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Holism and the reconstitution of everyday life: a framework for transition to a sustainable society

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ABSTRACT
In this paper, a framework to assist transition to a sustainable society, incorporating the insights of whole systems science and philosophical holism, is proposed. It is argued this framework needs to be embedded in everyday life, and that everyday life is more likely to be sustainable when communities control the satisfaction of their needs at all levels of scale — households, neighborhoods, villages, cities, regions — 'The Domains of Everyday Life'. When everyday life is sustainable, these Domains arise as people strive to satisfy their needs in place-based ways. They are emergent, self-organizing, participatory, networked, nested and semi-autonomous forms, characteristics they share with living, whole systems. In modernity, however, control of need satisfaction has largely been ceded to centralized institutions and the Domains have consequently been hollowed out and gone into decline, leading to everyday life's unsustainability. Transitioning to a sustainable society requires the reconstitution and reinvention of the Domains. An additional Domain, that of the Planet, has emerged in modernity and its development could give everyday life a cosmopolitanism it lacked in pre-industrial societies.

KEYWORDS
Holism; whole systems; everyday life; needs; sustainability transitions

> There is always a tight connection between social reality, the theoretical framework we use to interpret it, and the sense of politics and hope that emerges from such an understanding. This connection is often overlooked. Our hopes and politics are largely the result of a given framework. It is particularly important that we reflect on this fact in times of profound transformations, such as today. (Arturo Escobar, *Other Worlds are Already Possible,* 2009)

Introduction: the need for a framework for transition

No era in human history has been so beleaguered by such a range of mutually exacerbating problems: from loss of biodiversity to social injustice; from the proliferation of waste to cultural homogenization; from rampant urbanization to nuclear proliferation; from the demise of community to global warming. The list of problems could be extended ad infinitum, no aspect of our lives or that of other species remains untouched, and any such problem represents a challenge to the sustainability of human and non-human life support systems.

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On the other hand, possibilities of a different kind of society and a different way of life are evident in many initiatives that are taking place all over the planet, including renewable energy technologies, local currencies, experiments in participatory democracy, efforts to restore forests and watersheds, new forms of transportation, and new kinds of manufacturing facilities, to name just a few. As the list of 'problems' can be extended ad infinitum, so too can the list of possible 'solutions.' Whilst we may feel overwhelmed by what historian Russell Jacoby refers to as a state of 'permanent emergencies' (Jacoby 2005, ix) viable (albeit fragile) alternatives to 'business as usual' are not difficult to find.

In this paper I argue that we need a new framework – a conceptual structure which provides the basis for action in the world – to assist the process of transition to a sustainable society, that is, the process by which we address the kinds of problems touched on above. I further argue that the key elements of such a framework can be realized by applying the insights of whole systems science and philosophical holism to human affairs. Several important 'green' frameworks have already been developed, but these tend to focus on single aspects of the transition process. For example, the framework of Libertarian Municipalism, principally developed by social ecologist Murray Bookchin (Biehl and Bookchin 1998), makes the case for direct and participatory democracy and focuses on the problem of political disenfranchisement and disengagement that is endemic to representative democracy. The Natural Capitalism framework, developed by physicist Amory Lovins and colleagues (Hawken, Lovins and Lovins 1999), focuses on technological issues and advocates an expansion of the definition of 'capital' to embrace ecosystem services and natural resources. The objective is the development of new manufacturing processes that will lay the foundation for the 'Next Industrial Revolution.'

A notable exception to the limited purview of such frameworks, and one of most important developments on the sustainability scene in recent years, is the approach that is being developed by the Transition Town Movement (Hopkins 2008). This is a grassroots effort to enable communities to recover their 'resilience' (Walker and Salt 2006), their capacity to be self-reliant, materially, culturally, and psychologically, so that they can flourish not only under ordinary circumstances, but also in the event of external disruptions such as the prospective decline in oil availability. Their systemic and community based approach has the potential to integrate the many different facets of transition – political, technological, cultural, social, economic, and ecological. This is an enormously ambitious project – no less than the transformation of industrial civilization. Given the enormity of this ambition there are many questions that the Transition Town approach is not equipped to address, such as how to think about the appropriate levels of scale which correspond to the levels of scale for solutions, and the need for a narrative that connects the diverse efforts currently underway all over the planet, including the 'undeveloped world.'

Several additional and essential features of a framework for transition are:

- it needs to incorporate a vision of a future, a desirable sustainable society by which we can orient ourselves in the present;
- it needs to provide a conceptual model for transdisciplinary collaboration (since the expertise required for transition will come from all fields) within a grassroots context (if the transition movement is not going to become co-opted by experts);
- it needs to provide a way for projects and practices to be connected and integrated, since these will only realize their potential through such mutually beneficial relationships;

- it needs to embody a more qualitative and humane understanding of sustainability than recent technocratic and economistic appropriations of this concept have come to do.

