

Ex-Cons in Community? Yes! says Bo Lozoff.

COMMUNITIES

Journal of Cooperative Living

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Winter 2000 (Issue #109)

Decision Making in Community

Twelve Myths of Consensus
When People Miss Meetings
Alternatives to Full Consensus
Multi-Winner Voting



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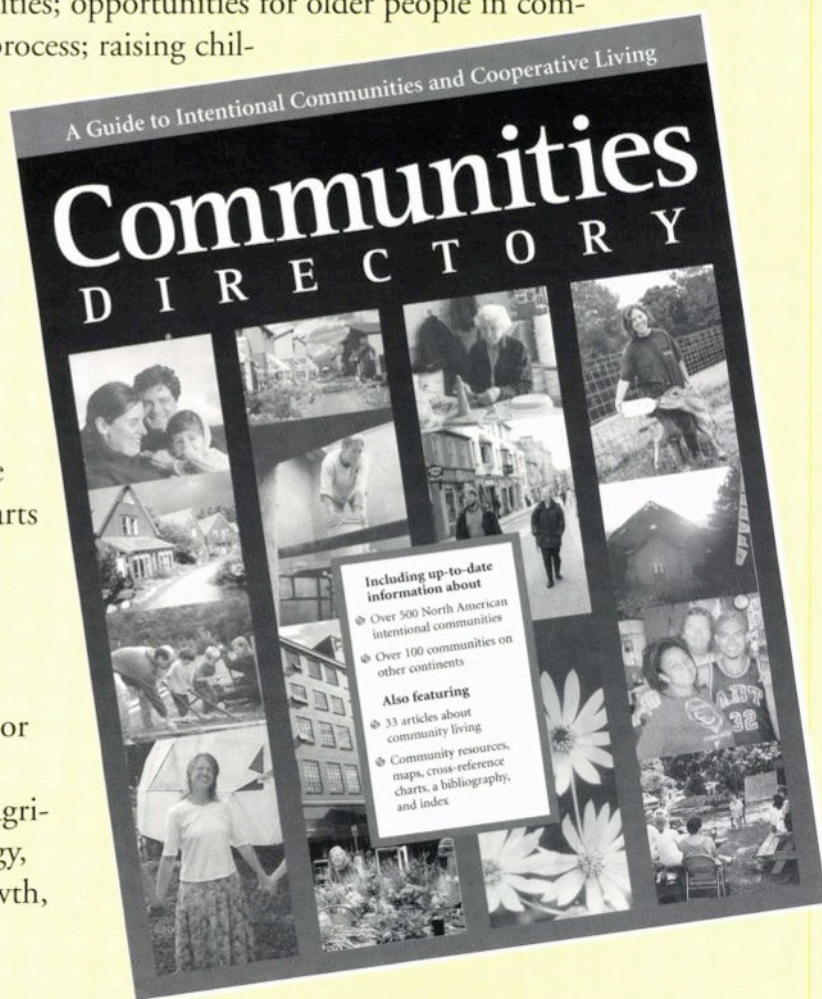
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COMMUNITIES

Journal of Cooperative Living

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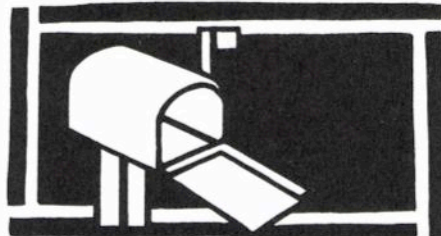
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LETTERS



Send letters to *Communities* magazine, 688 McEntire Rd., Tryon, NC 28782. Your letter may be edited or shortened. Thank you!

Intentional Community College

Dear *Communities*,

Logan Harris's letter in "Our Readers Ask" (Summer 2000) about the affordability of community struck a familiar note. Substantial personal debt these days seems the rule rather than the exception. By and large, communities seem to be either full income-sharing ones in which working for personal income is not compatible with the basic community economy, or communities designed around independent financial responsibility, where individuals generally must buy in and have a good income to support themselves.

There is a third alternative, with its own benefits and drawbacks, on which our community is based. I'd be interested to hear about other communities that might be trying something similar.

We call this our "hybrid economy." Each able adult member has a substantial (roughly full-time) work requirement to the community; this work takes care of community needs and raises money for the community through work in community businesses. In return, every resident receives "the basic necessities" (food, clothing, health insurance, access to transportation and communication, etc.) and what we call "the basic luxuries" (chocolate, beer, arts and crafts supplies, etc.). Members are free to have their own income and/or resources from an outside job, investments, etc., provided the means to secure this doesn't interfere with the full-time work requirement.

For members like me, that means working full-time in the community and part-time for an outside company. This is not necessarily easy, but it's viable, and people have the flexibility to buy things that the community doesn't provide (like expensive vacations or rare books) or to pay off debt if they can earn the money. The initial money was raised by members who are financially able to invest, and the community must make enough money over time to pay those investments back. We have no investment requirement, though, and many members did not have substantial resources when joining.

There are a number of limitations to this model: Your initial group must contain at least a few people who do have some reasonable money to invest, and everyone, including those people, must then be willing to live under whatever conditions can be afforded with the pool of money available. In our case, we are very dependent on community businesses, and so are very concerned with making certain that our businesses are successful, since without income from them we do not have money to live (just like full income-sharing communities). We have a practical and financial review when considering a new member that may cause us to put some potential members on a waiting list if we can't afford to take them on. People who have debt or other private money needs must work more than full time to earn additional money in some cases, and must be able to find a workable private income situation, although in future we hope to be realizing enough business income to offer some paying work in community above the work requirement. Clearly this is not the model for everyone, but speaking from a very early stage in our community's development, it appears to be working for us so far, and does address the question of being able to create community for someone who has ongoing personal financial needs and minimal resources.

Luc Reid

Meadowdance

Springfield, Vermont

luc@meadowdance.org

Dear *Communities*,

I'm always interested in events in kibbutzim, and wanted to share with your readers this email from my friend Connie Risk, a former member of East Wind who now lives at Kibbutz Ha'aretz in Israel. I believe it is primarily the labor credit system that keeps East Wind and Twin Oaks communities from following the same privatization path that Connie describes of kibbutzim, below. I have said as much to a number of my kibbutz academic contacts, but haven't had a response. Of course I can understand how kibbutzniks may have no interest in taking an economic model from the small groups in the Federation of Egalitarian Communities. Yet there is hope that what we started in the FEC will grow again. The current revival of student activism and anti-capitalist globalization demonstrations, rise of the Green Party and ecological concerns, and all the work done by the Fellowship for Intentional Community in movement outreach certainly suggests a great potential for community growth in North America, of all kinds. Keeping abreast of the developments in kibbutzim is essential, I think, to our analysis of and organizing for the communitarian movement on this continent. Here's what Connie wrote:

"Kibbutz" no longer means shared income and expenses as it did originally. Now some kibbutzim are paying members for work done and paying different amounts according to the job each person does. These kibbutzim also charge for the kibbutz services members use (such as child care, etc.); they are no longer socialistic. Of course these changes are drastic, and are happening for a number of reasons, including grown children leaving, members working in city jobs, and other events resulting in the loss of original ideals, which can cause failure of the communal economy in individual kibbutzim. However, they are still kibbutzim—the Kibbutz Movement does not kick them out of the movement and does not enforce standards or red lines.

The discussion about these changes is universal here at my kibbutz, and there are those who want change here; however it is still

basically social. We pay for toilet paper, but get an allowance for that kind of thing. Cash allowances, food, housing, education, and medical services are all still social. Who knows what the future will bring? Hopefully the discussion will bring a more serious look at changing the present system while keeping the traditional kibbutz values. Connie, Kibbutz Ha'aretz, crisk@mishkei.org.il.

Allen Butcher

Denver, Colorado

Dear *Communities*:

First of all, I want to say thank you for the Fall 2000 issue! I am a recent college grad looking for info and learning opportunities and this issue was a wonderful spark for my search, and my daydreams! I especially appreciated the article by Chris Mare ("Designing My Own Education for the 'Ecovillage Millennium"), as I too designed my own major in college, "Environmental Science and Sustainable Living," and am trying to learn from life experiences now. Thanks again!

Jenny Leis

Framingham, Massachusetts

Dear *Communities*:

Quakerland community is dissolving, and we're looking for a group interested in getting a jump start on their community dreams by purchasing this partially developed 142-acre site only 15 miles from Kerrville, Texas. Our preference is to place the property in the hands of people who will use it for peaceful and socially uplifting purposes, and who will commit to long-term protection of the land.

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We intend to make a decision by March 2001, and would love to see the land pass to people with similar visions. We will give preference to Quaker-related groups and nonprofits, yet welcome all inquiries. Visit our web site: www.quakerland.org or contact me for details.

Jane Houser

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Communities Editorial Policy

Communities is a forum for exploring intentional communities, cooperative living, and ways our readers can bring a sense of community into their daily lives. Contributors include people who live or have lived in community, and anyone with insights relevant to cooperative living.

Through fact, fiction, and opinion we offer fresh ideas about how to live cooperatively, how to solve problems peacefully, and how individual lives can be enhanced by living purposefully with others. We seek contributions that profile community living and why people choose it, descriptions of what's difficult and what works well, news about existing and forming communities, or articles that illuminate community experiences—past and present—offering insights into mainstream cultural issues.

We do not intend to promote one kind of community over another, and take no official position on a community's economic structure, political agenda, spiritual beliefs, environmental issues, or decision-making style. As long as submitted articles are related to the theme of community living, we will consider them for publication. However, we do not publish articles that 1) advocate violent practices, or 2) advocate that a community interfere with its members' right to leave.

Our aim is to be as balanced in our reporting as possible, and whenever we print an article critical of a particular community, we invite that community to respond with its own perspective.

Submissions Policy

To submit an article, please first request Writer's Guidelines: 688 McEntire Road, Tryon, NC 28782; 828-863-4425; communities@ic.org.

Advertising Policy

We accept paid advertising in *Communities* because our mission is to provide our readers with helpful and inspiring information—and because advertising revenues help pay the bills.

We hand pick our advertisers, selecting only those whose products and services we believe will be helpful to people interested in community living, cooperation, and sustainability. We hope you find this service useful, and we encourage your feedback.

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What is an "Intentional Community"?

An "intentional community" is a group of people who have chosen to live or work together in pursuit of a common ideal or vision. Most, though not all, share land or housing. Intentional communities come in all shapes and sizes, and display amazing diversity in their common values, which may be social, economic, spiritual, political, and/or ecological. Some are rural; some urban. Some live all in a single residence; some in separate households. Some raise children; some don't. Some are secular, some are spiritually based, and others are both. For all their variety though, the communities featured in our magazine hold a common commitment to living cooperatively, to solving problems non-violently, and to sharing their experiences with others.

PUBLISHER'S NOTE



Deciding to Be Curious: Notes from the Train of Experience

Three years ago I was on a cross-country train trip with a community friend, and we had a 45-minute stop in Albuquerque. It was a chance to stretch our legs and mail an important letter my friend had just composed, so we took off looking for a post office. Getting directions from someone on the street, we walked briskly through downtown, only to discover that the letter was not with us when we got there. Frustrated and feeling the pressure of our limited time, we talked it over amidst the crowded lobby of the main post office. We shared reactions, explored what might have happened, discussed possible remedies, and made a decision. It took about three minutes.

For my friend and me, this sequence was rather commonplace. Not misplacing letters, I mean the main elements of the story: plans going awry, irritation at the unexpected, imperfect information about what happened, and the need to make a decision about what to do under tight time constraints. The stakes were hardly life and death (after all, the letter could be rewritten and at least we got the exercise) and I probably wouldn't remember this story at all, except for one thing—the reaction of the man standing behind us in line at the post office.

He was so moved by witnessing our three-minute conversation that he broke through the normal barrier of urban aloofness to exclaim, "Wow, I have never seen two people argue so reasonably. That was awesome." The remarkable thing about this minor incident in Albuquerque was that our productive exchange stood out.

As I reflected afterwards on that stranger's observation, I realized that I learned the skills he admired by living in community (where the everyday commingling of lives supplies countless opportunities to practice fielding bad-hop grounders in the game of life), and that those skills are relatively rare in contemporary society. This is more than an oddity, it's an insight into important work that communities are pioneering for everyone: how to make decisions that deal thoroughly and efficiently with issues, taking into account the widest range of input possible.

Recognizing the potency of this topic, we are dedicating this issue of *Communities* to examining what's being learned. This is not simple stuff. Just defining what we mean by "efficient" is pretty tricky. For instance, while there's easy agreement on the desirability of collecting everyone's input, people also want meetings to end on time, and these two can clash. How do we know when we've given reasonable time for all the input to surface? For that matter, how do we know when we've provided a reasonable range of formats for all the input to surface? If the topic triggers distress in the group, when is it more effective to deal with that in the moment, and when is it better to set it aside?

Intentional communities are field research centers where answers to these vexing questions are being painstakingly teased out of our experiences, one meeting at a time. Where do these learnings apply? Wherever people make decisions, and want to get better at it.

Looking back over more than a quarter century of community meetings, I believe the key challenge is learning to be curious (not defensive) about why others have views different from our own, and creating a meeting environment where full expression is encouraged. For most of us there is deep cultural conditioning to approach meetings as a battle, which we strive to "win" through eloquent speech, persuasive proposals, and careful alliance-building. Differing viewpoints are seen as threats, rather than as opportunities to illuminate our thinking.

Imagine how different it would be if we could enter meetings with the hope that our minds would be changed, that someone would have a better idea than what we already know. Think how much better our decisions would be if we were focused more on the advantages to hearing and incorporating the widest possible perspectives than on appearing brilliant in front of our peers.

While better decision making (and therefore better meetings) is a powerful goal in and of itself, the scope of this work goes well beyond the relatively few hours we spend in "official" meetings. Once you learn inclusive, cooperative skills, they become available for much more than adoption as part of one's meeting persona; they become a way of life. Thus, I take what I've learned about effective engagement in community meetings wherever I go—even to the Albuquerque post office.

Jared Schaus



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4. Total paid and/or requested circulation (2 + 3)	4849	4762
5. Total free distribution	0	0
6. Total distribution (4 + 5)	4849	4762
7. Copies not distributed	551	238
8. Total (6 + 7)	5400	5000
9. Percent paid and/or requested circulation	100%	100%

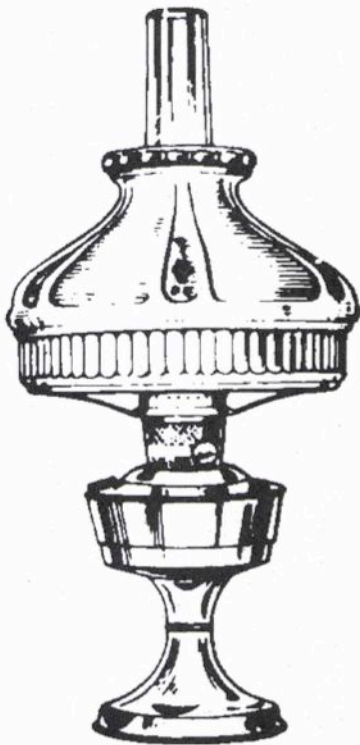
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COMING IN FUTURE ISSUES

"Student Housing Co-ops." Spring '01. What communarians and the "community-interested" can learn from student housing co-ops; where they are; how they're financed, self-governed, and managed; their joys and challenges; how to start one. *Guest Editor Deniz Tuncer, deniztuncer@email.com.*

"Appropriate Technology in Community." Summer '01. Our love-hate relationship with technology; appropriate technology options for sustainable technology in communities and learning to live with it; micro-hydro-electric, solar electric, wind generation; living with home-power systems; how future appropriate technologies will change our lives. *Guest Editor Jeff Clearwater, clrwater@valinet.com.*

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"Inclusivity" Style or "Diversity" Style *Part I*

How Do We Best Serve the *Whole Communities Movement?*

Over the last several years increasing controversy has surfaced in the Fellowship for Intentional Community (FIC), publishers of this magazine, the *Communities Directory*, and the IC Web Site (www.ic.org), over how we should communicate with the widely diverse range of intentional communities and people potentially interested in them. In this, the first of several articles with FIC people on all sides of the issue, longtime FIC activist and former Board member Betty Didcoct shares her perspective. She is interviewed by *Communities* magazine editor Diana Leaf Christian.

COMMUNITIES MAGAZINE: *What has been the purpose of the organization?*

BETTY DIDCOCT: Although the FIC was founded in 1948 to bring intentional communities together for mutual support, the small group of community activists who got together in 1986 to start up the organization again expanded its original purpose to interface with the public. We had a two-pronged purpose: 1) to help communities within the communities movement, and 2) to help the public to know about communities and their current viability. So most of our projects have been involved in public outreach. That's what motivated our first major project, the first *Communities*

Directory, in 1991. Our next major project was the national Celebration of Communities gathering in 1993. We also acquired *Communities* magazine about that time.

I think that we've really impacted public awareness (for example, journalists now call us regularly to get quotes about community-related stories), and I think it's made the communities movement stronger—there's been a lot more public awareness. And we've helped a lot of people

find communities and communities find people.

CM: *What's been the FIC's policy on diversity?*

BD: We've had a very strong mission of being inclusive; in fact, "inclusivity" has been a prominent word in our group discussions since the beginning. Our intention was not to exclude any communities because they had different ideas than we did, because we were serving a broad cross-section of communities that included every kind from guru-led ashrams to egalitarian communes, from rural to urban, from those with low-income lifestyles to upper-middle class communities. So our intention was to be as embracing of the wide variety among communities as possible.

And because the core workers in FIC tended to be more homogeneous in



lifestyle and in our own alternative “hippie” values than people represented across the entire communities movement, we constantly asked ourselves if we had any implicit messages of exclusivity that we might unintentionally communicate. What were we unintentionally expressing in our publications by our graphic style, our choice of words, or in our meetings by our social interactions, sexual relationships, or choice of clothes?

And so we tried to question everything with that in mind. We tried to publish the *Directory* in a professional, mainstream way, so it would have the widest possible appeal. For example, we worked very hard not to use new-agey language in our publications, even though we spoke it ourselves!

Hosting the Celebration was a challenge. We didn't want it to be like a Rainbow Family gathering or an upscale event at the Hyatt. We wanted to find a place that would accommodate the widest possible range of people, and we

managed, offering accommodations from camping to college dorms to comfortable apartments in campus housing, and meals from an outdoor soup kitchen to a university cafeteria.

You could really see this struggle to remain inclusive at our Spring '95 Board meeting where, after a lot of emotional discussion, we decided the FIC would *not* offer consensus training, certifying, or consulting, because that would put out the message that we supported one decision-making style over another. This might communicate lack of inclusivity, because many communities didn't use consensus—they used majority-rule voting or decisions were made by one leader—and we didn't want to imply that we thought consensus was a better decision-making process than the ones these communities used.

CM: *It seems odd that you went to so much trouble to bridge to people unlike yourselves, since they were mostly “straight” people. I mean, half the men on the Board*

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INDIVIDUALS AND ORGANIZATIONS."

PAUL DELAPA ASSOCIATES

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at that time had long hair. Most lived in fairly countercultural communities. You people were the hippies!

BD: Well ... experienced ones. Most of us who came together in the FIC in the late '80s had all been leaders in or founders of networks of communities in our regional areas—so we knew how to build coalitions between widely diverse groups and bring people together with disparate backgrounds. Dan Questenberry was involved in Inter-Communities of Virginia, Laird Schaub in the Federation of Egalitarian Communities, and Harvey Baker in the Communal Studies Association. Elph Morgan had been active in student co-ops and NASCO (North American Students of Cooperation). Geoph Kozeny was editor of the *Collective Networker* newsletter and a prominent figure in the Bay Area co-op movement, and Caroline Estes was a cofounder of Com-Unity. I was a cofounder of Earth Community Network on the West Coast, networking with communities as different as Alpha Farm and Esalen.

So, there was never a question about our values when we considered things like what words we'd use in our publications or how we'd dress or behave in the presence of our communities movement constituency. We had long discussions about whether our style of dress might be putting people off. Was the sexually open, non-monogamous lifestyle of

some in our group potentially off-putting to people we wanted to serve and our constituency as we perceived it?

We weren't always successful in including everyone we wished to, and we were definitely aware when we screwed up. We knew when we lost people. We certainly knew we didn't have much representation from the cohousing movement, the Christian communities movement, and the affordable housing movement. So it was always a

We've had a strong mission of inclusivity; our intention was to embrace the wide variety of communities as much as possible.

question for us: were we projecting an attitude of inclusivity or not?

CM: *When we were talking about our values and diversity at the spring organizational meeting in Oregon, the opinion was expressed that we were trying to counter the public misconception that communities are "hippie commie cults" and we don't want to scare people away by implying that com-*

munities are about political radicalism or being gay, bi, or polyamorous, for example. One of the newer Board members responded that he was concerned that our distancing ourselves from the language, dress, or style of some of these populations, which in our culture are currently oppressed, could be perceived as invalidating or repudiating them, which cancels out our attempt to be diverse.

BD: It seems to me there is a subtle but important difference between "diversity" and "inclusivity." FIC has always striven for inclusivity—we want everyone to feel access to and be served by the information and activities we provide.

I would not say we are an organization whose goal is to educate about diversity. However, inside our organization we certainly allow the expression of whatever people want to express; we'd be amiss if we didn't. We would not be inclusive if we didn't make room for the participation of everyone. But when we talk about outreach to everyone in the communities movement, and to the public, I don't think we should create barriers that people have to jump over.

The main diversity that we seem to be arguing about in FIC is sexual preference. However, there are diversity issues around all kinds of things in FIC, and among communitarians in general: food preferences, money values, economic lifestyle, dress/lifestyle. It goes way beyond simply race, religion, and sexual



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preference. And so in terms of our mission to interface with our constituency and those potentially interested in community, I think presenting ourselves in a way that is acceptable to the mainstream is the closest way we have to keeping the door open to the *whole* range. It may not be the perfect way, but it's the closest way.

CM: *What is the nature of the current disagreement?*

BD: I think some of the activists who've joined the FIC more recently are highly frustrated when "old-timers" in the organization ask them to limit personal self expression in terms of dress or behavior in public events or language in our publications. Sometimes the newer people characterize these requests as oppression of the populations they're members of, for example, gay, bisexual, or polyamorous people.

CM: *If people want the organization to change, why not make a formal proposal to change the FIC's policy? The policy of attempting to bridge to all communities and the public by voluntarily limiting people's specific lifestyles in public outreach situations?*

BD: I don't think there is an actual policy to change. It was unspoken. Our original group was so aligned in the desire to bridge to everyone and in the assumption that we'd do it by using mainstream speech that we never actually talked about the underlying value that we were all holding—only how to express it. There was never any decision about a specific policy; it was just part of the FIC's "organizational culture." However, there were plenty of decisions all along about how to implement our

unstated assumption. For example, we chose designated spokespersons to represent the organization publicly, and it was clear we chose the specific people that would reach as wide an audience as possible.

Inclusivity—to not put off outer ranges of the continuum—has always been a strong theme and purpose of the organization. We want to be inclusive in our membership, of who we communicate with, in the way we do our business.

**Were we
unintentionally
expressing our own
alternative,
"hippie" values in
our publications or
public events by our
language, dress,
or lifestyle?**

So how can an organization that preaches inclusivity allow full expression of our own people with non-traditional lifestyles when the work we're doing is this public outreach?

The style of how to implement that value was implicit in the early days, without discussion. And now people have joined the organization who have a different strategy, and it's causing conflict. I think the newer people believe that if this is in fact an inclusive group, whenever it asks them to not behave or express as they may normally do when doing public FIC outreach, it is actually *exclusive*—excluding populations they may belong to, say gay, bi, poly, or politically radical populations.

CM: *Is it possible that these newer FIC folks believe they were joining an organization different from the one you've just described? That "inclusivity," the way you've described it, had actually meant "diversity" in the sense that the organization would embrace all behaviors, clothing, and language of each of our non-mainstream lifestyles?*

BD: We can certainly ask them. I hope we would embrace all behaviors, but not publicly represent each one.

continued on page 66



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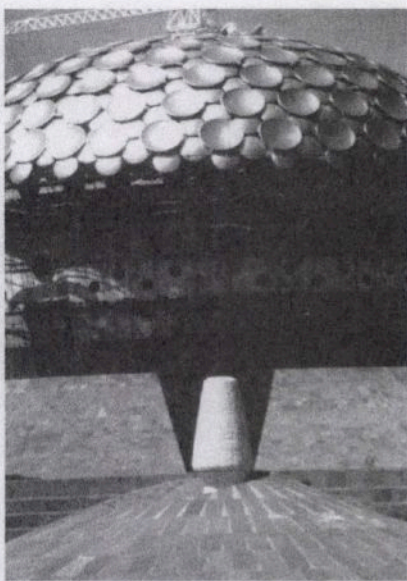
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Around German Communities to the "Centre of the World"

I am staying at ZEGG commune in eastern Germany, and working on plans for the International Communal Studies Association (ICSA) conference to be held here June 25-July 7, 2001. This gathering of community members and communal scholars from around the globe will be followed by a tour of intentional communities in the area.

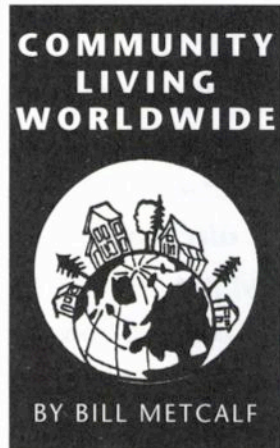
ZEGG, as always, is both challenging and inspiring. Their "freed-love," or "liberated-love" approach to social and sexual life spills over into all other areas. I feel challenged and enthused by their openness, honesty and directness, while impressed by their spirituality.

Just as when I previously visited ZEGG (see "ZEGG: Free Love in Germany" Winter '98 issue), I am thoroughly impressed by their environmental and economic achievements, as well as their innovative approach to cultural and social life. But mostly, I am impressed by how well these 70 or so adults and 20 or so children manage to interact and have a great time, largely avoiding jealousy, power struggles, and sexual manipulation, and effectively dealing with the issues that do arise. ZEGG is really a fun place to be.

I now follow the route which ICSA's post-conference tour (June 29-July 1)

will take next year, including passing some famous sights in Berlin—Brandenburger Tor, Unter den Linden, "the wall," and the Reichstag.

An hour northeast of ZEGG my first



stop is UFA Fabrik, an urban commune in central Berlin. UFA Fabrik prospers and changes with the times, while providing a home and income for about 50 adults and children. The community's five-acre site was formerly the infamous movie studio that made Nazi propaganda films. When these communards first claimed the land (squatting here in

1979), the site was dirty, dusty, and ugly. Since then, they have altered and painted the buildings and considerably "greened" the site with shrubs and flowers. The community now has a small wind generator, sod roofs, power and heat co-generation, and a constructed wetlands water cleaning and waste-water recycling system.

All UFA Fabrik members work on site for community businesses. About a third of the community income derives from several small businesses such as a cafe, bakery and fresh food shop. Another third derives from their business organising entertainment and cultural activities. The last third comes from the community's most famous businesses, a circus and a samba band.

Dr. Bill Metcalf, of Griffith University, Australia, has since the early 1970s studied both contemporary and historical communal groups around the world. He is President of the International Communal Studies Association, a Fellow of the Findhorn Foundation, and author of Shared Visions, Shared Lives: Communal Living Around the Globe (Findhorn Press, 1995; available from Bill Metcalf at w.metcalf@mailbox.gu.au) and From Utopian Dreaming to Communal Reality (University of New South Wales Press, Sydney, 1995). Bill has lived communally for about half of his adult life.

Note: We preserve the spelling of our Commonwealth authors.

The UFA Fabrik Circus entertains about 200,000 people each year.

The community has so much work, in fact, that they employ about 100 non-communards. This reliance on outside labour both challenges them and offers a sign of their undoubted success, similar to many Israeli kibbutzim.

Several of the old film studio buildings have been converted to accommodations for members and guests. Each member has a private room, while almost all meals are eaten together. The community operates a small alternative primary school for their own and neighbourhood children, although older children attend a city high school.

UFA Fabrik members are adamant that they live communally solely for practical reasons and hold no overarching ideological vision. But their actual, inherent vision is surely to show people that it is possible to live a sane, prosperous, and sustainable lifestyle, even within the crowded and hyperactive city of Berlin—and to have a great time doing it.

From Berlin, I travel southwest to Kommune Niederkaufungen, near the small city of Kassel. Only occasionally on my worldwide travels to intentional communities does a group strike me as a place that even I, a crusty scholar, would want to live but this community does just that. They are lovely people with a superb communal set-up.

Niederkaufungen started in 1986 on a four-acre site which contained a centuries-old manor house and several enormous barns, all in beautiful timber framed “Fachwerk” style, right in the centre of a village. Because this group had been together for some years before forming the community, they had already worked out a set of principles and practical rules of social and economic life. They also had some savings to invest, so they quickly established an impressive social and physical infra-

structure. (See “Kommune Niederkaufungen” in the Spring '97 issue.)

Today about 70 people live in Niederkaufungen, which holds what they call an “eco-socialist” value system. Each member has a private room in living groups of three to 10 adults, plus children. Each living group has its own bathroom and a living room. All Niederkaufungen members eat together in their large and comfortable dining room. Cooking is done by several members, mostly men. Members do not often change jobs, as is common in many other communal groups.

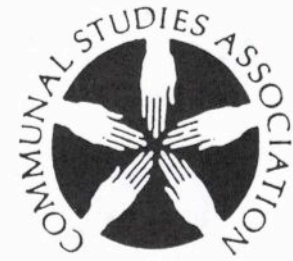
Members operate several community businesses, including a construction crew, metal fabrication and carpentry workshops, a community kindergarten, a dairy farm, and a guest house. Several members work off-site in various professions. Income is pooled, which pays all communal expenses. Niederkaufungen donates the equivalent of about US\$1000 each month to a charity or to environmental and social change projects. They also offer support to other European communal groups in their early stages.

When people join the community after a six-month probation period, they turn over all their money and other assets to the collective. When/if they leave, they are given a negotiated amount of money to meet their needs. In other words, when people leave, they take away what they need, which could be more or less than what they brought.

Members don't receive a salary or any personal allowance from the community businesses, but simply take what cash they need for personal expenses from a pile of money on a shelf in the office. They record this in a book, according to how it will be used, such as for toiletries, travel, or clothes. Very significantly, this is tallied and displayed each month

A third of UFA

Fabrik's income comes from their most famous businesses, a circus and a samba band.



