

CARS AND RABBITS · HOW ECOLOGY LED ME TO COMMUNITY

COMMUNITIES

Life in Cooperative Culture



Ecology and Community

Reindeer Herders

Ecology Is for the Birds

Sharing and Climate Change

Balancing Inner and Outer Ecology

Environmental Activism in Community

Findhorn's Incredible Shrinking Footprint

Summer 2009 • Issue #143

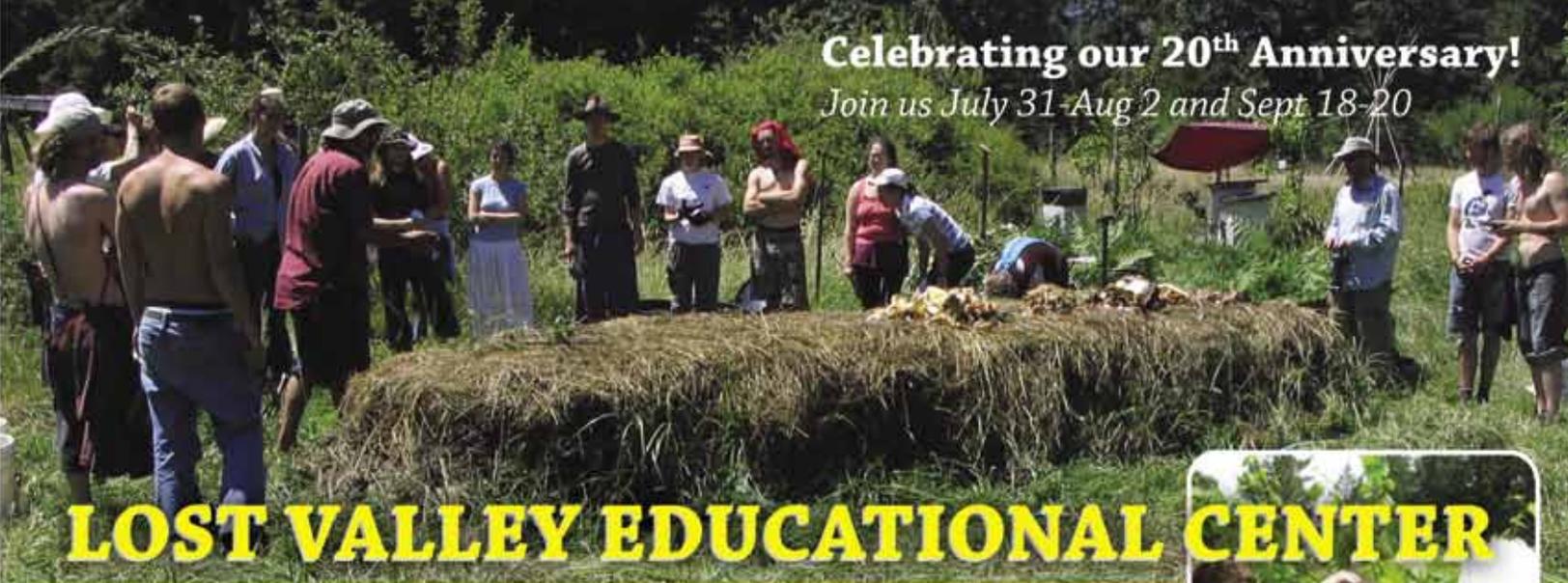
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 COMMUNITIES

Ecology and Community

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Prudence-Elise Breton



www.findhorn.org



Marilyn Walker

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ON THE COVER

Reindeer races at the Tsaatan Festival in Har-mat, Mongolia in 2007. It is too warm for the reindeer to stay long in the valley so after the festival, the Dukha Tsaatan are anxious to take their animals back up to the taiga where the weather is cooler and the reindeer can forage on their favourite food—reindeer lichen. They are riding their male reindeer.

EDITOR

Chris Roth (*Lost Valley Educational Center*)

ART DIRECTOR

Yulia Zarubina-Brill

BUSINESS MANAGER

John Stroup

ADVERTISING MANAGER

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OFFICE MANAGER

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CIRCULATION MANAGER

McCune Porter (*Twin Oaks*)

EDITORIAL REVIEW BOARD

Deborah Altus

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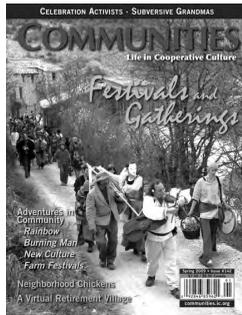
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Thanking Geoph Kozeny

I recently received the newest edition of COMMUNITIES magazine, "Festivals and Gatherings." I thoroughly enjoyed reading it and am especially pleased to be reminded of the many people, places, and ways in which joy can be shared in community. Clearly, the world needs more togetherness and celebration at this time when so many are challenged on so many fronts. Maybe more people will be willing to take the risk to come together to face our challenges now, as people have done across the continents and throughout history before us.