These seven or eight points lay out an ostensibly overwhelming set of requirements for a framework for transition. The answer, I believe, is to apply a holistic paradigm to how we live – to everyday life. In so doing, a framework which meets all these criteria will emerge. In the following sections of this paper I will discuss the tradition of holism in social theory and the implications that contemporary whole systems science and philosophic holism have for this tradition, and use this discussion as a basis for a framework that can be integrated into our everyday lives.

Social holism and social sciences

Within social theory, holism (or organicism – I use these words interchangeably) has been one of the most common ways of describing and interpreting human affairs (Brown 1989, 129–139; Hollis 1994; Merchant 1983; Phillips 1976; Polkinghorne 1983, 135–167; Gordon 1991, Stark 1962). Holism's influence has been immense even when the originating metaphor – of society as a living and growing organism and therefore an irreducible unity which cannot be understood by reduction to its 'parts' – has long been forgotten. As sociologist Richard Harvey Brown (1940–2003) contended:

> This biological image of society is so deeply rooted that scholars often fail to recognize it as the central presupposition of their own social thought. But, recognized or not, the metaphor can be seen in the substructure of the vast majority of Western theories of social order and change. (Brown 1989, 131)

However, it has been a problematic metaphor whose influence has often been reactionary or authoritarian. 'Functionalism,' for example, a theory originated by Herbert Spencer (1820–1903) in the mid-nineteenth century but carried forward by other sociologists and anthropologists for at least another century, explores how the interdependent 'organs' of society (people and institutions in their various roles and activities) are consciously or unconsciously involved in serving the needs and maintaining the order of society as a whole. This approach lends itself to a conservative outlook: functionalism can imply a level of social unity that does not exist. Moreover, purported holism has on occasion given rise to pernicious ideologies that have had disastrous consequences. Nazism, for example, strove to justify a rigidly authoritarian and 'racially pure' social order by proposing that, like any organism, society has 'parts' which exist *solely* in order to maintain the health and purity of the whole; the Nazi state and 'the volk' (Harrington 1999).

In contrast to these examples, which can be considered 'conservative social holism,' is the tradition that I have identified and dubbed 'radical social holism,' or, more simply – 'radical holism.' The radical holists have adopted various holistic approaches (such as organismic biology, ecology and systems theory and even cybernetics) upon which they based their case for non-authoritarian, participatory, self-organized, humanly-scaled, and decentralized social forms. Radical holism is a tradition which can arguably be dated from the mid-nineteenth century and that continued throughout the twentieth century. Its members would have variously described themselves as anti-authoritarian socialists, anarchists, communalists, social ecologists, or possibly none of these. More important than their different monikers is the connection they all made between the emancipatory social forms they advocated and form in the natural world. Preeminent in this tradition were the social ecologist Murray Bookchin (1922–2006) and the historian Lewis Mumford (1895–1990). Bookchin looked to the complementary, non-hierarchical patterns of relatedness found in ecosystems as the basis for an ethics upon which new kinds of human communities could be grounded (Bookchin 1980, 1982, 1986, 77–104). He contended that 'Either we will create an ecotopia based on ecological principles or we will go under as a species' (1980, 70–71). Similarly, Mumford argued that the 'The Organic World Picture' (with its portrayal of nature as a dynamically creative, yet stable and self-regulating realm) 'undermined the conceptual framework of the dominant power system' (Mumford 1971, 384 and 391). The existential philosopher Martin Buber (1878–1965) summed up the position of many in this tradition in his call for 'a new organic commonwealth ... a community of communities' (Buber 1988, 136) through which social structure could be renewed.

Whole systems science and philosophic holism

Both conservative and radical holism derive from the objective of social solidarity and yet the former leads to a defense of hierarchical, top down, social forms whilst the latter challenges these. It is paradoxical that the organic metaphor can be used in such divergent and contradictory ways. I propose that the problem lies in social theorists' incomplete and incoherent understanding of the nature of 'wholeness' and organic dynamics which is a result of mechanistic habits of thought. In recent years, however, there have been developments in science and philosophy which reinforce the radical holist case for forging a connection between natural form and liberated social form. Murray Bookchin's contention that 'Nature is writing its own nature philosophy and ethics' (Bookchin 2005, 455) is supported by discoveries in chaos and complexity theory and a renaissance in the scientific approach to understanding the wholeness of natural organisms developed by poet-scientist J.W. Von Goethe (1749–1842) (Miller 1988). The Goethean approach and chaos and complexity theory represent two complementary ways of thinking about nature, respectively the phenomenological/intuitive and the analytical.