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according to how the money was spent but not according to who spends it. Trust and honesty are crucial at Niederkaufungen. These are enhanced by their weekly meetings and their biannual three-day retreats.

That evening, still following the schedule of the tour, I dine with Niederkaufungen members, and stay overnight in their lovely old guest house. The meal, all organic, is excellent, and served with style. I particularly enjoy the wine from their bar. Never before have I known a large communal group which regularly has alcohol available, for free, to members and guests. This makes scholarly research far more interesting and pleasant!

The next morning, after a superb breakfast and more talk about ecospirituality, I drive north to Ökodorf Sieben Linden, passing through many old, almost medieval villages of the former East Germany. I seem to be in a time warp, moving between a modern

motorway and small country lanes and village squares.

While ZEGG, UFA Fabrik, and Niederkaufungen are old, well-established communes, Ökodorf Sieben Linden is a fairly new aspiring ecovillage. The planning group came together in 1993, and moved to their 50-acre site in 1997.

Although they plan for 300 residents ultimately, only about 30 now live here. The community's several enormous old farm buildings, built around a courtyard, have been renovated to provide kitchen, dining, and office space, as well as facilities for workshops of all sorts, small conferences, and guest accommodations. As in many communities, members are responsible for providing their own housing, with only the land, community buildings, and general infrastructure such as the water system and recycling facilities owned by the community. Until they can build houses, many members live in old travel trailers.

What is so unusual and impressive at Ökodorf Sieben Linden is that instead of people building single family houses, as I have seen at most ecovillages, the first two houses under construction are for cooperative living groups of 10-12 people. Another group of members plans to build a strawbale dwelling and, unlike the first two groups, who have independent incomes, will live as an income-sharing commune. This inclusion of various housing arrangements and financial structures within an ecovillage seems like a brilliant way to get the best of all worlds.

As we share an organic vegetarian lunch, I am struck by the fact that while members here are younger than at the other groups I have visited, they are no less determined to make their intentional community work, nor less aware of the challenges they face.

It costs the equivalent of about US\$10,000 to buy into Ökodorf Sieben Linden. Members provide their own employment and income, unlike at UFA Fabrik and Niederkaufungen, and to some extent, ZEGG, where

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members work in community-owned businesses and share incomes.

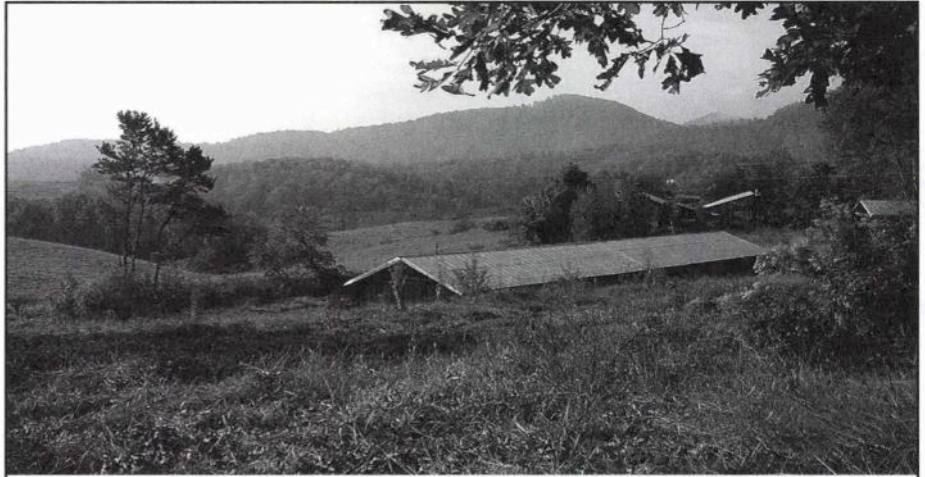
Many people argue that ecovillages and cohousing projects, because they offer sufficient private space and independent finances, represent the future of intentional communities. The contrary argument is that combining private space and independent finances might just result in the worst of all worlds; i.e., losing some privacy and independence for very little environmental and economic gain. I must admit to being sceptical of the utopian claims of some ecovillages, yet here at Ökodorf Sieben Linden, for perhaps the first time, I can really see the eco-village ideal working out with admirable results. They are an impressive group.

At the nearby old village of Poppau, a plaque on a large stone proudly claims the village is "The Centre of the World." It seems that several centuries ago the people, using chains, measured all the known world and established that the centre of the world was—exactly here!

This claim leads me to wonder about intentional communities such as those I've just visited. Are ZEGG, UFA Fabrik, Niederkaufungen, and Ökodorf Sieben Linden best characterized as fringe social groups, or, given their innovative environmental, economic, and social systems, at the centre of a new world emerging in the new millennium? Are these communities examples of what can be a sustainable and more equitable future? Has my short tour indeed taken me to the centre of the world?

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C On the Cohousing Trail—

in the Pacific Northwest

Have these Danish-import communities evolved in unique ways on our shores?

BY DIANE R. MARGOLIS

I am driving down a narrow, winding country road on my way to Trillium Hollow Cohousing outside Portland, Oregon. I am writing a book about my community, Cambridge Cohousing in Massachusetts, and so I decided to compare it with other cohousing communities. Hence this trip.

When I arrive, Laura* shows me around Trillium Hollow's common house, which is beautiful and luxurious with windows all around and a thickly carpeted floor. I marvel at the comfortable dining room, but wonder how they fit everybody at the four tables. Laura assures me they do, and we review some numbers. At Cambridge Cohousing we have eight tables seating eight each for a community of about 65 adults and 25 kids. Trillium Hollow is smaller with about 30 adults and four kids. Laura says that keeping up the plush carpet is a problem. "We've got to change it," she says, pointing to a trail of spots. "Well, replace it with something quiet," I say. "Our wood floor is beautiful, but our dining room is awfully noisy."



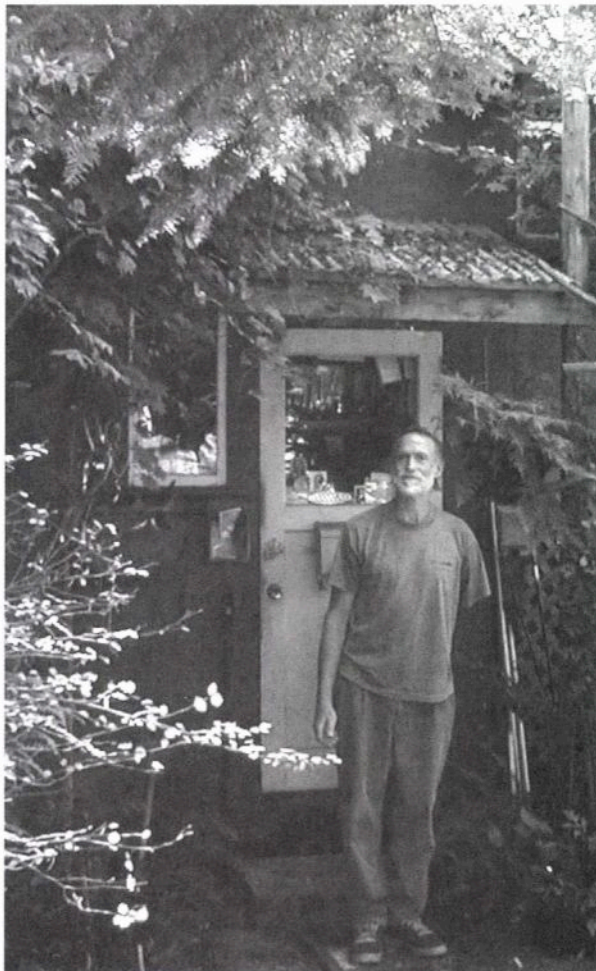
Sharingwood Cohousing in Snohomish, Washington, built on the lot development model, people live in detached houses.

ROB SANDELIN

As she shows me around, we start toting up similarities and differences between Trillium Hollow and Cambridge Cohousing. They started with a common house—the large, luxurious home of the former landowner. We built our common house along with the rest of our structure. Their common house is freestanding. Ours is the basement and most of the first floor of our central building. Theirs was built to be a very posh home. Ours was built on a tight budget and is a bit institutional looking. A friend visiting for the first time confessed that it reminded him of a church, but most people are amazed at how homey it looks. Trillium Hollow's common house is hexagonal with large windows overlooking a deep creek. Its huge living room is now the dining room and a computer area, and its dining room is now a children's room during meals and a meeting room when the kids aren't there. It says something about conspicuous consumption in our culture that a living room designed for a single family can serve so well as a dining room for nearly 40 people.

Trillium Hollow was completed in 1998, and they're still deciding what to do with all the common house bedrooms with their elegant baths. One has become another children's room; two are guest rooms; one is a TV room with a queen-sized mattress on the floor for kids to jump on. Another has an aquarium with no fish. "No one has taken on that job," says Laura. I think about our aquarium with its lone fish, contributed by one of our members, that disturbs another member who feels it is wrong to incarcerate fish and other wild creatures. It's one of our unresolved bones of contention.

Below the Trillium Hollow dining room is a big room sporting a pool table. A lone exercise bike stands in the corner. How to use this room is one of their unresolved bones of contention. Laura says some people want to



ROB SANDELIN

The builder of this 100 sq. ft. dwelling at Sharingwood uses the kitchen and bathroom in the Common House.

Their homes range from a 100 sq. ft. lean-to to a large triplex with an apartment and two rental units.

each level. There appears to be good variety in sizes and layouts of their units. Many of the larger units are on two levels, with much customization. As I leave the community Laura points out some small trilliums they

just planted in the garden. The tiny plants look as though they will thrive.

The next day I drive to Sharingwood Cohousing, outside Seattle. I never realized before how many cohousing communities lie in the Seattle area: four well-established ones that I will be visiting and several more in various stages from planning to completion.

I will stay at Winslow Cohousing on Bainbridge Island. I wonder,

though, whether even the two days I plan to be at Winslow will be enough to get much more than a surface impression of the community. As a sociologist, what interests me most is the way we cohousers are, through our everyday lives, inventing a culture for ourselves and perhaps influencing those around us.

turn it into an exercise room, but she thinks it is too beautiful for that. In addition to windows overlooking the stream, it has a wood stove in a large fireplace alcove. "When the leaves are out, it's like a cool grotto here, so peaceful," she says. We listen to the stream for a moment.

Next, we go to see some of the housing units, four of which are on the market, which seems a high number to be up for sale at one time. Cambridge Cohousing bought its land early in a rapidly rising market. Moreover, Cambridge Cohousing has experienced very little change in the lives of its members since we moved in: no deaths and no family break-ups; only four new babies and a couple of new partners. Trillium Hollow, on the other hand, has experienced a couple of deaths and some break-ups but no new babies since the one born almost a year before move-in.

The units are built on three exposed levels with an elevator connecting the platform at



Cohousing is not just an alternative to conventional housing: it is a social movement.

*Top Left clockwise:
Bellingham, WA
Vashon Cohousing
Puget Ridge
Cambridge Cohousing
Trillium Hollow*

COHOUSING MAGAZINE



Two aspects of cohousing impress me already. First, as I was planning this trip, all I had to do was email the representative listed on the community's Web site to set up my visit. That every cohousing community has someone on hand to show strangers around reinforces the fact that cohousing is not just an alternative to conventional housing; it is a social movement interested in social change. And as my trip progresses, I am struck by the uniqueness of each cohousing community. Like most social movements, cohousing is made up of diverse groups held loosely together by a common vision.

The diversity of cohousing settings becomes palpable as I near Sharingwood. Cambridge Cohousing is urban, Trillium Hollow suburban, and Sharingwood seems to be in the heart of Seattle's vacation land, with lakes all around. As I drive down Sharingwood's road, I slow for a speed bump. My host, Rob, is expecting me and begins our tour with the common house. It is a very large room, with a small play space for the kids a few steps down and off to the right of the entrance. At the other end is a fireplace surrounded by couches.

On a table lies a huge pad with Sharingwood's plot plans. Sharingwood owns 35 acres, with 25 acres reserved as a greenbelt. Cambridge Cohousing has just over one acre for its 41 units and Trillium Hollow has three acres for its 29 units. Unlike Cambridge Cohousing and Trillium Hollow, which were developed and built all at once, Sharingwood follows a lot development model. New members buy lots and then build their own houses. The community has developed their property in two phases. The first phase, with 17 homes, is finished

and they are now developing the second. Having sold all the lots in their second phase, Sharingwood has a surplus of about \$90,000. A bulletin board near the entrance lists members' suggestions for how to spend it.

As we leave the common house to walk around the community, I see that most homes have large windows rising up to their peaked roof lines and lots of dark stained wood. Their sizes range from a 100 sq. ft. home—pretty much an enclosed lean-to just large enough for a bed and a place to hang some clothes, and with no plumbing (the owner uses the common house kitchen and bathroom)—to a large triplex with one owner-occupied apartment and two rental units. "Wow," I think, "that's the way to go." Using lot development, where members can build their own places, you can have such a range of housing sizes, cost, and design. New members can try out cohousing as renters. And, as at Sharingwood, instead of ending up with cost overruns that require an additional financial assessment of every member, the community ends up with a big surplus to play with.

Among the other communities I will visit, only Vashon Cohousing on Vashon Island also uses the lot development model. It's not an option in urban developments like Cambridge and Trillium Hollow, where on small plots we must stack our dwellings and build all at once. I won't be visiting any retrofit communities on this trip, but I wonder if that is the way to get some of the advantages of lot development in an urban setting.

"Cohousing is a crazy idea," I say to Rob, thinking about the angst of building together. "There's nothing more stressful than moving—unless it's building your

own house. And here we are, bringing a bunch of people together, most of whom never knew each other, to go through one of the most difficult projects in their lives. It's amazing it works at all, and that it works so well."

Rob takes me to another feature not possible in an urban setting—a small redwood glen with a stream running through it. "We call it Sharingwood National Forest," he says. "We have campfires and the kids play here in the winter. We saw an owl last week." Back at his house Rob offers me lunch which I gladly accept, and he gives me directions to Winslow, the next community on my tour.

As I approach Seattle, I follow the signs to the ferry. Once on board I tell a fellow passenger I'm going over to visit Winslow Cohousing. "Oh, the hippies," he says. I say I'm sure they're not. On the ferry, the daily commuters are reading, working at their computers, and eating. No one seems impressed by the beautiful city rising from the waters.

Off the boat, I wend my way to Winslow, the second oldest cohousing community in the United States, forming in 1989 with move-in in 1992. The housing units are more uniform, clearly built all at once like Trillium Hollow and Cambridge Cohousing. I walk up to the common house where I meet Audrey, my guide.

Winslow has more townhouses than flats in its mix than Cambridge Cohousing, which has nine large townhouses, two small ones, and 30 flats ranging from studios to four-bedroom units. Winslow has 24 townhouses and six flats. The units at Cambridge Cohousing range from 525 to 1900 square feet, compared to Winslow's 518 to 1390 square feet. The greater range of home sites at Cambridge Cohousing makes a difference. Several of Winslow's families left when their families needed more space.

On my final day, I visit Vashon Cohousing and Puget Ridge Cohousing and notice another difference among communities: the timing of common house construction. Trillium Hollow had their common house from the day they bought their land; it served as a place for some members to live while their new homes were being built. How handy that would have been at Cambridge Cohousing where many residents sold their homes in anticipation of a June 1997 move-in, only to move from one short-term rental or friend's offered room to another, waiting almost a year till construction was far enough along to finally move in. Vashon, a community that began a decade ago, is just now building its common house.

At Vashon, I see a possible disadvantage of lot development: an extended period of construction with all the noise and muddy tire tracks that entails.

Though five families purchased the land and began planning for Vashon in 1989, the first household did not move in until 1993. It was another year before the second household and third households moved in, and it was not until the summer of 1997 when the fourth through 11th households moved in.

Jan, my guide, begins the tour. The last of Vashon's projected 18 homes is edging toward completion and the common house is framed in. I follow Jan over a plank bridging the house with the rutted road, and into the common house. As she points out where its dining room, guest room, and other rooms will be, I note how different this construction is from ours. At Cambridge Cohousing our developer and builder did not allow us on site except at special viewing times. But here at Vashon, we climb where the stairs are not yet in, and walk across floorboards that have not yet been nailed down. I hope their insurance is in good order as I follow my guide very carefully, grateful for the casualness of Vashon.

I arrive at Puget Ridge a bit early to meet George, my guide, who shows me the common house and the grounds. Built on a hilly 2.4 acres with a small stream along one side, Puget Ridge has a sense of settled comfort and order. Unlike most other cohousing communities that have the air of a work in progress, seven-year-old Puget Ridge seems finished, almost manicured. Its physical appearance seems to reflect its social life. "We do everything through committees," said one resident. "Each committee has its responsibility, and the people on the committees have the authority to do what they think needs to be done." "Our committee structure works very well," added George.

As I say good-bye, I notice a pair of sneakers with flowers growing out of them sitting by the door of one of the units. George explains that the sneakers belonged to one of the founders of Puget Ridge. During her last illness members of the community visited with her frequently to make sure she was taken care of. After she died, a friend put the flowers in her sneakers on her porch where they sat for a year. Now they sit on her best friend's porch.

Her story reminded me of something I heard from one of the founding members of Saettedammen, one of Denmark's first cohousing communities. "You know the value of cohousing best at life's most difficult moments," he said, "for example, when a marriage breaks up, or when someone dies."

Diane R. Margolis, Emeritus Professor of Sociology at the University of Connecticut, is a freelance writer living at Cambridge Cohousing in Massachusetts.

A Pressing Need, an Overlooked Treasure

BY BO LOZOFF

A small percentage of released prisoners are sincerely drawn to become hard-working, productive members of an intentional community.

Charles, Gabrielle, Micheal, Lee— are four members of our community who, between them, bake bread, help run the office, manage the garden and orchard, do vehicle maintenance and repair, take care of all the grounds-keeping, and help in childcare and education. Charles is also a gifted chiropractor who gives excellent free care to nearly all our community members. Before becoming residents of our community, between the four of them they have also spent a total of nearly 60 years in prison.

Welcome to Kindness House, an interfaith spiritual community near Durham, North Carolina, which runs all the projects of Human Kindness Foundation. The Foundation's largest and best-known project is the Prison-Ashram Project, created in 1973 to provide support and materials to prisoners around the world who are trying to turn their lives around. Along with my wife, Sita, I have been privileged to see many thousands of prisoners make the changes they had hoped for— becoming deeper, more

caring, truly decent human beings. And some of them become very interested in trying a different lifestyle, such as living in community rather

live. When prisoners write us asking for names of communities they could parole to, we do not know of a single one whose membership policies can

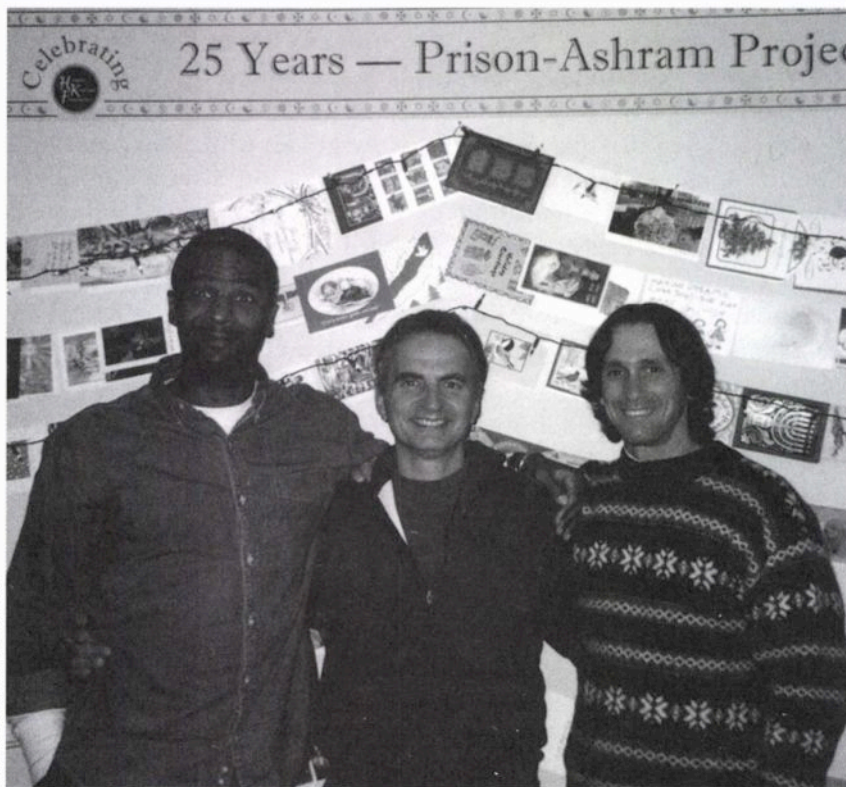
accommodate those parole requirements. In other words, unlike most prospective applicants, a prisoner cannot come for a visit or a trial period. To receive parolees here, we must be willing to make at least a three-month commitment as their job plan and home plan. We have received a couple dozen ex-cons at this point, who have stayed with us anywhere from that minimum three months to several years. Charles, Gabrielle, Micheal and Lee all plan to stay permanently.

In trying to find other communities willing to take ex-

cons, I have had some fascinating Catch-22 conversations that go something like this:

Me: Is your community open to the idea of someone coming out of prison to live with you?

Community Member: Oh, absolutely. We are not prejudiced against any



Kindness House community offers paroled prisoners from the Prison-Ashram Project a community of simple living, spiritual practice, and service to others. (Left to right) Bruce, author Bo Lozoff, and Michael.

than returning to the mean streets most of them came from.

The problem is, the vast majority of prisoners do not “max out,” or finish their entire sentences; they are released on parole, which usually means that they must submit a parole plan that includes a job and a place to

class of people.

Me: Wonderful. How would you arrange that if I were to put someone in touch with you?

CM: Our application procedure is that they would come for a two- or three-week visit, then leave while we think about it.

Me: But actually, that would make it impossible for anyone to come on parole, because they would need a commitment of at least three months before they left prison. How about this—you get to know them during their last six months or year inside, write them, have a phone interview, maybe one of your members going to meet them in person?

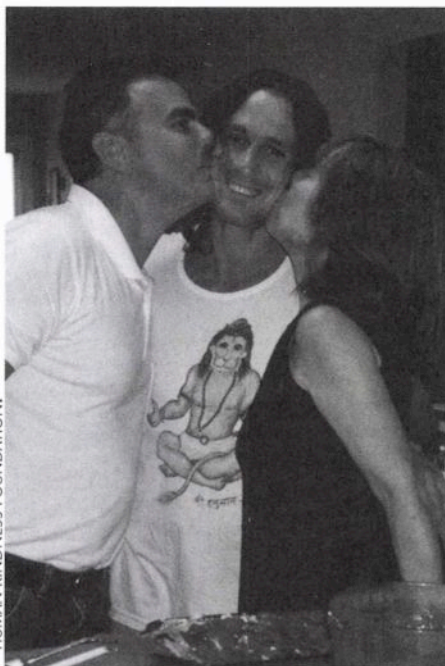
CM: We would not be able to accept them before they visit. Our policies don't allow that.

Me: Then you are not open to anyone coming out of prison to live with you?

CM: We're completely open to it. We have no prejudices.

Something along those lines is how the conversation goes. It's like a restaurant saying it welcomes people in wheelchairs with a doorknob six feet above the floor. Coming out of prison is very much like a serious disability. There are so many Catch-22's for ex-cons that many of them wind up back in prison within a few weeks or months, not because of harmful or criminal behavior, but merely because the entire social structure works against them—from community policies such as those described above, to first-and-last month's rent, references needed for phone service and other utilities, and the intense prejudice against them among the general population.

In the year 2000, approximately 50,000 American prisoners will be released every month of the year. Nearly all of them will hit the streets with \$50-\$100 "gate money" and the clothes on their backs. Thousands more will be kept in prison long after their parole dates simply because they do not have an approved parole plan.



Kindness House cofounders Bo and Sita Lozoff celebrate Micheal's 41st birthday, his first out of prison since he was 17.

With the United States now housing one-fourth of the entire world prison population, this is a serious problem that affects us all in one way or another. There is no way I can accurately describe the enormous waste of human life that these facts represent.

In all these years, we haven't had a single instance of violence among the former killers, bank robbers, and drug dealers we've accepted under our roof.

Most men and women getting out of prison are not interested in intentional community life. They are eager to get back into the self-centered consumer culture and make up for lost time. But a small percentage are very sincerely drawn to a whole other vision—a vision that includes, or even revolves around, being hard-working, productive members of an alternative community. They have had a good chance to see the futility and self-

destructiveness of the lifestyle that you and I have left behind, and they want very much to leave it behind also. They have for the most part endured horrific conditions and witnessed the very worst of man's inhumanity to man, and are extremely motivated to contribute to something more positive. And they have a lot of energy, and mighty contributions to make. No one has more credibility with kids and especially at-risk juveniles than ex-cons whose scars and tattoos attest to where they have been. Micheal, one of my chief assistants and a dear, sweet human being, has a skull in a cowboy hat, and the word "Desperado" crudely written over it, on his right arm. Lee, a gentle and soft-spoken 50-year-old with tattoos on every major body part, first entered the Texas prison system in 1968 and was in and out, in and out, until April of 2000. I assure you, kids will listen with respect when these guys say something.

Ex-con community members also tend to help the rest of the community appreciate what they've got. Middle-class people moving in may be apprehensive about what they are "giving up," but ex-cons come in like it's the Garden of Eden. And it is, compared to a hundred-man dorm where people scream or rant through the night, and a guard shines a flashlight in your eyes every few hours throughout the night to "count" you. Or a six-by-nine cell where you are locked in 23 hours a day and you actually forget what a tree looks like.

Making room in your community and in your policies for ex-cons would address one of the most pressing social needs of our day. It would also be opening your community to some overlooked and underutilized treasures. Not everyone will work out. But with reasonable screening beforehand, the ex-cons who do not work out will not present any more of a problem than anyone else who doesn't work out. In all these years, we have not

had a single instance of violence among the former killers, bank robbers, drug dealers, and others whom we have accepted under our roof. Honestly.

Anyone who has been in prison for a long time will certainly have some adjustments to make in terms of trusting others, feeling safe, and dealing with authority. I have also noticed that after the first month or so outside of prison, many people seem to hit a wall that may lead to confusion and depression. Coming out of prison is like coming home from a fierce war. Imagine having been at war for 23 years, like Micheal! Prison is a war zone 24 hours a day, and prisoners are forced to endure and witness things that human beings should never have to



Thanksgiving dinner, '98.

witness. When Micheal celebrated his 41st birthday at Kindness House, it was his first birthday outside of prison since the age of 17. The first time I took him

energy we have spent as a community in helping Micheal to go through his adjustments has been more than offset by what he has shared with the community.

to Home Depot, he clutched my arm and said, "Don't turn loose of me in here!" Nothing near the size of a Home Depot existed when Micheal went to prison.

Gradually over the course of two-plus years at Kindness House, Micheal has been able to reveal and let go of some of the worst things he had to see or do while growing up in prison. This has enriched the community's understanding of human nature, society, politics, and the folly of our criminal (truly criminal) justice system. Any time or

Transferring Decision-Making Power at Kindness House

"I don't want to tell anyone what to do, or be anyone's boss," Bo Lozoff told Father Murray apprehensively. The elderly Anglican priest was Bo's fellow board member of The Human Kindness Foundation, which had just bought land for Kindness House. "Sita and I have just been working side by side on the project for 20 years, and now I'm suddenly going to direct other people's lives?"

"Who do you think should be in control then?" replied Father Murray. "Someone who wants that power? You've offered your life to God in service, and you don't want power over others. You're the best person to direct anything--someone who doesn't want power."

And so, Bo and Sita became founder-directors of Kindness House. Their task, besides initiating the logistics and processes of a new community and continuing to serve thousands of prisoners worldwide, was to educate other community members in the philosophy and practice of their life's work, and gradually turn decision making over to them.

Now, seven years later, Kindness House has 12-15 mem-

bers, and is dedicated to "simple living, daily spiritual practice, and service to humanity." Board members of Human Kindness Foundation, including Bo and Sita, several community members, and two non-community members, meet every few months to decide by mutual agreement the overarching policy decisions for Kindness House, and administer the Prison-Ashram Project and other projects.

At Kindness House members build all the buildings, raise most of their own food, and manage the work of the Prison-Ashram Project. A third of the full community mem-

bers, four people, are former prisoners who plan to make their lives there. Dozens of former prisoners have lived in the community for varying periods of time. Most have adjusted to life on the outside, learned a skill or trade while in community, and gone on to their new lives. Others have found the community's strong commitments to service and daily spiritual practice more difficult, and decided to move on. None have ever been asked to leave.



We are wiser and more compassionate as a result, and this is what we yearn to get across to other communities, who tend only to see the bother or the risk of ex-cons becoming communards.

We would love to have a larger network of possibilities for our prison friends who write to us. Toward that end, we are happy for you to visit our community to meet some of our folks and see how this works in a real-life application. There are no costs to visiting Kindness House; just get in touch with us and we'll be happy to arrange your stay. We are also happy to share our screening procedures, application forms, and tips on dealing with interstate parole transfers, local parole authorities and so forth. The more you learn about these procedures and bureaucracies, the more convinced you will become of the importance for the commu-



HUMAN KINDNESS FOUNDATION

Everyone at Kindness House works in the garden or the Prison-Ashram Project office ... and they like to play too.

nities movement to become more involved in this area of North American life.

Bo is happy to be a resource for communities who accept newly released prisoners, or who are interested in exploring the idea; 919-304-2220.

For information about visiting Kindness House, or how you can help: Human Kindness Foundation, P.O. Box 61619, Durham, NC 27715; 919-304-2220; www.humankindness.org

Bo Lozoff and his wife, Sita, directors of Human Kindness Foundation, have worked for over 25 years in its Prison-Ashram Project, helping prisoners and prison staff worldwide use their harsh environments to develop wisdom and compassion. Bo's books include We're All Doing Time, Lineage and Other Stories, Just Another Spiritual Book, and his latest, Deep & Simple: A Spiritual Path for Modern Times.

The community manages its day-to-day affairs through a series of meetings. Each morning at breakfast, for example, they discuss who will be doing which tasks and chores that day, who might need extra help, and so on.