As I read "In Community Intentionally, Part 2," I remembered the good times with Geoph Kozeny over the years, and I thought it fitting to further honor his life with a great public "Thank You" to Geoph for the part he played in the creation of Lost Valley Educational Center, an intentional community which is celebrating its 20th Anniversary this year (www.lostvalley.org).

Lost Valley was itself created out of a celebration of temporary intentional community. The Earthstewards Gathering of 1988 was held at Harbin Hot Springs and hosted by the local Bay Area Earthstewards. Several hundred people attended for a number of days in the sweltering 109-degree heat of late summer. We did all the usual gathering things like singing, chanting, dancing, meeting intensely in men's and women's groups (24 hours with our own gender before joyously reuniting), circling for prayers, drumming, learning from each other about the powerful projects and actions being done across the globe by individual and collective Earthstewards.

Despite the heat, the visitation of little skunks in the women's sleepover, and an accident following the early morning sweat lodge, we had a great time together. As we gathered in a very large closing circle, beat-

ing the big new ceremonial drum presented to Danaan Perry for the use of the group, we wondered why we were going home and only living this way a few days a year when we could create this way of being as a permanent lifestyle. In response to that question, Kenneth Mahaffey and Terry Bodkin initiated the idea of creating a Land Trust that would hold properties for both conservation and community purposes. A first meeting was called in Berkeley a few weeks later and from it came the beginnings of a group who would eventually birth Lost Valley Center, Inc. in Dexter, Oregon.

That's where Geoph comes into the picture. After a few months of the group's working together, Kenneth attended one of Geoph's slideshows focusing on Intentional Communities in the Pacific Northwest. He showed pictures and talked about the budding communities north of California, and as an aside, happened to mention a piece of property which had previously been owned by the Shiloh religious community outside of Eugene. Apparently it had been closed down, "abandoned" in the eyes of the county zoning board, and "might be up for sale at a good price"—especially since the county officials had gotten into trouble by secretly planning to buy it for a proposed prison camp after having told all other interested parties that only five unrelated adults could legally reside there, since the grandfather clause had been lost forever.

Kenneth and I got on the phone the next morning, traveled up to see the property the next weekend, and began the process which led to the formation of Lost Valley Educational Center and Seven Generations Land Trust. Several Earthstewards put down the initial loans, which allowed the property to be bought, and "the rest is history," as they say...

Dianne Brause
Sulphur Springs, Ohio

Cofounder of Lost Valley, Dianne is currently living in Ohio where she is tending to her aging parents in her original close-knit, but decidedly "unintentional" farming community (diannebrause@gmail.com, 419-562-6148).



Getting Out of the Trunk

The author sent the following open letter to Canadian environmentalist David Suzuki:

Being an environmentalist, I was struck by David Suzuki's life-defining metaphor of all environmentalists being stuck yelling in the trunk of a car headed for a brick wall. Now David is producing some cute TV ads from his trunk, trying to persuade us to buy better lights and to seal our windows. And, curiously, Obama is striking the same note. I ask you, should we have more efficient automobiles as we hurtle headlong towards resource wars, mass migrations, and climate horror? Hmmm. Why not leap out of the trunk and found an intentional/utopian/environmental community? What we need is a public figure like David Suzuki to abandon the mainstream green movement and take us beyond the trunk. To extend our metaphor, we have enough movements. What we need is something stationary. A foundation. Not an abstract "foundation" like the Suzuki Foundation; an actual, living, self-sustaining and physical community. Utopia? Well, just something that operates according to green principles, without donations from sponsors and businesses.

David, if you can hear me out there, could you lead us out of Egypt, ban yourself from cars and airplanes, put your foot down, and begin to create the promised land?

Become a myth.

Peter Dudink

Burlington, Ontario

Bringing Back the Circle

Hello to all there and let us all hope that 2009 brings in more peace and longer lasting love, caring, and conscious-minded communities and relationships.

Although I have only #137 of COMMUNITIES, I'm still inspired by its boldness and the love that went into making it. I would

like to share the following observations with COMMUNITIES and quite possibly, inspire others to make those bold living steps to self-liberation and viewing the world we all share just a little brighter as we find love within ourselves.

We share and live on a very beautiful and circular world. Our planet is a perfect sphere. Mother Earth breathes and casts out her lovely bounty, asking nothing in return. She travels in an orbit around another sphere—the Sun, radiating his heat and plenty of love for us all to grow and make more. Then there is another sphere—our night light, the Moon, which travels in an orbit around us. Within this shared existence we live and love in is an unfathomable, vast, and mysteriously-ordered chaos—Nature in Symmetry. Loving Nature works in cycles—a constant flow of structures and beautiful intercourse. With the peaceful ebb and flow of it all, each of us is alive for a time; we love, we prosper and decay, then perish in an ever-changing cycle of life. We, as very loving creatures, love on through countless generations...a beautiful sight from the heavens.

