LOCALIZATION:
TRANSITIONAL THINKING FOR THE NEW NORMAL

NRE 564-001/Environ 462-002
Mondays/Wednesdays 6:00 - 7:30 pm, Dana Building 2024

INSTRUCTORS
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PREMISE – This course 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 85% or more this century, a shift without precedent. While energy is a key driver, the course is not about energy policy, nor does it develop doom-and-gloom scenarios. The course provides evidence for this premise but does not dwell on it.

FOCUS – The course focuses on:

- What localization is (it is already happening).
- What it can be (a welcome challenge or a dire struggle).
- What it should be (e.g., peaceful, democratic, just, resilient, biophysically sustainable).

It presumes that now is the time to envision adaptations and plan for the transition. It explores the implications of a biophysical circumstance unique in human history and proposes responses for it. The focus is on crafting a wholesome, just, peaceful and sustainable transition while considering the local, regional, national, and international dimensions of localization.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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

READING MATERIALS

2. Other readings available on U-M Ctools website

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1 Note: This is the first module (i.e., half semester) in a year-long sequence of modules all of which fit under the rubric of "transitional thinking for the new normal." Although not a prerequisite for the other modules, this first module lays the necessary groundwork for those modules and will not be covered in those modules. In some cases—e.g., using "transitional thinking" to meet a Master’s opus requirement or contribute to an honors thesis—this module may be required by the instructor.
REQUIREMENTS

1. **Daily preparation and participation** – Thorough preparation of conceptual readings and experiential cases. Thorough preparation is essential to the success of the course. In-class activities are the core of the course, where active listening is as important as speaking.

2. **Attendance** at all class sessions is required. There is no substitute for *in-class lectures, discussions, presentations*. Since the course is an integrative exercise, presenting one’s views is essential to its success.

ELECTRONIC DEVICES POLICY

Laptop computers and other electronic devices are not allowed in the classroom. They should be stowed before entering. The reason will be explained in class but the short version is this: The instructors’ classroom responsibility is to focus students’ attention on the topic at hand. Students’ classroom responsibility is to so focus, not to distract themselves or others. Experience has taught that, even with the best of intentions, such devices distract the student, other students and the instructor thus diminishing the instructors’ effectiveness and students’ learning.

GRADES

The final grades will be based on the following weightings:

- Preparation and participation: 35%
- Research paper: 55% *(instructions and criteria in separate handout)*
- Presentation: 10% *(instructions and criteria in separate handout)*

PROCEDURES

1. **Readings** – Most readings are in the textbook. The goal is not to accumulate lots of facts nor to memorize. Rather, it is to identify key ideas, concepts, norms, biophysical and social contexts, and principles as they relate to localization. Thus, consider the following as an overall reading strategy.

   1) Approach the readings as an exploration, an active process of making sense of the piece, of finding nuggets of insight into the reasons for and processes of localization. One resource that aids this process is Fu, Leean, *Active reading revisited* (2006) *(available on Ctools)*.

   2) As you read, note your own reactions, especially surprises or “aha’s” or passages that contradict your previous understanding (or another reading). Share such reactions with course members, or others, however common or uncommon you think they might be.

2. **Research paper** – There will be a separate handout detailing the paper, potential topics, expectations and grading criteria. In brief, students will chose a single topic early in the term and then submit progressive drafts culminating in a final paper, with the second draft undergoing peer-review. The due dates are as follows *(all are due at 5:00 pm on the specified date)*:

   1) First draft *(2 pages)* Due: Friday, September 12
   2) Second draft *(5-6 pages)* Due: Friday, September 26
   3) Peer-review Due: Tuesday, September 30
   4) Third draft Due: Friday, October 10
   5) Final paper Due: Friday, October 24

3. **Written work** – Print all assignments; single spacing is acceptable for final papers (in fact, for source reduction purposes, preferred) but drafts to be read and marked by others should be double spaced with ample margins for comments. Printing on the back side of used paper and
other creative uses and re-uses of paper are also encouraged provided the material is highly readable. With so many documents being produced and edited and reviewed, each student is responsible for managing the flow. At a minimum number all pages and staple, include name, date, mailing address (preferred means of contact), and assignment topic.

If, for any reason, including the issue of using English as a second language, writing assistance is needed, it is the student’s responsibility to see the instructors in advance of the due dates. The instructors also assume, and highly recommend, that all students take advantage of the services of the Sweetland Center for Writing (1310 North Quad, 105 S. State Street, sweetlandinfo@umich.edu, 764-0429). In fact, those with poorly written papers will be referred to the Center and required to submit additional drafts.

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READINGS  (unless noted, all readings are from The Localization Reader)

[The structure of each class session is roughly as follows: an activity from readings; lecture; discussion of conceptual and case readings.]

SEPTEMBER 3

Front Matter: Preface and Introduction
Introduction: Drivers of Localization

Ch. 2 Energy Cost of Energy Gained  Adam Dadeby
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 Ctools site for online link]


Webpage to review: Prior to the first class (over the summer) review the Resilience webpage (www.resilience.org) looking for articles about localization. Select one article and enter your reaction to it in the Forum on the Ctools site.

SEPTEMBER 8

Ch. 1 The End of Fossil Fuels  M. King Hubbert

SEPTEMBER 10

Ch. 3 The Inevitability of Transition  Joseph A. Tainter

Case: Box (Erie Canal)
SEPTEMBER 15
Ch. 4  Less Energy, More Equity, More Time  
       *Ivan Illich*

**Case:** “Shipping costs and globalization.” New York Times. (3 August 2008).

SEPTEMBER 17

Introduction: Localization in Practice

Ch. 5  An Arc of Scenarios  
       *Rob Hopkins*

Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press. (Ctools)*

**Case:** Box (Energy islands)

SEPTEMBER 22

Ch. 6  Inhabiting Place  
       *Robert L. Thayer*

**Case:** Box (Belo Horizonte)

SEPTEMBER 24

Ch. 7  Locally Owned Business  
       *Michael Shuman*

**Case:** Box (Localizing Finance)

SEPTEMBER 29

Ch. 8  Daring to Experiment  
       *Warren Johnson*

**Case:** Box (Planful Shrinkage) [also read expanded case by this name on Ctools webpage]

OCTOBER 1

Ch. 10  Ecovillages: A Whole New Way  
       *Karen Litfin*

**Case:** Box (Work less)

OCTOBER 6

Introduction: Philosophies of Localization

Ch. 11  The Decentralist Tradition  
       *Kirkpatrick Sale*

**Case:** Box (Hawaii)

**Presentations** (process explained in separate handout; extended evening session possible)
OCTOBER 8
Ch. 12 Technology at a Human Scale  
Ernst F. Schumacher

Presentations (continued; extended evening session possible)

OCTOBER 13 – FALL STUDY BREAK

OCTOBER 15
Ch. 15 Conserving Communities  
Wendell Berry

Presentations (process explained in separate handout; extended evening session possible)

OCTOBER 20
Introduction: Tools for Transition
Ch. 24 Tools for the Transition  
Donella Meadows, Randers & Dennis Meadows
Case: Box (Corn to Veggies)

Presentations (continued; extended evening session possible)

OCTOBER 22
Ch. 25 Downshift/Upshift: Our Choice  
Raymond De Young & Thomas Princen
Case: Box (The Potato)

Presentations (continued; extended evening session possible)