Thursday morning staff meetings cover logistical issues about Prison-Ashram Project work and other community activities. Decisions are made by the people who raise the issues and Bo and Sita. Recently the community decided to save time by changing the staff meeting format so that Bo and Sita have a series of short meetings with the people involved in each agenda item, so no one has to sit through a long meeting about logistical details they don't care about. Decisions are announced at the next day's breakfast meeting to make sure they're fine with everyone.

Once a week, on Friday nights, they meet to talk about any interpersonal concerns or conflicts, and check in with each other to see if they're meeting their intentions and in fact doing what they say they're doing as a spiritual community.

"It's the community's wish right now, very strongly, that Sita and I continue to be the central figures in all this, because we've been doing it so long, and nobody else has lived at Kindness House longer than four years," says Bo. "So we are still mom and dad for the time being, because we really don't want the work or style of the Human Kindness Foundation to change flavor greatly as we've expanded it

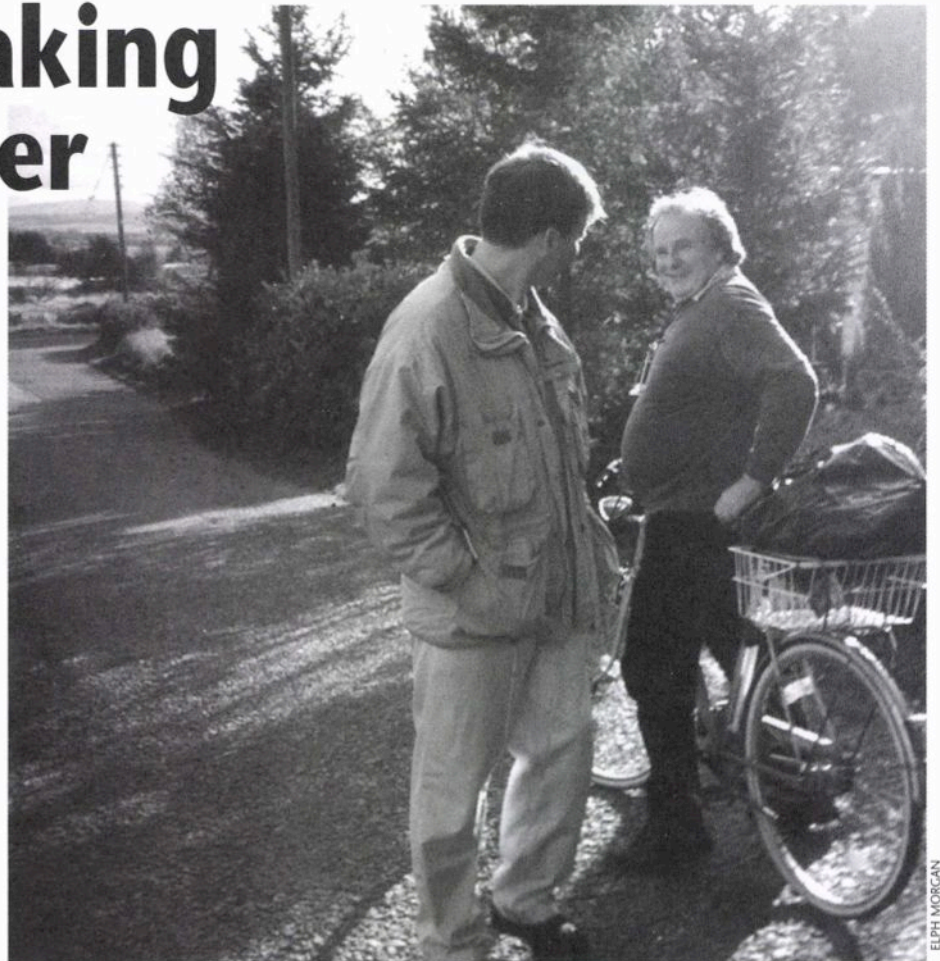
into a community enterprise. We want people to train in the flavor of what we've been doing for nearly 30 years because that's what the world knows our work as, and why they're drawn to it." Joanne, who's been there four years, has also become centrally involved, and now handles much of the day-to-day administrative affairs.

"We really look forward to the time when we have more long-time members here," says Bo, "so more people can embody and carry forward the work as we've developed it. Part of our mission is to grow the community so it can run this project after Sita and I are gone. It seems to be working out well, since it's really clear that we're trying to turn over the authority, in a good way, and in a realistic way, over a period of time."

But he is still the sole decision-maker when it comes to newly arrived former prisoners. "That's where I'm not in any way equivocating about my power," he says. "I'm the guy with a lifetime of experience and affection for these people, who must take full responsibility for them and make command decisions about their well-being and their relationship to the community. Because we're talking about people's lives. In the case of parolees, we're holding the papers that can send them back to prison." Fortunately, no one's ever been sent back. —D.L.C.

Decision-Making and Power

What is power in a group? Is it bad, good, or neutral? How is it shared?



ELPH MORGAN

FROM THE EDITOR • DIANA LEAFE CHRISTIAN

ONCE LIVED IN A GROUP WHERE I HAD MOST OF THE POWER. Like many people in this situation, I didn't know it.

Later I lived in a different group, where someone else had most of the power. There, I certainly noticed it. I recalled what people of color tell white people, and what books about racism say about power and privilege—which is that those who have it often aren't aware of it. They exercise power unthinkingly, even innocently, and don't usually notice that it's not reciprocal.

I'll bet you've seen this if you've visited communities. Have you met the community founder who: 1) had established the original vision for the community, 2) put up all or most of the money, and/or 3) had lived there the longest—and whose opinion other community members habitually defer to (even as the founder tells you that everyone has equal say and most of the time they all want to do the same thing anyway)? Or seen the community where someone has so much energy, expertise, and/or personal charisma that his or her views usually carry the day (however, you notice the tendency towards resentment in others)? My guess is that these individuals are absolutely sincere—and probably blind to the power dynamics that you, the observant guest, easily pick up.

I see "power" in a community as coming down to decision-making power. Who decides (or disrupts the decision-making process) has the power.

But ... let's take a look at the nature of power. My favorite description comes from Joel Kramer and Diana Alstad's *The Guru Papers: Masks of Authoritarian Power* (North Atlantic Books, 1993). In essence, they say:

1. Power is the ability of a person or system to influence other persons or systems.

In itself, it's neither good nor bad.

2. Authority may be vested in a position, a role, or some perceived capacity within an individual; i.e., expertise, experience, or charisma.

In itself, it's neither good nor bad.

3. Hierarchy is one way human societies and groups organize themselves for high efficiency. It can work extremely well; for example, when many people need to accomplish much in a short time, such as in emergencies, or for military defense.

4. People with authority are chosen for the top of a hierarchical organization. There, of course, they have the most power.

This is neither good nor bad.

5. Authoritarianism occurs when someone enforces or perpetuates their power by punishing or ignoring those who disagree

with them. This person is usually an authority with power, and usually at the top of a hierarchy,

Not so good.

6. Most people tend to confuse power, authority, and hierarchical organization with authoritarianism. They often use the term “power” when they really mean the punitive use of power, or power over.

I’m not saying there’s anything wrong with power. Not at all. I like power: I like that we have the ability to influence each other with our expertise, experience, or good ideas. I don’t like it when I or others have power over others in inappropriate ways, and especially when we don’t know it and so don’t take responsibility for it. And I’ll bet you don’t like it either.

I think human beings love to feel powerful—and here I mean being able to influence outcomes in ways they deem important, as well as to be seen, heard, acknowledged, appreciated, and able to contribute to others. And while whole groups of us live in community and probably each enjoy experiencing ourselves as power-full and actualized, we need to do it so that no one of us experiences it at the expense of another. We need to be in balance with each other.

But, but, you say ... some people naturally do have more expertise and experience, or more energy and charisma than others. Don’t they usually rise to positions of power and leadership. Don’t they just ... emerge as the people with the most influence in any group?

Yes, they certainly do. The idea, I think, is for a group to find a balance between honoring the leaderful contributions of these people—hey, we need them!—without abdicating our own responsibilities for contributing, or speaking up when we see things differently, and making sure we keep the power spread horizontally across our group.

And, to keep ourselves balanced in the opposite direction as well—to not trash or punish those who, because their skill, expertise, or good ideas, consistently influence our community’s projects and policies. Australians call this the “tall poppy syndrome”—if we see some poppies shooting up taller than others in a field, well then, mate, just lop ‘em off so they’re no higher than the others. I’ve seen, and maybe you have too, a tendency towards poppy-logging in some communities, especially those where everyone being equal is almost a religion. Ouch! I’d rather communities encourage each person to actualize their whole, full selves. “What’s the point of living in community,” asks River Jameson of Silver River Earth Village, “unless you’re all thriving?”

I’ve seen built-in “structural” ways in which some people in a community have more power than others, even if they don’t acknowledge it. Where one person, or several, own the land and others don’t. Where some people are offi-

cers or shareholders of a legal entity that controls the land or community projects, and others aren’t. (While I don’t believe there’s anything wrong with this, I think such arrangements work best when all members are well aware of these arrangements and know in advance and support the fact that those with ownership equity or legal responsibility may make the ultimate decisions about certain topics.)

I’ve also seen emotionally dysfunctional ways, whereby some people in a community have more power than others, and don’t know it. Where someone dominates the conversation or overrides others when speaking. Or “punishes” others with anger or intensity (or the implied threat of it) when they don’t agree with them. Or takes offense often, affecting the good-will of community meetings with their affronted, offended suffering.

This too can affect decision making, by so disempowering meetings that people leave or refuse to attend (thus relinquishing their power to influence others) or by draining everyone’s energies away from the decisions at hand.

What’s a solution? How can we—given the realities of any financial or legal inequalities in a community, or in our nature as flawed human beings—all experience power in community, and power in balance with one another?

So decision making (and its inherent relation to power in community) is what we are exploring in this issue of *Communities*.

How we can turn our individual and group power (to influence each other) into well-crafted decisions? Decisions that last, or that last until replaced with better ones? Decisions that include everyone? That feel good?

How can we take the urge to power that arises in each of us—that urge to influence, to personally express, to contribute, to actualize—and spread it through our community like a powerful river of group intent?

Our staff has scoured the communities movement for people with stories to tell, methods to suggest, cautions to heed, inspirations to encourage. We’re pleased to bring you veteran activist/philosophers such as Tom Atlee and Bo Lozoff, and experienced facilitators (some would refer to themselves as “process junkies”): Caroline Estes, Rob Sandelin, Laird Schaub, Betty Didcoct, C.T. Butler, Paul DeLapa, and Lysbeth Borie. And decision-making methods less well-known than voting and traditional consensus, such as agreement-seeking, multi-winner voting, sociocracy, and guidance-inspired consensus. And special treats like hand signals in meetings or consensus via the Internet.

You have a sumptuous field of choices before you. We hope you enjoy them and learn a lot.

And, more power to you.

Diana Leafe Christian is the editor of *Communities* magazine.

How to Make a Decision Without Making a Decision

BY TOM ATLEE

WHEN I FIRST SAW A DECISION being made without any decision making I was trapped with hundreds of my fellow community members in a fertilizer factory in western Colorado. The place stank like anything, and it was stifling hot. The towering sheet-metal roof was bellowing with thousands of gallons of water smashing down on it from an unstoppable herd of thunderclouds charging by thousands of feet above us. Jostling together in our sopping rain gear, we were not happy campers.

Four-hundred people from all walks of life were trying to live together in a tent city that moved 15 miles down the road every day or two. We joked that our lives were “in-tents.” We were the 1986 cross-country Great Peace March for Global Nuclear Disarmament and we were getting ready to fall apart. (We’d already fallen apart once when our sponsoring organization, Pro-Peace, went bankrupt and stranded all 1200 of us in the California desert. Eight-hundred of us went home. The 400 of us trapped in the fertilizer factory were the ones who’d finally gotten rolling again after two weeks holed up on a Barstow MX track back in March looking for new support and leadership. But that’s a whole ‘nother story!)

At any rate, here it was June already and we were being eaten away from the inside by a conflict that just wouldn’t stop: the familiar war between “maintaining an acceptable appearance for the rest of the world”



JOHN WINDLE

Great Peace Marchers in “country” made in Iowa, 1986.

and “expressing our authentic selves.” Nearly every community has its own version of this. Ours had been festering for almost two months before we landed in the fertilizer factory (we’d been setting up camp on its lawn when the storm rolled in). Our two polarized camps were: “We should march along in orderly rows to impress the media and maintain order in the face of traffic!” and “We should move at our own pace in a strung-out line so we can appreciate the natural world and chat with people in homes and schools we pass!” You can pretty much imagine who was on each side. And each side was ready to leave the march ... “if you people are going to wreck the march like that!”

But today we were momentarily drawn together by our common enemy, the rain. Taking advantage of our temporary communion, a few wise marchers set up a portable speaker system right there amidst the piles of odiferous chemicals, suggesting that anyone who wished to should take a two-minute turn speaking into the microphone about our conflict. So we did that, with great passion and messiness.

“How can we talk about peace and then force everyone to march like a military unit?!”

“How do you expect to get disarmament if the media can make fun of us as a raggle-taggle mob of hippies?!”

“How do we expect to get to Washington if we can’t get along?!”

“No one has a right to dictate to me how I walk!”

“Someone’s going to get hit by an upset motorist in some city if we don’t

get some discipline around here.”

“I get all my energy from the sky and the trees. If I’m too crowded with other people I lose touch with that.”

***The energy was
sprouting, bubbling up,
being born,
breaking through.***

“Hey, folks, we’re all in this together. We’re just like the Russians and the Americans; we have to learn to resolve our conflicts peacefully.”

It went on like that for two hours, with each person speaking only once. As it proceeded, I noticed that speakers were increasingly taking into

sense us all working our way into what some native peoples call “One Big Mind.” From the inside, I could feel that big Peace March Mind struggling to come to terms with all the elements of this difficult problem that it faced. It was doing just what my own mind does: “Well, let’s see, if I do this, then ... but no, that wouldn’t be so good. So I should try this, and then.... But I need to take into account this other thing ... etc.”

And then someone said: “Why don’t we all walk together in the cities and let people walk at their own pace in the country?” The next person said, “Well, I was going to talk about my experience as a media photographer, and the sorts of shots we like, and I was sort of thinking it would be good

to be all together with the flags up front, but then I realized this new suggestion seems best of all. High shots of the march strung out along a country road, plus talking to farmers and all that would be great—but you’d need to be massed together for a city shot to make sense.” And the next person said, “Well, we could just call it city mode and country mode and just do it.” And

then the rain stopped. After two hours of unremitting clatter, the silence was deafening. Without further comment, we streamed out into the dusk to finish putting up our tents.

As I stepped out into the flooded fields I suddenly realized that no decision had been made. No motion was made. No vote was taken. No one checked for consensus. Nothing was announced or recorded. The group just “knew” how we were going to



Marchers at Continental Divide.

account what previous people had said. Even though there was no back-and-forth, and no facilitator, the monologues began to sound more and more like dialogue. I was really blown away when one speaker after another began saying things that had only occurred to me moments before. I heard the ambivalences and nuances in my own head and heart being spoken and wrestled with in the public conversation I was part of. I started to



Marchers in
Nebraska.

behave as we marched down the streets and highways of America. And, in subsequent months, the overwhelming majority of us did just that.

Years later I read that Oren Lyons, faithkeeper of the Turtle Clan of the Onandaga Iroquois, said of his tribal council tradition: "We just keep talking until there's nothing left but the obvious truth." Once "the obvious truth" has been found, there is no need for a "decision." Such truth not only sets people free—it allows a group or community to self-organize.

The word "decision" derives from Latin words meaning "to cut away." It comes from the same root as "incision"—"to cut in." To de-cide is to cut away all the other alternatives but one. If you are considering options 1-6, a decision picks option 4 and cuts away options 1, 2, 3, 5 and 6 (to say nothing of 7-419!). When people "hammer out a compromise," there's even more cutting going on—a cutting and pasting of trade-offs. And "forging an agreement" requires a lot of heat and even more hammering.

In contrast, what happened in that Colorado fertilizer factory in the summer of 1986 was more like a group realization (a collective "a-ha!" experi-

ence) or a seed sprouting. No cutting, no hammering, nothing being pasted together or traded-off—just a set of conditions that helped the obvious truth emerge. Instead of slicing, pounding and constructing, the energy was more like emergence, sprouting, bubbling up, being born, breaking through.

***I started to sense
us all working
into what some
native peoples call
"One Big Mind."***

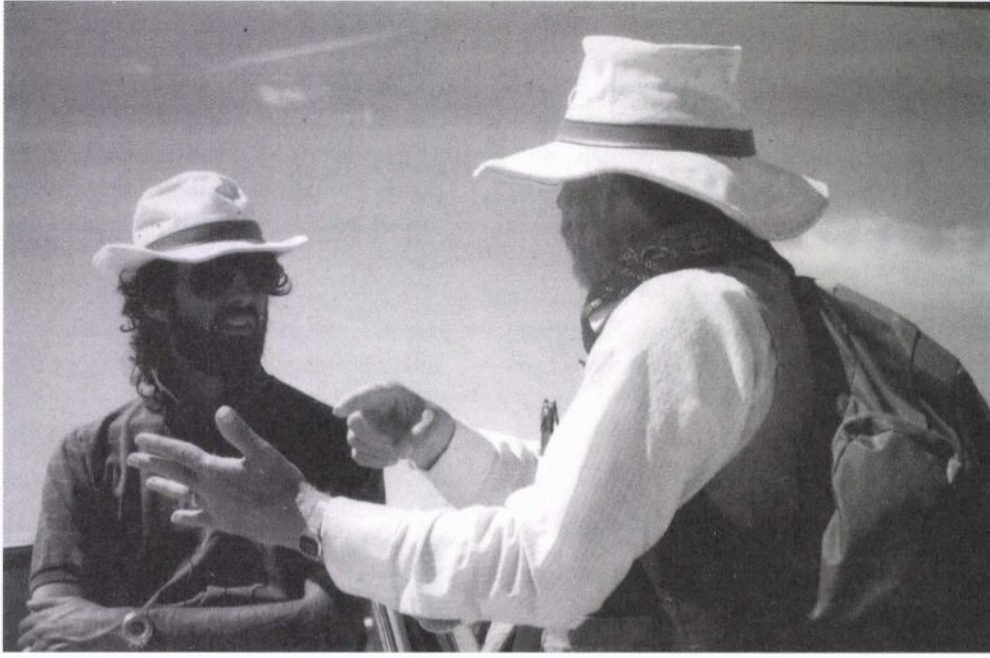
Of course the breakthrough came after a lot of turbulent hoo-hah about all the aspects of the issue, all the feelings, all the stories people were telling themselves and each other, all the information connected to this or that possibility. I've come to think of this as the necessary cultivation of the Earth in preparation for planting, or like making compost, or like midwifing a birth. This is "setting the conditions" needed to help the natural, obvious truth emerge—that bigger truth that takes into account all the

different pieces of the puzzle. The straggly, juicy work early on provides the nutrient base for the ultimate discovery of that big truth.

I believe at least five conditions are required for powerful "non-decision-making," for discovering big obvious truths: 1) Diversity, 2) Passion, 3) Motivation (Commitment/Responsibility/Necessity), 4) Deep Dialogue, 5) Enough time.

Diversity: Without diversity, there is no creative tension, and little chance of seeing a bigger picture. Any group has lots of diversity, but sometimes the right kind of diversity is needed. Consultant Meg Wheatley offers a great question that can be asked over and over: "Who else should be in this conversation?" But diversity needs help to avoid bogging down in argumentation so it can discover its true resource-fullness.

Passion: Without passion there is no energy to drive discovery. Too often we are urged to be "dispassionate" because passion is so often associated with dogmatism and inflexibility. But passion is where the creative juice is, where the caring is, where everything that is truly important lives. It just needs help to break out of fixed ideas



Powerful “non-decision-making” requires diversity, passion, motivation, deep dialogue, and enough time.

and preconceptions long enough to become aligned with the passions of other people. This generates the power needed to realize shared visions and solutions.

Motivation: Without commitment (or responsibility or necessity) there is nothing to keep people together in the conversation long enough to make it through the inevitable dissonance one encounters enroute to the shared excitement of creative discovery. The emergence of true breakthroughs is seldom neat and pretty. All creativity is messy, some is fun. But if we’re going to get through the messy parts, we have to hang in there. (This is a secret probably every communitarian reluctantly knows)

Deep Dialogue: By “deep dialogue” I mean exploration towards shared understanding, connection and possibility. Deep dialogue isn’t a method. It is a quality of inquiry and conversation characterized by interest, listening and respect. It can be achieved by agreement, by group culture, by practice, by accident or by facilitation. In the Peace March example above, we had already developed a group culture

of “talking stick circles”—the Native American practice of passing an object around a circle, with each person who holds it “speaking the truth from their heart.” We’d practiced doing circles for several months, and that spirit helped generate the deep dialogue that resulted when our “talking stick” was a microphone.

Enough Time: How much time is “enough time”? Sometimes it is ten minutes. Sometimes it is ten months. Often “enough time” includes leaving an issue to lie fallow—letting it be gnawed at by people between meetings, letting perspectives and situations shift incrementally—before coming back to it again. Enough is enough. And those communities that acknowledge the power of ripeness and the essential continuity of community conversation—and therefore help their shared understandings develop “in their own good time”—reap the richest harvests.

Just as good cultivation or midwifery don’t guarantee a great harvest or a healthy baby, good group process doesn’t guarantee the emergence of Greater Truth. However, we’ll only be

able to evoke shared insight with any frequency if we use good processes well.

Choice-creating process was created by consultant Jim Rough of Port Townsend, Washington (see www.tobe.net for information and training opportunities). It is the centerpiece of a practice called “dynamic facilitation”* which encourages people and ideas to change as a conversation unfolds. Anything done to help such transformational conversation happen qualifies as dynamic facilitation. Jim contrasts “transformational talking” with “transactional talking” or discussion, in which unchanging people bat solid ideas back and forth like a ping-pong ball. “Discussion” derives from the same root as “percussion”—a root meaning “to hit.” In contrast, transformational talking is more flowing and exploratory.

The choice-creating process works best where a group faces a thorny shared problem they all care about. The dynamic facilitator writes what they say up on four chart pad pages, labeled:

- Problems (or Situation Statements, or Inquiries)
- Solutions (or Possibilities or Options)
- Concerns
- Data.

*Not to be confused with Paul DeLapa and Betty Didcoct’s Dynamic Consensus process. See pg.44

Most processes try to get clear on the problem first, then discuss it, than figure out a solution, etc. Choice-creating process just plucks these things like fruit as they arise from the ongoing conversation, with no effort to organize them.

The group usually starts with some problem statement which evokes people's suggestions about how to handle it. Most familiar processes treat suggestions as proposals. But in choice-creating each suggestion is just written on the Solutions page. Furthermore, at any point someone may say, "Wait a minute. We're barking up the wrong tree. There's actually a much deeper (or broader or other) problem here...." The facilitator writes their new problem statement on the Problems page and—if the group is interested in it—follows their energy. There's no effort to hold the conversation to any linear train of thought.

If someone says, "That's absurd! That would distract us from our basic mission here!" the facilitator writes that down on the Concerns sheet, nipping conflict in the bud while noting each person's contribution. If someone says, "We're forgetting there are thousands of people in this town who are not part of our community who are also interested in this issue," that's just written on the Data sheet.

The facilitator lets people know they've been heard and keeps the conversation moving forward. He or she doesn't revise what's already written, or check whether a piece of Data is factual or not, or try to get the group to pick the best solution from those listed. Whatever is said is logged on the big sheets in front of the room.

Sometimes the facilitator will dig a bit, trying to put some meat on the bones. For example, if someone says, "The real problem is X!" the facilitator might write that down and say, "You're saying that the real problem is X. Is that right? OK. So let's say you're king of the world. How would you

handle X?"—and writes down the answer on the Solutions page. "And you over there. What do you think?"

In the early stages of the choice-creating process people tend to share things they already knew when they walked in: their sense of the problem, their ideas about what should be done, their concerns and information. This is exactly what should happen, and the facilitator helps it along. All

**Good group process
doesn't guarantee
the emergence
of Greater Truth.**

those pieces of the puzzle need to be out in the group space. And participants need to feel heard, to free their attention to hear and creatively interact with each other.

A well-facilitated choice-creating process will usually evoke breakthroughs if: a) all the participants are really interested in solving the problem or breaking through on the topic; b) the group of participants is consistent over time; and c) there is enough time available, preferably several meetings, each several hours long.

Choice-creating works best with a facilitator trained in the dynamic facilitation process. Smart organizations and communities will share facilitators so that every member of each group can participate in that group's meetings and the facilitator has no special interest in the outcome.

Other useful Big Truth processes include:

- Listening Circles. An object is passed around the circle of participants. Each consecutive holder of the object speaks from their heart. No facilitator is needed.

- Fishbowl. In a group conflict, members of Side A converse in a central circle while others watch. Then Side B converses while others watch. Then other sides or no-sides take their turns. The whole sequence repeats two or more times. Facilitation is often useful.

- World Cafe. The group breaks up into subgroups who talk for a while and then mix randomly into other subgroups and continue talking, ultimately returning to their original subgroup. Someone needs to ring a bell to signal shifts.

- Open Space Conferences. Participants who are passionate about a given topic create their own sessions on aspects of that topic. Active facilitation is needed at the beginning.

- Consensus Process. Explore a topic and options until all agree on the best approach. Usually consensus is a decision-making process, but sometimes the emergent solution is so clear that "deciding" is a formality. Facilitation is advisable.

These and other powerful processes are described more fully on my website www.co-intelligence.org.

Tom Atlee has evolved from a Quaker-oriented peace activist into an explorer of collaboration and holistic social change for the new millennium. His many articles on holistic politics, philosophy and social transformation can be found in a number of alternative journals and on his website. He is president of The Co-Intelligence Institute in Eugene, Oregon. cii@igc.org; www.co-intelligence.org.

Fairness and Fun with Multi-Winner Voting

BY DIANA LEAFE CHRISTIAN

“NOT THE BUDGET MEETING AGAIN,” the person next to you groans. “I hate budget meetings. They’re endless. We never agree on anything!”

Do you, like many communitarians, also cringe when it’s time to decide the community’s annual budget? The one where you figure out what projects you have to fund and which ones you want to fund. Do you buy new play equipment for the kids, finally fix the roof, or build the workshop everyone’s clamoring for? Can you afford two out of the three projects? Which two?

Instead of girding yourself for the inevitable struggle—the heartfelt pleas, the heated exchanges, the back room deals (“you support my proposal and I’ll support yours”)—consider applying “multi-winner voting” to your budget.

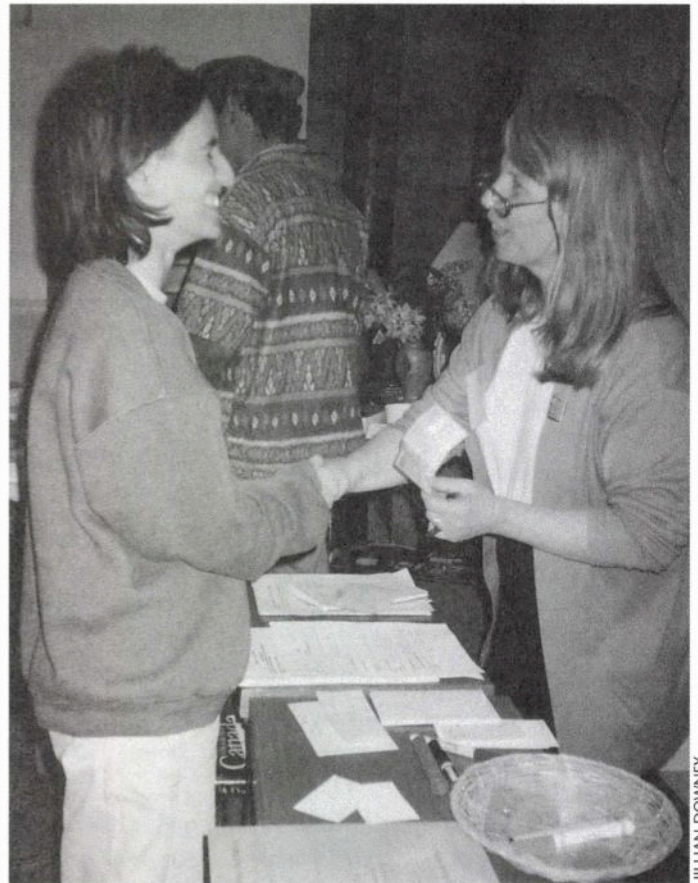
According to Rob Loring, former member of Twin Oaks community in Virginia and Web master/librarian for the Center for Voting and Democracy, some groups have adapted the multi-winner voting method to “proportional spending” for their budget allocation.

Most of us in North America have never heard of multi-winner voting, notes Rob. In multi-winner voting each large political group or political party gets its fair share of elected representatives, based on people either allocating their several votes among the slate of candidates, or ranking their favorite candidates on the ballot, sometimes called the “parliamentary system.”

“Europeans use multi-winner voting and that’s why minority interests or the traditionally less powerful get representation in government,” says Rob. “Countries that use this method elect three times as many women as we do.”

Rob notes that according to NOW, the National Organization for Women, more women in a legislature leads to more funding for childcare, education, health care, and other social spending. In 1993, after New Zealand changed to multi-winner voting, they elected more women, Greens, libertarians, and Maoris. In fact, their Green Party’s co-leader on a recent visit observed, “The representation of women in the U.S. is an international disgrace.”

Rob says that countries that use multi-winner voting can also use it to distribute money for public good: each voter



JILLIAN DOWNEY

allocates his or her several votes among, or ranks, the projects proposed for government funding. This way several proposals get funded, including those advocated by minority interests (those not wealthy or powerful) in proportion to what the people want. Sometimes this form of voting is called “proportional funding.”

In the 1970s Twin Oaks members developed the Tradeoff Game to help members allocate money and labor for the coming year without having long meetings.

According to Twin Oaks cofounder Kat Kinkadee, every year each community member who plays the Tradeoff Game fills out a long, complicated survey which lists all the relevant figures that would affect economic decisions for the forthcoming year. The survey sets out how much money and labor each area (hammock business, tofu business, garden, kitchen, etc.) used for the last two years, and how much the managers of each of these areas are asking for the upcoming year. The task of each player, Kat says, is to evaluate the requests and express individual opinions in numeric form.

