An Introduction to "13 Steps for Long Term Culture Change"

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The Community Peacebuilding and Cultural Sustainability (CPCS) Initiative

[(8 page excerpt from "13 Steps for Long Term Culture Change" (78 pages; May, 2017)]

The Community Peacebuilding and Cultural Sustainability (CPCS) Initiative

The Community Peacebuilding and Cultural Sustainability (CPCS) Initiative provides research and analysis for critical challenge alerts, and research and support for collaborative problem solving and community education initiatives which seek to maximize citizen participation, and accelerate solution-oriented activity.

In February, 2017, The CPCS Initiative sent a "Convergence of Critical Challenges Alert" to:

1) peacebuilding organizations and peacebuilding graduate study programs
2) chaplains and offices of religious and spiritual life at universities and colleges
3) national and international organizations associated with religious and spiritual life in higher education

In that "Convergence of Critical Challenges Alert"--

In that "Alert", this writer offered the following three key indicators as a way of measuring if we are On Track with the cultural transformation necessary to resolve the challenges of our times--

1) Now… only a small percentage of people understand the following insight, *and are able to apply it in the everyday circumstances of the communities they live in.*

The investments of time, energy, and money (the "votes") each of us make in our everyday circumstances--
--can result in countless ways of earning a living which *contribute to--rather than impair--*
--the peacebuilding, community revitalization, and ecological sustainability efforts necessary to reach positive tipping points on many critical challenges at the same time.

We need a high percentage of people who understand this insight--*and are able to apply it in the everyday circumstances of the communities they live in.*

2) We need to be on the same side, helping each other.

3) We need to be making best use of the knowledge and skills each one of us has.

Further—we need to achieve significant positive tipping points on those three key indicators (above) <u>before</u> negative feedback loops in many areas (climate change disasters; greed and corruption; the consumption juggernaut; water shortages; global inequities, overindulgence, malnutrition, and disease; unsuccessful transitions to carbon neutral--and ecologically sustainable--economies; transitional unemployment; loss of trust in institutions responsible for guiding public discourse; negative stereotypes; cynicism and violence; etc) *destabilize social cohesion…*

A*nd--until we have reached significant positive tipping points on the above three key indicators, the highest level of warning is justified.*

The "Convergence of Critical Challenges"

The cultural transformation necessary to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and mitigate global warming is, by itself, enough to justify the highest level of warning since:

a) there is uncertainty about how negative feedback loops are triggered
b) there is a quickly closing window of opportunity for staying below $+2^o$C ($+3.6^o$F)
c) investment in the energy sector requires long-range planning
d) although there is much very credible information available--about what causes global warming and climate change, how widespread the negative impacts are already, how catastrophic negative impacts could be in the future, and what we can do to reduce Greenhouse Gas Emissions and minimize negative impacts--we live in *very complex cultural landscapes*, and there are many different kinds of moral compasses attempting to navigate such landscapes.

Unfortunately, what we have now is a **convergence of critical challenges** ([here is a two page description of the ten most critical challenges identified by this writer](#)).

The ten critical challenges identified by this writer:

1) Global warming and reducing carbon emissions
2) A marginalization of the treasured wisdom associated with religious, spiritual, and moral traditions
3) Cultures of violence, greed, corruption, and overindulgence
4) The end of the Fossil Fuel Era

5) The increasing world population and its implications relating to widespread resource depletion

6) Current trends indicate that we are creating more and more "urban agglomerations"--(megacities with a population of more than 1 million people--more than 400)—and a*lmost all megacities are running massive "ecological deficits"*

7) Global inequities and the tragic cycles of malnutrition, disease, and death

8) Significant progress towards positive tipping points for the other challenges cited in this list will almost certainly make it impossible for the U.S., and many other countries, to resolve unprecedented public debt

9) Deterioration of trust/confidence in institutions responsible for guiding public discourse—and the related loss of social and spiritual cohesion

10) Sorting out what are real challenges and what are sound and practical solutions is becoming more and more difficult—*People who are not sufficiently informed about critical issues are everywhere, and they are investing their time, energy, and money—voting—all the time.*

Unprecedented Challenges + Serious Blind Spots + Most Complex Cultural Landscapes Ever Created on Earth = "Way Beyond" Uncharted Territory

This writer recognizes that unprecedented efforts are being made towards resolving many of the challenges of our modern, advanced societies. Even so, during the three to eight decades of unprecedented cultural transformation needed to achieve--and adjust to--carbon neutral economies, *this writer believes many serious blind spots will be discovered--issues which are far from being fully appreciated now, and issues which are serious enough to cripple our best efforts, if not remedied.*

One such blind spot, which this writer has identified (and rated #2 in his list of the ten most critical challenges of our times), is "A Marginalization of the Treasured Wisdom of Religious, Spiritual, and Moral Traditions".

