

LOCALIZATION SEMINAR: ADAPTING TO THE COMING DOWNSHIFT

NRE 564 and ENV 462 – FALL 2016 – Wed 5:30-7:30 pm, 3556 Dana Building

INSTRUCTORS

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READING MATERIALS

- De Young, R. & T. Princen (2012). *The Localization Reader: Adapting to the Coming Downshift*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.
- Other readings available on U-M Canvas website

PREMISE – This seminar takes as given that high-consuming, growth-dependent societies soon will:

- be operating on drastically less energy and material;
- need to make a rapid transition;
- be less affluent, but possibly function with higher levels of well-being.

The drop in energy and material use may be 80% or more this century, a shift without precedent. While energy is a key driver, the seminar is not about energy policy, nor does it develop doom-and-gloom scenarios. The seminar provides evidence for this premise but does not dwell on it. The seminar presumes that now is the time to envision responses, debate alternatives, and plan for the transition. The seminar focuses on crafting a wholesome, just, equitable, peaceful, and resilient transition. Throughout, members consider the local, regional, national, and even international dimensions of localization.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Developing principles, guidelines, and rules-of-thumb for the urgent transition from a fossil fuel-based, resource-intensive, growth-oriented society to a resilient localized society
2. Applying insights gained to a specific instance of localization
3. Develop the competence and confidence to publicly present principles and practices of localization and collaborate with community officials and citizens

EVALUATIONS – Include weekly preparation, weekly written principles, discussions, and research projects.

ASSIGNMENTS

1. **Preparation and participation** – Thorough preparation of readings and diligent weekly and term writings are essential to the success of the seminar. In-class activities are the core of the course, where active listening is as important as speaking. Attendance at all class sessions is required. There is no substitute for in-class discussions. Since the seminar is an integrative exercise, presenting one's views is essential to its success.
2. **Individual weekly principles** – The readings are selected to stimulate thought about localization. No one reading or combination of readings says definitively what localization is, yet each may offer a different perspective or frame for understanding localization. For each week's readings, members of the seminar will write at least two principles (e.g., criteria, guidelines, rules of thumb, propositions) for localization, based on that week's readings. Depending on class size, we may alternate writing.

One principle should derive from a case, the other from the conceptual reading(s). These principles take the form of general statements, not descriptive summaries. The objective is not to be right, but

to be exploratory and synthetic, even, at times, provocative. The broader, long-term goal is to build a conceptual framework for localization and offer guidelines for action. The collection of principles from all members thus serves as a publicly accessible (initially only to the seminar members) database from which anyone can build a conceptual framework of localization.

The readings contain many possibilities for such principles. Sometimes the authors make them explicitly, but more often, only implicitly. Sometimes, we must infer them. A few carefully crafted sentences will generally suffice for each principle. It is useful to indicate where in the reading the principle originated (e.g., page number, a short quote). In each class session a few volunteers will share their principles. This will be one basis for class discussion.

The principles are to be printed, 3-hole punched (a punch is provided in class), and (physically) posted on the classroom board for everyone to read at the beginning of class (see agenda below). Afterwards, they will be put in a 3-ring binder, available to all members.

3. **Research project** – Beginning at the start of the term, groups of students will develop a small research project. Optimal team size is 2 to 4 students. Smaller groups, even one-person, and larger groups are possible. After a discussion of various topics in the early part of the term, students must make a commitment to a single topic early in October. Projects by individuals are permitted yet gently discouraged.

Documents that form the starting point for research topics are available on Canvas including a number of *Energy Descent Action Plans* (or links to such plans) that have emerged over the last decade. Each research group delivers a short draft paper for peer review, due early November. Seminar sessions are scheduled for presentations in early December. However, the group can choose how (e.g., formal presentation to class, a poster in the commons), where (the class, the school, a conference, a board meeting) and when (no later than early in December), and in what format to present its findings. The how, when and what should be confirmed by late -October.