“For instance, on my Game I see that Rollie, the Building Maintenance Manager, is asking for a substantial increase in both money and labor over last year’s budgets,” Kat writes in *Is It Utopia Yet?* (Twin Oaks, 1994). “I note that Rollie overspent both money and labor the previous

year. I think about what he has accomplished since he took the managership, and I feel pleased at his commitment and the progress I have seen. I think about the future of maintenance; there is still a backlog of projects that need to be attended to. I am inclined to vote Rollie a big increase, because I think the Community will get its money's and labor's worth. So I express my approval and encouragement by writing on the Game form the same money figure that Rollie requested. Then I go on to the next area and do the same kind of thinking."

"This is all pleasant enough, but there's a catch, and therein lies the essence of the Game: The bottom line is fixed. There is just so much money and labor to go around. If I treat every area manger as generously as I do Rollie, I won't have enough. My Game has to balance to that bottom line. Everybody who does a Tradeoff Game works with a pencil and eraser, and a conscientious player will probably devote at least four hours to the task."

When all members' Game forms are analyzed and (usually) averaged, says Kat, Twin Oaks' planners have "a very good guide" for making up the next year's economic plan.

Years later Rob and Keenan Dakota came up with a more developed proportional spending method for Twin Oaks' annual OTRA fund (One-Time Budget Allocations). This method empowers more members than a strictly voting or consensus decision-making method would allow, as it unites the requirements to collect a quota of supporters for proposed expenditures (the new swimming pond? a pizza oven?) to the budgeted amount of money.

Recently I learned about another use of multi-winner voting for budget allocation, this time from Rob Sandelin, cofounder of Northwest Intentional Communities Association and a member of Sharingwood Cohousing in Snohomish, Washington. Rather than have

a long and arduous budget meeting as they had in the past, Sharingwood members heard about how another group had had a "budget party" to decide what projects to fund. It sound like so much fun they decided to do the same.

On the budget party evening, Sharingwood members dressed up in fancy clothes and met for wine and cheese by candlelight in the Common House.

***"The rock wall is
funded!" its
sponsors announced,
to cheers
and whistles.***

Each member received an envelope of Monopoly play money. The amount of play money represented each person's real power in the decision making; that is, it was a fraction of the same amount as the discretionary budget fund for the next year divided by the number of "voting" community members who attended the budget party. (For example, if the whole amount equaled \$30,000 and 30 full adult members planned to attend, the fund was divided by 30 and each person each got \$1,000 in play money to spend.)

At their leisure, the party guests perused the well-designed displays of each funding proposal set up at intervals around the room. A "Children's Play Equipment" display, for example, might include some tots in a sandbox with moms standing nearby to explain why they wanted new play equipment and how it would benefit the community. A "New Retaining Wall" display, for example, might have a short sample rock wall and a "barker," a member-advocate of the project dressed up in top hat and tails. "Laaadies and Gentlemen!" he would call out to the

crowd. "Step right up and feel this sturdy wall. You too, can have a rock wall like this protecting the embankment by the parking lot. A place to sit! A place of beauty! A place to prevent erosion runoff!"

As in Twin Oak's Tradeoff Game, each party guest "spent" various amounts of their play money on the proposed projects they liked the best—as convinced by the displays and persuasive logic of each project's sponsors. As soon as a project got enough money its sponsors would ring a loud bell and announce it—"The rock wall is funded!"—to everyone's cheers and whistles. Since more money was proposed for projects than Sharingwood actually had, that meant some projects didn't get enough. No problem. By the end of the evening the least funded projects pooled their money and contributed it to the almost-funded projects. This way the projects that most of the people wanted got funded. As for those that didn't get funded, well, there's always next year.

The wine and cheese budget party was a huge success, says Rob.

Rob Loring and the Center for Voting and Democracy:

<http://members.aol.com/votingsite>.

Rob Sandelin and Northwest Intentional Communities Network:

www.ic.org/nica.

Diana Leafe Christian is editor of Communities magazine.



When People Miss Meetings

BY ROB SANDELIN

THE EIDERDOWN COMMUNITY was meeting to decide on a proposal to expand their food co-op business. After three meetings of discussion and re-framing the proposal, the proposal seemed to be well-crafted and represented a good amalgamation of the ideas and concerns brought up at the previous meetings. Sue, the group's facilitator, thought the actual agreement to the final proposal would be easy since so much discussion and word-crafting had happened prior to this meeting. Unfortunately, six community members who had not been present for the previous discussions began bringing up most of the same issues that the rest of the group had already processed and resolved. The people who had gone over all of this before became increasingly impatient. The tension in the room became so high that the "vibes watcher" called a time-out in order to process people's feelings. Then the floodgates opened and a rush of resentment and frustration came pouring out at the people who had missed the previous meetings. The meeting agenda was scrapped, and the rest of the meeting was spent processing the process. Much later, after everyone had gone home, Sue wearily wondered why in the world she ever agreed to facilitate this group.

Participation is a crucial element of the decision-making process, and yet it is not always possible for everyone to attend every meeting. In smaller communities it might be possible to reschedule to ensure attendance, but even coordinating the schedules of as few as four busy adults can be a complex task, and in a larger community of 30 or more it is almost an impossibility to expect everyone in one place at the same time.

So since making community decisions requires participation, what do you do when people cannot or will not come to meetings?

Some communities have tried these solutions:

Take time to evaluate, as a group, why people are not attending.

The reasons why various people miss meetings may vary, but there could be some trends worth looking into. Perhaps the meeting time conflicts with people's other needs, or the meeting process itself may not be working for some people. Sometimes the meeting content is just not interesting. When you inquire why people don't attend meetings, I recommend being soft and gentle, not accusatory. Your goal is to encourage people to be part of the process, not add a layer of guilt, so use open-ended questions such as, "How can we get the expertise and experiences we need to make good discussions and decisions?" Sometimes people don't attend meetings because they feel alienated and disconnected, and this is important to know. Outreach to these folks is a delicate but important task of a caring community.

Ask people to be explicit about why they will not be attending a meeting. Sometimes people do not show up to a meeting on purpose. They have no experience in the subject, feel they have nothing to offer, and want to spend their time doing something else. For example, a recent cohousing group had to make a decision about a water retention pond. Several people did not attend this meeting because they did not know, or care, anything about the topic. Some communities ask members that opt out of a decision to agree in advance

to whatever decision the group makes.

Since the discussion phase of a proposal is the heart of most decision-making processes, and such discussions are key to understanding other participants' attitudes, ideas, and issues, missing such discussions seriously handicaps a person's ability to fully understand the proposal. Some groups modify decision-making participation for who people miss the discussion on a topic, allowing that person's input only with special considerations such as not allowing him or her to modify the proposal.

Sign up to be a meeting buddy. If you track who is not present at your meetings you can ask for volunteer meeting buddies to fill that person in about what happened while they were away. Some communities ask that those who know they will not be present take responsibility for this proactively and arrange in advance for someone to be their meeting buddy. A meeting buddy ideally just informs the other person about what happened at the meeting. Of course, this allows for the possibility that the buddy will describe meeting events through their own biases. It is helpful if the buddy brings a copy of the meeting minutes along as well to provide another perspective.

Outreach ahead of time to key players. In any group there are subsets of expertise. For example, if an upcoming meeting will focus on community repair issues, it is wise to contact those community members who have mechanical interest and expertise ahead of time, to ensure they will attend and offer their expertise to the group. Conversely, if you find yourself in a meeting about a subject where significant community experts are missing, you should note this and either postpone the topic to a later meeting or perhaps subject any decision to a review and input of the folks with expertise. Well-meaning but ignorant decisions can end up becoming surprisingly expensive.

Create alternative discussion and briefing formats. Sometimes it is useful to examine outside the meeting context the subject and processes of the meeting.

There are many ways to do this where people do not have to be in the same place at the same time. You can use a paper survey to capture opinions and ideas, or a posted notice in a central location with space for input to be collected. Electronic means such as email exchanges, Web site areas for comments, and telephone voice mail all allow input from people without their necessarily having to be at a meeting. These long-distance techniques are most effectively employed by forming groups that don't live together yet, but even folks that all live in the same place can find uses for some of them. The goal is to draw the experiences and wisdom from your group, whatever it takes.

Troubleshoot the problems that lack of attendance creates. The problem at Eiderdown, where people missed the original discussion then brought up the same points at a later meeting (to the annoyance of everyone else) is a classic problem. If your group never calls attention to it, you may get to repeat this experience several times. It is always a good idea to evaluate your meetings, catch the glitches, and remedy them so you don't continue to fall into this pattern. Make a point of capturing the problems caused by lack of participation and bring them up so everyone can see them. If non-participation is a real community problem, everyone should have an understanding of how it affects the group's well being.

Getting everybody in a community to the same place at the same time is a huge challenge. Creating ways to reach out and include everyone's voice, even those not physically present, is a good use of community energy, and your decisions and processes will be better for it.

Rob Sandelin is co-founder of the Northwest Intentional Communities Association (NICA) and host of a Web site on forming new communities and process issues: www.infoteam.com/nonprofit/nical/resource.html. He is author of "A Facilitator's Guide to Making Consensus Work," soon to be published on the Internet. He lives at Sharingwood Cohousing in Snohomish, Washington.

Things you (as a participant) can do to improve meetings

BY PAUL DELAPA & BETTY DIDCOCT

1. Listen outwardly first and inwardly second. We have two ears and one mouth, use them proportionately as given. "Seek first to understand, then seek to be understood." —Stephen Covey, *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*
2. Welcome the concerns of others. Let go of any fear you may have of others' voicing reservations or skepticism. Learn to see concerns as insights, passageways to new solutions that serve the best interests of the whole group.
3. Practice non-attachment to your ideas. Rather than defending them, release your ideas and let the group take ownership. Imagine yourself taking a pair of scissors and cutting the strings of emotional attachment.
4. Listen for and be willing to examine the assumptions underneath your choices, actions, thoughts, and judgments. Assumptions left uncovered often lead to unnecessary divisions between people.
5. Leave your ego at the door. Come prepared to serve others and the will of the group. Don't take things personally. Most likely you are not the target.
6. Be willing to admit your blind spots and apologize when appropriate. If you are speaking your truth, it's likely that you will upset or unwittingly offend someone at one time or another.
7. Participate without blame, negativity, or undermining of the group's efforts. Recognize that every time you speak, you have the power to constructively (or negatively) influence the meeting.
8. Give up wanting to control or have things turn out any particular way. Healthy groups are dynamic, by their very nature they go in and out of what may look like "chaos" on the way to creative solutions.
9. Be accepting of people who are different or who hold different viewpoints and opinions. Most issues in meetings are not black and white, and can benefit from having different perspectives brought to bear on them.
10. Take an interest in differences. Differences hold opportunities to gain insight and clarity about the issue and effective solutions. Rather than saying, "That won't work," consider asking, "Can you give me some idea about how you see that working?"
11. Treat others as you want to be treated, and expect nothing in return. Kindness doesn't need to be earned, and it's most genuine when offered freely.
12. Be willing to deal with what's invisible or hidden. Are there any unspoken assumptions or personal agendas? How can you name what you're sensing without blame or judgment?
13. Stay open to learning from the most unexpected sources. Inspired meetings regularly take surprising turns. Each development holds promise for new discoveries and understandings.
14. Develop an attitude of giving rather than receiving, especially in the area of acknowledgment. All of us need to be seen and acknowledged. Practice extending the gift of appreciation during and around meetings.
15. When you notice you're repeating yourself, stop. Take a moment to check to see if people have already understood your point, perhaps by asking if anyone is not clear.
16. Let go of petty hurts. Move beyond small bumps and pains and stay poised for making responsive rather than reactive contributions.
17. Accept responsibility for your own emotions. Your personal and emotional maturity plays a critical role in meetings. You are the only one who can manage you.
18. Be open to sharing joys, pains, emotions, passions, and love, all of which are potentially present in every meeting.
19. Celebrate your connections with others. All meetings are ultimately about connecting people, ideas, and actions. Have fun. Interject humor whenever possible and appropriate.
20. Be open to the mystery of group meetings and expect miracles!

*Excerpted with permission from the upcoming booklet series, **The Consensus Decision Making Process**, by Betty Didcoct and Paul DeLapa.*

Betty and Paul are both organizational development consultants, meeting facilitators, and consensus teachers. Betty and Paul work nationally and internationally, in collaboration as well as independently. To get on their mailing list for their consensus booklet series, please email ties@ic.org, or write TIES, PO Box 110, Cataldo, ID 83810.

Hand Signals in Group Process

BY ROSA ZUBIZARRETA WITH MICHAEL BRIDGE

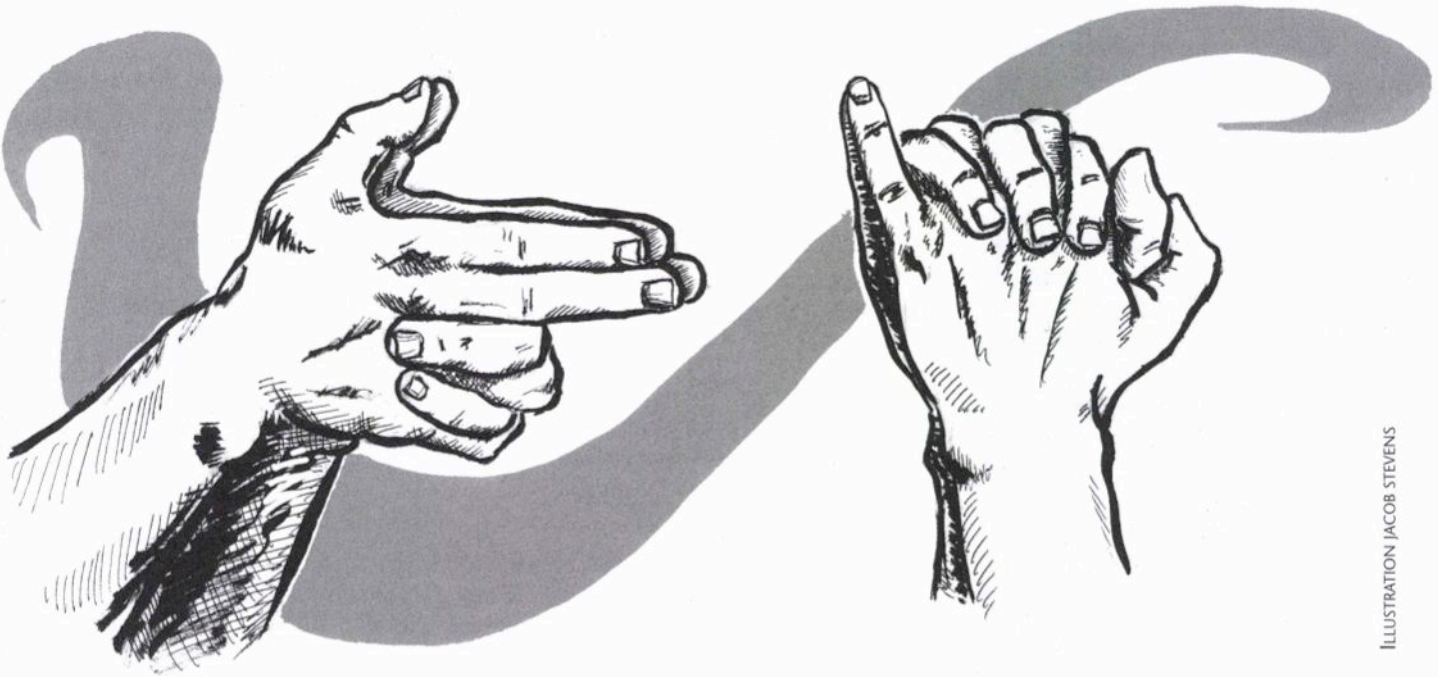


ILLUSTRATION JACOB STEVENS

*The gestures
offer an
alternative to
unconscious
patterns
of domination.*

WHEN MICHAEL AND I FIRST MET, we discovered that we shared a passion for exploring how the use of language affects our consciousness, not just as individuals but also in terms of group dynamics. For the last three years, we have been exploring a simple method of hand gestures as a way of deepening and transforming communication. While the gestures are very simple, their use implies a profound shift in the habitual attitudes toward speech that we carry as members of our “civilized” culture. We have found that the gestures offer an alternative to the unconscious patterns of domination and alienation that tend to permeate verbal communication. They serve to strengthen our inner voice, and help us regain a sense of the sacred in our communication with one another.

In one-on-one or small group settings, the gestures can serve to alter the pace and rhythm of conversation, thus equalizing power between those who are more verbal and those who are less so. Instead of focusing on what any one person has to say, our attention expands to include the quality of what is taking place between us.

In larger groups, the gestures can be used as a simple feedback system for the speakers when incorporated as an enhancement to the existing conversational arrangement. Or, more radically, they can be used as part of a movement towards "group mind"—that state of synergy where our individual creativity and our collective process are experienced as profoundly interdependent.

Here are some of the gestures, to get you started in your own explorations. Note: As with any living language, there can be multiple shades of meaning, depending upon the context.

Offering Presence. Palms together, in the traditional gesture of prayer. Can be used as a nonverbal greeting, in order to frame our verbal communication within a larger context. This gesture is also used to convey the message that "I have clear attention to offer," especially in response to the next gesture, "The Stirring."

The Stirring. Hands clasped, two index fingers pointing upward. Can be used to signal that "there is something stirring within." We tend to view this sign as a way of acknowledging and honoring what is taking place inside one's self, rather than as a "request" for "permission" to speak. (The latter perspective tends to reinforce the paradigm where the listener is "giving away" their power.) At the same time, a speaker who observes someone else making this sign may choose to respond by offering his or her attention, either immediately or at the next opportune moment.

Retreat. Hands fully clasped. Used to signal that one's attention is with-

drawing or becoming unavailable. The speaker may continue to speak if he or she so wishes, but the listener shall not be held accountable for hearing any of it.

Pause. Hands clasped, pinkies pointing upwards. Used to request a pause, or to signal a brief interruption. For example, it can be used by a listener as a substitute for: "I'm really interested in what you are saying right now, and I need to take a break to use the bathroom." It could also mean that I am requesting a pause to process, and/or inviting you to take a breath.

Alternatively, this sign might be used by a speaker to signal, "I see that something is stirring within you, and I am just about to reach the end of my train of thought."

Requesting Another's Voice. Hands clasped, index and middle fingers of both hands pointing towards another person. Can be used as a substitute for: "It seems John hasn't said anything in a while. I wonder if he has something that he'd like to share." Or, if we see someone making the "Retreat" sign, we might use the "Requesting" sign to inquire about what is happening with them.

As stated earlier, signs can have various meanings, depending on the context. For example, if we are feeling overwhelmed by someone's words, we might make the "Retreat" sign, followed by a "Requesting" sign pointed towards the speaker. In that case, the "Requesting" sign becomes an invitation to move to a deeper level of communication, somewhat equivalent to, "I am having a hard time following all of your words, and am wondering what the feelings are underneath or what it is you are really wanting."

For us, the use of the signs is part of a larger process that we call the "Ritual of Sacred Encounter." In a universe of infinite possibility, every encounter can be regarded as a miraculous event, and the use of the signs helps re-awaken our sense of wonder.

As we develop a greater balance between words and Silence, we open to a greater sense of community with each other and with Nature. After all, our community is the fruit of our collective conversation. If we conceive of Nature as the conversation between everything and everything else, then the re-design of human conversation becomes crucial for regaining a sense of connection to the whole.

Since our work places a great deal of emphasis on the balance between words and silence, it is important to acknowledge that not all "silence" is healthy. The "Silence" we mean is the restful kind, the one that invites us to hear the quieter voices, that allows us to hear the trees grow and the birds sing. We do not mean the kind of silence that is the result of intimidation and oppression. (To distinguish between the two, we now call the second kind of silence "dysquiet," thanks to the inspiration of our friend Tom Atlee.)

In closing, we'd like to emphasize that we welcome your collaboration in this shared endeavor, and we'd love to hear any stories about your experiences using these or your own signs to deepen communication.

Michael Bridge works as a caregiver in a group home in Santa Rosa, California. He is the author of Pillow Mountain: Notes on Inhabiting a Living Planet (Times Change Press, 1991).

Rosa Zubizarreta is a practitioner and ongoing student of facilitation, group learning, and collaborative problem-solving. She and Michael are co-authors of Revelations from the God of the Raindrop, the Leaf, and the Slithering Snail (Raindrop Press, P.O. Box 5801, Santa Rosa, CA 95402).



*Sociocracy
at EcoVillage
of Loudoun
County*

“Going
Dutch”

BY
TENA MEADOWS O’REAR
WITH JOHN BUCK

THREE SUMMERS AGO our Virginia cohousing community, EcoVillage of Loudoun County (EVLC) was in crisis. Many things were going well. We had found and bought land—180 acres of beautiful, rolling hills in the Virginia countryside, about an hour by train from Washington, DC. Our vision seemed clear: build a cohousing community that would respect the Earth and its ecological requirements. Up to 25 people were participating in meetings. So, why a crisis?

Above: EVLC’s goal is to build a rural cohousing community that respects the Earth and its ecological requirements.

We couldn't seem to make decisions. We were trying to use a consensus decision-making process that sought unanimous, proactive agreement, and it was a nightmare. Even simple issues such as when and where to have the next potluck would take 30 minutes to decide, and harder issues would go on forever. We ended our marathon meetings having run at least an hour over schedule, having covered half the agenda (not necessarily the most important half), wondering why we ever wanted to live in a community in the first place, and thinking, "Please God, don't let her be my neighbor!"

Fortunately, we heard about John Buck, who lived nearby and was writing his master's thesis about the use of an innovative decision-making process in a number of Dutch businesses. We sought his consultation.

"When I started helping EcoVillage with its decision-making, there was a lot

of whispered suspicion," John remembers. "People seemed exhausted because they were spending every weekend meeting about every detail. No one wanted to delegate decisions to others. One person did a lot of research on his

***We were trying
to use a process
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agreement. It was
a nightmare.***

own and felt hurt when the others didn't accept his recommendations. I remember his muttering about suing to recover the cost of his time."

John suggested that EcoVillage adopt "sociocracy," a decision-making method developed over the past 25 years in the Netherlands. "The sociocratic approach

helped us immensely," says Grady O'Rear, the development manager of EVLC. "Now our meetings are much more harmonious and we cover an enormous amount of material in a timely way. I believe we couldn't have made it this far—beginning house construction—without sociocracy."

"In sociocracy decisions are made by 'consent' instead of by the unanimous-agreement model of consensus we used," Grady continues. "Consent means that we look for any argued objections to proposed decisions; we don't look for unanimity. Consensus, at least the way we were using it, was hard because we asked everyone to thoroughly understand each decision and agree with it. That took a lot of time, and smart, articulate people dominated our meetings."

To illustrate the difference between unanimous agreement and consent, we might suppose that Tara, Robert, Julie,

Some EcoVillagers believe they never would have made it to house construction without sociocracy. Groundbreaking, 1999.





EcoVillagers plan to reforest over 70% of this former farmland.

Richard and I were on the property committee and had to decide what color to paint the barn. If we felt strongly about the importance of the decision, we might begin with two or three color charts for exterior paints. We could spend hours hearing Tara's advocacy for her favorite, and Robert's advocacy for his favorite, and my pleas for my favorite, etc. However with the consent method, each person would be asked to identify those colors that were outside of his/her range of tolerance and why. Richard might say, "I don't want maroon because I think it's too somber," and Julie might say, "Well I don't want any light pastels because they quickly get dirty looking," etc. That which is outside of one's range of tolerance and the reasons why constitutes an objection. Then the group might say, "Well Tara, you've heard what we don't want. We can live with any of the choic-

es that fall within those parameters. You make the decision because you're good at decorating." So what color would be selected? Tara would select some upbeat color that weathers well but probably isn't Richard's favorite, or my favorite, or Julie's favorite. We would end up with a color that we could all live with. These lessons of this simple example can be applied to complex decisions with very weighty consequences.

Consent decision-making encourages a sensible organizational structure because it's easier to delegate to each other. EcoVillagers are equal in our decision-making. The process respects and includes the interests of the minority as well as the majority, and offers built-in efficiency.

Leni Nazare, chairperson of the Marketing Committee, adds, "I used to think that any tension in a meeting was bad. We still have tension in our meet-

ings, but it is the kind of tension that generates creative thinking. Now I think that tension in the safety of a sociocratic circle meeting is a good thing."

"I was really skeptical when John started talking about this weird-sounding system," recalls Francy Williams, one of the original members, "but hearing about its origins opened my ears." Originally envisioned in 1945 by Dutch educator and pacifist Kees Boeke as a way to adapt Quaker egalitarian principles to secular organizations, sociocracy allows participants in business or nonprofit organizations to give and receive effective leadership while remaining peers.

Gerard Endenburg, a pupil of Kees Boeke, developed Boeke's vision into a body of well-tested procedures and practical principles. After World War II, Gerard Endenburg's parents (socialists before the war), set up their own suc-

Caroline Estes on Consensus

by Diana Leafe Christian

We asked Caroline Estes, “the grandmother of consensus facilitators,” who has used the process for nearly 50 years and trained many facilitators in North America, what people using the consensus process should look out for.

“Most groups aren’t trained in how to use it,” she said. “When I get called in to help, it’s usually because they don’t understand the process. Consensus really has a whole structure to it. When groups don’t know this they can get themselves into hot water and become upset and discouraged. They end up deciding it’s not worth it.”

The main roadblock, Caroline said, is with individual personal behaviors or expectations: for example, when people are used to having their own way, or believe they know better than others. While this can occur in every decision-making process, it’s more obvious with consensus, she says, because everyone in the group has so much responsibility.

Caroline also pointed out that consensus isn’t the only way that you can have good meetings—you can use agreement-seeking methods, for example (see p.46)—“but if you’re going to use consensus,” she says, “it’s important that you use it correctly.”

“I’ve worked with a number of cohousing groups who’ve had trouble. I don’t usually get called in until after they’ve moved in, and are exhausted from using consensus. But once they understand the basic principles, and the structure, they’re always amazed that it’s so much easier than they thought. Once they see that it works, they no longer find themselves at their wits’ end.”

Typical misunderstandings in cohousing communities include the idea that everyone has to decide everything, rather than giving a committee authority to go off and make decisions, and the fact that most don’t understand that consensus is more of a philosophy that includes everyone’s perspective than simply a rote decision-making practice.

“We’ve all recognized if we step back one space we see that we individually don’t have all of the truth, but collectively we can have more of it than we do individually,” Caroline advises. “However, we have to trust in this, and have some faith in it. It’s very much a synergy. If we don’t trust in group wisdom, or if we won’t at least let it try to let group wisdom work, then we’ll never see it. We’ll always think we know better.”

Caroline Estes, a co-founder of Alpha Farm community in Oregon, has facilitated and taught consensus for decades, and taught many consensus facilitators in the communities movement. She is co-author with Lysbeth Borie of the forthcoming book, Everyone Has a Piece of the Truth. For information about the book or Caroline’s workshops through Alpha Institute, contact alinst@pioneer.net.

Diana Leafe Christian is editor of Communities magazine.

successful company in the Netherlands to try out these ideas. Gerard trained as an electrical engineer, gained expertise in cybernetics (the then-new science of steering and control), and worked briefly for Phillips Electronics, designing a flat speaker that is still used in small electronic equipment today. Then his father challenged him to manage a small, failing business he had purchased. In less than a year Gerard had made the business profitable and merged it with his father’s company. In the late 1960s Gerard’s father retired and Gerard became manager of Endenburg Electrotechniek, with the mandate to run it both as a profitable business and as a real-time laboratory for testing innovative management ideas. The sociocratic decision-making process is a product of that “laboratory.”

Today, Gerard has retired from day-to-day management of Endenburg Electrotechniek to devote his time to running the Sociocratisch Centrum, a consulting business that assists a wide variety of companies and organizations, including European cohousing communities, to implement sociocratic structures. Gerard is member of The Netherlands’ Science Advisory Board. He is also a professor at the Economic Science and Industry Department of the University of Maastricht in the Netherlands, where sociocracy is part of the curriculum and academic practice.

John introduced sociocracy to the group developing EVLC by holding a series of three evening seminars. First the group learned that sociocracy is a system of governing that vests the power to rule in the socios, a Greek term meaning in the people who regularly interact with one another and have a common aim. Each member of the socios has a voice that cannot be ignored in managing the organization. In contrast, majority-rule voting vests the power to rule in the demos, that is, a collection of people who may or may not know each other and have only



So far EVLC has planted 11,000 trees.

general aims in common—such as governing a state or other geographic area. The majority of the demos can ignore the minority of the demos as they make their decisions. The majority and the minority aren't equivalent. So, ensuring minority rights is a constant problem for majority-rule voting. With sociocracy, the basis of decision-making is consent, which uses the principle of no objection, whereas with majority-rule voting the basis of decision-making is the principle of numeric majority.

The sociocratic process has four ground rules. Here is how we apply them in our community.

1. Consent: The principle of consent governs the decision-making process. This means that a policy decision can only be made if nobody raises a reasoned and paramount objection against it.

2. Circles: The organization consists of circles or semi-autonomous groups. Each circle (committees in EVLC) has its own aim and performs the three functions of directing, operating, and measuring/feedback. It maintains its required knowledge and skills through internal training.

3. Double link: Any two circles are connected by a double link, which means that at least two persons from a circle—the circle's leader and one or more elected representatives—participate in the decision-making in the next higher circle.

**One lawyer
called our bylaws
the "Starship Plan
of Corporate
Activity."**

4. Elections: People are chosen for functions and tasks ranging from leadership positions to specific assignments, exclusively by consent, after open discussion.

Here's how we apply these rules at EVLC. We use consent decision-making, the first basic rule, when setting policies. Because consent decision-making looks for objections rather than agreement, final decisions represent a broad range of tolerance. It's surprising how much quicker it is to make group decisions when you are only asking for

objections with reasons—rather than asking for full agreement as with the form of consensus we practiced.

Concerning the second rule, "circles," our EVLC development company has several committees staffed largely with volunteer future residents. The new EcoVillage Community Association has eight committees to run the community after move-in: Architectural and Environmental Design Review, Common House, Covenant Compliance, Economic Development, Facility Maintenance, Finance, Land Management, and Social committees.

Each committee operates freely within defined parameters of its own sphere of responsibility. Each is a learning organization, responsible for educating its own members in its work and keeping its own records. Each makes its policy decisions by consent, but operates day-to-day under the direction of the designated leader. Setting guidelines for the leader by consent lets people focus on getting tasks done and accept direction without resentment.

The body that manages general operations of the whole community is the General Circle. The General Circle consists of the EcoVillage General Manag-

er, chairs of each of the committees, and elected representative(s) from each committee. Having two persons from each committee (the chair and the elected representative) forms the “double link” of the third basic rule. Representatives are chosen by consent, the fourth basic rule.