Consider the three observations below, all of which have many serious negative implications--

a) "The satisfaction of one's physical needs must come at a certain point to a dead stop before it degenerates into physical decadence."

b) "Taken together, the bottom half of the global population own less than 1 percent of total wealth. In sharp contrast, the richest 10 percent hold 86 percent of the world's wealth, and the top 1 percent alone account for 46 percent of global assets."

c) "The global drugs trade and the global arms trade are integral to violence in both developing and industrialized countries. Even modest progress on either front will contribute to reducing the amount and degree of violence suffered by millions of people. To date, however--and despite their high profile in the world arena—no solutions seem to be in sight for these problems."

In addition, **we now live in the most complex cultural landscapes ever created on Planet Earth**. Widespread access to the search engines on the Internet; Wikipedia; YouTube; Social Media (Facebook, Twitter, etc.); professional networks, etc. on Ning Platforms; iPhones and iPads; television networks; cable networks; newspapers; and radios mean that however carefully schools attend to their social responsibilities, there are countless ways in which "unworthy features" of our complex world can counteract, rather than reinforce, important educational goals.

And further--what if cynicism causes human aspirations to lean towards degrading aspects of human morality, instead of uplifting aspects of human morality, at this profoundly critical time—when we are at one of the most significant crossroads in the evolution of life on Planet Earth?

Unfortunately, much of the real treasured wisdom of religious, spiritual, and moral traditions now seems to be hidden--and thus in need of being re-discovered. These "hidden" resources include teachings which inspire and encourage people to:

1) sacrifice personal desires for the greater good of the whole
2) find contentment and quality of life while consuming less material goods and ecological services
3) prefer peacebuilding which supports and actualizes mutually beneficial understandings, forgiveness, and reconciliation—*and which abstains from violent conflict resolution*—as a way of bringing cycles of violence to an end
4) use resources carefully, so that there is surplus available for emergency assistance
5) support community life and cultural traditions which "… bring to the fore how many good people there are, how many ways there are to do good, and how much happiness comes to those who extend help, as well as to those who receive it".

This writer believes that--at this most critical time in the history of life on Planet Earth--we have an urgent need to make unprecedented progress towards resolving timeless shortcomings of human nature—*even though such shortcomings are perceived as so much a part of who we are that most of us accept such as inevitable*. **Thus, the uncharted territory we thought we were in to achieve carbon neutral economies might be more accurately described as "way beyond" uncharted.** There should be no one who has any doubts**:** there is no culture or association of societies that ever existed on planet Earth which has had to resolve the kind of challenges the next few generations of people will have to resolve.

It is the complexity of succeeding in integrating wisdom and compassion into the everyday circumstances of community life--at this critical time when wisdom and compassion are so urgently needed--which has persuaded this writer to make what contributions he can, and to issue the Convergence of Critical Challenges Alert in February, 2017.

The Four Part "Constellation of Initiatives" Approach in the CPCS Initiative Summary Paper

We need many plans of action, in communities around the world--

a) which go beyond the efforts currently in progress
b) which will exponentially increase solution-oriented activity
c) which can assure us that wisdom and compassion will be "coming through the mist as much as they should be"
d) *which people from every variety of circumstances can trust*
e) *which will help people discover for themselves how much we all need to be learning so that we can be part of the solutions… and how much we really need to be on the same side, helping each other.*

The CPCS Initiative Summary Paper [Recalibrating Our Moral Compasses: to resolve unprecedented challenges and discover our collective spiritual destiny" (85 pages; June, 2015, updated July, 2016)] includes an overview of The CPCS Initiatives' "constellation of initiatives" approach to collaborative problem solving, community education, and citizen peacebuilding (which is offered as an example of the kind of "constellation of initiatives" approach necessary to fulfill the above requirements, and help accomplish the unprecedented cultural transformation ahead). The four part "constellation of initiatives" approach:

1) Recalibrating Our Moral Compasses Surveys
2) Community Visioning Initiatives
3) Neighborhood Learning Centers
4) Neighbor to Neighbor Community Education (NTNCE) Projects in local newspapers

[In the CPCS Initiative Summary Paper, the above listed 4 steps are highlighted (and detailed overviews are provided) on p. 36-45. For a detailed overview of each of steps in this "13 Step" document, see Step #5, #6, #7, and #13.]

