narrative is palpable

- ~ *“A happier, less lonely, more socially-connected, leaner and healthier population living and working in a far more localised, more self-reliant, greener, diverse, inclusive, “small is beautiful” society”.*
- ~ *“circular economy, zero carbon emissions by 2030 – optimistic”*
- ~ *“Strengthening community bonds. Hard times are coming. Together we will make it”.*
- ~ *“strong resilient regions”*

Other responses suggest that these changes present an opportunity for change to unfold, yet with some pessimism about whether it can be achieved

- ~ *“the end of capitalism is coming soon. Or at least a big change in the system”.*
- ~ *“economic collapse will necessitate a radically relocalized economy, only the ongoing work of helping our community to weather collapse as it manifests locally, connection between economic and ecological collapse”*

## Greenwash

Sustainability layer of the Regenerative Spiral (stories which assume a continuation of current systems, but with more visible action for sustainability amongst many institutions and corporations, improvement in some areas but no meaningful systemic shifts on the scale needed to respond to current global crises. Underlying inequalities, extraction, oppression and control continue)

Some responses questioned the degree to which meaningful change could be brought about without Govt and corporate commitment, and a change in the existing economy:

- “can we bring about any significant economic and environmental transition without serious commitment by governments and big corporations?”
- “The question is: Is a movement which is continuously changing strong enough to collaborate? Economy plays by wrong rules - As long as more people are payed to destroy the earth according to the "wrong rules of the game" we don't have a chance either”
- Existing polarisation in societies, political tensions and growing intolerance; politically divided (USA)

## Extraction, oppression and control

Conventional status quo layer (stories of increasing inequality / power grabs / shift to (far) right)

These responses highlighted

- ~ political instability and turmoil from Covid
- ~ the response to a growing polarization and violence in our societies, opportunity for transformation post-COVID, The rise of extremism and the polarization of populations,
- ~ globalized forces
- ~ in Patagonia, we must confront corruption, overfishing, mega-mining, voluntary fires, etc ... to oppose and fight, there are plenty of issues, even a province prohibited the creation of natural parks

## Chaos, breakdown and die off

Extinction level

Collapse and chaos were common themes, although these were sometimes linked to the opportunity for change.

- ~ *“it now feels that we are heading towards inevitable collapse”*
- ~ *“have a hard time talking about how to deal with impending environmental disasters. face them.”*
- ~ *“Switch over to facilitating a descent as Deep Adaptation has done. It's over. violence and resistance to climate induced migrations. Don't think Transition is possible”*
- ~ *“we must assume the condition and the approach that we will no longer arrive in time for the transition.”*
- ~ *“The current context has changed and the level of urgency is higher. Less and less is possible. I can't imagine a bright colourful naive future.”*
- ~ *“fragile state of community action, Everything as always came far too late.”*

~ *“stop presenting utopias that are just not practical for the majority of the people of the planet who are polluting the most.”*

## Themes and tensions we see emerging from the survey

We identified these themes and tensions from the first 276 responses of the survey, and they are currently still feeling relevant - do you agree? What would you add? They were shared in the “Exploring what’s emerging from the Transition movement survey” document.

### 1. The Transition movement within a wider ecology of change

We use ‘ecology of change’ to refer to the different strategies and roles needed to support a shift to a regenerative future. Different groups have different parts to play: some excel at rapid mobilization and generating urgency (e.g. Fridays for Future, Extinction Rebellion), others build the social infrastructure to sustain change-making.

Some impacts of the Transition movement are ‘invisible’, yet the survey responses demonstrate how Transition has contributed to the wider ecology of change through the dissemination of practices, concepts and collective wisdom from the Transition movement to others such as COVID Mutual Aid groups, XR, community land trusts, community energy groups, local food producers, Fridays for Future, Deep Adaptation. For some respondents, this is what success looks like: the integration of Transition principles into wider movements and organisations.