Finally, the Top Circle (equivalent to a board of directors), is composed of the EcoVillage General Manager, elected representatives from the General Circle, and other persons invited because of their special expertise in areas vital to EcoVillage. Two future residents, not investor-members, were elected as representatives to the Top Circle. The Top Circle is a place to handle the really tough questions such as deciding to take the leap and begin road construction with all of the accompanying financial risk for investors. With consent as the basis for decisions, the investors keep the power to protect their interests and simultaneously must take into account the interests of those not investing—and vice versa. Being open about these gut concerns leads to mutual respect and creative thinking.

“All this theory about sociocracy seemed exciting but overwhelming the first night we learned about it,” Francy reminisced, “but John asked us to role-play decision making using the sociocratic method the other seminar evenings. After we role-played for a little while we soon found ourselves using the method to deal with our real problems. I believe that the sociocratic method and the consistent consultation and coaching that John has provided over time helped to forge a solid foundation for carrying on business through stages of waxing and waning participation.”

“The system is very flexible,” Grady adds. “For example, someone in the Land Development and Construction Committee had a creative idea for saving money that affected some of our marketing and financing strategies. He wasn’t a regular elected representative to

the General Circle, so the Land Development and Construction Committee made him a special representative for that issue. Leadership can emerge easily from anyone.”

Today our meetings cover the entire agenda, result in clear decisions, usually end about 15 minutes late (but we start 15 minutes late; we’re working on that), and end the meeting with people often

long development effort will carry on into the new community. Sociocracy is both simple and subtle. Our EcoVillage slogan is “Building Community—respecting the Earth.” In a very real way, we operate on the belief that a sustainable social model supports our overall goal of environmentally-sound living for the long-term.



A sustainable social model supports EVLC's long-term ecological goals.

saying they’re refreshed and that this is why they really want to be part of a community.

John and I led the effort to get the bylaws for our new community cast in the sociocratic format. Because Virginia law for community associations requires that we make certain decisions by majority-rule vote, it was impossible to set up our structure purely on sociocratic principles. But we did all we could and our lawyers were amazed. One called our bylaws document the “Starship Plan of Corporate Activity.” We’re determined to operate sociocratically, using the required voting just to affirm decisions that have previously been “seasoned” sociocratically. We’re very hopeful that the spirit of cooperation that has sustained us through this

Tena Meadows O’Rear, Chair of EcoVillage Community Association, has a background in management and business consultation, and is helping her husband Grady design and develop the EcoVillage project. For more information about EcoVillage of Loudoun County: www.ecovillages.com.

John Buck, M.A. in Sociology, an advisor to EcoVillage of Loudoun County and a budding consultant, has helped instill sociocracy in several organizations in the U.S. and has seen it work in corporations and nonprofits, and now in EcoVillage of Loudoun County.



ILLUSTRATIONS BY JACOB STEVENSON

Building Creative Agreements

Using Dynamic Consensus to Empower Ourselves

BY BETTY DIDCOCT AND PAUL DELAPA

It's a radical notion that a group of individuals can all come to agreement together. Our culture surrounds us with images and ideals of victory and accumulation arrived at through competition—winning is the rule whether it's about being faster, stronger, smarter, or acquiring more by any number of means.

Let's face it, we're not raised with many models or practices based in cooperation and collaboration. Instead, we're well conditioned in competitive lifestyles constructed around hierarchical power structures and struggles.

As our world becomes smaller and more closely linked, the need to live and work cooperatively becomes more evident and critical. Today, all over the world, we are being asked to give up old ways of hierarchical thinking and find new methods of sharing responsibility, power, and decision making. Many organizations—corporations, public service groups, schools, and government agencies—are simultaneously building collaborative partnerships with other organizations and creating team-based operations where the people affected or involved with implementation are part of the decision-making process.

This changing climate has creat-

ed much enthusiasm for working with inclusive decision-making processes, including various forms and interpretations of consensus. Consensus is an approach which can empower teams and individuals, encourage full participation, and harness diversity. While the consensus process may not be a panacea, and for many of us it is not easy due to our conditioning, it does hold great promise and possibility when fully understood and used appropriately.

What Does "Consensus" Mean?

Unfortunately both the word and the concept of consensus are frequently

misunderstood and misused.

Consensus comes from the word consent which means “to feel together,” “to be of the same mind,” or “to agree in opinion or sentiment.” Consensus is a practice of gathering the collective feeling about what’s best for this group at this time.

Our conditioned method of finding solutions is to “make decisions.” The root of the word decide is *cide* (the same root as in suicide) which means to kill off. In traditional decision making, individuals represent their idea, shoot down ideas and opinions of others, and rally support to “kill off” ideas from everyone else. Meetings often feel like a battleground, and when all is said and done the wounded limp out of the room and look for ways to circumvent or undermine the decision (or worse, retaliate).

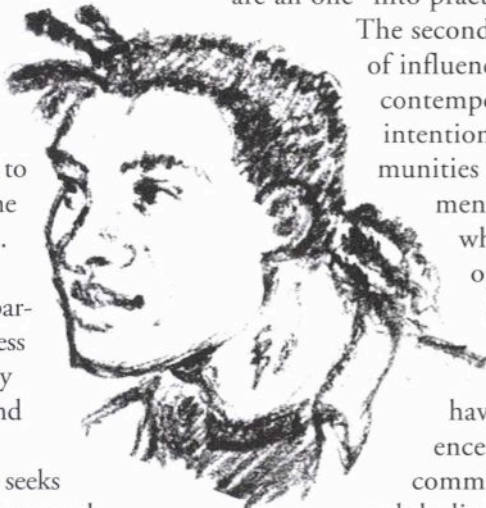
In contrast, rather than eliminating anyone or any particular view, consensus process builds creative agreements by gathering ideas, concerns, and views, and weaving them together. Consensus process seeks out the synergy of the group to reach its best solution, rather than compromising to a middle ground, settling for the lowest common denominator, or overpowering a minority view.

Where Does “Dynamic Consensus” Come From?

The Dynamic Consensus* process we introduce in this article has its roots in two streams of social activism of the '60s and '70s. The first is from Quaker activists who suggested using consensus and brought some order to the political activism of the times by setting up teaching programs and publishing instructional materials. Large protest groups of more than a thousand people astounded police by using consensus to make quick decisions for a unified response, right on the protest site.

Specifically, Dynamic Consensus has grown out of the work of a few of Carolyn Estes' students. (Caroline is a Quaker and founder of Alpha Farm community in Oregon.)

Dynamic Consensus process rests on a strong Quaker philosophical foundation—the belief that there is God, Spirit, Wholeness, Goodness, in each person—that inspiration and wisdom can be held by anyone and everyone. In secular terms, each person holds a unique piece of truth for the group. No one person holds all the truth. Dynamic Consensus brings the spiritual philosophy “we are all one” into practice.



The second stream of influence is the contemporary intentional communities movement. Those who developed this form of consensus have experience living in communities and dealing with the emotional struggles which

inevitably arise when people work and live together. For the past ten years we have practiced consensus together in our work with the Fellowship for Intentional Community and as private meeting facilitators and consultants.

What is Unique About the Dynamic Consensus Process?

There are several ways consensus decision making is practiced, including the traditional Quaker form, C.T. Butler's Formal Consensus, and Dynamic Consensus.

Dynamic Consensus process incorporates aspects of the whole person—the intellect, the emotions, the spirit—as valid sources of infor-

mation to pay attention to when reaching an agreement. The process is fluid (hence the term “dynamic”) in that it works with what is present in the moment, with no specific steps to lead the group through.

Overview of the Basic Elements

The Discussion

Although there is no step-by-step set of procedures, the discussion does follow a general course. It begins with an introduction to the issue or item on the agenda, followed by clarifying questions about the issue and what's needed from the discussion. Next the item is opened for general comments, discussion, and concerns. After working with concerns and seeing to it that they have all been met, an agreement begins to take shape.

The Sense of the Meeting, or the Agreement - The facilitator draws all the ideas, concerns, and responses together into a sense of the meeting. This is the trial agreement which is reflected back to the group by the facilitator and tested for agreement. Participants have three options for responding to the trial agreement: agreeing, standing aside, or blocking. *Agreeing* - “Agree” means that I am willing to go along with the agreement as stated and to support its implementation.

Standing Aside - Standing aside is the position which allows me as an individual to register my personal reservation. While I recognize that this decision is best for the group, for some serious reason (which I have already disclosed in the discussion) I feel I need to be noted as having stood aside on this decision. I can even request that I not be asked to implement the decision. *Blocking*

Blocking is the position I must take when I am clear that this agreement is a dangerous and seriously unwise choice for the group to be making. Blocking is not a personal position. In blocking I exercise my power and responsibility to override the group's

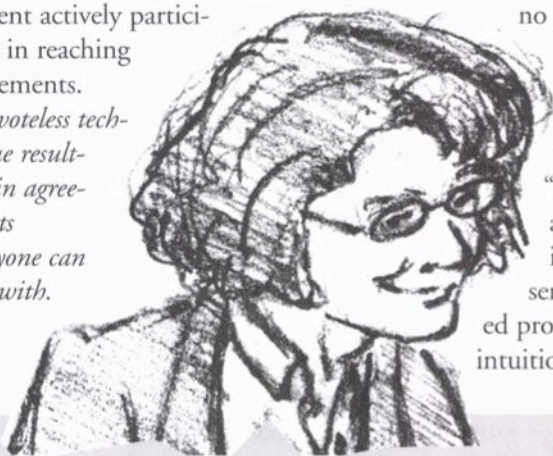
*Not to be confused with Jim Rough's Dynamic Facilitation process. See p. 29

wisdom. It's important to note that it is rare when we as individuals have insight which is greater than that of the group. A rule of thumb says that if you block two or three times in your lifetime you've probably "used up" all your blocks.

What Dynamic Consensus Is and Isn't

Dynamic Consensus process is:

- An *inclusive, participatory process for building cooperative agreements*. All members of a group who are present actively participate in reaching agreements.
- A *voteless technique resulting in agreements everyone can live with*.



Agreements are built by creatively integrating concerns and ideas, until a proposal emerges that everyone can go along with. This does not mean that everyone agrees with each detail of the proposal, only that it is something they can support.

- *A trust-building process*. Because consensus process encourages active listening, cooperation, and creative thinking, it helps build trust, openness, and a spirit of community.
- *A win/win process*. As the process builds, there are no losers, no sides, and no factions. Over time the group learns to work collectively for the common good.
- *A dynamic process*. "Dynamic" means vigorously active or energetic, producing change or progress. Consensus is often a highly spirited process infused with emotions, intuition, and sometimes sudden

changes in direction.

- *A creative practice*. There is no step-by-step method or formula to reaching agreement. Instead, the opportunity in this process is to bring the group together using whatever techniques or tools are appropriate in the moment.

Dynamic Consensus process *is not*:

- A unanimous voting process—in fact there is no voting at all.
- Related to parliamentary procedure or *Robert's Rules of Order* meeting processes.
- A process which necessarily results in a decision everyone agrees with in every little detail.
- A rigid set of rules to follow along a direct or clearly mapped-out path.

What Are the Underlying Values and Principles?

- *Equality*. "Everyone has a piece of the truth." Dynamic Consensus holds a systems perspective where each person

When You Don't Want to Use Full Consensus

BY LYSBETH BORIE

My understanding is that the decision-making method known as "agreement seeking" includes a range of methods that seek to build agreement in the group while not adhering to all of the requirements of traditional consensus process.

One example of agreement seeking is attempting to come to consensus twice (or just once), and if that fails, deferring to some kind of voting process percentage. I've worked with or heard of groups that used a voting fallback of anywhere from a 50% to 90% vote.

I've been facilitating the meetings of the Oregon Greens for a couple of years, and they use the voting fallback method. Most of the time they come to consensus, but sometimes they have to go to a vote. It's not common but it does happen. I think people who are drawn to political movements have a certain adversarial bent; they can't be good activists without having that. It's part of what gives them the juice to go out and keep doing what they're doing. Also, they're also not always doing community building with

the same group of people. So there's only so far that they can go in terms of consensus, and they need the voting back-up. I think voting fallback is a good process for them, not only for these reasons, but also because of the dynamics in a political activist group. If someone's a prima donna, for instance, or likes to grandstand, or doesn't know much about consensus process, the voting fallback enables the group to have an opportunity to hear the views of those participants and move ahead anyway. The process isn't held up by the personal issues of a small number of people.

Another form is consensus-minus-one or consensus-minus-two. In the former, if one person doesn't agree the proposal still passes; in the latter, two people can disagree and the proposal still passes. But I think these terms are misnomers. Consensus-minus-one isn't consensus. Maybe it should be called agreement-minus-one or unity-minus-one.

Another form of agreement-seeking is just a straight voting process, but with a percentage significantly over 50 percent, such a two-thirds, or 75 percent, or 80 percent vote.

What each of these methods have in common is that participants attempt to build as much agreement as possible within the group before making a decision, without allowing individuals to block.

As to whether most intentional communities would be better off using traditional consensus process or agreement seeking, that depends on how close-knit the community wished to be. In general, I think the traditional consensus process is best in intentional communities because it really does work hard to honor everybody's piece of the truth. But

plays a valuable and influential role in determining what's best for the whole.

- *Cooperation.* A competitive atmosphere is not conducive to building unity and well-informed agreements. Dynamic Consensus, as with other forms of consensus, is firmly rooted in a field of cooperation, and the process itself can help build trust between people.
- *Inclusivity.* Everyone present is encouraged to offer their feelings, ideas, and views.
- *Wholism.* Dynamic Consensus embraces input from the rational, emotional, and spiritual dimensions of our being. Emotions, feelings, and intuition are all honored.
- *Diversity.* Dynamic Consensus process encourages and strives for a broad range of views and ideas.
- *Individual/group power balance.* The power of the individual equals that of the whole group since any one person can block a pending agreement based

on his or her insight into what is best for the group.

- *Non-hierarchy.* There are no privileged ranks or viewpoints within this consensus process. No one is above or below anyone else in terms of importance, power, or weight of their contributions.
- *Good will.* The assumption that all individuals are doing their best and are attempting to listen to divergent points of view. Good will may not be present at the outset; however, it can be developed as participants learn that everyone's ideas deserve equal consideration and their own views are honored.
- *Common ownership of ideas.* Individual ideas are gifts to the group and become building blocks for wise decisions. Once a person makes a contribution, they are encouraged to "cut the string" of attachment so the idea can be added to, modified, or superseded by a more fitting concept.
- *Shifting perspectives.* Emphasizes the need to shift perspectives and to hold

the others' viewpoints in the interest of genuine understanding.

- *Strategic or long view on time.* The time spent making an agreement is considered a part of the time it will take to implement it. Consensus considers the consequences or hidden costs of making incomplete or hasty decisions. Quick decisions do not necessarily correlate to faster or better implementation.

What's Needed to Make Dynamic Consensus Process Work?

- *Common purpose.* You can't effectively use Dynamic Consensus if the members of your group don't have a common sense of purpose for being together. You need a shared understanding of why you are together—a place to stand and return to as common ground when differences and details begin to cloud the view.
- *Willingness/agreement to use the process (and to learn it).* Without a collective agreement and openness to learn/use a

modifications might be appropriate in some cases. For instance, the traditional consensus process originated in the Quaker business meeting, ranging from fewer than 20 to more than 1000 people, and is a corporate body with a life of its own that continues whether or not individuals come and go. But in a small community that has a lot of turnover among newer members, the character of the community is going to shift significantly over time. And a small community usually functions more like a family than like a Quaker meeting.

So in that case it may make sense to consider other adaptations of the consensus process. I'm thinking particularly of the understanding that once a decision is made, it requires a consensus of the whole to change it. In a family, you wouldn't do that. If a couple agreed to work full time and share the bills equally, and one of them had an auto accident and was disabled for several months, the other wouldn't say, "Well, our agreement is that you go out and work no matter what." In a family setting, and a small, close-knit community (or any community, really) it's important to be flexible in response to people's changing needs, abilities, and sensibilities. I think it's important to take a look at that dynamic and really consider the degree to which our security lies not in our agreements but in our relationships with each other over time. So for instance, a community might have a process by which all agreements made in the community would have a shelf life of five years, or ten years. That would enable the community members to continue to function by consensus process, but every so many years

they'd look at their agreements and ask, "Are these still working for us?"

In terms of community size, I believe that the smaller or more close-knit the community, the more important it is to have a basically traditional consensus method, or something close to it. But a large community or an ecovillage of 150 or even 300 might need less of a pure consensus method. Some form of agreement seeking might be more appropriate there. The emphasis is on trying to build as much agreement as possible. There may be times when the work required to come to consensus in an ecovillage of 300 may not be worth it, or may even be counterproductive; for example, spending time agonizing over decisions that really aren't so important in the scheme of things.

Some communities differentiate among various kinds of decisions, saying, for example, that long-term policy decisions are decided by consensus and other kinds aren't.

In a well-functioning consensus group people naturally regulate themselves in terms of how strongly they insist on having agreements they all fully support. They can let go of their insistence if the focus of the issue is narrow, or if it's really not so important. That's part of the self-discipline people develop as they use consensus.

Lysbeth Borie, who lives at Alpha Farm community in Oregon, has practiced consensus for about 20 years, and has taught and facilitated professionally since 1988. She facilitates the Pacific Green Party of Oregon. She can be reached at alinst@pioneer.net.

consensus process, there's little hope of reaching agreements in unity.

• *Presence & participation.* In this process there is no proxy position. Participation requires presence because agreements are built in a dynamic discussion. Participation means staying present through each topic on the agenda and contributing constructively.

• *Valuing of the process.* Using Dynamic Consensus will be frustrating at best and result in pressured or unthoughtful agreements without a willingness to attend to the process of reaching agreement. If my main concern is in the outcome or decision, it's unlikely I'll be practicing deep listening, wholistic thinking, and letting go of my preconceived ideas.

• *Appropriate work.* Not all issues and choices a group faces warrant engaging the full group's heart and mind. It's important that the issues brought to the meeting are appropriate to this level of the organization's attention.

• *Neutral skilled facilitation.* The facilitator provides content objectivity with a dedicated focus on the meeting process. Without these (and other) abilities, the task of managing this creative and seemingly chaotic collective process is likely to be ineffective and potentially reckless.

• *Adequate time.* Consensus processes take time, especially at first. Be sure to allocate appropriate time, being realistic about what it takes to gather full and diverse input from all participants. As the group builds trust and experience together, the time needed will shorten.

• *Personal reflection.* It's hard to hide in a consensus process. Individuals need to have a willingness to identify, question, and work with their personal attitudes, assumptions, and participation styles.

• *Appropriate people present.* Informed agreements require informed participants. Those who hold key implemen-

tation roles, information, or perspectives need to be present for the process.

What Are the Benefits/Advantages of Consensus?

Dynamic Consensus process:

• Gives the group the opportunity to discover new information, gain new insights, and co-create unexpected solutions.

• Equalizes power and shifts emphasis from hierarchical power structures where only one or a few make decisions to true democracy where all voices are included.

• Empowers both individually and collectively. Supports individuals being included, feeling valued, and feeling connected because the process honors individuals' ideas, feelings, and contributions.

• Produces inclusive agreements leading to coherent action. When people have had a role and involvement in crafting an agreement, they are naturally more committed when it comes to implementation.

• Inherently contains self-teaching mechanisms for individual and group learning. Dynamic Consensus requires a willingness to evaluate and reconsider actions and process. This reflective quality keeps the possibility of learning present and alive at all times.

• Produces no disenfranchised, unsatisfied minority. Properly applied, no one has "lost," or leaves the meeting feeling discounted.

• Gives the opportunity to reach creative, carefully considered decisions because all viewpoints are explored.

• Motivates participation as people experience their contributions as being valued.

• Uses differences to help develop a clearer understanding of the issues and formulate more powerful decisions.

• Reduces polarization. When con-

cerns are explored, it is rare that issues are only two-sided with yes-no answers. Rather than establishing "for" and "against" sides as in a voting process, everyone is working toward agreement, striving to integrate objections and concerns to reach group agreement.

• Is easier for participants to understand than *Robert's Rules of Order* since there is no formal set of procedures to follow. Consensus is also more transparent than *Robert's Rules* in the facilitation process.

• Works with conflict. Differences are considered healthy and something to be worked with—not avoided. The issues at the root of conflict provide information and understanding of what needs resolving before an effective solution can be reached.

What Are the Disadvantages/Limitations/Pitfalls?

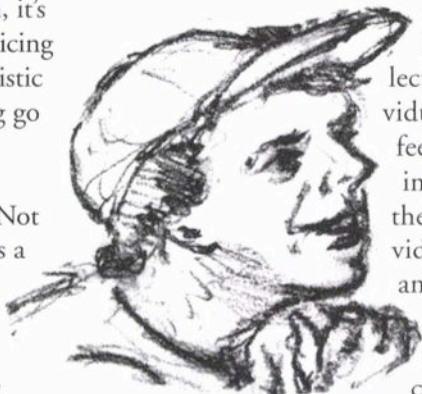
• Meetings can take longer, especially at first, as trust is being built and people are learning how to listen and participate. It can also take more time because there may be more input and depth to consider.

• If the facilitation of the meeting is poor, time can be wasted in unfocused discussion, the group can be dominated by outspoken participants, or issues may not be drawn out of conflict situations.

• It is conservative in the sense that a new agreement of the whole is needed to make a change in previous agreements. Consensus processes can inhibit entrepreneurial spirit and movement in new directions if supportive processes and understandings aren't in place.

• It can be hard, especially at first, and for many it is challenging to work cooperatively, listen fully, and learn to embrace others' ideas and concerns.

• Use of any method of consensus will likely be challenging and disem-



continued on page 67

Consensus in Latin America

BY BEATRICE BRIGGS

When I first came to Mexico in late 1994 to participate in planning meetings for a continental bioregional gathering, I never imagined that my training in consensus process would be the key to a new life in the South. Upon arrival, I spoke no Spanish, knew little or nothing about Latin America, and was content with my life in an alternative community in rural Wisconsin. Now I live in Huehucoyotl, an ecovillage located in the mountains about 90 minutes south of Mexico City, and travel throughout the Americas giving consensus workshops and facilitating meetings in both English and Spanish. In the course of this rather dramatic transition, I have had to come to terms with some of the cultural realities of being a gringa who introduces consensus south of the Rio Bravo.

Among the North-South, First World-Third World cultural stereotypes and prejudices which I have encountered are the notions that "we" are well-organized, efficient and prompt, while "they" are informal, chaotic, and always late. "We" plan. "They" improvise. "We" are rigid, impatient, and clumsy dancers. "They" are tolerant, affectionate, and great dancers. And so on. As with all stereotypes, there is a tiny grain of truth in these assertions and a lot of unfounded nonsense. But because consensus process involves the identity and self-image of a group, I have had to question how culturally bound the process is and to what extent it can be exported.

To understand Latin American resistance to consensus, especially

when taught by a norteamericana, it helps to consider that after 500 years of imperialistic exploitation, political meddling, and ecological destruction, our neighbors to the South are justifiably leery about anything that comes from the United States. Based on their experience, consensus could be just another form of cultural oppression.

On the other hand, people everywhere are looking for viable alternatives to the old, hierarchical methods of decision making. I find that by presenting the basic concepts of consensus in a clear, relaxed manner, I am likely to get a fair hearing. I remind myself—and the groups I work with—that part of the gift of this process is the way it combines Yankee pragmatism with the revolutionary notion that people everywhere can and should be in charge of their own destiny. Furthermore, I point to the example of the Zapatista rebels in Chiapas, who provide a living proof of the power of grassroots democracy to confront oppressive systems.

Groups in the South are usually surprised, and relieved, to learn that their process-related challenges, such as training group members to speak concisely and to the point, listen with respect, plan realistic agendas, or facilitate effectively, are equally difficult for their counterparts in the North.

Resistance to setting time limits on agenda items and/or individual comments also seems to be a universal phenomenon, not a North-South issue. Given more practice with consensus process, people usually begin to appreciate the need for time limits, even if they have trouble respecting them.

Punctuality, on the other hand, does seem to be a deeply culturally conditioned trait. In Mexico, meetings routinely start 60-90 minutes

late. No amount of group discussion about the topic, tinkering with starting times, or other strategies seems to make much difference. I try to be on time myself and then go with the flow.

In countries with a recent history of political repression, the desire for a more participatory process coexists with memories of the danger of speaking out in public. I try to find ways to let people release their fear or anger about the past as they decide whether or not to risk trying consensus.

In traditionally Catholic Latin America, the arrival of evangelical Protestantism has sometimes caused bitter divisions within families and communities. In these areas, mentioning that one of the sources of consensus is Quakerism (a Protestant religion) can set off cultural alarms. I try to be clear that consensus is not a religion and emphasize the potential of the process to unite, rather than divide, a group, honoring differences instead of exacerbating them.

Facilitating a meeting being conducted in a foreign language proves Caroline Estes' assertion that up to 80% of what is "said" in a meeting is nonverbal. Sometimes it is easier to listen for and summarize the main points of a discussion if you do not understand every word. The nonverbal signals that people are bored, angry, nervous, or excited are more-or-less universal.

Finally, I have learned that all over the Americas, small groups of ordinary citizens are changing the world, one consensus decision at a time.

Beatrice Briggs is author of the booklet Introduction to Consensus (available for \$15 postpaid from 1039 Mills St, Box 416, Black Earth, WI 53515). She can be reached A.P. 160, Tepoztlan, Morelos, 62520, Mexico or briggsbea@aol.com.

12 Myths of Consensus

BY BETTY DIDCOCT AND PAUL DELAPA



Myth #1: Everyone Knows What Consensus Is and What It Means

Much of what we know (or think we know) about consensus comes from common, often imprecise usage of the word. Consensus for some is a goal: what results after getting everyone to agree on one solution. Some people use the word consensus interchangeably with the word majority. Interestingly, most of the disparate meanings we hear aren't found in dictionaries—from being synonymous with majority view to a "view held by everyone," to "everyone minus one" (or two or...), to an unanimous vote.

For those experienced in using something called "consensus" in meetings, it's likely we've attached our own meanings to the word. Often misunderstood, poorly practiced and poorly facilitated, consen-

sus has been defined as a cumbersome process—taking too much time and resulting in weak, compromise decisions. Consensus conjures up different images in people's minds, including everything from hours of dreary discussions leading nowhere, to enthusiastic agreements arrived at through thoughtful deliberations.

Consensus means all kinds of things to all kinds of people. It would be challenging at best to come to an agreement about what consensus means and what it is.

So what is myth and what is the reality behind some of the commonly held perceptions of consensus?

Myth #2: Consensus Is a Unanimous Voting Process in Disguise

Most of us have many experiences of voting, from deciding on what game to play during recess in 5th grade, to electing leaders for our country. Vot-

ing provides us with an either/or choice. To "win" the vote, we take sides and prepare for a battle in which each "side" tries to convince the other that its position is the best. With all this training, it's not surprising that we tend to approach consensus as if the goal were to reach a unanimous vote.

Consensus process is not a voting process and it is not about unanimity. It is a creative practice weaving together an agreement in unity out of all the different perspectives, concerns, and understandings present in the meeting. There is no voting, but rather a group process which results in an agreement that everyone can support and live with. Whereas voting encourages a win/lose mentality, consensus process encourages a sense of all of us being in this together, striving toward what's best for the whole.

Myth #3:

It Takes Hours and Hours to Reach a Decision Using Consensus

As a group first learns to work with the consensus process, it can take more time to explore all the ramifications of concerns held by its members. As people become more experienced and gain trust in the process and in each other, the process can run more efficiently.

If the discussion is well facilitated by someone who works with individual concerns and carefully “builds” the agreement, the process can be very creative, interesting, and empowering to the participants. While it may take longer in this up-front time to reach an agreement, the commitment level is generally higher and the buy-in more complete, so in the implementation phase any chosen action takes less time.

Myth #4:

Intellectual Discussion is the Only Way to Reach Consensus

Most groups attempting to use consensus follow the norm in our culture to disregard all other ways of knowing except the intellectual. On the familiar intellectual battle ground, only the articulate and nimble of word and thought dare to venture, leaving behind others who process information more slowly or in different ways.

The consensus process is firmly grounded in a recognition and value of the whole person which is precisely where it gains significant depth and strength. Not everyone accesses wisdom through the intellect. By incorporating feelings, intuition, experience, body wisdom, insights, and personal reflection, consensus process gives individuals with different styles greater opportunity to participate. Increased participation helps groups gain access to multiple levels of information, resulting in more fully informed, inclusive, and effective agreements.

Myth #5:

Consensus Decisions Are Weak Because They Are Really Compromises

Weak, “compromised” decisions are not unusual for some groups attempting to use consensus (and “Robert’s Rules” as well). With incomplete understanding of the consensus process and weak facilitation, it’s easy to be led or pushed to give in under the pressure to conform and reach a decision. The moment differences arise, it appears easier and quicker to settle for “the lowest common denominator.”

Consensus process is the quest for the highest shared perception of what is best for the group, rather than a compromise. A well-facilitated group with clear understanding of the consensus process will listen carefully to all underlying concerns and work creatively to find solutions incorporating these concerns. This highly collaborative process leads to stronger agreements with the group’s best interests at heart and in mind.

Myth #6:

Consensus Requires That Everyone Think the Same Way

In fact the opposite is true. The consensus process seeks out diverse ideas, recognizing that they are the fertilizer for finding the best course of action available to the group. Different knowing and thinking styles actually contribute to the richness of the ideas and feelings available for the group to incorporate into agreements.

The danger of “group think” or mindless participation is present in all groups. Coercion, deceit, manipulation, intimidation, pressure, over-reliance on authority, and misuse of power are some of the many pathways that can lead to irresponsible consent. Consensus process equalizes participation and power dynamics, reducing the potential for inappropriate influence and coercion. In short, diversity gives the consensus process power and insight.

Myth #7:

A Consensus Decision Can Never Be Changed

It is true that once an agreement is made using consensus, it takes a consensus to reverse it or create a new one. Consensus is a conservative process. It is practiced with care and consideration for individuals and for the needs of the group. Decisions tend to be more lasting because of the thoroughness of the consideration.

When a group is venturing into uncharted waters, it is possible to set a time period to test and experience the agreement, with a scheduled review at some future (“sundown”) date. When the sundown date arrives, the group has several options:

- 1) Make the trial agreement permanent;
- 2) Extend the trial period; or,
- 3) Create a new course of action.