One of the most important contributions to the Goethean renaissance has been made by philosopher and physicist Henri Bortoft in his book *The Wholeness of Nature* (Bortoft 1996), in which he makes an important distinction between 'authentic' and 'counterfeit' holism. I will argue that this distinction is of the utmost importance to the development of a framework for the transition to a sustainable society.

Bortoft argues that wholeness is 'authentic' only when the whole form of a plant, an animal, or even a text, is seen to emerge in and through its parts as they develop, over time. Each leaf of a plant, each organ of an animal, each word of a text, reveals a different aspect of the whole plant, animal, or text. So, the whole can be said to be present or immanent in its parts; it is not 'a thing' that somehow exists separately from them, nor is it a sum of their total. Rather 'wholeness' is an experience, in the mind of the (Goethean) scientist or the text's reader, of the unity (or meaning) of the animal, plant, or text. This experience is achieved through an encounter with the parts – organs, leaves, or words. These parts become meaningfully/intrinsically related to one another through their mutual participation in the *coming into being, over time, of the whole*. Bortoft calls this dynamic mode of relationship '*belonging* together' (emphasis on the word 'belonging') (Bortoft 1996, 59–60): the parts *belong* together because they diversely express a single unity. Therefore, diversity is intrinsic to wholeness;

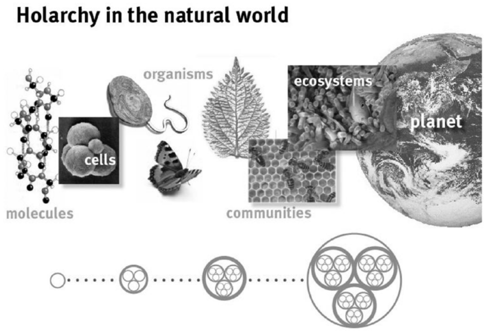

Figure 1. *Holarchy in the Natural World.* Natural forms are arranged in nested 'holarchies' of whole/parts, or 'holons.' Each such holon is at once a whole in its own right, but a part of a greater whole and is therefore semi-autonomous or interdependent with other holons, as well as self-organizing and emergent. Just as holarchies are central to the sustenance of natural form, so too holarchies of households, neighborhoods, villages, towns, cities, and regions are key to establishing sustainable patterns of everyday life. Source: Diagram by Terry Irwin.

the greater the diversity of *meaningfully related parts* that arise over time, the more fully the wholeness of a particular plant, animal, or text can be realized.

Yet because of our sequential, linear habits of thinking (we think of whole *or* part rather whole *and* part, one coming before the other rather than each mutually constituting one another) we do not usually think of wholes and parts as reciprocal. Those who are holistically inclined tend to give priority to wholes *over* parts, seeking wholeness, or unity, by taking 'a multiplicity of different things, and [subtracting] from them all the respects in which they are different to leave what they have in common' (Bortoft 1999, 93). 'Wholeness' is supposedly what remains after this stripping away process has occurred; the parts of such wholes are extrinsically rather than intrinsically related (they do not mutually participate in bringing forth the whole, they do not *belong* together) and therefore the unity of the whole is imposed or artificial. It is a way of understanding wholeness that Bortoft refers to as 'counterfeit' and it represents a mathematical, abstract, homogenizing, and static style of thinking, in which 'the universal is the authority and the particular simply does as it is told' (Bortoft 1999, 93). However, particularly since the Enlightenment, it is a style of thinking that has been extended into many fields, for example, biological classification, and ethics and aesthetics, in which 'universals' are sought (Bortoft 1999, 93–94). Moreover, as I will argue below, it is a form of wholeness that has come to be embodied in many of our institutions, with dire consequences.

Several of the key themes of systems theory (Laszlo 1996; Von Bertalanffy 1968) and its progeny, chaos and complexity theory (Briggs and Peat 1989; Capra 1996) can be understood in terms of 'the whole being present in parts.' For example, in the early to mid-twentieth century, systems theorists realized that whole systems in nature are always nested structurally – cells within organs, organs within organisms, organisms within ecosystems, and so on (see Figure 1). This arrangement is often referred to as 'a hierarchy,' but this is a misnomer since any system at a given level of scale depends upon systems at lesser levels of scale in order to constitute itself: there is no forest without the trees and other organisms of which it is comprised, but there are no trees and other organisms without the organs and cells of which these are comprised. In other words, in nature's nested systems there is an interdependence of whole and part at all levels of scale and each level of scale is at once a whole in its own right, as well as a part that expresses an aspect of a greater whole. The scientist and novelist Arthur Koestler coined the term 'holarchy' to describe this relational nested structure (Koestler 1975, 45–70, and 314–348). Similarly, the themes of self-organization and emergence, which are intrinsic to natural systems, describe the coordinated activity of the interrelated parts of a system which mutually constitute the whole to which they belong. Self-organization could be defined as *the participation of each of the parts in the emergence of the whole*. The ongoing activities of thousands of different organisms in an ecosystem collectively and spontaneously give rise to the whole ecosystem.