And while there are examples of one or two of the above four part "constellation of initiatives" approach actually being applied in community and regional settings, the reasons for the applications is often "revitalizing economic growth"--or an effort to make significant progress on issues which are only a small part of the challenges ahead. Unfortunately, it is more difficult to point to examples of the whole four part approach being applied as a response to most of the ten challenges identified in the "Unprecedented Challenges Ahead—February 2017" assessment (also in Appendix of this paper). And yet… many more steps, many more projects, and many more initiatives, are needed--to reach positive tipping points on the many critical challenges ahead. To emphasize this very point--*that we need to*

exponentially accelerate our efforts, to a level of collaborative problem solving most of us have never known before--this writer has revisited some older CPCS Initiative documents, and expanded on them to create this "13 Step…" document. [Two key documents in the process: the Spring, 2005 issue of The IPCR Journal/Newsletter (which had brief descriptions of seven "steps")—and the most recent "step" document "Ten Steps for Long Term Culture Change" (30 pages; 2014).] Regarding this current version, this writer believes that *the 13 steps in this document can have such positive multiplier effects in the specific area of integrating wisdom and compassion into the everyday circumstances of community life that it is worth advocating for them, and finding ways to create start-up versions of them, at every possible opportunity.*

The Down-To-Earth Practical Value of Wisdom

Consider:

"*… there are truths which none can be free to ignore, if one is to have that wisdom through which life can become useful. These are the truths concerning the structures of the good life and concerning the factual conditions by which it may be achieved*…." (italics by this writer) [From "General Education in a Free Society, The Harvard Report (1945)]

We need to be thinking very carefully at such a critical time, when **Unprecedented Challenges + Serious Blind Spots + Most Complex Cultural Landscapes Ever Created on Earth = "Way Beyond" Uncharted Territory.**

And this writer believes that through examining the wisdom which have accumulated over the many centuries of human experience, and which have been confirmed again and again as essential to individual well-being and social harmony by the saints, sages, spiritual leaders, and sincere practitioners of all religious, spiritual, and moral traditions--

--we can see that there are many people have attained to realizations about the meaning of life, and the relative value of spiritual and material culture…

--and that such realizations can have very down-to-earth practical value….

I now ask you to think carefully about the following observation:

If many people can learn to find contentment and quality of life while consuming much less material goods and ecological services, this limiting of desires at the "root" will save much trouble trying to respond to the symptoms (of unrestrained, or unexamined desires) as they materialize worldwide. This is one of the benefits of spiritual teachings which often gets overlooked.

Can we see, even from this one example, that wisdom can have very down-to-earth practical value?

All the "little events" in everyday community life can have a positive and cumulative effect

There are countless numbers of "things people can do in the everyday circumstances of their lives" which will contribute to peacebuilding and community revitalization efforts, in their own communities and regions--and in other parts of the world.

Creating the knowledge base and skill sets necessary to resolve the challenges of our times will require encouraging as much formal and informal meetings as possible between neighbors--and people living in the same local community. Creating many Neighborhood Learning Centers can provide places--in local neighborhoods--for discussion, information sharing, mutual support and encouragement, fellowship and friendship—so that the exchanging of information and resources will also include the building of a close-knit community of people, with a healthy appreciation for each other's strengths.

Through workshops and other informal education (and associated local learning networks), citizens can gain greater awareness of how all the "little events" in everyday community life have a positive and cumulative effect on the challenges-solutions-investment-training-employment sequence… and thus how all the investments of time, energy, and money (the "votes") each of us make in our everyday circumstances become the larger economy. Citizens from every variety of circumstances can learn how to wisely cast such "votes". Wisely directed, such "votes" can result in countless ways of earning a living which contribute to the peacebuilding, community revitalization, and ecological sustainability efforts necessary to drastically reduce Greenhouse Gas Emissions, and minimize other related challenges. As the ancient Chinese proverb says: "Many hands make much work light."

Surely, there will be work to do….

I am hoping that this "13 Step…" document—and the www.cpcsi.org website—might generate some discussion among practitioners, instructors, key community leaders, concerned citizens, etc which would raise the quality of ideas, and practical application, in many topic areas including: critical challenges assessment; preliminary survey questionnaire design; stakeholder engagement; low cost lifelong

learning systems; community service components of local news media; community economics/local sustainability business networks; community revolving loans/microfinance; low impact transport systems; workforce development; food autonomy, food security, food sovereignty; land use reform; water supply and sewage treatment; recycling, composting, and cradle to cradle manufacturing; inspiring role models/right livelihood; mentoring and apprenticeships; local currency; sister community relationships; re-evaluating our moral compasses; peacebuilding; and non-violent conflict resolution.

Many people seem to be worried that "the economy" will collapse if there is widespread movement from "consuming material goods and ecological resources indiscriminately" to "discriminating carefully about use of material goods and ecological resources"… and yet many of the challenges of our times are very deeply rooted in cultural traditions, which suggest that it may require many decades, and many generations, to resolve such challenges. Surely, there will be work to do….

I believe that the most advanced societies are the ones which have been successful at integrating spiritual wisdom into the everyday circumstances of community life.

The Community Peacebuilding and Cultural Sustainability (CPCS) Initiative is an effort to apply the accumulated wisdom now accessible to us towards the general goal of integrating spiritual wisdom into the everyday circumstances of community life--and towards the specific goal of generating practical responses to the challenges of our times.

I gladly and willingly contribute time, energy, and money to make the resources and documents of The CPCS Initiative accessible to those people who might benefit from them.

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Fulton, Missouri
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