

Revisiting a Vocabulary of Transition Design

IN3010, 27th of February 2025

Objectives

- ▶ Extent further our vocabulary, our understanding and our toolbox
- ▶ Learn from practice



Based on



- ▶ Irwin, T. (2018) The Emerging Transition Design Approach, in Storni, C., Leahy, K., McMahon, M., Lloyd, P. and Bohemia, E. (eds.), *Design as a catalyst for change - DRS International Conference 2018*, 25-28 June, Limerick, Ireland. <https://doi.org/10.21606/drs.2018.210>
- ▶ Lockton, Dan, and Stuart Candy. “Vocabulary for Visions in Designing for Transitions.” In *Design Research Society Conference 2018*, 2018. <https://doi.org/10.21606/dma.2018.558>.

The Transition Framework

A vision for the transition to a sustainable society is needed. It calls for the reconception of entire lifestyles that are human scale, place-based but globally connected in their exchange of technology, information and culture. It calls for communities to be in a symbiotic relationship with their ecosystem.

New ways of designing will help realize the vision but will also change/evolve it. As the vision evolves, new ways of designing will continue to be developed.

The vision of the transition to a sustainable society will require new knowledge about natural, social and built/designed systems. This new knowledge will, in turn, evolve the vision.

The transition to a sustainable society will require new ways of designing that are characterized by:

New Ways of Designing

Theories of Change

Ideas, theories, & methodologies from many varied fields and disciplines inform a deep understanding of the dynamics of change in the natural and social worlds.

Changes in mindset, posture and temperament will give rise to new ways of designing. As new design approaches evolve, designers' temperaments and posture will continue to change.

Posture & Mindset

A new theory of change will reshape designers' temperaments, mindsets and postures. And, these 'new ways of being' in the world will motivate the search for new, more relevant knowledge.

Living in & thru transitional times requires a mind-set and posture of openness, mindfulness, a willingness to collaborate, and 'optimistic grumpiness'

Diagram by: Professor Terry Irwin, Dr. Gideon Kossoff and Dr. Cameron Tonkinwise

How does a designer work?

- ▶ Two approaches to the design process:
 - ▶ The aesthetic approach - intuition, personal experience, personal values
 - ▶ The guideline approach - a design process can be described rationally, process guided

Stoltermann, E., 1994. Guidelines or aesthetics: design learning strategies. Design Studies, Vol 15 No 4, pp. 448-458

Where is transition design?

[1 minute]

Phases of Transition Design

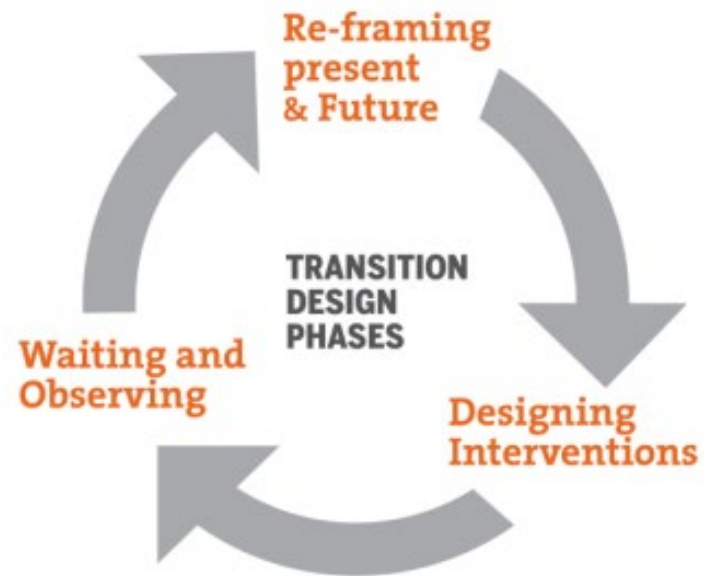


Figure 2: The emerging Transition Design approach suggests three phases comprised of reframing the problem and its context in the present and future, designing interventions, then observing how the system responds. These broad phases accommodate a variety of practices and processes tailored to specific problems and contexts. Source: T. Irwin.

