

Earthos Conversation Series PEOPLE Introduction

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*“Further research is needed to **better understand** the linkages across food, water, and energy systems; **our response to the resource conundrum** must be long-term and integrated across sectors to address systemic risks and root causes.” -Global Resource Security Experts Workshop 2009*

The Resource Conundrum and Earthos Conversation Series

Why?

According to the Global Footprint Network, we are currently using resources at a rate 1.5 times greater than the earth can produce them. If the 20th century was about how to maximize the use of non-renewable resources to stabilize, modernize, and develop nations, then the 21st century is about how communities and regions must find better ways to live within the limitations of ecosystems—and to do so in humane, just, and beautiful ways. For this to be possible, we must address the resource conundrum together *as a society* across sectors, scales and political and social boundaries. What knowledge and leadership do we need? What integrated, long term actions do we need to undertake? How do we innovate and design solutions? Who needs to be involved? The purpose of the Earthos Conversations is to think about how we can incrementally move towards understanding these questions.

Our Inquiry

What do we need to *know* and *do* to create resilient, self-sustaining regional resource systems that support local efforts and lead to global sustainability?

The Bioregional Urbanism Frame

Bioregional Urbanism is the metabolic collaborative practice of creating resilient, self-sustaining regional systems and cities. This frame aims to: 1) **increase understanding of the relationships between cities and their supporting regional systems** of water, energy, food, people, biodiversity, land and waste-as-resource; 2) intentionally **connect the science** of regional ecosystems + climate **to decision making** in policy, design, business and community; and 3) **encourage the innovation** of living well and equitably within ecosystem limits 4) work towards one planet living. How do we work with ecosystems to increase the optimization for human well-being and decrease the chance of overusing the ecosystems so they can no longer support us?

Main challenges this frame aims to address include: 1) the need to work with systems—human and ecological; 2) the need to work across sectors including science, policy, design, business, and community; 3) the need to understand and work with scales from the hyper-local to the global; 4) the need to understand and measure resource limits; 4) the need to address issues of access and equity.

The Resource Considered: PEOPLE

Why?

We are experiencing a cultural revolution that is accelerating. Paul Hawkin writes about the millions of people around the world who are engaging in “blessed unrest,” who are seeking solutions to our environmental and social challenges. In addition, the internet, social media, innovation realm, new economies and shared platforms are both evidence of and tools of our rapidly changing culture.

As part of this cultural revolution, many of us are thinking about how we can be more sustaining and resilient. What kinds of systems do we need? And what do we as people need to participate in the creation of these systems? What do we need to thrive? What kinds of services, education, economies, infrastructures, ownership models do we need? Many of us are working on these questions at the local level, and sometimes at the global level. But how can regional thinking and regional systems support these efforts?

Initial Considerations

- Who are the people of this bioregion? Who are the people of the bioregions of the planet?
- What are our people systems like now? How are they evolving?
- What do resilient, sustaining people systems look like? What are the elements? How do these elements work together? How do we co-build these systems?
 - needs—physiological, safety, love/belonging, esteem, self-actualization (Maslow 1943)
 - community/family
 - education—formal, experiential, traditional, trades, native
 - spirituality/religion
 - art/creativity/innovation
 - infrastructure—physical, communication, shared
 - economy/wealth/livelihood
 - health/well-being/self-actualization
 - heritage/culture/diversity
 - ownership—private, public, shared
 - governance
- Who has access to these systems? Who has access to creating them? Who has access to owning them? Who benefits?
- How do people systems learn to engage with ecosystems in sustaining ways?
- How do we understand the relationships between scales of people systems—local/community, regional, global? Why is this important?
- How do decisions about resilient, sustaining people systems affect other resources? Land? Food production? Energy production? Water? Waste? Biodiversity?
- How do we better work across sectors, disciplines and scales to create these people systems?

Moving forward

How do we use *systems thinking* to design solutions?

How do we design and create people systems that are just, equitable and sustaining and responsive to ecological systems?

How do we design ownership for resiliency and just sustainability?

What do we measure and how do we measure success?

Emerging trends

- Shared work spaces, co-housing, shared resources and new building and infrastructure types
- Participatory governance, design and planning
- Permaculture, biodynamic, aquaponic, and urban agricultures
- Educational innovation—STEM/STEAM, experiential, applied, artisan, creative, ecosystem, urban agriculture
- Internet, social networks, resource sharing platforms
- Digital natives
- Emerging innovation sectors
- New economy movements

Thought-Provokers

Tim Devin— Creative leader, Somerville resident, Librarian New England School of Law

Discussing: “Getting by in Boston” Initiative, creative economy, affordability and self-actualization for resilient communities and regions

Mashaël Majid— Community Planner, Somerville Community Corporation

Discussing: the importance of robust community processes of inclusivity in a changing urban landscape, to inform creative solutions at multiple scales

Peter Marquez— Initiator of Somerville ARTFarm for Social Innovation, Senior Partner eCube Systems

Discussing: creating social/creative innovation infrastructure for communities and regions

Ed Gaskin— Executive Director, Greater Grove Hall Main Streets

Discussing: green business incubation in diverse neighborhoods and regions