If the group cannot reach agreement on any of these options, the test agreement is over and the group reverts to its original course. The sundown clause gives room for entrepreneurial efforts while allowing time for experience and wisdom to accrue.

Myth #8:

Everyone Has to Share His/Her Opinion Before a Decision Can Be Reached

If every single person speaks on every single issue, the potential for burning out the good will and interest of everyone involved is enormous. While it is important for all divergent opinions to be expressed—in fact it is the participant’s responsibility to share new opinions not yet voiced—care must be taken not to repeat ideas already expressed with a slight change of “color” to put a personal “stamp” on it.

Consensus encourages listening to others first, which often brings forth the discovery that personal ideas are shared by others and not so unique

after all. Very often a simple “he/she speaks my mind” comment or a signal of agreement will suffice. In those moments where everyone’s voice is critical to group cohesion, there are other more effective and appropriate processes than consensus available (Council, “Talking Stick”, Cafes, etc.).

Myth #9:

Consensus Is Impossible to Use in a Large Group

Consensus process has been used effectively with groups numbering from two, well into the hundreds. While it requires skilled facilitation and can be more challenging, there are various ways to explore a topic with full participation and reach an agreement in unity.

For starters the group can divide into small discussion groups, share their ideas, and offer suggestions to the whole. As each group shares, the next group adds only new ideas and doesn’t repeat what other groups have already stated. Another option is having the small groups report back offering only their concerns—not the agreed-upon parts of the proposal. Whatever way input is gathered, the facilitator can then help the group weave concerns and solutions together into a collective agreement.

Myth #10:

Everyone in the Group Has to Be Involved in Every Decision

Just because an organization has agreed to use consensus process doesn’t mean that decisions can’t be delegated either to individuals or sub-groups. Without delegation most groups can very quickly exhaust themselves in marathon meetings leaving no time or energy left for implementation.

Consensus is about individual and collective empowerment, returning influence to those who will be called

upon to live with the agreement. This includes enabling parts of the whole to carry out the ideals of the full group within agreed upon parameters of authority and autonomy. Full group time and energy are best spent clarifying group intentions, global policies, effective domains of authority, and defining avenues for providing input and feedback to subsets of the whole.

Myth #11:

I Can Block the Group's Decision If I Don't Like It

The position of blocking (or “standing in the way of”) is one of the most misunderstood and misused elements of the consensus process. Blocking is the position which balances individual insight with the power of the group. As such, it is a serious and weighty option not to be taken lightly.

Not liking the group’s choice or direction is no grounds for blocking (either during the process or later by someone who wasn’t present for the agreement). Blocking is not a personal position. It is a deep insight into what would be best for the whole. This kind of deep sensing of “what is best for the group” comes from inner clarity and equanimity, not personal preferences, agendas, values or needs.

Myth #12:

The Facilitator Is Responsible for the Success of a Consensus Meeting

It is a common tendency and misconception to assume that group leaders—those who step forward to take responsibility for aspects of the meeting, which certainly includes the facilitator—are totally responsible (both positively and negatively) for the outcome of the meeting. It is easy to scape-goat the facilitator and other leaders when things don’t go as planned (and they rarely do)—a

tendency equivalent to laying a fast track to disempowering participants and the group.

Consensus is about empowering individuals and the group. Empowerment brings with it the opportunity of participation and shared responsibility for the choices of the whole. In the consensus process the facilitator is a servant to the group. As such he or she actually holds only a small (granted, potentially significant) influence in achieving success. Achieving that success is the group’s responsibility, which ultimately means the individual participants hold responsibility for outcomes.

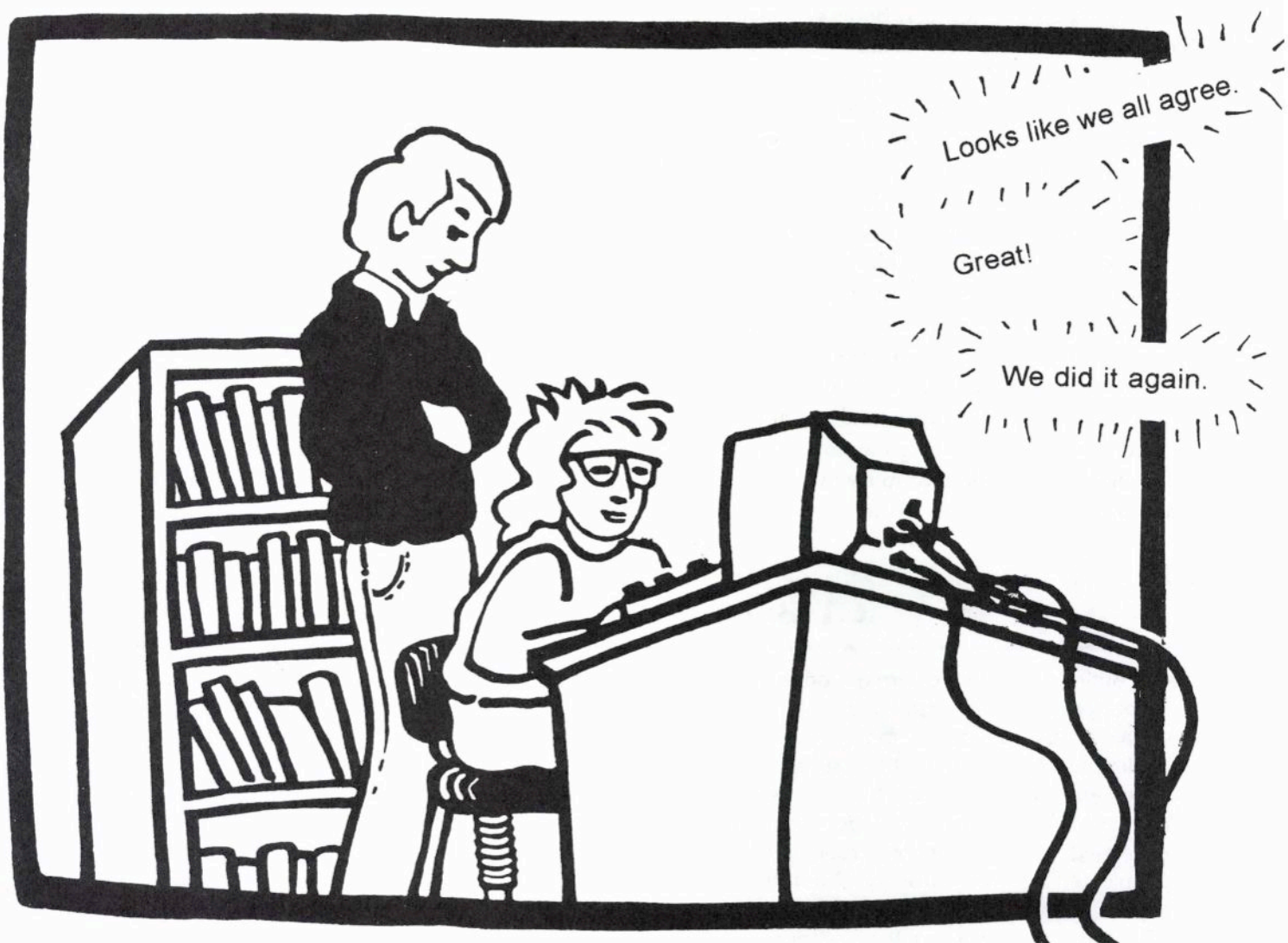
Consensus Reality

Consensus is a decision-making process that can be learned. It takes practice and may require replacing old behavior patterns and rethinking the relationship between the individual and the group. The benefits to both individuals and groups are many, including increasing participation, sense of ownership and belonging, and commitment to follow-through on agreements.

Excerpted with permission from the upcoming booklet series, The Consensus Decision Making Process, by Betty Didcoct and Paul DeLapa.

Betty and Paul are both organizational development consultants, meeting facilitators, and consensus teachers. Betty and Paul work nationally and internationally, in collaboration as well as independently. To get on their mailing list for their consensus booklet series, please email ties@ic.org, or write TIES, PO Box 110, Cataldo, ID 83810.

—D.L.C.



BY LUC REID

Meadowdance community owes much to email decision making during our forming stages, and in some ways it was nearly a necessity. While some of our members came to the group through ads in Communities magazine or flyers in New England co-ops, the rest found us through the free Reachbook section at www.ic.org or through our own Web site. Some of the people who participated in our planning process lived hundreds or even thousands of miles from others. Typically a few of us saw each other in person at gatherings every few months.

We had decided to use C.T. Butler's "Formal Consensus" process as our decision-making model, and wanted to be inclusive of everyone regardless of whether or not they were able to make it to the periodic in-person gatherings. We also needed the ability to make decisions between gatherings. We needed to figure out some kind of long distance, co-operative decision-making process.

For us, using the Internet to make decisions seemed natural. Almost all of us used email on a regular basis, and we used an online discussion group to bat around ideas. We decided to try to adapt the consensus process to our

email discussion group.

The system we came up was this:

- In our discussions an issue or idea would arise that called for a group agreement.
- Someone would draft a proposal about that issue, or a small group would discuss ideas through email and come up with a proposal.
- The authors would post the proposal to the whole group, starting the subject line with "PROPOSAL" so everyone would know a decision was at hand.
- On line, we would discuss the merits of the proposal and raise concerns, if any. As concerns arose, we would dis-

cuss them and try to address them. Very often the proposal would change through this process. Other times it became clear that the proposal was problematic or didn't have widespread support, and it was withdrawn.

- If after a total of two weeks no concerns remained, we assumed that we had reached agreement and the proposal was adopted. However, if after two weeks there were still concerns, we would continue until all outstanding concerns were resolved or until it was clear that the proposal didn't have the necessary support. Some proposals had serious concerns that took months to resolve, and with these we

C.T. Butler's FORMAL CONSENSUS

C.T. Butler designed the Formal Consensus method as a detailed yet flexible structure which can eliminate certain problems that commonly occur in meetings.

His method separates the process of identifying issues and concerns from the process of resolving them. In Formal Consensus, ideas and concerns are expressed before any conflict resolution begins. Since people tend to feel strongly about the ideas they express, they often become possessive about them. The Formal Consensus method encourages a creative interplay of unowned ideas, allowing cooperative refinement of proposals.

Some group decision-making processes lack a clear structure, and often only the chairperson or facilitator understands what the next step ought to be. Formal Consensus provides options for every situation so everyone can follow along during the process and be included in the decision making. The flowchart (ideally, posted where everyone can see it) describes, in general, a decision's evolution from original proposal to complete decision.

When an unresolved concern remains after discussion, the concerned individual must decide to either stand aside (thereby giving consent) or withhold consent (thereby raising the question, "Is this a block?").

Unlike other consensus methods, in Formal Consensus someone can only block a proposal when the entire group agrees that the concern is based upon the group's principles and foundations. That is, the group must accept that the concern is based upon the group's principles for it to block the decision. This

step prevents a group from being covertly disrupted by someone not aligned with the group's vision and values. C.T. finds that the groups to whom he teaches the Formal Consensus process, especially nonprofit organizations and cohousing communities, often face the challenge of including "difficult" people—those with widely varying values or with apparent limited communication skills or emotional difficulties. He finds that this way of treating blocking allows nonprofits and cohousers to be inclusive of these people without being held hostage to the idea that they could block the group from moving towards its intended purpose.

Here are the rules for Formal Consensus:

1. Once a decision has been adopted, it cannot be changed without a new consensus.
2. Only one person may speak at a time.
3. All roles and process techniques are adopted with little or no discussion.
4. All content decisions are adopted only after full and open discussion.
5. A concern must be based upon the group's principles to justify a block to consensus.
6. Every meeting must close with an evaluation.

For more information about C.T. Butler's work, to arrange for a consultation or purchase a copy of his book, On Conflict and Consensus (Food Not Bombs Publishing, 1987/1991), see his Web site: www.consensus.net, or contact him at ctbutler@together.net or 800-569-4054.

continued until we had either addressed all concerns or decided to drop the proposal.

Looking back, I think we ideally would have added a couple of pieces to this picture:

- A warning a few days prior to the two week mark might have been helpful to make sure everyone realized the decision was imminent.
- A confirmation of what we had agreed on would have been nice at the end of the period, or if we did not reach consensus, a message about the status of the proposal.
- Our discussion group was much too large (approaching 100 late in the game) for us to be able to get explicit agreement on proposals before considering ourselves to have consensus. However, we did occasionally use this technique to double-check a decision with just the committed members. For a small group, however, explicit agreement online could be more efficient and satisfying than a simple time limit.

The system worked well for us. While some of our central agreements were discussed and given tentative approval at gatherings, by using email we were able to involve almost all participants. Many other issues were discussed solely through email.

We were able to involve off-line participants as well, but unfortunately we did a less thorough job of it. Letters sent out with the full details of pending proposals were helpful, but they did not convey the rest of the discussion going on around an issue, and they required someone to keep on top of mailings to people who were off-line. Telephone calls to talk about current proposals and discussion on them so far were better, but such calls were time-consuming, cost money, and filtered the entire discussion through one person's viewpoint. For a group that wants to use an online consensus process and tackle this problem, I

would suggest considering a period longer than two weeks and a process that involves mailing out a compilation of the discussion part way into the process.

For that matter, this same process could be adapted to a newsletter format without use of the Internet at all. One person could send a proposal out to all by mail, or in to a designated person who could include the proposal in a regularly mailed update. Any discussion of the matter could be mailed to the designated mail handler and duplicated and sent out with other discussion to all participants. This process might take a great deal of time, however, in the inevitable back-and-forth as people tried to under-

***Discussion that
becomes too heated
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of the delay in
email response.***

stand one another's points of view. Even through email it was a frustratingly drawn-out process, although ultimately very effective.

In the end, people who were not online (a small minority in our group) and people who had trouble with either written communication or typing were not able to participate as well as the rest of us, and in this respect I think the system is inherently problematic. At the same time, if we had not had email discussion of decisions, most decisions would probably have been made by a comparatively small group.

A very few issues were so charged

or potentially contentious that we would drop the online proposal until it could be brought up at an in-person gathering. There the people who were able to make it to the gathering could talk face to face, with the benefit of body language, intonation, and presence that so dramatically distinguishes an in-person discussion from email. After this we were generally able to bring a revised or more thoroughly considered proposal out on the email list and get to some resolution. A few items lingered on until after we formed the community, but whether this was due to the issues being too difficult for online consensus or simply to not having time to settle everything during the busy planning stages is not clear.

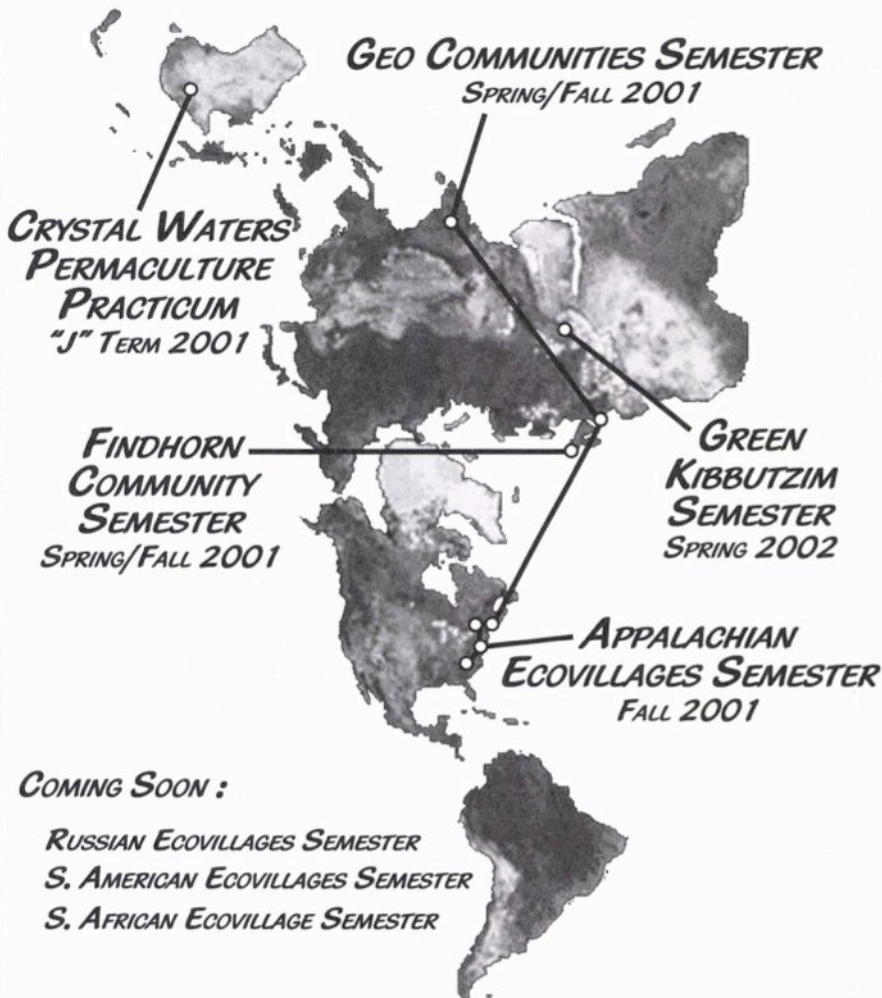
One marked advantage of consensus-by-email is that you don't have to spend time in discussions that aren't of any particular interest to you. Another is that discussion that becomes too heated will often cool itself down simply because of the delay in response and the use of written rather than verbal language. Additionally, in an online context it is easy for someone to step in and try to find the common threads between people or groups in conflict, whereas in person it is sometimes hard to get in the middle of that process. We found it fairly easy to write with consideration and respect for one another most of the time regardless of how difficult the issue was. Clearly, though, there is also the potential for the reverse: written messages without the context of vocal intonations can contribute to misunderstandings or hostility, and it may be difficult to reverse the trend because one does not have all the communication signals of a face-to-face discussion.

An interesting outgrowth of the ever-expanding capabilities of the Internet is a new possibility for consensus, namely online voice discus-

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sion. While our Meadowdance forming group did hold periodic "chat" sessions (typed only), we did not try to arrange consensus discussions in this way, in part because the scheduling and technology requirements were even more limiting than email. However, if everyone in a small forming community group had the technology, they could hold online, real-time voice chat for virtual consensus meetings. (If your group tries this, by all means let me know how it works out.)

In the end, our consensus meetings in person are far more satisfying than our email discussions (and certainly require less typing and less patience). Still, the level of planning and the depth of considered agreement that forms the foundation of our community owes an enormous debt to our online consensus process. We would not have been nearly so far along without it.

Luc Reid is a single dad and one of the founders of Meadowdance community in Springfield, Vermont. His daily work involves computers, daily meetings, and sometimes hammering (not on the computers, usually). He can be reached at luc@meadowdance.org or 20 Common St., Springfield, VT 05156.



Consensus as Spiritual Practice

BY BRICE WILSON

CONSENSUS WAS THE TOPIC OF a recent in-depth community meeting at Sirius. The meeting began with Bruce, the meeting focalizer (facilitator), informing the rest of us that the period for community announcements was going to be only ten minutes this time. Tony objected, saying people hadn't yet had the chance to indicate how much time would actually be needed for announcements. Deborah interjected that she was at that moment sensing some relevant cosmic energy that needed interpretation, and some time should definitely be set aside for that.

Bruce ignored Deborah and told Tony the planned format was packed too tightly to allow for an announcement period of more than ten minutes.

Bruce added that making such decisions about the agenda fell within the authority he was granted as elected

***Consensus is more a
learned skill than
innate ability.***

focalizer, and that should be the end of it. A fourth member remarked that this was a meeting focusing on the topic on consensus, a tool used to insure every voice mattered. How were we to effectively contrast the deplorable strife and conflict in the

world if we couldn't practice consensus here?

Bruce repeated he was acting within his authority and tried to move on. Deborah prevented closure by demanding time to present her cosmic report. Tony insisted on a longer time for people's announcements. Nanette, overcome with emotion, left the room tearfully. Daniel leapt up and followed her out to console her. Deborah launched a sharp diatribe over being ignored, and Bruce responded by ejecting her from the meeting. At that point our time bell sounded, indicating we had reached the end of the agenda review period.

Bruce then announced that the foregoing had just been guerrilla theater, and (despite its similarity to some

Consensus by Individual Guidance

BY BETTY DIDCOCT

IN THE EARLY '80s, a small group of us developed a process we called "consensus by individual guidance." We served as board members of Turtle Island Fund, a now-defunct philanthropic organization which gave money to intentional communities to help them purchase land, create a land trust, then place stewardship covenants on their land title.

We lived together and were members of a small spiritual community. We had the practice of meditating—sometimes individually, sometimes collectively—and made our decisions by consensus. Some of us had the experience of "receiving guidance," which often helped to provide insights and wisdom for our community life and for individuals in their personal lives. (We described the messages of guidance in various ways: voices from within, intuition speaking, words of Spirit or God, etc.)

The board made decisions about the granting process for the fund—whether or not to give as much as \$50,000 to communities to assist in their land purchase. At some point we felt that our intellectual thinking and discussions were not all we could bring to these decisions, so we evolved a group practice of receiving guidance to assist our decision-making process. Our goal was to open up to possibilities beyond what our minds and thoughts told us, to let in intuition, spirit, or the "wisdom of the universe."

We did this process either after we had fully discussed a topic or without any previous discussion. We experimented by doing both and developed a sensitivity to which way served us best, depending on the situation.

Here's how you can do the same:

First, take time to identify the question you are asking so that everyone in the group will focus specifically on the same thing. State the question or the topic you want to consider.

1. Each person sits quietly, usually with eyes closed. We did not make physical contact with one another. (We did try holding hands, but it was too difficult for each person to receive their own guidance.) Center yourself in your own way. Quiet your mind and do whatever internal process helps you to move aside your judgments and opinions. Open yourself to simply listening to whatever comes to you.

2. State the question to yourself. Listen. Accept the first response that comes. Do not analyze. The response might come to you in a word, a phrase, a paragraph, or pages of information, a picture, a movie which might last a while, a light bulb of understanding. Be open to receive whatever comes to you.

3. Don't let your mind create stories about, reasons for, or interpretations of what you are receiving. With practice, you will learn to discern the difference between "receiving" and "interpreting."

4. Look for an "on beam" quality—does it "feel" true in your body (while it may not feel true in your mind). What you receive may seem weird or totally unrelated to the question. Don't pay much attention to the content; simply try to "feel" the quality of the experience.

5. As each person finishes, they open their eyes and wait for everyone to complete the process. Then each person reports what they "received" without any interpretation. Be as objective in your reporting as possible.

6. After all the pictures, thoughts, and understandings are spoken and described, step back and see how they look as a whole. This is the fun part—to interpret and discuss the possible ramifications of what was received. Was there a pattern, a trend, clarity in one direction or another?

Often the pieces of the puzzle fit together in a way which shows an obvious answer. Sometimes it seemed

to be clear, except for only one or two people's contributions. Or maybe their pieces appeared to be exactly opposite of the rest of the group. When this happened, we would go back into those offerings and ask for more understanding about the meaning. The result might show us that we all needed to shift to the less-obvious view. Other times, we cleared up something unfinished or unresolved which pulled these seeming opposites into the rest of the group's direction or answer.

In the process I often questioned the validity of the "information" I received. In fact we all had doubts at one time or another. How did we know what we were receiving was "true" or real guidance and not just our imaginations? There is no way to be certain, but practice and sharing our doubts with one another helped us gain skill and confidence in our process.

We had some amazing experiences. There were times when we received understandings about the community that we had no way of knowing from our rational minds. Sometimes we went into a meeting certain that we would give a grant to a community or project—only to finish this process with a resounding "no" and clarity about why. The opposite also happened—we entered the process sure that we would not give a grant to a particular community, but when we finished, it was clear that we would.

I encourage you to give this process a try. As you become skilled, you will find that it is a decision-making process which not only has much richness and depth, but results in good, solid decisions.

Betty Didcoct is a trainer, facilitator, and consultant for TIES Consulting who has taught consensus and facilitation to students all over the world. She can be reached at ties@ic.org or PO Box 110, Cataldo, ID 83810; 208-682-3550.

Sirius meetings we've had!) was intended as parody. Its purpose had been to portray behaviors poorly suited to consensus process. At that point, as is customary at Sirius at the onset of meetings, we engaged in one practice found to facilitate consensus building: our group meditation.

During later discussion, someone mentioned that beginning our meetings with a group meditation as part of our consensus process seemed unusual to some people. Daniel, no longer acting out the archetype of rescuer, pointed out that the consensus process was developed by the Society of Friends (Quakers) Society and also by certain Native American peoples, both of whom had inextricably bound the process to the recognition of guidance from a unifying spiritual Presence. What's odd, therefore, is not that our community models this, but that consensus as applied nowadays in most organizations and communities does not.

This is important. Compared with concerns about facilitator technique, when people can speak, or when in a discussion we should call for consensus, recognition of this unifying Presence seems crucial. Such recognition signifies an awareness that we as individuals are not so much in the business of making decisions as we are involved with the process of discerning and aligning with the designs of this overarching greater consciousness.

Consensus-building at Sirius, and also traditionally, is therefore inherently a spiritual practice. It reflects joint willingness to suspend individual personality-based inclinations in favor of the group's greater welfare. It specifically focuses on realizing the designs of greater consciousness, and of working to help manifest those designs. When not considering this spiritual dimension, talk of consensus building is necessarily limited to the mundane benefits of increased group participation in making and implementing decisions. These are not trifles of course, but

consensus process is about a lot more than motivational strategy. When such material benefits of consensus become the sole focus, the underlying purpose of the exercise is lost. Consensus building then becomes relatively empty and meaningless.

Another aspect of the decision-making process at Sirius is our two-tiered system of governance. One group, consisting of all full community members,

Improvement comes through willingness to participate in what is often a grinding, messy, exasperating process.

decides general policies, operating budgets, project and event planning, and other matters. A second group, the "core group" or board of directors, makes decisions about community purpose and direction, financial obligation, and membership matters.

This split in duties and responsibilities has sparked controversy at times. Some have claimed that since participation in decision making on the most critical issues is restricted to core group members, Sirius does not truly embrace consensus in terms of its governance. Charges of "elitism" and "arrogance" have occasionally been leveled at core group members from other members and outsiders as well.

Others concede that while hierarchy is present in the structure, it is appropriate because we must strike a balance between the responsibilities for making and implementing decisions. Core group members are required to work many additional

community labor hours to make sure our decisions get implemented. They also typically have invested more time into the community. A person must be a full community member for at least a year before being eligible for inclusion in the core group.

Any community member can attend core group meetings, and any member is welcome to provide input on issues. Anyone who feels that the core group has made a poor decision may call for further dialogue within the full community meeting, and the core group is obliged to reconsider its decision.

New candidates for the core group are proposed by that group and approved by full community membership. The most likely reason we wouldn't approve someone for the core group would involve that person's apparent ability, and/or their unwillingness to release attachment to personal objectives in favor of the well-being of the whole group. New members often find this more challenging than folks who have been around for a while.

In this sense, participation in the consensus process is more a learned skill than innate ability. People get better at it through practice. New community members, unaccustomed to making relatively weighty decisions affecting many other people, may have few skills in this area. But improvement comes through willingness to participate in what is often a grinding, messy, exasperating process much like that described in our guerrilla theater exercise. Our community's multi-tiered approach to governance may therefore provide a useful gradient method of learning the art and practice of consensus building as exercise in spiritual development.

Brice Wilson has been a member of Sirius since 1993 and a member of the core group since 1997.

REVIEWS



Books on Consensus and Facilitation

by Tree Bressen

THIRTY YEARS AGO, during the big '60s wave of community-building, there weren't a lot of resources out there on how to make decisions together. Brave groups of people plunged in with good intentions, high hopes, and a fair dose of naiveté. Some folks resisted having meetings at all, and even those who recognized a need for groups to come together at an appointed time to make decisions often weren't fully prepared to do it effectively.

Fortunately the past three decades have seen the emergence of excellent written resources on how to have meetings that are upbeat and productive. The books described here are loaded with helpful information on everything from what to do when a decision is blocked to how to deal with a crying baby. Some selections are specifically oriented toward consensus methods, while others broadly discuss facilitation or other relevant topics. Many of the books listed are available through the Community Bookshelf service of the Fellowship for Intentional Community (Rt. 1, Box 156, Rutledge, MO 63563; 660-883-5545; community-bookshelf@ic.org; www.ic.org.)



Building United Judgment: A Handbook for Consensus Decision Making

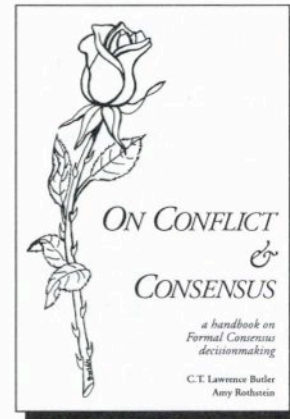
by Michel Avery, et al.
Center for Conflict Resolution, 1981.
Reprinted by Fellowship for Intentional Community, 1999
Pb., 124 pages. \$19 postpaid

Available from Community Bookshelf
Rt. 1, Box 156, Rutledge, MO 63563
660-883-5545;
communitybookshelf@ic.org; www.ic.org

For basic information on how to do consensus, *Building United Judgment*, originally published by the Center for Conflict Resolution (CCR) in Madison, Wisconsin, is the book many facilitators recommend first. Sample chapters include "Structuring Your Meeting," "Working With Emotions," "Communication Skills," and "Common Problems: What To Do About Them."

Chock-full of useful knowledge presented in an accessible manner, *Building United Judgment* also includes fascinating insights and opinions by individual authors and commentators, set off in boxes next to the text. For example, on paraphrasing: "This technique is tricky and often mis-used.... Gotta be tuned in to the speaker emotionally for this to work." The chapter on blocking includes an engaging description of the actual process the authors went through when they couldn't agree on what to write about the topic. Overall this book has a very down-to-earth feel.

While the extra bits give it the sense of being a work-in-progress, it's clear that the information has been "field-tested" through real experiences.



On Conflict and Consensus

by C.T. Butler and Amy Rothstein
Spiral bound, 61 pp. \$14 postpaid
Food Not Bombs Publishing, 1987
PO Box 853, Burlington, VT 05402
800-569-4054
Full text available free at:
www.consensus.net.