If Michelangelo was a transition designer



Creazione di Adamo, Michelangelo

- Reframing the present and future
- Designing interventions
- Waiting and observing
- Methods, techniques

[5 minutes]

The Transition Framework

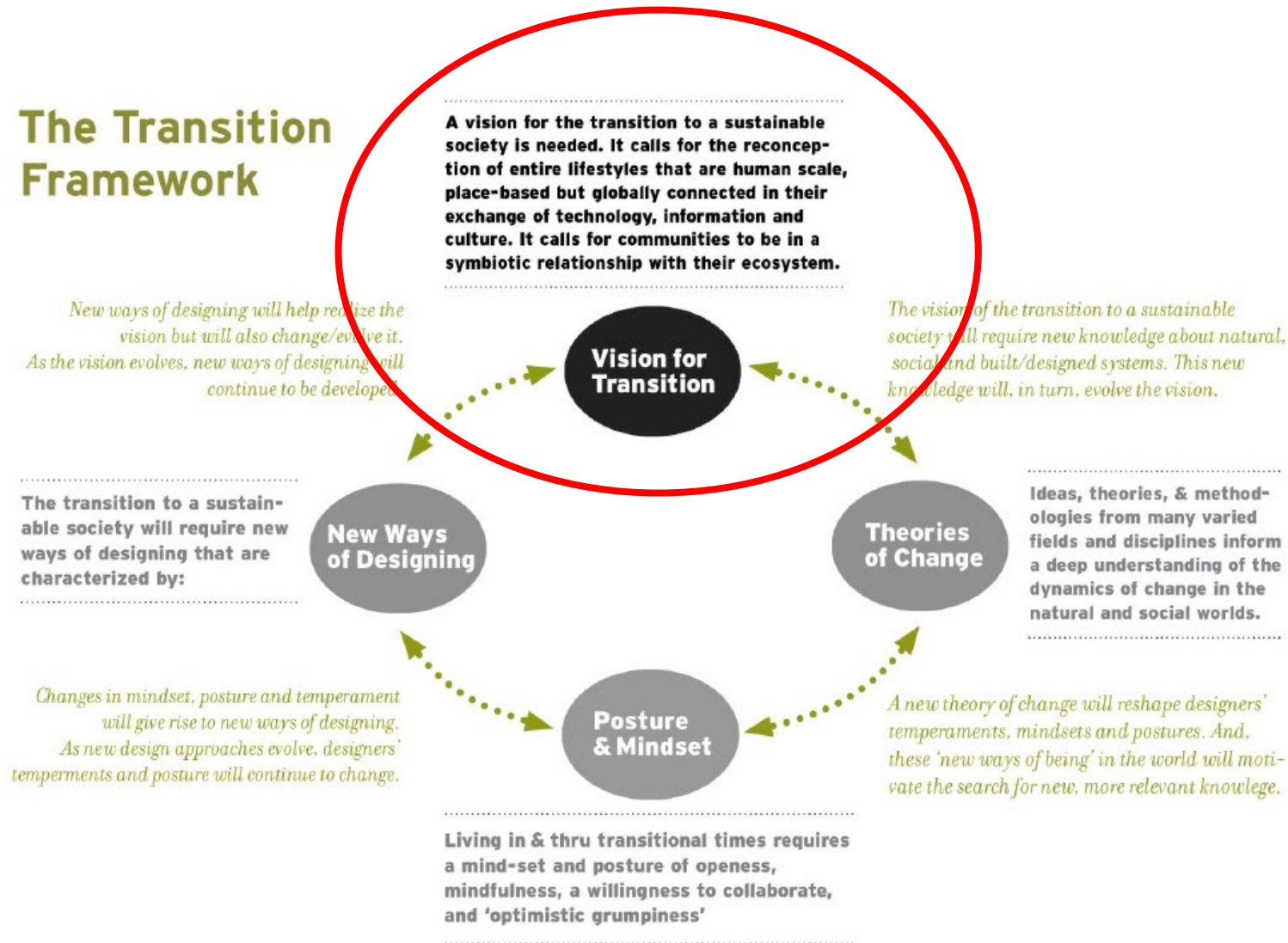


Diagram by: Professor Terry Irwin, Dr. Gideon Kossoff and Dr. Cameron Tonkinwise

