



Towards Co-operative Commonwealth: Transition in a Perilous Century

Start date March 25

Organizing of Study and Action Circles

A priority for Synergia is to promote peer-to-peer learning and collective action and to test the impact of this course when people take it as a group. Why? The reason is simple. We believe the MOOC can be leveraged by groups in ways that will significantly strengthen and accelerate their common work.

A thousand individuals taking the course is wonderful. Adding 10 to 20 groups to the MOOC, each of which have common interests connected to place, issue, organization, or movement has the potential to significantly accelerate our collective capacity to advance system change.

We are exploring this idea with experienced change makers in several countries. They are, among other things, skilled facilitators who are connected with people already engaged in a range of issues, campaigns, projects, and organizations at local, regional, national or international levels.

Study Circles and Action Circles are two ways of doing this.

Study Circles

Study Circles are simply a group of individuals coming together to jointly explore and better understand the content of the course. They are interested individuals, usually locally based, who will take the course but will gather, on-line or in person, on Zoom, Skype, WhatsApp etc., to explore the exercises and learn from each other. This is akin to individuals who come to a learning series at the library or a reading group.

Study Circles may be formed by a group of people living in the same locale or generated online through a shared discussion space. The Synergia MOOC allows for the creation of these individual Study Circles through our online learning platform, Canvas.

Action Circles

Action Circles are composed of individuals already engaged in common work. They will engage the same course material as everybody else but they enter the course as members of an existing group or project. The intent of taking the course is to use the ideas and practices encountered in the MOOC to strengthen their shared knowledge, their strategic thinking and their collective capacity to more powerfully affect systems change. Examples of Action Circles being organized by facilitators are outlined below.

Study Circles and Action Circles use a designated facilitator to convene and co-ordinate the group's activities.

Both are offered a dedicated discussion space on Canvas.

Here are some examples of groups already in formation in the lead up to the MOOC.

- In Australia, a colleague is organizing a group of practitioners supporting transition planning, resilience building and community economic development in towns and regions across the country. She is also contacting skilled facilitators in different communities to test if they want to use the course as a way of strengthening the organizing work in their local contexts.

- In New Zealand, the convenor of a place-making project across the country is organizing a group of up to 20 people in Auckland, who are engaged in promoting a number of development issues across the city.
- In South Africa, an activist-organizer is finding there is interest in forming a study circle with two groups that are already in collaboration. They are made up of organizers, educators, sector-based activists and progressive government staff working on social, economic and environmental issues in their localities.
- In Nova Scotia, Canada, a local organizer is exploring how the course can be leveraged as a resource for local government councillors and activists working in two rural counties facing multiple economic and social challenges.
- In the southern part of Vancouver Island, including the city of Victoria, an activist has a group in formation from the local/regional food movement.
- In New York City, a grass roots solidarity economy coalition is exploring how the course might be used to promote the solidarity and social economy and co-operative development work in that city.
- In Ireland, a commons activist is organizing a circle of key persons involved in different sectors with the aim of strengthening the strategic discussion of how to more effectively advance systems change in the region.