On Conflict and Consensus is the other consensus manual used by many communities. This booklet is simple and clear, providing a step-by-step procedure for using consensus decision making complete with flow chart. There is a section on how to evaluate meetings (something many groups overlook), and descriptions of possible roles (such as Agenda Planner, Advocate and Doorkeeper). Criticisms of the Formal Consensus approach that some communities have voiced are first, that the model suggests that all issues be raised in the form of a proposal, instead of allowing for raising a question or situation followed by collective development of a proposal, and second, that the model focuses too much on concerns, which can lead to a negative atmosphere in meetings. However, communities can choose to tweak the Formal Consensus guidelines to allow for more flexibility in these areas.

Introduction to Consensus

by Beatrice Briggs
Self-published, 2000
Spiral bound, 62 pp. \$15 postpaid
Also available in Spanish.
Available from PO Box 25
Black Earth, WI 53515
briggsbea@aol.com

This relatively new booklet is less dense than *Building United Judgment*, while including much basic information on the standard secular consensus approach. In contrast to the two manuals listed above, which each include a chapter on facilitation, a full half of Bea's booklet is devoted to facilitation, including sections such as "Supporting the Shy," "Silencing the Verbose," and "When You Don't Know What to Do Next." Plus it's the only resource here available in both Spanish and English.

Sharing Consensus: A Handbook for Consensus Workshops

80 pages. \$5.00 postpaid
Available from Nova Land
128 Hidden Springs Lane
Cookeville, TN 38501

A colleague recently introduced me to this booklet by an author who chooses to use no name. A sweet, homespun booklet filled with exercises, suggestions for posters, and Quaker anecdotes, the consensus approach outlined here is very different from what most of us who teach consensus are used to. For instance, the author believes that reliance on facilitators is too authoritarian—the only reason the "clerk" (the Quaker term for a facilitator) should repeat back the sense of the meeting to the group is to make sure it's correct for the notes. Here's an excerpt, to give you the sense of it:

Consensus is more a set of attitudes than a set of rules. It works best when done informally, avoiding jargon and simply doing the talking together necessary to build understanding. In their 300-year history the Quakers have never written

down an official set of rules for their meeting process. Actions such as checking to see if there is strong objection to a proposed course of action should occur naturally as a part of discussion, not as empty rituals or steps on a checklist.

While some might say that this approach is overly idealistic, it seems to me an important balance to the lists and techniques in other books. An evolution appears to be taking place in consensus, as groups such as the Center for Conflict Resolution and Movement for a New Society reacted to what some referred to as "the tyranny of structurelessness"* of the 1970s with structured agendas and facilitators to keep discussions on track. The author of *Sharing Consensus* advocates using those structures at most as training wheels.

* The landmark article, "The Tyranny of Structurelessness" by Joreen (*Communities Directory*, 1990, 1995 editions) addressed how the lack of explicit organizational structures in the '70s-era feminist groups hid decision making.

Reviews continued on next page...

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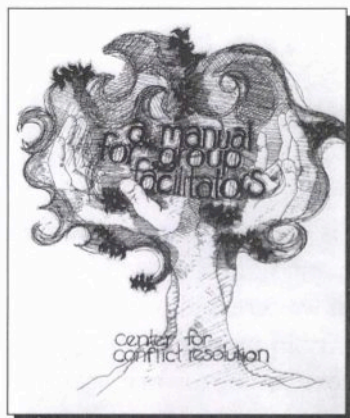
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And in a parallel universe, so to speak, three of the four facilitation books profiled below arose from the corporate or community organization context which has developed parallel to the alternative culture of activist politics and intentional communities.

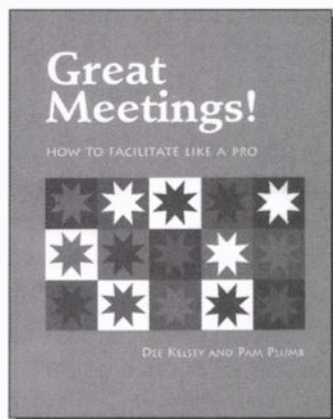


A Manual for Group Facilitators

by Brian Auvine, et al.
Center for Conflict Resolution, 1977, 1978
Reprinted by Fellowship for Intentional Community, 1999
Pb., 90 pp. \$19 postpaid
Available from Community Bookshelf
Rt. 1, Box 156, Rutledge, MO 63563
660-883-5545; bookshelf@ic.org;
bookshelf.ic.org

This facilitation handbook, published by the Center for Conflict Resolution four years before *Building United Judgment*, can be taken as a companion work. Like the other books on facilitation listed here, it's oriented toward how to facilitate for groups in which you are not a member, but almost all the information is quite useful for facilitating in your home community too. *A Manual for Group Facilitators* is a thorough overview, including my personally favorite chapter, "What Can Go Wrong: What To Do About It," which includes highlights such as: "When an Exercise Flops," "What Do You Do About Your Own Feelings?" and "Someone 'Freaks Out?'" Good advice abounds, with CCR's trademark field-tested feel.

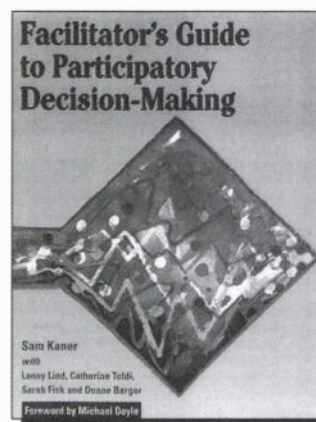
BEGINNING OUR SEGUE from alternative to mainstream books, something to notice right away is that the latter works don't treat the consensus process the same way. They tend to include consensus on a list of qualities that groups should strive for in making good decisions, rather than giving it a central and defining role.



Great Meetings! How to Facilitate Like a Pro by Dee Kelsey and Pam Plumb

Hanson Park Press, 1997
Pb., 175 pg. \$29.00
Available from Community Bookshelf
Rt. 1, Box 156, Rutledge, MO 63563
660-883-5545;
communitybookshelf@ic.org; www.ic.org

Great Meetings! is a wonderful overall book on facilitation. Easy to read, it covers a lot of territory—what's not to like? Especially check out the chapter, "Tools for Problem Solving," which describes half a dozen varieties of brainstorming, along with brain mapping, force-field analysis, and many other techniques. Other sample chapters include "Managing Conflict" and "Integrating Graphics." If you're only going to read one book on general facilitation (as opposed to consensus facilitation specifically), this is probably the one to choose.

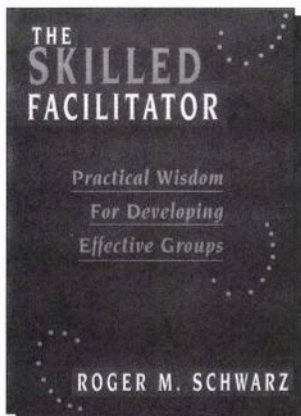


Facilitator's Guide to Participatory Decision-Making by Sam Kaner, et al.

New Society Publishers/
Community at Work, 1996
Pb., 255 pp. \$24.95
Available from Community Bookshelf
Rt. 1, Box 156, Rutledge, MO 63563
communitybookshelf@ic.org; www.ic.org

Facilitator's Guide to Participatory Decision-Making, is a product of the movement started by Michael Doyle and David Straus in 1976 with their book, *How to Make Meetings Work: The New Interaction Method* (the classic book for mainstream, hierarchical organizations on how to do participatory meetings). I was put off at first by the format, which is a series of handouts rather than a "normal" book. But the handouts are actually more accessible than straight prose for many people, and enable a group to focus attention on a specific process issue.

Central insights of Kaner's book for me included the advice that a group's getting clear on the structure of their decision-making process can prevent conflicts that will otherwise appear as interpersonal difficulties; the "Groan Zone" that groups go through on the way to creating shared understandings, when they become clear about the actual nature and extent of their differences; and "Gradients of Agreement"—the concept that how much group enthusiasm is enough to count as "agreement" on an issue can vary by group and occasion.

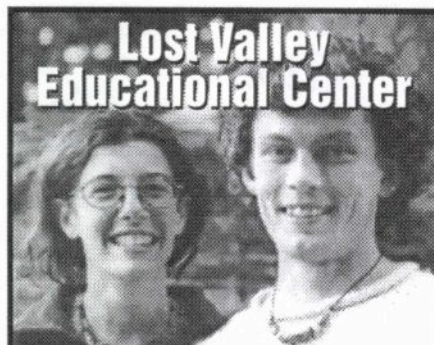


***The Skilled Facilitator:
Practical Wisdom for
Developing Effective Groups***
by Robert Schwarz

Jossey-Bass Inc., 1994
Hb. [?], 314 pp. \$34.95.
Available in bookstores, or
Jossey-Bass, 350 Sansome St.
San Francisco, CA 94104
415-433-1740; www.josseybass.com

Among business people, *The Skilled Facilitator* is considered a landmark. The most intellectually based of the books listed here, it has lots of great information if you can handle its dry, analytical style. Schwarz is particularly sensitive to how to intervene in groups in which you are not a member, while also including a section on what to do if you are a member. He also distinguishes between "basic" and "developmental" facilitation: the latter has the explicit goal of supporting a group's further development of process skills (thus working yourself out of a job).

Taken collectively, the books reviewed here contain an enormous amount of information about group process. I find myself referring to them year after year, picking up new bits on every reading. Ideally groups will take time to read widely and experiment to see what best meets the needs of the community.

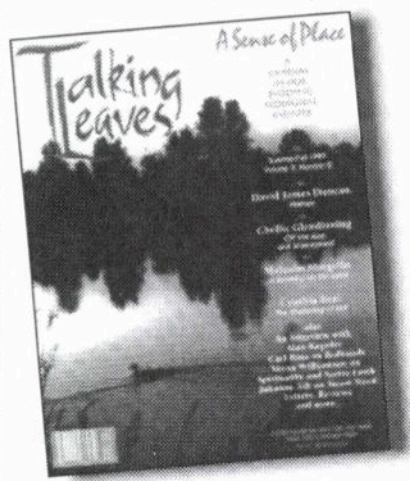


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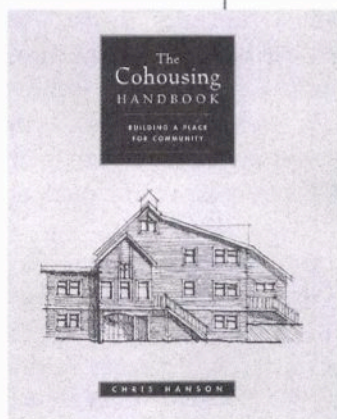


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I HAVE THOUGHT FOR SOME YEARS that any governing system will work, provided only that the group being governed is reasonably contented with it and expects it to work. Some groups use the consensus process and take more time to reach agreement. Impatient groups might prefer the faster majority-rule vote. As for Twin Oaks, where I live, we have long used the Planner/Manager system, and most of us agree that it serves us better than most other suggested systems would. So as I describe Planner/Manager government, I am not necessarily recommending it for other communities. I am just explaining it for the curious and for anybody else who might want to try it.

We have probably 50 or 60 Managers, and they are basically autonomous. The system was originally created out of the theory that a lot of people like to have a little bit of authority. So a great many members can call the shots in their particular area. The Food Manager decides whether we're going to buy bananas or not, the Bikes Manager determines whether a given bike is worth fixing, and so forth, multiplied by dozens of decisions that are made every day, quietly and without having to consult anybody else. This doesn't mean that Managers don't consult other people about their decisions. On the contrary, consulting another member or two who probably knows something about one's area is a daily occurrence. The point is that this consulting isn't required. The managers are empow-

ered, within their budget, to act on their own judgment. It is only when that judgment seems to other people to have been wrong that their decisions might be appealed to the Planners, where they might be upheld or overturned or compromised.

Planners are three community members who agree to serve for 18 months (plus a Stand-in Planner who serves from three to six months and may go on to be a full Planner later). They are in charge of the community's general welfare, and their theoretical authority is sweeping. In their turn, they can be overruled by a majority written vote of the full membership. This happens once every couple of years. These days the Planners mostly don't even have hurt feelings when a majority vote overrules them. They figure, "We used the best judgment we could and tried to protect the community from ... (whatever it was)... and if the community doesn't want to be protected, fine. At least our conscience is clean."

Planners usually meet about three times a week and deal with whatever issues come up at the time. Issues can be large or small. The larger they are the more time the Planners use in coming to a decision. They talk to people, perhaps have a meeting or two on the subject, maybe even put out a written survey to gather group opinions. Then they examine all this information, compare their own opinions to the general public input, and eventually announce a decision. This may take several

FEDERATION UPDATE



BY KAT KINKADE

months, though they have been known to move faster when a particular issue seems to require it.

The Planner/Manager system can give a superficial impression that is quite mistaken. That is the assumption that we are a hierarchy, with the citizenry reporting to the Managers and Managers reporting to the Planners. This is not true. There is no "reporting" relationship in our system at all. There are levels of authority coupled with responsibility, and it is true that the Planners can overrule a Manager, but this rare occurrence does not constitute a hierarchical arrangement on a day-to-day basis. It is merely something that can be done to get a disagreement settled if necessary.

Though there are norms around Planner behavior, there are almost no solid rules controlling it, which means that the kind of decisions that come out of one Board of Planners might have a totally different feel from those of a different board. Just about any member who really wants to serve as a Planner will get an opportunity to do so. Members know that they can always overrule any outrageous decision the current Planners might make, so they are fairly relaxed about the original appointment.

We are not always satisfied with our form of government, but we have never been able to get any agreement on how to change it, so it goes on, year after year, giving us decisions we can live with.

Kat Kinkade is a cofounder of Twin Oaks and East Wind communities. She is author of "Is It Utopia Yet? An Insider's View of Twin Oaks Community In Its 26th Year" (Twin Oaks, 1994).

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CM: *What do you think the FIC should do?*

BD: We have to go back to the original purpose of the organization and be clear about what inclusivity means to everyone. I believe it's not to communicate any one style. It changes the organization's purpose to allow any one group to come in and express their style in our public interface, whether that group uses conservative Christian, radical feminist,

or new-age dress and language. So when FIC uses the voice of any one of these non-mainstream populations, it loses its very core purpose—trying to make the idea of community available to everyone.

If any of the non-mainstream groups are turned off by the FIC because they require that their own language or dress style be expressed in order to join us, we'd have to become that group. If we used, for example, Bible language, or queer activist language, and Bible groups or queer activists chose to join us because of that, we'd become a Bible or

queer activist group.

If a particular group's style has to be represented, then we become that style. We become an organization that belongs to that style, rather than belonging to the communities movement as a whole.

Now, I have no objection when Fundamentalists Christians or radical feminists use their language publicly as a strategy to influence people in the mainstream. But if they use that strategy to communicate *from within an organization that has as its purpose to communicate with everyone*, then I believe the use of that language or style takes over the organization and changes its purpose.

For information on the Communities Directory, Communities magazine, Intentional Communities Web Site, Visions of Utopia video documentary, Community Bookshelf mail-order service, regional Art of Community gatherings, or to get involved with the FIC's work, contact Fellowship for Intentional Community, R 1, Box 156, Rutledge, MO 63563; 660-883-5545; 800-995-8342; fic@ic.org; www.ic.org.

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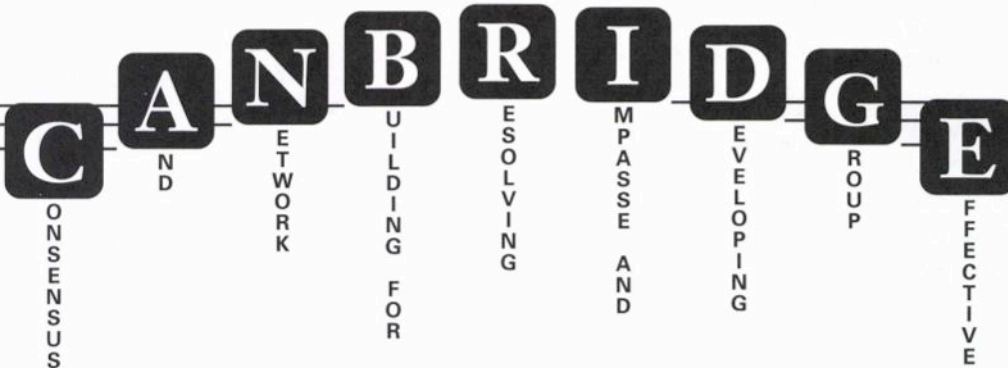
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- decisions that everyone gets behind?
- clarity about what your group wants and how to get it?

CANBRIDGE can help. A consulting team of experienced communitarians, we offer training in consensus and meeting facilitation, and are available for any size group or boulder-strewn agenda where skilled, outside help is wanted. We specialize in working with the whole person, welcoming emotional, intuitive, and body intelligence as well as people's best thinking. And we emphasize teaching the skills we demonstrate, so that next time your group will be better able to navigate those rocky moments on your own.

CANBRIDGE

c/o Laird Schaub
Rt 1, Box 155-D
Rutledge MO
63563

660-883-5545
laird@ic.org

continued from page 48

powering to use in groups that have an outside authority with overriding decision-making power over the group's decisions.

- Time may be needed outside the meeting to help resolve interpersonal difficulties so that they do not continually hijack or disrupt the group's process.

- Since the Dynamic Consensus process recognizes the whole person, it can take extra time in the moment to access and understand emotional or intuitive information.

- Members of the group need to be present to build decisions together, and care needs to be taken to integrate those who miss meetings.

- If the group falls into working with consensus as a unanimous voting process, it can become mired down in details.

- If trust is low in the group, it is more difficult to come to agreements. The group may need to plan for spending extra time to build the level of trust.

Cultural Obstacles to Consensus Processes

- *Reliance on hierarchical structures.* We are often conditioned to avoid taking responsibility while finding others to blame and passing the buck. Influence and authority have become associated with power and position, rather than leadership and guidance.

- *Competition.* Winning is primary to our upbringing in the classroom, sports, and meetings.

- *Attachment to ideas.* Individual credit is often given for being the source of an idea. We have learned to associate ourselves with our ideas, to hold them closely and defend them, and to earn recognition through this process.

- *Defensive listening.* We are not trained in compassionate listening. Instead we are trained in reactive or defensive listening. Responding quickly is often rewarded over a

thoughtful, caring, response.

- *Instant gratification.* We have little respect or value for time as an incubator for quality thinking, sensing, and responding. "Faster" is associated with "better."

- *Majority rule.* While the concept of majority rule has been the foundation of democratic process, it is not without drawbacks. Majority rule gives rise to an adversarial, competitive approach to decision making, to lobbies, and to powerful single (self) interest groups.

- *Focus on results.* We have learned to focus only on getting results with little regard for how we do things (the process). Though some people might leave a meeting with hurt feelings and angry thoughts, in our culture such a meeting may be considered a success.

- *Articulateness.* Being articulate is great; however, not everyone has the gift of clear, concise speech in group settings. Most groups give little consideration to members with forming or scattered concerns and proposals, even though they may contain golden nuggets. Subsequently, we become inhibited in our sharing of ideas based on our perception of the standard of articulateness the group accommodates.

Dynamic Consensus Process Results In:

- The best course of action possible for this group at this time.

- Group synergy and a collaborative spirit in meetings and in the group.

- An increased ability over time to reach effective creative solutions.

- Agreements with support for action and follow through.

- Guidance for relating to others, for personal behavior both in and out of meetings.

- A shift from reliance on outside authority toward taking responsibility and developing inner trust.

- Continuous personal and group learning.

To reiterate, it is a radical notion that everyone in a group can reach agreement together. It is radical to satis-

fy (and work toward integrating) all views. If we can create a world (or just a piece of the world) where everyone is truly heard and respected, we might revolutionize the way people interrelate. The way we work together—our process—is a key to these transformational ideas becoming a reality. Collaborative processes can open up the doors for miracles to happen.

The Dynamic Consensus process is more than just a technique for building cohesive agreements. It is a way of being, a way of listening, and a way of understanding. Working effectively with consensus processes gives hope that we can overcome our differences and difficulties and create a more harmonious world.



Paul DeLapa (left) and Betty Didcoct.

Betty Didcoct is a trainer, facilitator, and consultant for TIES Consulting who teaches consensus and facilitation worldwide, with students in 20 countries. She can be reached at ties@ic.org or PO Box 110, Cataldo, ID 83810; 208-682-3550.

Paul DeLapa is a consultant, trainer, and group facilitator. He holds a Master's degree in Organizational Development & Transformation and works with small businesses, large corporations, nonprofits, and intentional communities teaching consensus and facilitating. He can be reached at: 141 Baxter St, Vallejo, CA 94590; 707-645-8886; paul@ic.org

CLASSIFIEDS



Communities classified ads reach almost 5,000 people who are seriously interested in community. They include:

- any service, product, workshop or publication that is useful to people living in, or interested in living in communities
- products produced by people living in community
- land for sale which may be of interest to people forming or expanding communities
- personal ads.

Please note that the CLASSIFIED DEADLINE FOR THE SPRING 2001 ISSUE (OUT IN MARCH) IS JANUARY 20TH.

The classified rate is \$.50 per word. We now have a discounted rate of \$.40/wd. for a four time insertion and if you are an FIC member, you may take off an additional five percent. We appreciate your payment on ordering. Make check or money order out to Communities and send it, your typed or clearly printed copy with specified word count, how many times you wish the ad to appear and under which category (you may suggest a new category) to: Patricia Greene, 13 West Branch Rd., Heath, MA 01339. Phone or fax: 413-337-4037; email: pea-green@javanet.com If you are emailing me an ad, please be sure to send your mailing address, phone and put the check in the mail at the same time.

An additional benefit of advertising in Communities classifieds is that you get a half price listing on our Marketplace web page if you like. To place your web ad: www.ic.org.

NOTE: new picture listings with Land and Homes For Sale ads. See section for details. All other listings can be found in the Reach and Calendar columns.

BOOKS AND PUBLICATIONS

INTRODUCTION TO CONSENSUS. Useful information about participatory group process and sustainable decision-making. Includes 28-page Guide For Facilitators. Also available in Spanish. \$15 check or money order to Beatrice Briggs, POB 25, Black Earth, WI 53515. Briggsbea@aol.com

CLASSES, WORKSHOPS, CONFERENCES

COMMUNITY DIALOGS across North America, sponsored by the Fellowship for Intentional Community (FIC), publisher of this magazine. What does "community" mean to you? What would help you create more community in your life? And how can the FIC help? Community Dialogs are happening in many towns and cities across the continent; your area could be next. Seeking local hosts to bring people together for a discussion exploring these and other topics. For more information, contact the FIC office at RR1, Box 156, Rutledge, MO 63563; 660-883-5545; fic@ic.org

TOOLS FOR INTENTIONAL LIVING on your own and in Community. In the Avatar Course you learn how to get out of your own way, dream-and achieve-bigger, connect more easily, resolve conflicts quickly, and enjoy the process a whole bunch more. We have found these tools to be remarkably effective in our own Community, and we create a strong Community feel during our course. Avatar is the "how-to" course for deliberate living. Group discounts. Contact Ma'ikwe at 417-935-2984; mitrasom@altavista.com

CONSULTANTS

VASTU VEDIC RESEARCH FOUNDATION. Ancient Indian architectural traditions hold that a building is a living organism and can be designed in harmonic resonance with the

underlying energy structure of the universe. Such a building becomes a generator of coherence, attuning the occupants to the universal laws and increasing health, wealth and spiritual well-being. Design services/consultation. Vastuved@yahoo.com

EXPERIENCED COMMUNITARIAN who has helped dozens of communities run better meetings and work together. Let me help you with new ideas and inspirations for working together. Weekend consensus workshops custom designed for your group at affordable rates. Workshops include notebook full of ideas and a full year of remote consulting. I can help you get past your blocks and become aware of the fullness and potential of your group. For more information: Rob Sandelin at 360-668-2043; <http://www.ic.org/nica/cw1.htm>; floriferous@msn.com

FACILITATION AND WORKSHOPS on consensus and other decision-making tools. Learn skills to make your meetings upbeat and productive from planning agendas to dealing with "difficult" people. Save hours of time and frustration and deepen your sense of community. Contact: Tree Bressen, 541-484-1156; tree@ic.org

LAND FOR SALE

Run a one-inch picture of your land or home with your copy for only \$20 more. Send high contrast, horizontal photo by the stated deadline.

PERFECT FOR START-UP COMMUNITY. 40 acres. Two magnificent post/beam homes, rustic two-story cabin, additional full basement foundation. Beautiful woodworking, grid and solar-electric power, outbuildings. 29 miles NW of Spokane, WA, easy access to Long Lake. Irrigated gardens, year-round spring, two small ponds, meadows, woods. Beautiful views-surrounding forests. Spokane Mesa. \$285,000. 509-258-9443; MargaretRhode@aol.com; johnlscott.com/13751

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IDEAL COMMUNITY PROPERTY. 11 acre semi-rural, partially solar-powered homestead, an hour from Asheville, NC. Two houses (three bedroom/two bath, office, and three bedroom, one bath, office); 4,000 sq. ft. fenced organic garden; three acre pasture; 2,800 watt-hours/mo. solar system, AC & DC (grid backup) and two wells (one with DC pump); three outbuildings, 4-5 acres woods. 828-863-2802;diana@ic.org

MAGAZINES, NEWSLETTERS

WHY PAY RENT OR MAKE MORTGAGE PAYMENTS, when you can live rent free? The Caretaker Gazette contains property caretaking/housesitting openings, advice and information for property caretakers, housesitters and landowners. Published since 1983. Subscribers receive 700+ property caretaking opportunities each year, worldwide. Some estate management positions start at \$50,000/yr. Plus benefits. Subscriptions; \$27/yr. The Caretaker Gazette, POB 5887-I, Carefree, AZ 85377; 480-488-1970; www.angelfire.com/wa/caretaker.

PERSONALS

CONCERNED SINGLES links compatible, socially conscious singles who care about peace, social justice, racism, gender equality, the environment, personal growth. Nationwide/international. All ages. Since 1984. Free sample. Box 444-CO, Lennoxdale, MA 01242; 413-445-6309; www.concernedsingles.com

GREEN SINGLES NEWSLETTER. Connecting singles in the environmental, vegetarian and animal rights communities for friendship, dating and romance. Membership around the world and around the corner. Since 1985. Free information: Box 69-CM, Pickerington, OH 43147; www.greensingles.com.

SERVICES

THERAPEUTIC BODYWORK. Seeking community to do bodywork, ie. Trager, Z.B., CranioSacral, Massage, Shiatsu. Ischweit@yourin-ter.net

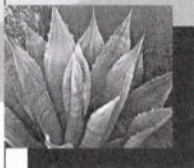
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REACH



Reach is a regular feature intended to help match people looking for communities with communities looking for people. As the most up-to-date and widely read clearinghouse available to you, it reaches those who are seriously interested in community.

You may use the form on the last page of Reach to place an ad.

Note: THE REACH DEADLINE FOR THE SPRING 2001 ISSUE (OUT IN MARCH) IS JANUARY 20TH!

The special Reach rate is only \$.25 per word (up to 100 words, \$.50 per word thereafter) so why not use this opportunity to network with others interested in community? We offer discounts for multiple insertions as well: \$.23 per word for two times and \$.20 per word for four times. If you are an FIC member, take off an additional five percent.

Please make check or money order payable to Communities, and send it, plus your ad copy, word count, number of insertions and category

to: Patricia Greene, 13 West Branch Rd., Heath, MA 01339; phone and fax, 413-337-4037, email: peagreen@javanet.com. (If you email an ad, please include your mailing address, phone number and be sure to send off the check at the same time.)

Suggestion: get a larger response by not excluding anyone. Include address, phone/fax, and e-mail/web site, if you have it. If you require a financial investment, target your ad to people with financial resources by letting readers know this. Caveat to readers: never, but never, drop in on any community unannounced!

NOTE: new picture listings with Community House For Sale ads. See section for details.

Listings for workshops, land, books, products, etc. including personals, belong in the Classified Dept. and are charged at a .50/wd. rate. Please see that column for instructions.

COMMUNITIES WITH OPENINGS

ABUNDANT DAWN COMMUNITY, Floyd, Virginia. Experienced community founders seek pioneers. We are committed to dealing openly with conflict and to considering carefully the impacts of our actions on the planet. Our 90 acres of beautiful southern Appalachian land has building sites for four or five small sub-communities ("pods"). So far we are two pods: Tekiah (an income sharing group) and Dayspring Circle (an independent income group). We want to grow, both by taking on new members in existing pods, and by taking on new groups. Business opportunities include

organic gardening, portable sawmill operation, and a hemp hammock business. Some members work in nearby cities. We include a diversity of spiritual and sexual orientations. Families welcome. POB 433, Floyd, VA 24091; abundantdawn@ic.org; www.abundantdawn.org

ACORN, Mineral, Virginia. We are a young consensus community creating an egalitarian culture that values fun, children, relationships and varied, fulfilling work. We share income from selling crafts, organic farming and occasional outside jobs, and work together to build and maintain our home on 72 acres. Acorn, 1259-CM12 Indian Creek Rd., Mineral, VA 23117; 540-894-0595; acorn@ic.org

ARC RETREAT CENTER, Stanchfield, Minnesota. 55 miles north of Minneapolis. Emphasizing peace, justice, prayer, simplicity. Has openings for adult volunteers and staff for one year or longer commitments, to join a resident ecumenical community which provides hospitality for guests seeking retreat and renewal. For information contact: ARC, 1680 373rd Ave., NE, Stanchfield, MN 555080; 763-689-3540; arcrcetreat@hotmail.com

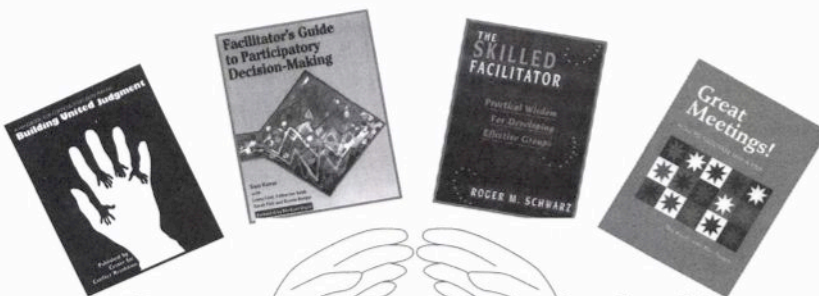
AQUARIAN CONCEPTS, Sedona, Arizona. Founded by Gabriel of Sedona and Niann Emerson Chase in 1989. Currently 100 members full-time. We love children. International flavor. Global change work for Destiny Reservists in Divine Administration. God-centered community based on teachings of The URANTIA Book and Continuing Fifth Epochal Revelation-The Cosmic Family Volumes as received by Gabriel of Sedona. Clean air, pure water, organic gardens. Starseed Schools of Melchizedek (all ages) and healing environment which includes morontian counseling and other alternative practices. Global Change Music with Gabriel of Sedona and the Bright and Morning Star Band with the vocal CDs "Holy City" and "CosmoPop 2000," and Future Studios with CosmoArt, CosmoTheater and video productions. Planetary Family Services, including light construction, stone masonry, landscaping, cleaning and maintenance, teepees and yurts, computer services, elder home care. Serious spiritual commitment required. Student commitment also available. POB 3946, Sedona, AZ 86340; 520-204-1206; aquarianconcepts@sedona.net ; www.aquarianconcepts.com; www.globalchangemusic.com

BREITENBUSH HOT SPRINGS, Detroit, Oregon. We are a wilderness retreat and conference center owned and operated by an intentional community, organized as a worker-owned cooperative. Breitenbush is surrounded by old growth temperate rain forest, one of the last of its kind on Earth, and possesses the highest concentration of thermal springs in the Oregon Cascades. We have a variety of hot tubs, natural hot spring pools, a steam sauna and all buildings are heated geothermally. The work and business ethic is one of stewardship; caring for the land while insuring accessibility of the healing waters to all who respect them. Breitenbush hosts events involving human potential: meditation, yoga, theater, dance... Breitenbush provides housing and a variety of benefits for its staff of 40 to 60 people. We are looking for talented, dedicated people in the areas of housekeeping, cooking, office (reservations, registration and administration), maintenance, construction and massage therapy (Oregon LMT required). Our mission is to provide a safe and potent environment for social and personal growth. Breitenbush Hot Springs, Personnel Director, POB 578, Detroit, OR 97342; 503-854-3320.