Many respondents question how Transition – as a movement and individual groups – can collaborate well with other groups and movements at local and international scales.

*“My biggest question is how to link these disparate groups and projects together horizontally so that we can work on projects together or towards mutual goals.”*

*“Why are so many movements pursuing the SAME aims but naming their movements differently ... thus avoiding the benefits of a huge community of like-minded souls working in tandem, or ... together, on the same processes and projects at local and regional scale. ... XR and most environmental groups at odds [are] with each other ... I see SO many commonalities but each is pulling entirely in its own direction ... I would love to see Transition call for cohesion in the movements focused on developing stronger communities prepared for the crises and change ahead. ... to call for UNITY or at least a networked, shared vision for how we ALL ... can work TOGETHER”*

### 2. Systems thinking and supporting grassroots action?

When asked where we should focus in the coming years, many spoke of **the application of systems theory and principles at other levels of scale**, noting that the Transition movement is good at holding a systemic perspective, and enabling action “supported by a cohesive vision”. However, cautions were raised about processes which are too complex to communicate or may be off putting to local level participation. For example:

*“Gli attuali e nuovi attivisti potrebbero non essere interessati a trovare risposte sistemiche o mettersi al servizio di altre organizzazioni. // Current and new activists may not be interested in finding systemic answers or serving other organizations.”*

Despite these tensions, some people saw value in both local work and a broader systems approach: *“Transition Town groups might have to shift away from grassroots work if they develop partners that are focused on systems level work; capacity to work across scales; we need both!”*

### 3. To define a narrower focus or hold a holistic picture?

Tensions were apparent between taking a narrower focus with a “clear and uncomplicated agenda”, and a breadth of focus to enable wider engagement. Some people said the movement should focus on a single key issue, but these included net zero, climate mitigation, tackling consumption, food and agriculture, energy reduction, transport, single-use plastics and biodiversity. Many recommended letting go of a framing around ‘peak oil’, or suggested a complete change of focus.

*“Switch over to facilitating a descent as Deep Adaptation has done. It’s over.”*

*“Transition has lost its way trying to deal with too many issues. Personally I would prefer a back to basics Climate Change mitigation approach. I am particularly concerned about the Biodiversity messaging taking efforts, volunteers and finances away from Climate Change mitigation efforts”*

Others stressed the importance of a diversity of issues to enable involvement and potential in each context.

*“It is difficult for the transition movement to have a single focus of attention since the contexts of the different countries where we are is different, in the case of Latin America a very large focus of attention is ... the protection of natural resources and communities native or indigenous to our countries, this legacy is the greatest we have not only with ourselves but also with the world, there is a lot of knowledge to share about it.”*

*“Emphasize that collaboration is key. Many local groups have their own individual agenda. An overarching approach where even small groups can visibly present their own initiatives, but are also part of a co-ordinated campaign/event/political 'push' would help to consolidate influence.”*

### 4. Social justice and environmental focus / Justice, climate, decolonisation

Some initiatives have integrated ecological and social justice, for example Transition Town Tooting in London has *“drawn in a mix of people in what is a wonderfully diverse and dynamic part of London. It’s opened up space for people who want to get involved, in a creative and positive way.”*

Cooperation Humboldt has incorporated practices and teach-ins to unlearn white supremacy, working with community health and people in recovery and on disaster response.

Most connected diversity to questions of participation and relationship with local communities, but it was also a question asked of the movement: *“There seems to be a reluctance on the part of the Transition movement to address the interconnectedness of white supremacy, capitalism, settler colonialism, and hetero-patriarchy in the ongoing consumption/destruction of our ecosystems.”*

Some called for the Transition movement to take a clearer stance on social justice and equity, highlighting the relationships between transition and food justice, migration, social welfare, and social inclusion. Other responses questioned the inclusion of social justice, alongside broader concerns about whether a dilution of focus could weaken the movement.