The schedule of research project tasks includes:

Weekly	Brief updates from groups on research progress
September	Discussion of topics by entire seminar
October 12	Commitment to a single topic
November 9	Draft reports distributed for peer-review
November 16	Peer-review evaluation returned to teams
December 7	Final report due

PROCEDURES

1. **Session agenda** – Each session will follow a simple order:
 - a) **Principles**
 - i. **By 5:30 pm – Post** principles on the board in the meeting room.
 - ii. **From 5:30 to 5:40 pm – Everyone will read and take notes** on the posted principles.
 - iii. At 5:45 pm – **Discussion of selected principles** will begin.
 - b) **Mini-lecture**
 - c) **Discussion of readings**
 - d) **Group-based research project discussion**
 - e) **Seminar administration**

2. **Readings** – Most readings are in the textbook. The goal is not to accumulate lots of facts. It is not to memorize. Rather, it is to identify key ideas, concepts, biophysical and social contexts, and principles as they relate to localization. Thus, consider the following as an overall reading strategy.
 - a) Approach the readings as an exploration, an active process of making sense of the piece. One resource that aids this process is Fu (2006). *Active reading revisited* (available on Canvas).
 - b) Most of the authors were not part of a localization seminar. They'd likely frame their piece differently had they been in such a seminar. It will often be useful to reinterpret their work.
 - c) As you read, note your own reactions, especially surprises or passages that contradict your previous understanding (or another reading). Share such reactions with seminar members.
3. **Written work** – Print all assignments; single spacing is acceptable for final papers but drafts to be read and marked by others should be double spaced with ample margins for comments. At a minimum:
 - a) Number all pages and staple
 - b) Include name, date, mailing address (preferred means of contact), and assignment topic

SCHEDULE

1. CASES

Human societies have long been organized locally, but cheap energy, new technologies and communications have shifted that organization to the national and international levels. Examples of localization, as opposed to “the local,” are hard to come by. A reasonable example must demonstrate how to provide for basic needs in a durable and resilient manner. Within the readings listed below, there are cases to help us imagine what the transition could be like. Brief texts of these cases are found in *The Localization Reader* and found on Canvas; other cases are listed below (with URL) and more examples will emerge in the mainstream media over the course of the term.

2. READINGS (The reading can be found in the textbook or on Canvas).

SEPTEMBER 7 – PREMISE

De Young, R. (2014). Some behavioral aspects of energy descent, How a biophysical psychology might help people transition through the lean times ahead, *Frontiers in Psychology*, 5, 1255.
 (http://www.researchgate.net/publication/267748678_Some_behavioral_aspects_of_energy_descent_How_a_biophysical_psychology_might_help_people_transition_through_the_lean_times_ahead)

Holmgren, David (2009). *Future scenarios: How communities can adapt to peak oil and climate change*. Chelsea Green Publishing, White River Junction, VT. [Book or online, see Canvas site for online link]

Case: Webpage to review: Periodically read *Resilience.org* (<http://www.resilience.org>) looking for articles about localization. Prepare a paragraph synopsis of that article and then a short paragraph on your personal response to it. Publish as a Discussion on Canvas website (i.e., enter as new item).

SEPTEMBER 14 – INTRODUCTION and DRIVERS OF LOCALIZATION

Front Matter: Preface and Introduction

Introduction

- 1 The End of Fossil Fuels *M. King Hubbert*
- 2 Energy Cost of Energy Gained *Adam Dadeby*

Monbiot, G. (2015) Consume more, conserve more: Sorry, but we just can't do both, *The Guardian*, 24 Nov.

Case: Read only “2000 watt” story in Kolbert, “The island in the wind.” *The New Yorker*, 2008, 68-77.