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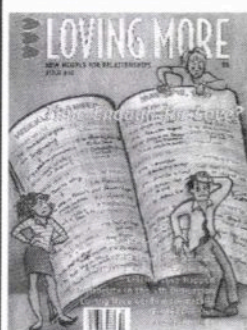
CAMPBILL VILLAGE MINNESOTA, Sauk Centre, Minnesota. Part of the International Campbill movement. Located in rural central Minnesota. Life-sharing community of 60 people, 25 of whom are adults with special needs. We are on 400 acres-woods, fields, river, ponds. We have a dairy farm, beef farm, weavery (rugs and scarves), woodshop (toys and household items), bakery (bread, cookies, cereals), dollmaking shop, food processing kitchen and large vegetable gardens. We provide our own bread and biodynamic/organic meat, milk and vegetables. We live and work together with respect for each person's abilities. Although we work out of a non-denominational Christian philosophy, we accept people of all spiritual paths. Fostering a mood of reverence and gratitude is an essential part of Campbill life. We celebrate the seasonal and Christian festivals of the year with songs, stories, plays and other activities that are prepared together in the community. We seek people to join us-families, couples, single people. We need people who can be House parents (usually with four special needs people and one or two other "coworkers"), a dairy farmer, gardeners and people willing to lend a hand wherever needed. We are looking for long term, committed people generally starting with a six month get-acquainted period. We provide health insurance, three weeks vacation and meet each person's needs as possible. For information: Rt. 3, Box 249, Sauk Centre, MN 56378; 320-732-6365; Fax: 320-732-3204; CVMN@rea-alp.com.

CHILDREN FOR THE FUTURE, Champaign, Illinois. Multicultural, peace oriented, income-sharing community of five adult non-smokers and five children in a beautiful neighborhood just two blocks from the University of Illinois. Non-sectarian with small grade school and day care, as well as our community bakery with members working in these or other jobs depending on their skills, professions and desires. Academically-oriented, hoping to have and raise many intelligent and well-rounded children who will contribute positively to society. Singles, couples, students, international members welcome. Great fun. Our goal is to have 50 adult members. 217-328-3349 or 800-450-5343; www.childrenforthefuture.org

DANCING RABBIT, Rutledge, Missouri. We are actively seeking new members to join us in creating our vibrant home and sustainability demonstration project. We are building our homes with earth-friendly materials on our 280 beautiful, rolling acres in northeast Missouri. We live, work and play together; with cooperation and feminism as basic principles. We grow much of our food and share delicious organic meals together every day. We make our decisions by consensus. If you're looking for a nurturing home where you can live more sustainably and make a difference in the world, come visit us-help make our ecovillage grow! One Dancing Rabbit Lane, Rutledge, MO 63563; 660-883-5511; dancingrabbit@ic.org; www.dancingrabbit.org

BROADDUS FARM, East Central New Mexico. Nonsmokers only, no illegal substances. Organic gardening. Helping in community is expected to receive free vegetables and live rent free. No particular mind-set expected. Quiet and private. Request details: Broaddus Farm, POB 153, Elida, NM 88116; 505-274-6440.

EARTHAVEN, Black Mountain, North Carolina. Ecospiritual ecovillage in the Blue Ridge Moun-



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- **Green Politics**, quarterly newspaper
- **Synthesis/Regeneration**, quarterly magazine of Green social thought

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tains invites adventurous, dedicated folks willing to pioneer a transformed cultural paradigm. Visit or inquire about membership opportunities. "Infopak" and four newsletters available for \$15 from Earthaven Association, 1025 Camp Elliott Road, Black Mountain, NC 28711. Visit our website at www.earthaven.org or leave phone number at 828-669-3937.

EAST WIND, Tecumseh, Missouri. A 75-member Federation of Egalitarian (FEC) community, est. 1973. Located on 1,045 acres of land in the Ozark foothills of southern Missouri. The topography is heavily forested and scenic. Like other FEC communities, East Wind members value ecological awareness, equality, cooperation, and nonviolence. Personal freedom is important to us. We enjoy flexible work schedules, incorporating choices from our successful businesses and domestic labors. Write or call and please contact us before visiting. East Wind Community, Box CM-R, Tecumseh, MO 65760; 417-679-4682; visit@eastwind.org

ECOVILLAGE COHOUSING, Ithaca, New York. A great place to live! We are creating an environmental village that will be composed of several cohousing communities integrated with a working farm and education center. As an experiment in sustainable living, we already inspire visitors from around the world. EVI actively seeks a diverse membership, including ethnic, economic, physical ability, sexual orientation, age and spiritual. There are several homes for sale in the first neighborhood. We are also seeking new members.

bers to join our diverse second neighborhood group (SoNG), which plans to begin building in 2001. Come see our beautiful 176 acre site near a vibrant college town. Stay overnight in our first neighborhood, a lively community of 30 families, share a meal in the common house and visit our 9.5 acre organic farm. EcoVillage welcomes you! Check out our web site at: www.ecovillage.ithaca.ny.us and contact: Liz Walker, 607-255-8276; ecovillage@cornell.edu; EcoVillage, Anabel Taylor Hall, Cornell Univ., Ithaca, NY 14853.

THE FELLOWSHIP COMMUNITY, Spring Valley, New York. Located 30 minutes north of NYC, we are an intergenerational community founded in 1966 centered around the care of the elderly. Now numbering about 150, we grow most of our vegetable needs biodynamically, enjoy a variety of animals, an apple orchard as well as practical work activities such as a candle shop, metal shop, wood shop, weavery/handwork, greenhouse, publication press, bakery, outlet store, medical practice. Children, co-workers and the elderly all may work together in these activities. The spiritual science (anthroposophy) of Rudolf Steiner is the basis for our work. There is a Waldorf School and several other anthroposophical initiatives in the neighborhood. Our lifestyle is an intense social/cultural commitment to the future of mankind. Check out our web site at www.FellowshipCommunity.org Write to Ann Scharff, c/o The Executive Circle at 241 Hungry Hollow Rd., Spring Valley, NY 10977, or call 914-356-8494.

GROUP HOUSE, Seattle, Washington. Looking for a warm, active woman, mid-40's to mid-50's to complete our four-adult group house, created for interpersonal growth, mindful living and consensual sharing. We're a family in a cohousing com-

munity in NE Seattle, and an excellent home base for retreat, clarity reconnection, life work and lifestyle changes. Martin, Karen and Tony, 22229 East Lost Lake Rd., Snohomish, WA 98296; 360-668-1931; starsighted@hotmail.com

RIVER GROVE CONSERVANCY, West of Palm Springs, California. Gated farmhouse, private studio for one in subtropical valley at the base of snow-capped Mount San Jacinto. Near universities, semi-rural, horses okay. Optionally participate with species restoration, reforestation and gardening. Expenses: \$335 monthly. 909-925-8110; 310-457-1268; e5m@hotmail.com

SANDHILL FARM, Rutledge, Missouri. Family-style, income-sharing, egalitarian community looking for new members to help build a caring, sustainable lifestyle, respectful of the earth and each other. We support ourselves growing and selling organic food (sorghum, honey, mustard, tempeh, garlic, horseradish), helping build the communities movement (we do administrative work for FIC), and by having fun! We grow most of our own food and value the energy put into that process. We operate by consensus and hold group meetings twice weekly. We are looking for people who value simple living, are self-motivated, conscientious, and willing to follow through with conflict resolution. We have experience homeschooling. Single parents or families with a child of four to ten years old are particularly encouraged to visit. We are looking to expand our membership from the current five adults and one child. Having a sense of humor and a joy for living are big pluses. We have recently joined energies with Dancing Rabbit (a community two miles away aiming to build a sustainable ecovillage.) Interns welcome April-November. Sandhill Farm, Rt. 1, Box 155-C, Rutledge, MO 63563; 660-883-5543; sandhill@ic.org

SALT CREEK INTENTIONAL COMMUNITY, Port Angeles, Washington. We are four non-sectarian, middle-aged, mostly traditional adults seeking members who share our vision of community which is: six to eight "families" who take responsibility to learn, communicate honestly, adapt and cooperate to create balanced, peaceful lives while restoring and sustaining our natural environment on 55 acres of forest, creek and farmland. We are not income sharing. We have a permit for a seven-lot cluster development, and are developing an organic market garden. Our dream is to build a common house and six individually owned small houses. We are still researching our legal structure but are leaning toward a homeowner association with common ownership of the common areas and open space. We are located 13 miles west of Port Angeles, a town of 20,000 near the Olympic National Park. SASE to Salt Creek Intentional Community, 585 Wasankari Rd., Port Angeles, WA 98363; janevavan1@aol.com

TWIN OAKS, Louisa, Virginia. Twin Oaks has been a model of sustainable community living for over 30 years. We are currently looking for new members, and would love to have you visit. We can offer you: a flexible work schedule in our community businesses, an abundance of homegrown organic food, a thriving social scene, and an established culture of non-violence and egalitarianism. You can offer us: your talents and skills (or your unskilled enthusiasm) and your desire to live lightly on the land and share income. For information: Twin Oaks, 138-R Twin Oaks Rd., Louisa, VA 23093; 540-894-5126; twinoaks@ic.org; www.twinoaks.org

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UNION ACRES COMMUNITY, Whittier, North Carolina. We seek responsible, fun-loving, ecologically conscientious people to purchase lots and join our growing community. Contact: Union Acres, 654 Heartwood Way, Whittier, NC 28789; swasapp@earthlink.net

WINDTREE RANCH, Douglas, Arizona. Remote foothills, eco-sustainable, poly, Pagan, naturist, vegan, toxin-free, non-profit. RR2, Box 1, Douglas, AZ 85607-9802; 520-364-4611; windtreeranch@theriver.com; www.windtree.org

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MANITOU ARBOR ECOVILLAGE, Comstock, Michigan. Forming eco-spiritual community seeks members desiring intentional community in a suburban area. Sharing talents, labor and resources to plan and develop sustainable culture on 270 acres including woodlands, lake, marsh and fields. Future residential units, cottage industries, food production and alternative local economy planned. Shared governance. Financial investment required. Your ideas welcome. Contact: V. Jones, POB 113, Nazareth, MI 49074-0113; manarbev@lueckdatasystems.com; <http://www.lueckdatasystems.com/~manarbev>

NAMASTE GREENFIRE COHOUSING, Center Barnstead, New Hampshire. Active ecology (permaculture), nature sanctuary on 49 diverse, secluded acres, seek investor co-participant cohousing residents. NGC, POB 31, Center Barnstead, NH 03225; 603-776-7776; nhamaste@yahoo.com

NOAH'S ARK 2, Texas. One hour east of Austin. Establishing open-hearted, earth-sheltered center for friendly, progressive folks since 1995. Weekenders, jobsharing. 4001 Oakridge, Houston, TX 77009; 713-863-0433; Quddusc@aol.com

OAK CREEK COMMONS COHOUSING, Paso Robles, California. We seek members to design and live in our community. 31 private units and five single family lots are planned on 14.4 acres.

10.75 acres of oak woodlands and a year round creek will be preserved. Permaculture and Feng Shui experts have been consulted. Shopping, public transportation, schools and parks are within a short walk. Projected home prices of \$130,000 to \$270,000 (1-4 bedrooms) include a share in the common house, organic gardens and orchards, children's play areas, underground parking, workshop, hot tub and pool. Ideally located on the Central California Coast, Paso Robles (pop. 23,000) is halfway between San Francisco and Los Angeles and 30 minutes north of San Luis Obispo. It has a beautiful historic downtown and a wonderful "can do" sense of community. Cuesta Community College and Cal Poly University are nearby. The area's warm summers and mild winters are influenced by the Pacific Ocean just 25 miles away. The site is owned by the group and our plans have been submitted to the city for approval. Mary Kraus is our site and common house programming architect and we have hired Chris Scott/Hanson of Cohousing Resources as our project manager. For more info, contact Mike Swettenam, 344 15 St., Paso Robles, CA 93446; 805-239-2872; fax 805-239-2601;; OakCreekCC@webtv.net; Web site: <http://cohousing.urbanden.net>

SEEKING PARTNERS: about a dozen adults committed that integrity is the source of workability in the matter, to forward the communal experiment "ethical science theatre." Alexis 631-736-3085.

SOCIETY QUASARKNIA, Seattle, Washington. Refugee from Mundania: Welcome to QuasArknia! Balance autonomy and communion in an alternative reality for alternative realists. Experience transpersonal growth in a family of celebratory worldmakers. Inner-city binaural beat bohemians and synaptic artists in Spacious Imagination invite you to visit our website now under construction. We'd like to hear from Kosmo-eccentric dharmaadventurers. We are non-smoking vegetarians and social pioneers in a merry-hearted, trans-conventional family. We experience home as spiritual, creative sanctuary. If you grok commitment, desire a spacious, gracious and audacious life of simple authenticity, a supra fictional experience awaits. Society QuasArknia, 700-East Mercer St. #206, Seattle, WA 98102; quasarknia@aol.com; www.quasarknia.com

PEOPLE LOOKING

ENVIRONMENTAL, INNOVATIVE, non-religious, fun-loving family of four seeking intentional and/or cohousing community of like-minded folks. He's generous, handy, skilled problem solver. She's a midwife, cook, craftswoman. Daughter, nine, enjoys cooking, arts & crafts, animals, music. Other child is due 5/01. Interested in home/community schooling. Seeking kind people: supportive, friendly, non-judgmental. Currently in NY, looking to relocate somewhere warm year-round, laid back, plenty of space. Another country also an option. We're non-smokers, supportive of natural and naturalist lifestyles. Looking to join/help form a community where our skills are useful and call our home. Adam & Marcia Roberts, Box 766, Montauk, NY 11954; happyfam@hotmail.com

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ARTIST SEEKS COMMUNITY. Working visual artist, 75 years young, who loves writing, music, all art forms, seeks urban community in warm climate. Nancy Strode, 833 LaRoda St., Santa Barbara, CA 93111; 805-683-4818.

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INTERNS AND WORK OPPORTUNITIES

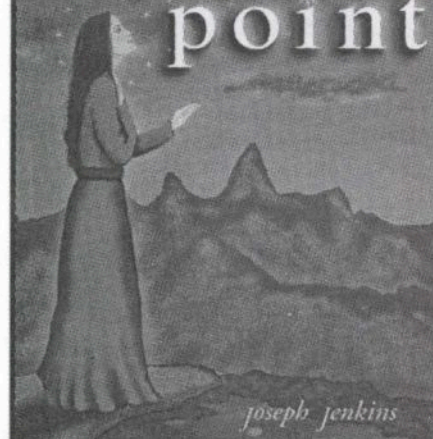
ADIRONDACK HERBS, Galway, New York. Open positions: A. Firewood Reader; B. New Science Officer-must be a person of Atlantian background familiar with Ancient Technologies of Free Energy and Perpetual Motion; C. Meteorological Officer-must observe work from a reclining position and promptly warn workers if it starts to rain; D. Slow Motion Researcher-must be able to move small objects very slowly from one place to another for no apparent reason. We are also starting a serious e-business and offer shares to programmer and engineer residing at another community. 518-883-3453; herb@klink.net

AQUARIAN CONCEPTS, Sedona, Arizona. Lead guitarist wanted for Gabriel of Sedona's Bright and Morning Star Band. Male or Female. Send demo. See our community listing under "Communities With Openings" above.

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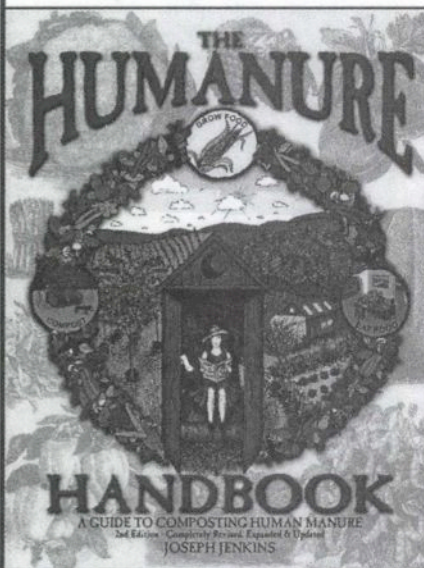


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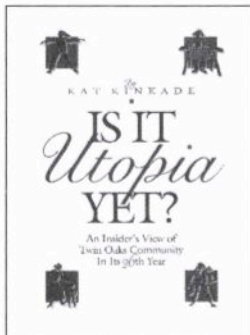


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RESOURCES

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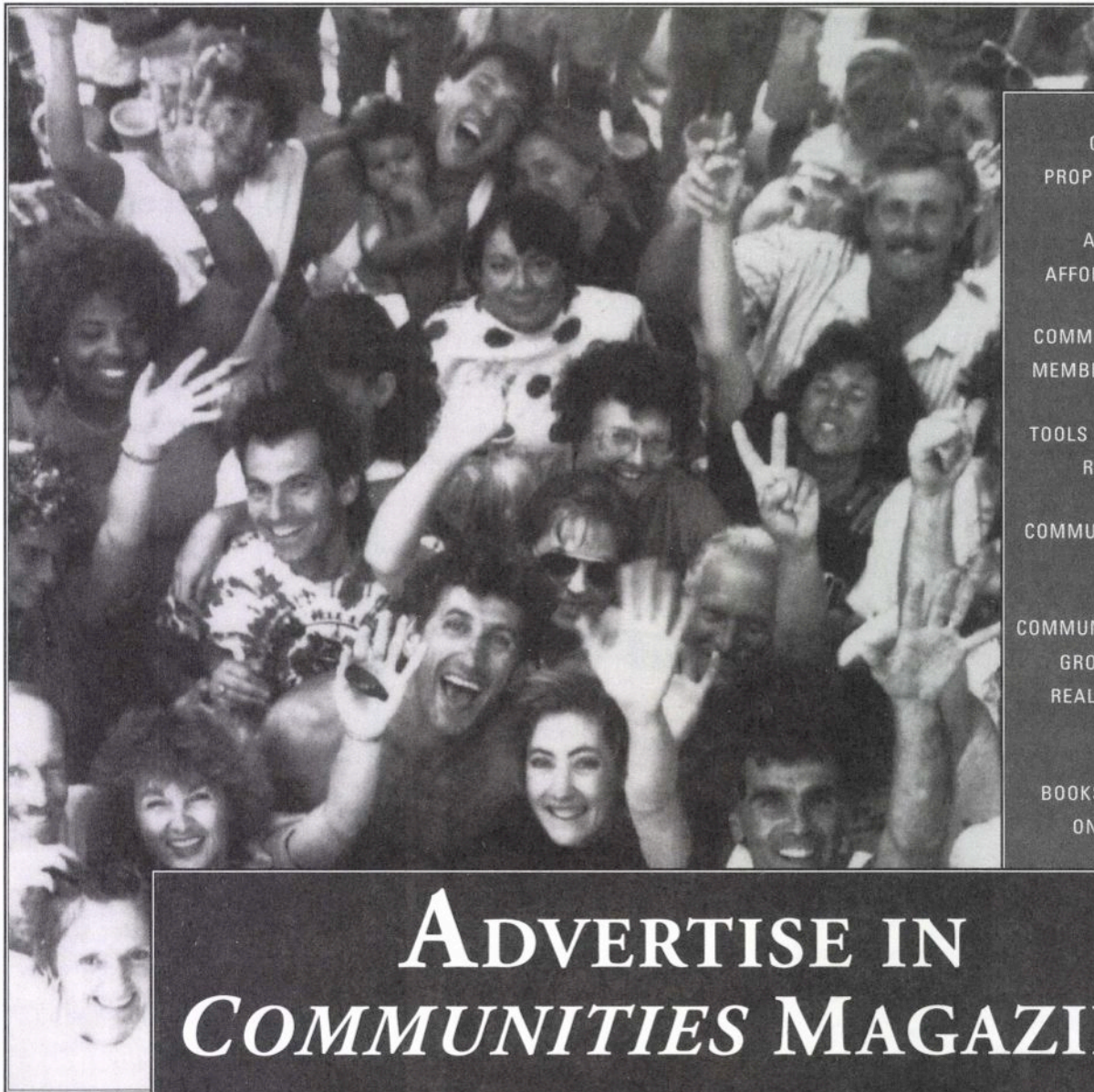
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[The project, delayed by technical difficulties and never dreamed-of complexities, is now nearing completion.]





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The Archaeology of Decisions

MOST OF US BELIEVE that our decisions are based on good evidence and sound reasoning, and are oblivious to the fact that many of the things we decide are heavily influenced by our deeply buried subconscious attitudes and beliefs. More profoundly, these seemingly harmless core beliefs harbor our fears and prejudices, and sometimes give rise to alienating and oppressive behaviors—offenses we are rarely aware of or willing to admit. To avoid this trap, we need a better understanding of what we believe, and how we came to believe it.

At first glance, many decisions seem straightforward. For example, should we have a system for monitoring and recording the work hours put in by community members, or should we leave it to the honor system, relying on the abilities, awareness, and discretion of each individual? To make such a decision, we typically share our opinions about which labor-sharing systems work and which don't, and tend to talk about our experiences as if they were definitive and free of preconceptions—as if our opinions have taken all the variables into account. Certainly the honor system approach could work fine and might avoid a lot of bookkeeping effort. Likewise, the monitoring system could work fine, possibly providing valuable labor accounting information for making future budgets. Which decision is best? Either—there's no correct answer. It depends on what we hold as the bigger picture in the moment.

Unfortunately, we tend to think that our stated practical and technical concerns are our sole reasons for choosing one option over the other, and we neglect to talk much about our fears. Maybe we're afraid that Joe, left to his own devices, won't carry his weight. Or maybe we have the more generic worry that some unnamed person will sooner or later take advantage of the system. Or that we are the potential problem, because without a system to keep us organized and motivated, we are the ones most likely to fall short. The list goes on. Sadly, many of our decisions are based on internalized fears rather than enthusiasm for exciting possibilities.

When we voice our opinions, we tend to offer up a few "facts" and mix in the "wisdom" gained from our "experience." What we tend to ignore is that our facts and experiences and insights are very subjective—two of us going through identical

situations will always have a somewhat different story to explain what happened, based not just on the facts of the event, but also on our interpretations of the facts: we interpolate meaning from whatever information we take in through our senses, embellishing the story so it fits with our preconceptions. It should come as no surprise that most of our interpretations are heavily influenced by whatever feelings the situation evokes in us.

Although feelings are subjective, many people seem to operate on the assumption that all emotions are pure and accurate and not to be questioned. As I see it, feelings always provide us with useful information to work with—if only we can figure out what concern lies at the root. A feeling is always based on a belief, usually one that's buried so far down that we have no idea it's operating in us. Even when we know, instinctively, that our inner program is influencing our judgment, we have no foolproof way to determine if the belief is guiding us to a necessary and appropriate action, or whether it's the belief itself that is in need of revision.

Our mental archaeological dig has now reached the bottom layer: everything that we believe—those things that trigger our emotions and our subsequent behaviors, including our personalities, which is how we have decided to present ourselves to the world—are based on choices, most of which we made early in our lives and have long since forgotten (allowing that many of our original choices weren't made consciously to begin with, coming instead from intense social programming or from our intuitive attempts to get attention or to defend ourselves from physical or emotional pain). To some degree this insight is scary because it places the responsibility for how we each individually experience life squarely into our own lap—it's our choice.

On the other hand, this is a very exciting and encouraging realization, one that has huge implications about our ability to live cooperatively and to choose a world that works for everyone. Looking "under" our spoken words is an extremely powerful tool for identifying and unlearning the judgmental and alienating walls we've put up around us, including the impulse to "be in control." It gives us a handle for understanding and counteracting such cultural artifacts as child abuse, spouse abuse, unbridled materialism, classism, sexism, and racism.



BY GEOPH KOZENY

this is a very exciting and encouraging realization, one that has huge implications about our ability to live cooperatively

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(continued from page 80)

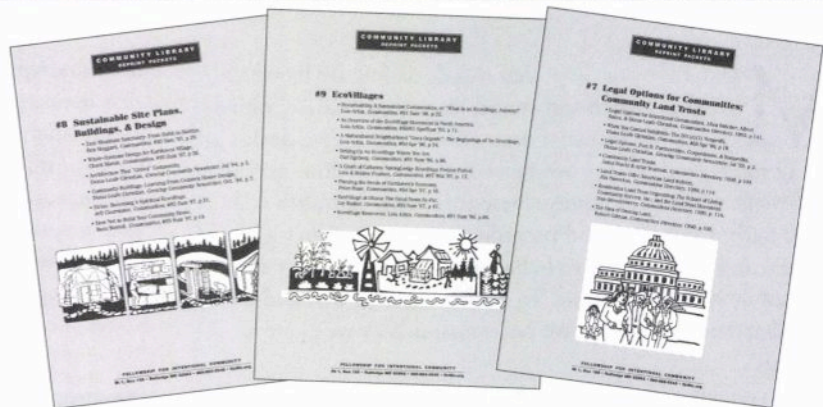
However, revising core beliefs is not a routine matter, and is usually quite daunting. "Egads!" you ask, "how do I do that?" The answer is deceptively simple: you choose a new belief. There are many ways people do this, including therapies, personal growth techniques, affirmations, peer pressure, listening to gurus, deciding to not listen to gurus, or the proverbial lightning bolt of inspiration coming from some mystical source. Ultimately, however, the most important belief to change is the one affirming that you have the power to choose your core beliefs, and to replace an old one any time you discover it has stopped serving you.

The next time you find yourself facing a tough shared decision, try probing a bit deeper within yourself to see if you can spot any unquestioned beliefs sneaking into the mix that you weren't aware of, preconceptions you're carrying that may be closing off viable options. Encourage those you're working with to do the same. If in intentional communities we can't learn how to reconcile our differences and come to a place of mutual respect, cooperation, and support, then how can we hope to create a world where that's the norm?

The concept is easy to describe, but tough to live up to. It will help immensely if you're able to forgive yourself when you fall short, and remain open-minded and forgiving when others demonstrate that they, too, have room for improvement. We've still got a lot of digging ahead of us, and it's going to take a sustained and compassionate collective effort to unearth the key to global peace and prosperity. Best bring your own shovel.

Geoph Kozeny has lived in various kinds of communities for 28 years. He has been on the road for 13 years visiting communities and learning about their visions and realities, and giving slide shows about the diversity and vitality of the communities movement. He is producer of Visions of Utopia, a video documentary on intentional communities.

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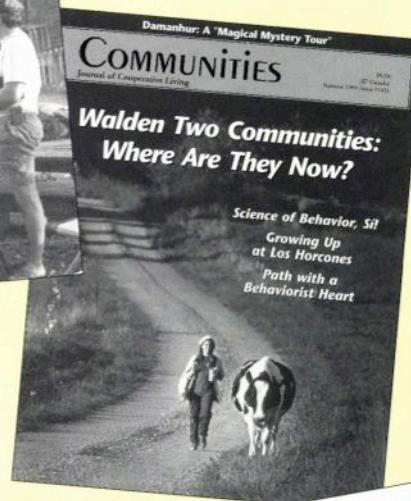
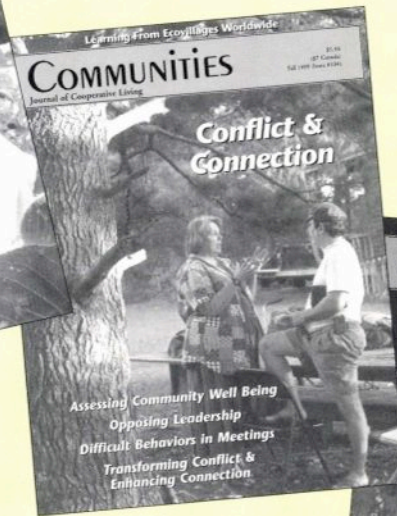
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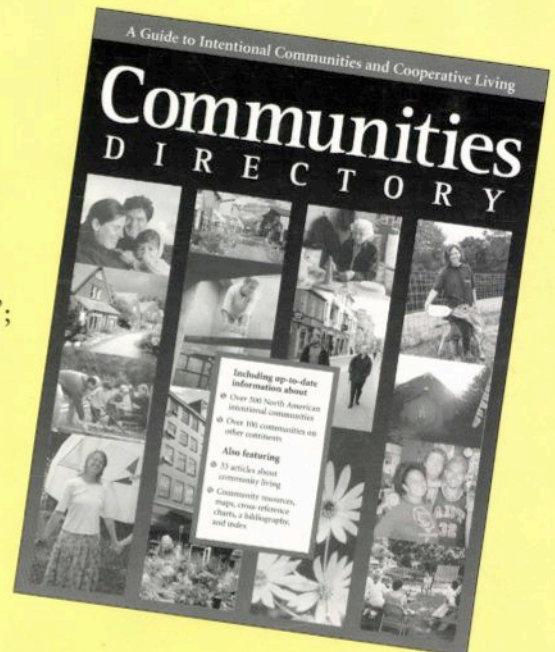
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