Application for Ashby Dialogue Grant

*Title of proposed inquiry:* Localization in a Global World: Exploring Local and Global Pathways to Resilience

*Funds requested for:* Academic Year

*Faculty coordinator:* Laura B. Cole, Ph.D., Interior Architecture

*Other faculty participants:*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Department</th>
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<tr>
<td>Corey Johnson</td>
<td>Geography</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jay Lennartson*</td>
<td>Geography</td>
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<tr>
<td>Aaron Allen</td>
<td>Music / Environmental Studies</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bill Markham</td>
<td>Sociology / Environmental Studies</td>
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<tr>
<td>Travis Hicks</td>
<td>Interior Architecture</td>
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<td>Anna Marshall-Baker</td>
<td>Interior Architecture</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sarah Dorsey*</td>
<td>Library</td>
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<td>Trey McDonald*</td>
<td>Campus Sustainability</td>
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<tr>
<td>Erick Byrd*</td>
<td>Recreation, Tourism, and Hospitality Management</td>
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<tr>
<td>Zachary Cole*</td>
<td>Recreation, Tourism, and Hospitality Management</td>
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*Still need to confirm interest*

*Student participants.* List names and majors, if known. If student participants have not yet been identified, explain how they will be selected and the mix of undergraduate and graduate students that is planned.

We will recruit graduate and undergraduate students from our academic programs, with a particular focus on UNC Green, Environmental Studies Majors, students in the Emerging Energies Learning Community, Geography Club, and graduate students in both Interior Architecture and Geography who are interested in urban sustainability.

*N Names and institutions of proposed visitors* (specify payment amount for each):

So far, we have not identified a speaker for this series. We propose to connect with the book authors via online conferencing. We intend to have collaborative discussions to develop our plans to bring in an outside speaker.

*Attach a 2-3 page narrative description of the proposed inquiry and submit the completed application to Associate Dean Bob Hansen, Room 100 Foust Building, Campus. Deadline for applications is May 15.*
LOCALIZATION IN A GLOBAL WORLD:
Exploring Local and Global Pathways to Resilience

It has been said that the twin issues of global climate change and fossil fuel decline may be the two greatest dilemmas of our times. Taken together with economic volatility, these issues will comprise some of societies’ most perplexing challenges in the not-so-distant future. How we use and source energy is at the center of these issues.

There are many possible societal responses to this perfect storm of problems. Positive localization is one provocative response unpacked by Raymond De Young and Thomas Princen in their recent book of essays entitled “The Localization Reader.” The premise of the book is that a radical downshift in energy use is inevitable, but how we respond is not. Localization --- the process of increasingly meeting a community’s needs with local resources --- is one response. But, given the global dimensions of the problems, localization is not only about the local.

Localization is best explained by De Young and Princen (2012) as:

a process of social change pointing toward localities. Its primary concern is how to adapt institutions and behaviors to live within the limits of natural systems. In a localizing process, people’s attention is focused on everyday behavior within place-based communities. At the same time, because localities are interdependent across scales, localization has regional, national, and international dimensions. Ultimately, localization’s high-level goals are increasing the long-term well-being of people while maintaining, even improving, the integrity of natural systems, especially those that directly provide physical sustenance (p. xvii).

There are already localization efforts afoot in many parts of the United States, as exemplified by local food movements, slow money entrepreneurship, and sustainability initiatives that emphasize low-energy, do-it-yourself skills. On one hand, such efforts can protect the environment by decreasing energy use, increasing bonds between community members, and supporting local economies, thus meeting the typical three-fold goals of sustainability.
However, localization practices may be called into question as insular, non-progressive, or too small to make a difference given the scale of the problems.

The goal of this dialogue is to explore these types of questions through a reading of “The Localization Reader” together with supplementary articles. Given the diverse intellectual resources at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro (UNCG), we will be able to discuss the concept of localization through a variety of lenses.

**Local to global:** The first major lens is that of localities situated in an ever-increasing global world. What are the global dimensions of localization? Some questions here include:

- How can practitioners of localization benefit from cross-cultural dialogue?
- How could localization practices in the United States positively or negatively affect workers overseas?
- Are there tools to evaluate the decision to localize a good or process versus developing dependencies to outside places?

**Impacts across disciplines:** Just as localization cannot be contained by geography, it also cannot be limited to a particular discipline. No discipline is left untouched by the prospect of energy descent. As scholars and students across campus convene to discuss localization, questions such as the following may emerge:

- How deeply would our disciplines be affected in both positive and negative ways by the possibility of energy descent, climate change, and localization?
- Should higher education be preparing students more adequately for these realities? If so, how?

**The Clover Project:** The Clover Project at UNCG points to four tenants of sustainability as environmental, social, economic, and aesthetic. The study of localization will involve movement across all four of these domains. By involving a variety of scholars and stakeholders, questions at the intersection of clover leaves are certain to emerge.

**Structuring the Conversation**

Through this Ashby dialogue series, we will deepen our understanding of the process of localization and facilitate an interdisciplinary conversation about the appropriateness of localization as a response to major upcoming social and environmental challenges. We propose a series of conversations based on the major sections of the book, each led by different a team of faculty members.
I. **Drivers and Philosophies of Localization**: In this session, we will read about and discuss the key drivers of social change with a particular focus on environmental crises. We will also examine the philosophy of localization as a response to these crises. This session will lay the foundation for the series. For this event, we hope to tie in the authors of “The Localization Reader” via Skype for a Q&A session about the premises of the book.

II. **Localization in Practice**: What does localization look like in practice? For this session, we will read about movements in finance, agriculture, architecture, and beyond. Ideally, this session will involve local community members who are engaged in related efforts. This session could also be tied to a film in the sustainability film series (a conversation planned with Sarah Dorsey).

III. **Mechanisms for Social Change**: This session will examine changes needed at the individual and institutional levels to transition to an increasingly localized society. We will start by discussing the readings in the “Bringing out the Best in People” section of book, followed by a discussion of select essays from the “Appropriate Governance” section of the book.

IV. **Tools for Transition**: The book ends with a series of essays about adaptive problem-solving, visioning, and promoting cooperation. We would like to invite dialogue participants across campus—from laboratories to field research to design studios—to discuss how their disciplines contribute to solving social and environmental problems. This session could also provide an opportunity to reach out to Guilford College’s Center for Principled Problem Solving.

These sessions would be further shaped and defined by the faculty leading them. Each one offers rich opportunities to pull in groups on campus and beyond. Examples of partnering groups include those involved with the Global Engagement QEP, the Sustainability Film Series, and the newly emerging Sustainability Research Network.

At this time, although we have discussed possibilities, no outside speakers have been identified for this series. We will continue to explore options with each other and with other UNCG entities that may be interested in collaborating. We hope that funds can be used, in part, to support local, healthy food businesses to cater enticing food to dialogue participants.