From present to future and backward

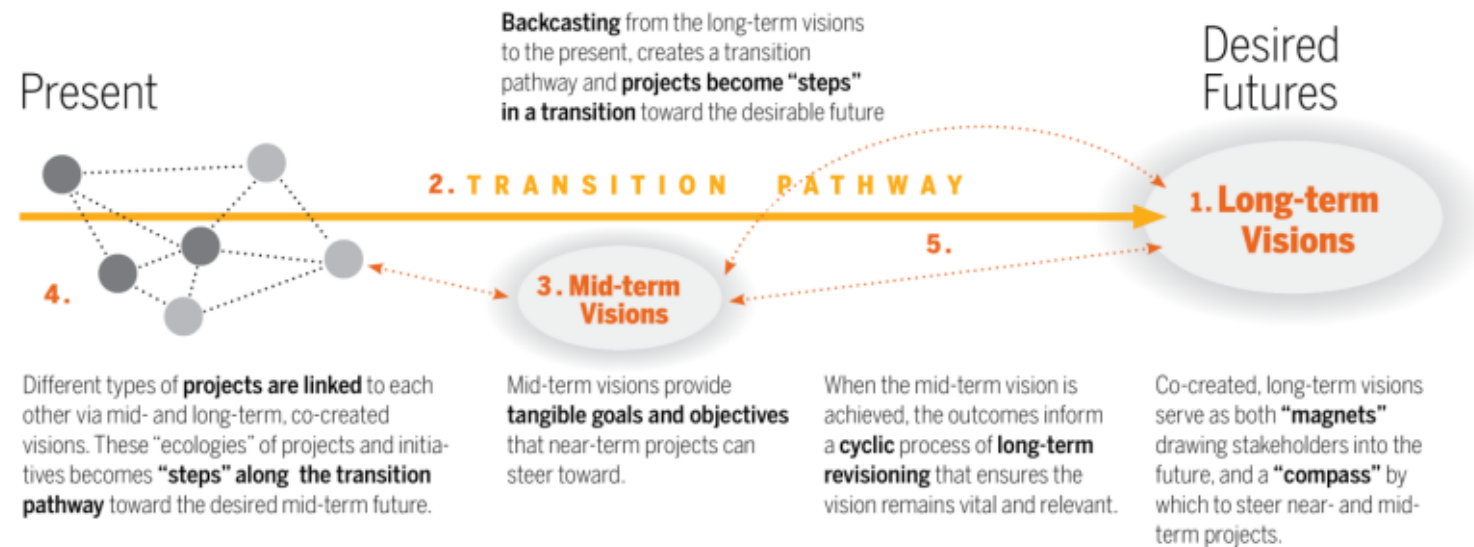


Figure 10: Backcasting from a co-created future vision creates a "transition pathway" along which new and existing projects can be connected and situated as "steps" in a long transition toward the desired future. Source: T. Irwin, G. Kossoff, C. Tonkinwise.