Round and round we go, dancing in the winds of change, through the cosmos and back again. Rounding, cyclic, flowing, changing, ever seeking an extreme, then a balance, then on to the other extreme, returning back to balance—a lovely constant state of flux and harmony. Nature is the collective sum of all things which constitute this circle we share, love, and call life—the shape of Nature. You will be hard pressed to find a straight line in the natural world.

Natural humans, now nearly extinct with the advent of "civilization," lived within the harmonious cycles of Nature and took their sustenance directly from her changing seasonal foods and products. Feast and famine were all shared, as tribes, clans, families, and all other community bonds were formed. The individual in harmony with Nature would contribute to the whole community and the community in turn would enhance

the well-being of each individual.

Such circular living tended to nourish the thinking of natural humans and was reflected in their outlooks, loving natures, and choices of abode.

Then war, clash, burn, hate, and greed—along came the Rectoids (selfishness and jealousy incarnate). Modern Child Man, that so-called civilized creature, full of laws and ways of collecting property, has a different shape—the Rectangle—and is thus tangled in a corrupt and distorted view of how the Universe operates. Our modern world is sickly and permeated with the straight line and right angles. We have become walled off, caged in, compartmentalized, separated, and stuffed into the so-called Box. Wrecked by the Rectoids!

But underneath the machinations of Modern Child Man the source of our sustenance is still nature. It is the bounty from which our modern consumer existence comes, albeit after being reconfigured to a Rectoid form.

The cycles of nature continue to turn in a mysteriously ordered chaos. The members of communities and others who have moved past restrictive dogma have become our shining beacons of a happier and healthier way of being. No longer will we allow ourselves and our minds to be wrecked by the Rectoids. We choose to create a new and very exciting, loving road to a healthier and better outlook on life and about ourselves. Learning each day to love more, getting our minds out of the box, and practicing every chance we get will lead to more understanding and fuller lives.

Thank you all at COMMUNITIES for being there for all to witness and learn from...

In solidarity,

Francisco M. Duran

#19588-016, Mesa Alpha

Federal Correctional Institution

PO Box 6000, Florence CO 81266-6000

The author invites correspondence. The letter above is edited down from a much longer letter.

We welcome reader feedback on the articles in each issue, as well as letters of more general interest. Please send your comments to editor@ic.org or COMMUNITIES, 81868 Lost Valley Ln, Dexter OR 97431. Your letters may be edited or shortened. Thank you!

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 or shared projects.

Through fact, fiction, and opinion, we offer fresh ideas about how to live and work 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 also seek articles about cooperative ventures of all sorts—in workplaces, in neighborhoods, among people sharing common interests—and about “creating community where you are.”

We do not intend to promote one kind of group 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 thematically to community living and/or cooperation, 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 Writers' Guidelines: COMMUNITIES, 81868 Lost Valley Ln, Dexter OR 97431; 541-937-2567 x116; editor@ic.org. To obtain Photo Guidelines, email: layout@ic.org. Both are also available online at 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 handpick 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. As in the COMMUNITIES DIRECTORY, we edit our REACH listings only for clarity and length, and can't guarantee that all community information contained in them is accurate—we encourage you to verify it as you pursue your interest in any group.

John Stroup, Advertising Manager, 10385 Magnolia Rd, Sullivan MO 63080; 573-468-8822; ads@ic.org.

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; others are both. For all their variety, though, the communities featured in our magazine hold a common commitment to living cooperatively, to solving problems nonviolently, and to sharing their experiences with others.



PUBLISHER'S NOTE BY LAIRD SCHAUB



O Subscriber, Where Art Thou?

Sometimes Size *Does* Matter...as with Circulation

Years ago my community placed a rush order with a local metal shop to custom make an eight-inch diameter steel gear for our sorghum mill (which we use to press the juice out of the cane; the mill was about 100 years old and we broke a tooth overfeeding the mill in the midst of our harvest). We had been quoted a price of \$150 and had agreed to the work based on that estimate. When I went to pick it up, however, the shop foreman explained (with embarrassment) that the materials and labor had cost him \$200. Sheepishly, he asked if we could at least cover his expenses—though he'd stand by his estimate if we insisted. He joked at the time that if they didn't start doing a better job estimating they'd just have to make it up on volume.

Well, this magazine is in essentially the same situation as that metal shop. We've been losing money steadily, and volume is *exactly* what we need to get healthier—as in more advertisers, more newsstand sales, and more subscribers.