Therefore, thinking in terms of the whole in the part enables us to begin to integrate the Goethean and the systems/complexity approach to understanding nature, and supplies an expanded definition of what, as I said above, Bortoft refers to as 'authentic holism': to summarize, the authentic whole is present in and reliant on intrinsically related parts to come into being; it fosters diversity and participation; it is creative, self-organizing, emergent, and nested at different levels of scale. This contrasts with counterfeit holism in which whole and part are disassociated and in which, therefore, emergence, self-organization, participation, relatedness, diversity, and nestedness are all negated.

A new and radical social holism

The distinction between counterfeit and authentic holism is fundamental to the development of a holistic framework for transition to a sustainable society. There is an affinity between counterfeit holism and top down/authoritarian social forms: when translated into the realm of human affairs, giving 'the whole' priority over the parts serves to legitimate control by supposed (i.e. counterfeit) social 'wholes' over the individuals (the social 'parts') of whom they are comprised. This is not just a theoretical position: there have been numerous historical occasions, from Plato to the Nazis (Harrington 1999; Marshall 1992, 407–408; Popper 2002) when ruling classes have declared that their populace has an obligation of unquestioning allegiance/obedience to the *greater whole* (the city state, the nation state, 'the volk,' to name but a few examples of supposed social wholes) and often this greater whole is explicitly compared to an organism. It was for this reason that many liberal philosophers such as Karl Popper rejected social holism out of hand (Popper 2002).

Similarly, there is a convergence between what I have defined as the radical holist tradition and authentic holism: the themes of self-organization, participation and mutualistic relatedness are central to both. However, radical holists did not have the distinction of authentic and counterfeit holism, and were therefore unable to adequately refute the charge that holism is inherently authoritarian, or understand how to more usefully apply the organic metaphor to the social realm. This accounts for Murray Bookchin's ambivalence about the concept of 'social wholeness': historically, he contended, it has been sought 'through homogenization, standardization and a repressive coordination of human beings' (Bookchin 2005, 88). However, the distinction between counterfeit and authentic holism establishes a more robust connection between the concept of holism and emancipatory social forms than has been hitherto possible. As I will argue below, there is also an intimate association between authentic holism and the sustainability of everyday life.

Table 1. A simplified rendition of Max-Neef et al's matrix of needs and related satisfiers (1991, 32–36). Everyday life is shaped according to how the needs in the left column are satisfied by the activities in the right column. Some satisfiers will simultaneously satisfy multiple needs.

Needs (universal)	Examples of satisfiers (unique to time/place culture)
Subsistence	Food, shelter, clothing
Participation	Associations, churches, councils
Protection	Healthcare, shelter, social security
Affection	Friendship, family
Creation	Workshops, cultural groups, craft, music
Understanding	Literature, education, meditation
Identity	Customs, tradition
Freedom	Political organizations, councils
Idleness	Games, parties, sun bathing
Transcendence	Meditation, religion, spiritual practices

Context: everyday life and needs

I began this paper by referring to a long list of problems that affect every aspect of our lives and that of other species, and argued that a framework was necessary to assist the process of problem framing and solving that will move us in the direction of a sustainable society. The context within which problems arise and solutions are to be developed is everyday life: it is the foundational level for all human experience, and we are unavoidably immersed in it. Elden, Lebas and Kofman (2003), Gardiner (2000), Highmore (2002). Therefore, a framework for transition needs to be embedded in everyday life.

To begin, we must start in a realm that is even more fundamental than everyday life – that of human needs. Everyday life is brought into being as people strive to satisfy their needs. Development economist Manfred Max-Neef and colleagues have developed a theory of what are claimed to be 10 material and non-material needs that are common to all cultures: subsistence; affection; participation; creation; understanding; identity; freedom; protection; idleness; transcendence (see Table 1) (Max-Neef, Elizalde and Hopenhayn 1991). There is room for debate over the structure and details of this taxonomy (for example, whether a given need is 'universal'). However, the more important point, which differentiates it from all other theories of needs, is the distinction that is made between *needs* and the *means by which needs are satisfied*: whilst needs are universal, 'satisfiers' vary wildly from culture to culture and place to place and from one historical period to another.

