

## Title: The changing landscape of community participation

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### Overview:

Within civil society, initiatives have often arisen in response to future-focused concerns and these play a key role in the evolution of societal change. Although these often target particular aspects of becoming more sustainable, holistic and multi-issue responses are less common. More recently the nature and scale of the drivers of change indicates that many communities are becoming increasingly vulnerable. The need to build an adaptive capacity to change is now better known even in developed countries, but the question is how. Against this setting, the civil society landscape is showing signs of change with the advent of 'transition thinking'.

'Transition' refers to necessary responses to undesirable trends. Transition thinking is currently demanding a new approach to community development and calls for a move away from globalization and towards re-localisation. It recognises a wide range of opportunities for local communities to create and be the catalyst for change. It also involves communities pulling together and creating their own self-determination.

Benefits of this approach include its potential for building social capital and improving participative processes. When applied to problematic trends, transition thinking has been effective in making concrete change happen, resulting in a range of positive outcomes including more adaptable communities who have reduced the vulnerability of their supply chains.

In recent years the number of community groups taking an interest has been growing rapidly. To date the transition approach has been officially taken up by more than 300 initiatives worldwide, with many more in the initial stages of consideration. There are now at least 75 active community groups identifying with or using the 'transition' term in New Zealand. That nearly all of these initiatives have arisen since 2008 demonstrates that the issues targeted are current and meaningful for many people. Join us for this presentation to explore the ideas behind the transition movement and its potential benefits for now and the future.