SEPTEMBER 21 –DRIVERS OF LOCALIZATION (continued)

- 3 The Inevitability of Transition *Joseph A. Tainter*
4 Less Energy, More Equity, More Time *Ivan Illich*
Greer, J. M. (2012). Progress vs apocalypse, *The Energy Reader*. (Pp. 95-101).
Case: Box (Planful Shrinkage) [read expanded case by this name on Canvas webpage]
Case: “Ancient Italian Town Has Wind at Its Back,” Elisabeth Rosenthal, September 28, 2010;
<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/09/29/science/earth/29fossil.html?pagewanted=all&r=0>

SEPTEMBER 28 – LOCALIZATION IN PRACTICE

Introduction

- 5 An Arc of Scenarios *Rob Hopkins*
6 Inhabiting Place *Robert L. Thayer*
7 Locally Owned Business *Michael Shuman*
Boyer, R. (2016). Achieving one-planet living through transitions in social practice, *SSP&P*, 12, 1-13.
Case: Box (Localizing Finance)
Case: “In a City in Italy, Schoolchildren Walk Where Once They Rode,” NYT, 27 Mar 2009.

OCTOBER 5 – LOCALIZATION IN PRACTICE (continued)

- 8 Daring to Experiment *Warren Johnson*
9 Civic Agriculture *Thomas A. Lyson*
10 Ecovillages: A Whole New Way *Karen Litfin*
Alexander, S. & P. Yacoumis (2016, in press) Degrowth, energy descent, and low-tech living, *Journal of Cleaner Production* (accepted manuscript).
Irwin, D. et al. (2015). *Transition Design Monograph* (Final - 15March2016).
Case: Box (Erie Canal)
Case: Box (Belo Horizonte)

OCTOBER 12 – PHILOSOPHIES OF LOCALIZATION

Introduction

- 11 The Decentralist Tradition *Kirkpatrick Sale*
12 Technology at a Human Scale *Ernst F. Schumacher*
Liftin, K. T. (2013). Localism, in *Critical Environmental Politics*. (London: Routledge). Pp. 154–164.
Case: Box (The Potato)
Case: “Revived paper Mill Brings a Town Back with It.” New York Times, 2008.

OCTOBER 19 – BRINGING OUT THE BEST IN PEOPLE

Introduction

- 16 Abundance and Fulfillment *Sharon Astyk*
17 Motives for Living Lightly *Raymond De Young*
18 Enabling the Best in People *Rachel Kaplan & Stephen Kaplan*
Brooks, D. (2016) The Great Affluence Fallacy, *New York Times* (9 August 2016)
Case: Box (Work less)
Case: “Good health as economy declines?” New York Times, 7 October 2008.

OCTOBER 26 – PHILOSOPHIES OF LOCALIZATION (continued)

- 13 Provincialism *Josiah Royce*
14 Local Enterprise *Wendell Berry*
15 Conserving Communities *Wendell Berry*
Alexander, S. & S. Ussher (2012). The voluntary simplicity movement, *J. of Consumer Culture*, 12, 66-86
Case: Box (Hawaii)
Case: “Workers’ Paradise Found Off Japan’s Coast,” New York Times, 22 April 2009.

NOVEMBER 2 – APPROPRIATE GOVERNANCE

- Introduction
20 Towards the Regional *Gar Alperovitz*
21 Global Problems, Localist Solutions *David J. Hess*
Case: Box (Energy islands)
Case: “Demand for Wind Spurs Ranchers to Join Forces,” New York Times, 28 Nov 2008.

NOVEMBER 9 – TOOLS FOR TRANSITION

- Introduction
22 Adaptive Muddling *Raymond De Young & Stephen Kaplan*
23 Promoting a Partnership Society *Lester W. Milbrath*
24 Tools for the Transition *Donella Meadows, Randers & Dennis Meadows*
Case: Box (Corn to Veggies)
Case: “An Effort to Bury a Throwaway Culture One Repair at a Time,” Amsterdam Journal, Sally McGrane, May 8, 2012 (<http://www.nytimes.com/2012/05/09/world/europe/amsterdam-tries-to-change-culture-with-repair-cafes.html?pagewanted=all>)

NOVEMBER 16 – PRINCIPLES FOR A RESILIENT TRANSITION

- 19 Ecological Democracy *John S. Dryzek*
24 Tools for the Transition *Donella Meadows, Randers & Dennis Meadows*
25 Downshift/Upshift: Our Choice *Raymond De Young & Thomas Princen*

NOVEMBER 30 and DECEMBER 7 – RESEARCH PROJECT PRESENTATIONS