It is the variation in how needs are satisfied that gives rise to the diversity of forms of everyday life that have arisen all over the planet, and that make everyday life *specific to place*. To take a simple example, one community may satisfy its food needs (i.e. part of its subsistence needs) by fishing, another by farming, and another by hunting. The respective differences in the means by which needs are satisfied is one of the reasons that the everyday life in fishing/farming/hunting communities is so different. Furthermore, depending upon whether control of the satisfaction of needs is internal (endogenous) or external (exogenous) to a community, two fundamentally different forms of everyday life arise. In the former case, everyday life comes to embody many of the features of 'authentic wholes,' described above; in the latter case, everyday life comes to embody many of the features of counterfeit wholes.

Control over the satisfaction of needs from within communities and the concept of authentic wholeness in everyday life are two sides of the same coin. If a community strives to satisfy its subsistence needs, members collectively plan, manage, grow/hunt/fish, harvest, preserve, process, store, and prepare their food. To satisfy their needs (whether material or non-material) individuals must establish collaborative/mutualistic forms of interrelatedness through which their communities are self-organized. To the extent that they do this everyday life within communities will be emergent; it will not be subject to imposed blueprints or top down control. Just as the diverse parts of a plant mutually participate in bringing forth the whole plant, each expressing a different aspect of its wholeness (and by virtue of this mutual participation *belong* together), so when needs are endogenously satisfied (when the satisfaction of a given need is controlled from within the community in which it arises) individuals mutually participate in bringing forth everyday life. In this way, the diverse 'parts' of everyday life (not only people, but also the natural world and artifacts) come to *belong* together, or form an organic-like unity. In the next section I shall discuss the exact form that wholeness takes in everyday life, but suffice it to say this kind of wholeness must lie at the heart of transition.

To the extent that a community voluntarily or involuntarily cedes control of the satisfaction of its needs to external and centralized institutions, everyday life will lose the aforementioned qualities of wholeness. For example, if food is grown outside of a community's boundaries and is distributed and sold by shareholder owned companies (the agenda of which is very different to the community in question) then the facet of everyday life that is represented by the satisfaction of the subsistence need is now externally controlled. In such an example the satisfaction of the need is managed rather than self-organized and is directed rather than emergent: the decline of self-organization and emergence represents a decline in the community's freedom. The mutual participation that previously enabled people, artifacts, and nature – the parts of everyday life – to *belong* together is now diminished. As *belonging* together diminishes, so too does everyday life's vitality, reciprocity, and creativity. Therefore, there is a direct correlation between the extent that 'satisfiers' are taken out of a community's control and development of alienated relationships between people, their artifacts and nature, the fragmentation of everyday life. All of the problems I outlined at the beginning of this paper can be described in terms of this three-way alienation process. *There is, then, a causal relationship between the loss of control of the satisfaction of needs and the unsustainability of everyday life.*

Just as authentic wholeness and control of the satisfaction of needs are two sides of the same coin, so too are loss of control of the satisfaction of needs and counterfeit holism. Just as authentic wholeness is at the heart of the framework for transition, counterfeit wholeness, with its association with the loss of social cohesion, cultural diversity, community autonomy, and a harmonious relationship with the natural world, is at the root of many of the problems I outlined at the beginning of this paper.

The Domains of Everyday Life

I have discussed how everyday life arises out of the satisfaction of needs, and how two fundamentally different patterns of everyday life are created according to whether communities are in control of this process: self-organized vs. managed, emergent vs. top down, participatory vs. non-participatory. However, whilst I have spoken in general terms about these contrasting forms of everyday life, I have not been specific about the form that wholeness takes in everyday life. The question remains: if the *parts* of everyday life are people, the

