

Integrating Six Models of a Better Way to Live

Contributed by Dave Pollard
Thursday, 13 May 2010

Dave Pollard: Integrating Six Models of a Better Way to Live. (2010.) This article is licensed under the Creative Commons. Source: How to save the world. Since I've retired I've been spending more time meeting with people in, and learning more about, six movements that are proposing, and working to implement, models of a better way to live. My motivation for this is simple: I believe our industrial civilization is going to collapse (in cascading spasms) in this century, and I want my grandchildren to have the tools and knowledge to deal with the crash and, if they survive it, to create a more sustainable society in its aftermath. The six movements are: 1. The Transition Movement: Originally developed to allow communities to prepare for the End of Oil and make the transition to a low-energy, renewable-energy future, this movement has now expanded its scope to encompass preparations to adapt to the effects of inevitable dramatic climate change in the coming decades.

Dave Pollard: Integrating Six Models of a Better Way to Live. (2010.) Since I've retired I've been spending more time meeting with people in, and learning more about, six movements that are proposing, and working to implement, models of a better way to live. My motivation for this is simple: I believe our industrial civilization is going to collapse (in cascading spasms) in this century, and I want my grandchildren to have the tools and knowledge to deal with the crash and, if they survive it, to create a more sustainable society in its aftermath. The six movements are: 1. The Transition Movement: Originally developed to allow communities to prepare for the End of Oil and make the transition to a low-energy, renewable-energy future, this movement has now expanded its scope to encompass preparations to adapt to the effects of inevitable dramatic climate change in the coming decades. 2. The Permaculture / Cradle-to-Cradle Sustainability Movements: Although the term "permaculture" is being generalized to include anything and everything related to economic and ecological sustainability, at its core it is about natural, sustainable food production and local food self-sufficiency. The Cradle-to-Cradle movement is the analogous (to permaculture) approach for production of other goods, with everything reused and restorable so there is no waste, no loss of value, ever. 3. The Intentional Communities Movement: This movement is principally about encouraging cooperative and collective housing, though it extends to helping people find others with common values and helping them build on these values, and deal with the challenges of communal living, such as achieving consensus and resolving conflicts. 4. The Unschooling Movement: This movement offers a model of self-directed learning, guided by mentors in the community, to replace the industrial education system. It appreciates that we are all born with the capacity for and love of learning, and that by practicing we learn how to learn, and if we trust children to follow their passions they will learn what they need to learn to thrive, better than any institutional system can teach them. 5. Holistic / Well-Being Movements: There are many movements looking to improve upon the industrial health-care systems of the world, but they tend to have these qualities in common: (a) they believe preventing illness and injury is preferable to treating them, (b) they treat the patient and caregivers as equal partners and believe patients are perfectly capable of self-diagnosing and self-treating many illnesses and injuries, and (c) they appreciate that the body is a complex interrelated organism that must be cared for holistically, not like a machine with independent parts. 6. The Gift/ Generosity/ Relationship Economy Movement: This cooperative movement recognizes that the industrial economy is built on manufactured scarcity and manufactured needs, and that this is unsustainable, unhealthy, and anti-social. It stresses the value of relationships, collaborative effort, filling real human needs, and passion and voluntary energy over the dubious and manipulated "market" value of "stuff". It can operate without money or other medium of exchange, at a time when currencies have become fragile, volatile, and inequitable. These movements don't have heads, gurus, controlling organizations or centralized management. That's why I describe them as movements. They are organic and largely self-organized. And all six movements are fundamentally community-based, and may not scale particularly well. Their practitioners share stories and practices of what has worked and what has not, and respect that each community is different and must therefore "realize" the principles of the movement differently. I'm fascinated by all six of these movements, and by the struggles each is having getting traction in our teetering industrial society. It's heartening to see that their members are starting to talk with each other. The next meeting of the Fellowship for Intentional Communities has a session on the Transition Movement, for example, and the Village Building Convergence, an ambitious and well-established "make our city more livable" program in Portland has a whole workshop on the Transition Movement this year. (By the way, I'll be attending both events later this month in Portland — let me know if you're going, or if you'll be at the Unschooling event in neighboring Vancouver WA also taking place at the end of the month.) It seems to me that all six of these movements offer a piece of the puzzle of how to live better than our current industrial society/civilization currently allows. I thought it might be useful to see if we could fit all six pieces of the puzzle into an integrated model. Here's what each of the six movements could bring to such a model: 1. The Transition Movement: * A sense of urgency and specific common purpose (the need to prepare for impending energy, ecological and perhaps economic collapse), as well as momentum and cellular organization experience 2. The Permaculture / Cradle-to-Cradle Sustainability Movement: * A practical method for achieving community-based sustainable production of food and manufactured goods 3. The Intentional Communities Movement: * Methods that can enable real communities to form, self-organize, achieve social and political objectives collaboratively and deal with conflict peacefully 4. The Unschooling Movement: * A process for learning that can be used when the institutional, industrial education system collapses, or before 5. Holistic / Well-Being Movements: * A process for optimizing community well-being that can be used when the institutional, industrial "health care" system collapses, or before 6. The Gift/Generosity/Relationship Economy Movement: * A means for organizing economic activity that is not based on scarcity, money, competition or

coercive exchange, but rather on our natural generosity, love, trust, and passion to solve problems and meet real needs cooperatively. I see the Transition Movement as the umbrella "adaptive change" movement, since I think it can and must broaden itself to accommodate adaptation to economic collapse, and with it the collapse of health care, education and other institutions. I see the Gift/Generosity/Relationship Economy Movement as the natural community-based economic model, the one that will work sustainably when trade, currencies and centralized globalized corporations collapse. I see the Intentional Communities Movement as the social and political model, the one that will show us how to live together peacefully and cooperatively once more in community, instead of under large inflexible centralized governments and the tyranny of lawyers and law-enforcers, since most governments are likely to go bankrupt and simply cease operating when civilizational collapse begins. I've tried to depict this in the diagram above, but I have a number of concerns with it:

- * It's missing a lot of the subtlety, the nuance, the context for when/how the various institutions and systems in our civilization are likely to collapse, and how they are so totally interdependent. Perhaps I need a story to show how each of the integrated movement's "parts" would fit into the new model. It's hard to show an organic system with a bunch of boxes, and I can't see how to show the interdependence of the system's parts in a diagram.
- * Essential to many or all "parts" of the Natural Society Model are (in addition to community): love, conversation, story-telling, trust, natural enterprise, responsibility, passion, and stewardship, but I don't know how to represent them on the diagram. I'd welcome any thoughts on how to pull this all together and present/represent it better. Is there a better name than "Natural Society"? How might this be pitched to the hard-working people in each of the movements in a way that is constructive, inviting, and collaborative, rather than appearing to subsume or layer more responsibility onto them? Or is this attempt to integrate them a waste of time and energy — will they find ways to work together naturally when they recognize the advantages of doing so?