Vocabulary for Visions in Designing for Transitions

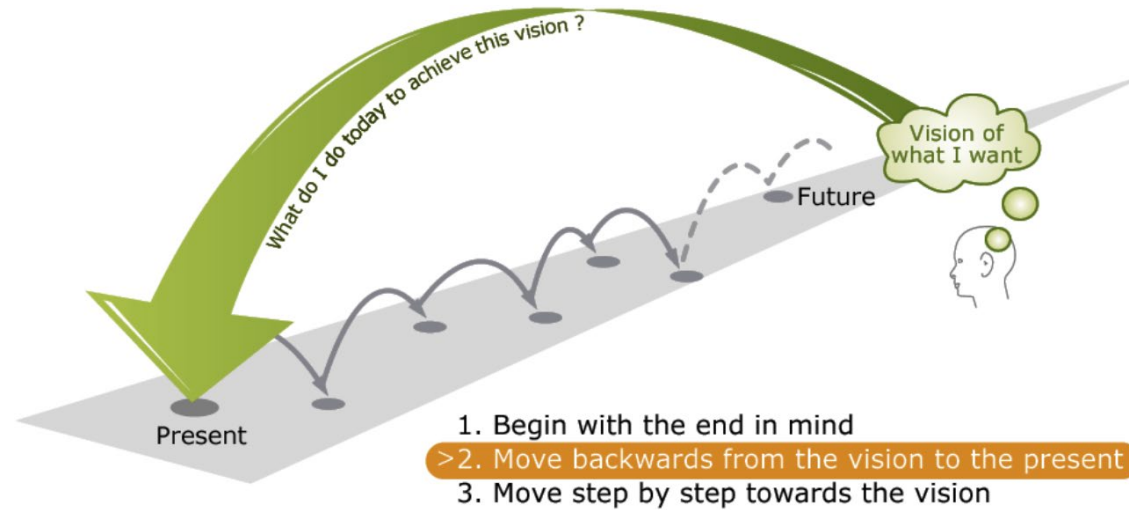
What is the Lockton's paper about

Finding ways of **working practically** which embody and **advance the ideas** inherent into the **transition design paradigm**, while making **use** of the many **techniques and methods** developed in **other fields**

<https://kisk.phil.muni.cz/transitiondesign/en/outcomes/conference/recordings>

Ways of seeing

- ▶ Methodology: Lenses themselves
- ▶ Imaginaries
- ▶ Backcasting
- ▶ Dark matter *
- ▶ Circularity *
- ▶ Experiential futures
- ▶ New metaphors



Your turn - Backcasting

- ▶ What is backcasting?
- ▶ How it works?
- ▶ Have you tried it? If not - could it be useful and how?
- ▶ Why is it included?

Your turn - Experiential futures

- ▶ What is it?
- ▶ How it works?
- ▶ Why is it included?
- ▶ Propose an example and explain it



Visitors to a large interior design and architecture show interact with NaturePod, a hypothetical future product demonstrated and launched at the show as if it were commercially available. Installation by Situation Lab, photo by Connie Tsang.

New Metaphors



Could creating new metaphors help us understand the world in new ways and imagine different futures?

New Metaphors

- ▶ Metaphors central to human reasoning
- ▶ Mapping features of an existing or familiar situation into a new one is enabling us to grasp it better
- ▶ Actively generating new metaphors bringing new ways of conceptualizing the world and encouraging new practices
- ▶ Semi-random process of bisociation
- ▶ [we are limited by our language]
- ▶ <http://imaginari.es/new-metaphors/>

New Metaphors

- ▶ Select a pair and explain
- ▶ <http://imaginari.es/new-metaphors/>

Try It Out

How could...



be a metaphor for...



Beyond the Lab

Dark Matter



Members of the public in Pittsburgh, PA, create maps of their perceptions of the 'dark matter' of local government, as part of the Imaginaries Lab's Civic Visions project (Ashlesha Dhotey, Theora Kvitka, Nehal Vora, Matt Prindible, Silvia Mata-Marin and Dan Lockton). Photo by Ashlesha Dhotey.

Dark matter

- ▶ There is more involved in change at scale and over time than redesign of products and services
- ▶ Products and services are embedded in contexts, practices, cultures, traditions, laws, standards, prejudices
- ▶ Transition designers should be more attentive to infrastructures
- ▶ "Some of the most radical changes are written not in the language of law and diplomacy but in ... infrastructural technologies"

Dark matter

- ▶ "the dark matter of strategic design ... organisational culture, policy environments, market mechanisms, legislation, finance models and other incentives, governance structures, tradition and habits, local culture and national identity, the habitats, situations and events that decisions are produced within" (Hill, 2012)
- ▶ Make the dark matter not only visible, but legible to those who are affected by it, but for whom it may be unreadable
- ▶ Credit cards and drivers' licenses – experience of emigrants in the USA
- ▶ Technology and organisation should be considered when designing sociotechnical systems

Discussion

- ▶ Why is this included?
- ▶ What is the dark matter in your project?
- ▶ Give an example of the dark matter?

Circularity

- ▶ Self-fulfilling prophecy
 - ▶ Visions of desirable futures inspire people to work towards making these future real
 - ▶ Can also be self-defeating
 - ▶ A thermostat controlling the room temperature but itself being controlled by the room temperature
 - ▶ We adapt to models over the time
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- ▶ When designing transitions - reflect on circularity - to what extent are the variables that we believe they are shaping actually shaping us

Discussion

- ▶ Why is this included? What does it add?
- ▶ Discuss mutual shaping (circularity) in you project