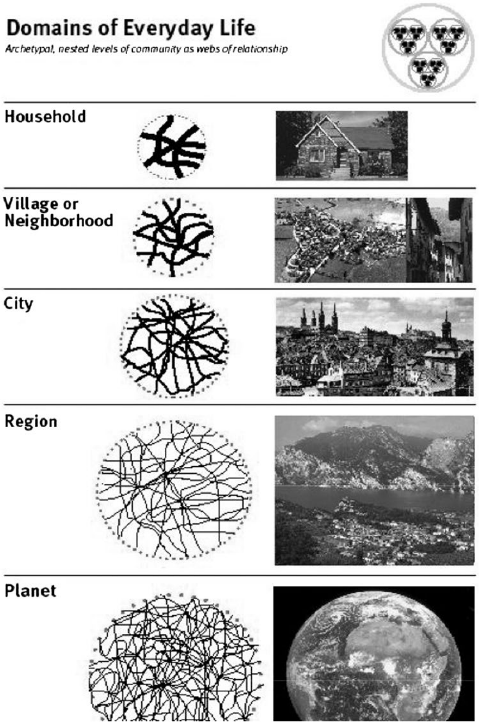

Figure 2. *The Domains of Everyday.* Life When they are vital, the Domains of Everyday Life represent different kinds of community, each with its own typical characteristics. This is a reflection of the different patterns of relationship – between people, the things they make and nature – that are necessary to satisfy needs at different levels of scale. Different kinds of activities are therefore appropriate to each Domain. Source*:* Diagram by Terry Irwin.

natural environment and artifacts, what are the *wholes* within which self-organized and participatory activities take place?

When communities are in control of the satisfaction of their needs, everyday life takes on a nested structure: households exist within villages and neighborhoods, villages and neighborhoods within towns or cities, towns or cities within regions. I have coined the term Domains of Everyday Life to describe these social forms (see Figure 2). When these are vital, they are the structural *wholes* of everyday life; nested, bounded and networked forms, the emergence of which reflects the place-specific ways in which the participatory and self-organized satisfaction of needs occurs. These Domains are semi-autonomous and mutually interdependent wholes, since needs can only be partially satisfied in any given Domain. The inhabitants of a neighborhood, for example, will still depend upon other neighborhoods and the city in which their neighborhood is ensconced for the satisfaction of many of their needs. The integrity of the Domains, the vitality of everyday life within them, is related to the degree to which needs are satisfied through self-organization and participation, which in turn is dependent on the quality of relatedness within and between the Domains. In short, the Domains provide the context for everyday life and, when they are vital, their structure resembles an ecosystem or other organic system.

A cursory glance at descriptions of pre-industrial capitalist communities, or communities only recently affected by this process, demonstrates the range of needs that were once typically satisfied within the Domains, giving them a great deal of vitality. For example, the historian Kirkpatrick Sale lists 14 different kinds of artisans (plus shopkeepers, publicans, and local farmers) that would have served a typical small English town of about 2000 people even in the late nineteenth century (Sale 1980, 400). The chronicler of rural life Norman Wymer lists a similar number for a much smaller English village (Wymer 1951, 37). Many anthropological studies of non-Westernized societies also reveal the vitality of everyday life at each level of scale. For example, in anthropologist Helena Norberg-Hodge's study of Ladakh, *Ancient Futures* (2000), it is possible to discern how, as recently as the 1970s, everyday life in household, village, and region are self-organized around extensive collaborative networks. Through these, not only were needs satisfied in many different ways, but also Ladakhi's came to *belong* together, i.e. they created unified communities which harmonized with the natural world in which they were embedded.

When the satisfaction of needs is controlled by communities *in place*, each of the Domains of Everyday Life assumes its own unique role in the life of the community: the same needs may be satisfied, but in different ways at each level of scale. For example, at the level of the household, the need for 'affection' would be satisfied by long-term, often biologically based, multigenerational relationships, whilst at the level of the neighborhood, the same need would be satisfied by more freely chosen friendships. Similarly, the same need is likely to be satisfied in different ways at the same level of scale in different places. So, although the Domains of Everyday Life could be described as universal/archetypal forms that have been common worldwide throughout history, these archetypes have been diversely expressed as emergent properties of people satisfying their needs in ways appropriate to their *time, culture, and place*.

When the Domains are vital each represents a different level and facet of community, and each has its own qualities and possibilities. Moving from inner Domains to outer Domains, from the household through to the region, relationships between people, their artifacts and nature become progressively less intimate and more transient, but more multiple and diverse. When many needs are satisfied within the household (as was the case in many pre-industrial communities) it could be seen as a small, tightly bound 'community' based on relatively few, long-term relationships; under similar circumstances the Domain of the Neighborhood is a larger, less tightly bound community, but has more variegated relationships, and so on, moving out through the Domains. It is this shift from 'thick' to 'thin' and few to many relationships that accounts for the changing character of everyday life at different levels of scale. For example, in pre-industrial society the Domains of the Household, Neighborhood, and Village were levels of everyday life better suited to the creation of livelihoods than the Domain of the City, which provided a market that enabled neighborhoods, villages, and households to trade. The Domain of the City or Region was more likely to support universities, hospitals, and other cultural institutions than the inner domains.

