

EDITOR

Chris Roth (*Lost Valley/Meadowsong*)

ART DIRECTOR

Yulia Zarubina-Brill

ADVERTISING MANAGER

Joyce Bressler (*Community of Living Traditions*)

ACCOUNTANT

Kim Scheidt (*Red Earth Farms*)

BACK ISSUE FULFILLMENT

Chris Roth/Volunteers (*Lost Valley/Meadowsong*)

PUBLISHER LIAISONS

Diana Leafa Christian (*Earthaven*)

Keala Young (*Atlan*)

EDITORIAL REVIEW BOARD

Crystal Farmer (*Charlotte Cohousing*)

Valerie Renwick (*Twin Oaks*)

Diana Leafa Christian (*Earthaven*)

Lois Arkin (*Los Angeles Eco-Village*)

Giovanni Ciarlo (*Huehucocoyotl*)

Daniel Greenberg (*Auroville*)

COMMUNITIES (ISSN 0199-9346) is published quarterly by the Global Ecovillage Network—United States (GEN-US) at 4712 W. 10th Ave, Denver CO 80204. Postmaster: Send address changes to *Communities*, 81868 Lost Valley Ln, Dexter OR 97431. Indexed in the Alternative Press Index.

SUBSCRIPTIONS: \$30 US, \$40 outside US for four issues via periodical/surface mail. Supporters add \$10 per year; Sustainers add \$20 per year. Digital-only subscriptions cost \$10 less. Single copies are \$10 postpaid US, \$13 postpaid Canada, \$18 postpaid other international. All payments in US dollars. Available from *Communities*, c/o 330 Morgan St., Oberlin, OH 44074; order@gen-us.net; 541-937-5221 for more info. (please leave message); gen-us.net/subscribe.

BACK ISSUES: *Communities*, c/o 330 Morgan St., Oberlin, OH 44074; order@gen-us.net; 541-937-5221 for more info. (please leave message); gen-us.net/back-issues.

EDITORIAL OFFICE: Chris Roth, Editor, *Communities*, 81868 Lost Valley Ln, Dexter OR 97431; editor@gen-us.net; 541-937-5221 (please leave message).

© 2023 by Global Ecovillage Network—United States (GEN-US) and individual authors. All rights reserved. Printed in the USA. Opinions expressed by authors and correspondents are their own and do not necessarily reflect those of the publisher.

GLOBAL ECOVILLAGE NETWORK—UNITED STATES: GEN-US, attn.: *Communities*, 4712 W. 10th Ave, Denver CO 80204; admin@gen-us.net; 541-937-5221 (please leave message); gen-us.net.

REPRINT PERMISSION: Community groups may reprint with permission. Please contact *Communities*, 81868 Lost Valley Ln, Dexter OR 97431; communities@gen-us.net; 541-937-5221 (please leave message).

ADVERTISING: Joyce Bressler, *Communities* Advertising Manager, ads@gen-us.net; 845-558-4492.

WEBSITE: gen-us.net/communities.

This magazine printed by Sundance Press, Tucson AZ.

Emergent Properties, Widening Circles



Chris Roth

“Emergent properties” (a modern term reflecting the insight that “the whole is greater than the sum of its parts”) permeate our lives in intentional community and in fact define the world as we know it. They are the phenomena that arise, often unexpectedly, when elements combine and have a chance to interact as, or within, a larger system.

Our personal experiences themselves are replete with emergent properties—unexpected ways in which we grow as individuals when we join with others in situations that are new to us; we often discover elements and capacities within ourselves that we hadn’t known before. Combine Individual A with Group B and then Phenomena C, D, E, and F, none of them necessarily anticipated at the outset, may well emerge. This has happened for me personally in every community I’ve joined; much as I thought I knew what I was “getting into,” the biggest lessons and areas of growth were unplanned, arising only when given a chance once I’d taken the plunge into this new combination of energies.

Similarly, the choices we make and the projects we pursue may have emergent properties. New projects, new relationships, new groups can come forth once we each take the single step that is in front of us that beckons us in the moment. Every project, every relationship, and every group I’ve been part of, traced back far enough, has come about in this way. And this process of emergence continues, everywhere. Speaking of which...

Our last issue presented several visions for expanding *COMMUNITIES*’ reach and impact, and appealed for support for realizing those visions. (See gen-us.net/visions.) We’re very happy to announce that, while the majority of those ambitious visions still await funding (for example, free worldwide digital access, and complimentary print subscriptions to several categories of high-impact US “hubs”), we have

received benefactor support for a first step in realizing these broader visions. **Thanks to an anonymous donor, 100 groups—mostly intentional communities—that have not been recent subscribers are receiving complimentary print-plus-digital subscriptions throughout 2023.**

Our new benefactor empowered us to choose these communities. At this point a new idea emerged: how about involving others in the selection of beneficiary groups? In fact, what if we could spread the benefits of this gift beyond simply the new readers, the magazine, and its publisher, GEN-US? With the subscriptions already paid for now, could other, allied organizations also benefit from this project? Could this be an opportunity for collaboration and mutual support among people and groups who have very compatible missions and shared visions of a world filled with exactly that: greater cooperation and more connection?