## 5. Power and leadership

Themes of power and leadership were apparent throughout. Many reflected that the Transition movement is good at empowering individuals and collectives to take action, harnessing the power of community through convening local action, and wider networking. This was compared to the power of governments and vested interests that maintain business as usual.

Different interpretations of power included **power-with** such as *“not dominating or taking over, simply inspiring”, or “support and engage in open governance systems and structures, distributed governance ... Sociocracy”*; and **power-over** such as *“seizing” or “taking power”* and *“The rulers / destroyers of the planet must disappear.”* Some mentioned a fear of losing power and autonomy through working with top-down systems of government.

Approaches to leadership differed, but some urged reflection on different types of leadership: *“It is ... necessary to clearly define what a leader is and that we can all also be leaders on defined goals that we wish to see achieved.”*

## 6. Inner transition

Many people highlighted psychological and inner issues that operate as a block to wider engagement, such as denial, increasing polarization, fragmentation, loss of hope, arising fear in response to emergency narratives, and the challenges of *“Un mundo asustado y empobrecido. // A scared and impoverished world”*. Others said that, whilst inner transition was *“essential”*, cultural contexts made it difficult to communicate the relevance of these approaches: *“We would have to find a new way to talk about it”*. Whilst not named as ‘inner transition’, many people expressed despair or overwhelm at the difficulty of achieving the scale of change needed.

Inner transition is the way into active engagement in Transition for some, and for others the inner dimension can feel uncomfortable; *“The approach needs more emphasis on practical engineering, and less on wellbeing, inner transition, and strange stuff that borders on mysticism.”*

There were frequent references to the people skills needed to build and sustain effective groups, to *“create and nurture support networks for activists, provide transition tools and accompany the teams of transition projects at the human level and internal transition”*, and also the tools needed to navigate divisive subjects - both in local communities and wider society *“Creating culture of peace, listening and dialogue to address polarization”*.

## 7. Narratives and vision

How to hold both imagination and inspiring visions and narratives *and* the realities of intersecting crises?

*“I’ve seen Transition concepts like building community resilience and envisioning positive futures become much more widely understood and embraced throughout the world”*

Many respondents mentioned the dominance of ‘business as usual’ narratives and the power of vested interests as a challenge to scaling up the work of the Transition movement. People reported creating and sharing regenerative narratives & visions through events, screenings and discussions and the practical application of positive visions in Transition projects.

Particular projects such as Municipalities in Transition enabled a *“systemic and practical vision”*, and positive visions were identified as what is needed: *“Passende Visionen, die viele Menschen erreichen und geteilt werden: von Medien, Kulturschaffenden, Kindern, LehrerInnen, PolitikerInnen,*

*ArbeitgeberInnen bis hin zu visionären ÖkonomInnen. // Appropriate visions that reach and are shared by many people: by the media, cultural workers, children, teachers, politicians, employers and even visionary economists”.*

However, some people suggested a need for change: *“the narrative, the story, of "the Transition" has to evolve in times of emergency, surely leaving aside the most naive character of seeking that positive future”* and *“[Transition] has to adapt its narrative, connecting it to current times and to that of other movements”.*

## 8. Sharing ideas and scaling up

Throughout the survey, challenges preventing scaling up are noted, including the challenges of community organizing (*“dealing with community is like herding cats”*), limits of time, money, resources; relationships with other organisations; and how to support healthy dynamic groups. Many people are looking for ways to share, access, learn from and develop the collective wisdom of the movement, accepting that what works well in one context may not be suitable for others.

*“we need Transition ambassadors, ... who visit the initiatives. Collectives need to feel connected to others... [through] having people who are paid to travel through the different regions, like troubadours, and disseminate messages, experiences, connect the movement.”*

*“Transition works well at a local level but . there is ... not enough time, energy or desire to engage with the movement as a whole. So perhaps keep an overall transition body that links groups but spend more time on your local area ”*