When self-organization, participation, and interrelatedness are highly developed, each of the 'parts' of everyday life contributes to the emergence of the wholes of everyday life – the Domains. Take for example, the activity of making and eating a loaf of bread baked in a household, placed on a board, and cut with a knife. This represents an interaction of the human, the natural, and the artifactual that together help the household emerge as a self-organized form. When the bread is made from wheat grown in the local countryside and processed in the city, the board is made from wood from local forests and crafted in a nearby village, the knife is engineered in a local workshop, then baking and eating a loaf in the household also helps region, city, and neighborhood emerge as self-organized forms, and bread, board, and knife all express different but related aspects of the household, neighborhood, city, and region. In short, bread, knife, board, and the people who are making and using these, *belong* together: everyday life has organic unity.

There are very few, if any, pre-industrial societies in which everyday life could be described as purely and unambiguously authentically 'whole'; elements of control, coercion, stratification, and fragmentation are usually present. Nevertheless, most pre-industrial societies managed to retain something of this basic organic form and managed to live sustainably 'in place' for generations. Described in these terms, we can begin to see what is meant by the loss of 'organic' social form that has been repeatedly bemoaned by many sociologists, historians, anthropologists, and philosophers. The sociologist Gerard Delanty notes, for example, the 'discourse of loss' that is at the heart of 'modern thought from the Enlightenment onwards ... with a sense of the passing of an allegedly organic world' (Delanty 2003, 11).

The decline of the Domains of Everyday Life

As social and economic theorist Mario Kamenetzky notes, control of the satisfaction of human needs by elites has been one of the hallmarks of civilization (Kamenetzky 1992, 186), and is a reflection of its hierarchical structure. In our era this phenomenon has penetrated so far into everyday life that satisfiers are predominantly externally controlled. This has resulted in the demise of the Domains of Everyday Life. They are still present – we still have 'households,' 'villages, 'neighborhoods,' 'cities', and 'regions' – but instead of functioning as semi-autonomous and robust wholes that integrate the satisfaction of needs in everyday life, today the Domains have become vestigial; they are fragments of externally controlled, unsustainable globalized systems run by institutions that are unaccountable to the communities they service. Typical of the radical holists was Martin Buber's observation that society has been 'hollowed out' by industrial–capitalism (Buber 1958, 14). Conceptualizing everyday life in terms of the Domains makes it clearer *what it is* that has been hollowed out, and how this has occurred.

The result is that for most people on the planet, subsistence needs can now only be met by engaging in the globalized market place, which is centrally controlled by a handful of corporations. The primary objective of these is not to satisfy needs but to make a profit. The non-material needs identified by Max-Neef, such as 'understanding,' 'participation,' 'freedom,' and 'security' have suffered a similar fate, as the political process, education, leisure, healthcare, and so on have been appropriated by both the market and the nation-state.

The decline of the Domains, or what could be considered ecosystems of everyday life, parallels the destruction of natural ecosystems, and there are many consequences of their decline, and global in scope. Many of the problems that I began this paper by listing are expressions of the erosion of the organic structure of everyday life. For example, social alienation, and any number of related issues, arises out of the decline in community at every level of scale; regional culture disappears as unique place based satisfiers controlled from within the Domains are abandoned; endlessly sprawling megalopolises reflect the disappearance of the boundaries within which communities once constituted themselves. In other words, as the Domains of Everyday Life go into decline, society becomes ecologically, socially, economically, politically, and culturally unsustainable.

No institution or social phenomenon is entirely counterfeit or authentically whole; elements of each are no doubt always present. Therefore it would be an oversimplification to portray everyday life in pre-industrial communities as an unalloyed expression of authentic wholeness; and it is a mistake to represent contemporary everyday life as an unalloyed expression counterfeit wholeness; it is always a matter of degree. Nevertheless, whereas formerly the Domains were the context within which needs both arose and were satisfied, now this intimate association has been eroded: everyday life in modern society is presided over by institutions (such as central and local government, corporations of all kinds, universities and schools, hospitals etc.) that are dedicated both to the production and control of satisfiers. This results in the extreme centralization of everyday life, and a situation in which many needs are satisfied inadequately and in a piecemeal fashion.