The answer was “Yes.” I contacted representatives of the Foundation for Intentional Community (FIC) and the Cohousing Association of the United States (CohoUS), with both of whom the magazine and GEN-US have collaborated in the past (distributing magazines at events, publicizing activities and projects, sharing articles and resources). With members of a third allied group, the Communal Studies Association (CSA), providing vital material support for this project, we arranged with both FIC and CohoUS to offer many of these complimentary subscriptions as incentives for communities to support these organizations, which are so crucial for networking, support, and education within their respective spheres.

Every cohousing group has benefited from the work of CohoUS, whether or not they have chosen to support it financially; and every intentional community of any type has likely benefited in some way from the work of FIC, especially those that have chosen to be listed in its Directory or have used its other resources. All four organizations—FIC, CohoUS, CSA, and GEN-US—have benefited from one another’s efforts. The opportunity to use this gift to support all groups, not simply the magazine and GEN-US, seemed like a perfect example of how “zero-sum” thinking is myopic and limiting. Abundance is meant to be shared and passed on, not withheld. And in this case, the sharing depletes GEN-US and the magazine not at all, but instead helps foster a wider movement of interconnected efforts to achieve more functional, cooperative human society.

This kind of mutual aid seems as if it should be the default mode in our world, but unfortunately it isn’t always. Nonprofits may often feel themselves isolated, and even in competition with one another for limited resources. Even if their missions involve the advancement of a cooperative world, they can struggle to cooperate with one another. (The same can be true of individual members and subgroups within intentional communities, within activist and interest groups, and within networking organizations, including these nonprofits.) As almost anyone involved in any of these spheres can attest, ego, insecurity, and/or a scarcity mentality—all of them ultimately manifestations of fear—can stop many opportunities for collaboration in their tracks.

While I can’t announce that “scarcity” has been eliminated in the world, nor that attending to the real needs to keep our individual ships afloat can safely be forgotten in the interests of purely helping others, I can celebrate the “emergent property” that has arisen from this example of abundance flowing to one group in order for it to supply abundance to others. That abundance is now flowing further, and in more forms, than originally imagined or planned for.

Ultimately, we are all “in it together,” and every experience we have that reinforces the value and the joy of that connectedness makes it even more real. Such experiences also strengthen our muscles for sharing, for mutual support, and for cultivating an attitude of abundance rather than scarcity, appreciation rather than ingratitude—and ultimately, love rather than fear. That is the kind of world that many with communitarian aspirations have envisioned and even experienced since time immemorial, and

I believe it is worth cherishing when and where we can find it within our lives and with each other. It is not to be taken for granted, and certainly not inevitable, but it is a choice that we often have the power to make.

Any attempt to list those who have contributed to various aspects of this particular “emergent” event, and to additional efforts to help us manifest the visions we laid out in issue #197, will be woefully incomplete. Nevertheless it seems important to mention and celebrate the contributions of the following individuals, representing multiple groups, who played vital roles in this effort and in collaborations throughout this past year that laid the groundwork for it: Trish Becker-Hafnor (CohoUS), Neil Planchon (CohoUS and FIC), Crystal Farmer (FIC/COMMUNITIES), Kim Kanney (FIC), Kim Scheidt (FIC/GEN-US), Keala Young (GEN-US/GEN), Diana Leafé Christian (GEN-US), Paul Freundlich (Fair Trade Foundation/COMMUNITIES), Jeffrey Hook and David Schrom (Magic), and a host of other networkers and supporters including Dianne Brause, Jerry Russell, Tim Miller, Kathy Fernandez, Jon Andelson, and many more.

Whether you are from one of the groups newly receiving COMMUNITIES, or are a reader supporting the magazine through a regular subscription, thank you for joining us in this, the first issue in COMMUNITIES’ second half-century of publication—a continuing illustration, we hope, of the power of community to help cultivate a more hopeful, more inspiring world.

Postscript: As we prepared this issue for press, we received an additional grant that will allow us to start reaching out to allied international organizations to offer complimentary digital magazine subscriptions to some of their supporters and member groups. We’ll report more in future issues. If you can help us expand these efforts even further, please let us hear from you! 🍷

Chris Roth (editor@gen-us.net) has edited COMMUNITIES since 2008, first with FIC, and now with GEN-US.