For example, many historians and anthropologists have shown that in pre-industrial communities, harvest of food not only met the need for subsistence, but was also a festive occasion which involved the whole community: several needs identified by Max-Neef – subsistence, participation, affection, idleness – were all satisfied simultaneously in an integrated way. The harvesting of food by a large corporation, on the other hand, is aimed at satisfying a single need alone (other institutions are relied on to satisfy the other needs) and in as far as the food produced is toxic and nutrient poor this need is not satisfied adequately. The profit generated from this harvest is funneled to shareholders and highly placed individuals within the corporation to enable these individuals, to paraphrase Mario Kamenetzky, to acquire more than their fair share of satisfiers (Kamenetzky 1992, 185–186). Whilst within such a corporation there will be elements of self-organization and participation, such a corporation is, structurally speaking, an overwhelmingly counterfeit whole, hierarchically organized and non-participatory. Because of this, the quality of relationships within such organizations is low, and top down management is necessary in lieu of any natural social unity.

The process of appropriation of decentralized and place-based satisfiers by counterfeit social wholes eviscerates the Domains. Counterfeit holism is essentially a process of homogenization and as everyday life is increasingly dominated by organizations that can be thought of as counterfeit wholes, so everyday life itself becomes homogenized. The story is the same the world over: it is the story of industrial-capitalist civilization's encounter with a pattern of everyday life as old as humanity itself. The diversity found in the myriad manifestations of the household, village, neighborhood, city, and region disappears in the face of a globalized but fragmented homogeneity that is controlled by institutions that are not meaningfully integrated into the web of relatedness of any Domain.

The Domains of Everyday Life and the transition to a sustainable society

The transition to a sustainable society will require the reconstitution and reinvention of households, villages, neighborhoods, towns, cities, and regions everywhere on the planet as interdependent, nested, self-organized, participatory, and diversified wholes. This will essentially be the transition from counterfeit to authentic holism in everyday life. The result will be a decentralized and diversified structure of everyday life which is in contrast to the centralized and increasingly homogenized structure that we have become accustomed to. It will resemble the 'community of communities' that Martin Buber envisioned (Buber 1958, 136), except that it will embody the communion not just of people, but of people, their artifacts, and nature, and will come into being at multiple, interrelated levels of scale.

It should be emphasized that this should not, and cannot, represent a simple return to traditional life ways. Modernity has brought with it many social and technological advances that should not be dispensed with. Furthermore, an additional Domain, the Domain of the Planet, has been introduced. This Domain can potentially bestow upon everyday life a cosmopolitanism and diversity which was not available to pre-industrial communities. Therefore, Reconstituting the Domains is not simply about re-localization; it is about establishing a symbiotic relationship between the global and the local.

The Domains cannot be reduced to separate social forms, economic forms, political forms, cultural forms, technological forms, artistic forms, or architectural forms: when they are vital they represent the integration of all of these facets of everyday life *in ways unique to particular places by particular communities*. Reconstituting the Domains is an inherently transdisciplinary and grassroots process that represents an opportunity to reintegrate and recontextualize knowledge, embedding it in both community and everyday life. It calls for the intentional, or designed, reintegration of all facets of everyday life in place, and suggests that a new kind of designer is needed – a 'transition designer.'

Any place-based self-organized and participatory activity aimed at satisfying a need at any level of scale that protects or engenders the intrinsic relatedness (the relatedness of people, artifacts, and nature) within and among the Domains, will contribute to the transition to a sustainable society.

Such activities will comprise facets of everyday life through which the Domains will reemerge as vital, semi-autonomous authentic wholes. First, we need to look at the Domains, as they exist today, and ask what needs are currently being endogenously satisfied, and how this satisfaction might be protected and 'amplified,' to coin sustainability designer Ezio Manzini's term (Mendoza 2010). Second, we need to develop new, endogenous satisfiers for needs that are currently exogenously (and probably inadequately) 'satisfied.'

The variety of endogenously organized and controlled projects and practices that could be established (or where they are already present, must be protected) within this framework are as limitless as the myriad features of everyday life itself. When projects and initiatives begin to be connected and integrated in particular places (the farm and forest with the market, the cafe, the grocery, the health center, the garden, the larder, and the composting toilet; the workshop with the laundry, the cinema, the factory, the transport system, and the renewable energy facility; the school, the bank, the art studio, the councils with all of these) they will create ecosystems of interdependence and mutual benefit, parts and wholes of everyday life at all levels of scale enfolding and reciprocating one another.

Conclusion

I began this paper by arguing that a framework for transition needed to provide a narrative which explains how our contemporary plight arose; a vision of a desirable alternative to contemporary society; a means of addressing problems and connecting solutions at appropriate levels of scale; a structure within which transdisciplinary and grassroots collaboration can take place; and a humane definition of sustainability. In updating the radical holist tradition by the application of a holistic paradigm to everyday life, all of these features of a framework have emerged. Hopefully it will provide a useful tool to 'transitionists,' including 'transition designers,' whatever problem their efforts are directed at, and wherever they are on the planet.

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