“Let's Do the Numbers”

Borrowing a phrase made popular by Kai Ryssdal on his NPR-syndicated radio show *Marketplace*, it's time for our annual look at this magazine's finances (there's a table at the end of this report so you can follow along at home).

The biggest number is that we lost over \$14,000 last year—double the operating losses we experienced the previous two years, and much more than we can sustain. This deficit more than consumed

the modest gains we made in all other FIC program activities combined last year, resulting in an overall organizational loss of nearly \$8,000. Ouch!

Looking solely at expenses, we managed to reduce them overall by 8 percent, which was hopeful. (In fact, if we'd been able to maintain income at the '07 level last year, we'd have broken even.) Even though printing costs rose 10 percent, labor overall (both production and fulfillment) decreased by 14 percent. Short of heroic volunteerism, there isn't much more belt tightening we can do on the expense side of the ledger, so our salvation will have to come from boosting income. And this is where the numbers are grimmest.

Taken as a whole, magazine revenue was down 19 percent. While there were proportional drops in most categories, the glaring under-performer was advertising, where the shortfall was—shades of Wall Street—a whopping 47 percent. And this is on top of advertising having fallen 12 percent the year before. Ufda.

Of course, these are hard days for print magazines in general, and the situation is compounded by the overall slump in the economy. If it comes down to choosing between buying fewer bananas, foregoing your Sunday morning triple latté, or dropping your subscription to COMMUNITIES, we know everyone's not going to make the same choice. People's discretionary funds are shrinking and something's gotta go.

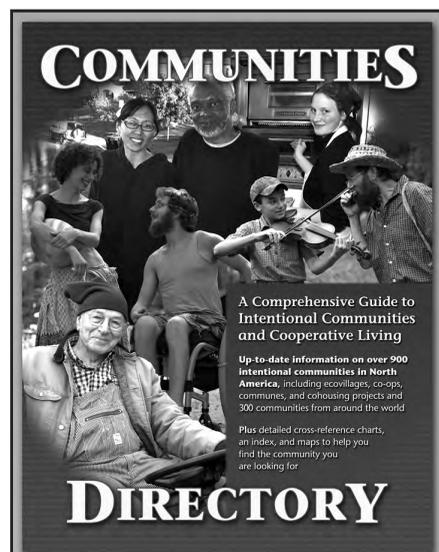
Divine Secrets of the Community Sisterhood

So what are we going to do about it? At FIC, our primary mission is to provide the information and inspiration for anyone who wants more community in their life. What's more, we're convinced that there are millions out there who hunger for this. While we carry out our mission in a variety of ways, publishing COMMUNITIES is one of our main vehicles for delivery. Though we currently have only 1350 subscribers, we know that there are easily 10 times that many people out there—even in these hard times—who

would love to subscribe if they only knew we were here and what we have to offer. (And if we had 13,500 subscribers, we'd be in high cotton and I wouldn't have to keep writing these hand-wringing financial summaries!) So how do we get there?

There's a great story in Malcom Gladwell's seminal book *The Tipping Point* about Rebecca Wells and how her 1996 book, *Divine Secrets of the Ya-Ya Sisterhood*, became a bestseller. As Gladwell tells it, sales of Wells' book were indifferent when it came out in hardback and things didn't shift until the book appeared a year later in paperback and started getting selected as the focus-of-the-month among book groups. The novel is about friendship and mother-daughter connections, and the book groups were starting to recreate in their discussions the heartfelt relationships described in the novel. Suddenly, these groups were experiencing a kind of intimacy that had heretofore been missing, and it was precious. As Wells toured around the country doing promotional readings from her book, attendance soared. This further fueled the meteoric rise in interest in the book because—and this was Gladwell's point—*people tend to enjoy more something they experience with others*. Thus the book groups, which had been sustained in their interest by having touched the third rail of intimacy inspired by the novel, became the shock troops (with all the fervor of the newly converted) for achieving an order-of-magnitude jump in sustained interest in the book and Wells' message. From whence, a bestseller was born.

I think this can work for community also (and by extension, for COMMUNITIES). Each one of you readers is potentially the seed of a vibrant group with a passion for community and cooperative culture. We just haven't figured out yet how to nurture you all to the point of sprouting or fruiting, so that we can access our own tipping point. While some of you have already succeeded in building nodes of community enthusiasm without anything further from FIC, more are needed.



Communities Directory

Over 900 North American communities, plus 325 from around the world, provide contact information and describe themselves—their structure, beliefs, mission, and visions of the future. Includes articles on the basics of intentional communities and tips on finding the one that's right for you. You'll also find information on how to be a good community visitor.

Maps

For the first time we've included maps showing locations of communities throughout the world. See at a glance what's happening in your area or plan your community-visiting adventure.

Cross-Reference Charts

These charts allow you to quickly scan for the communities that fulfill your criteria, including size, location, spiritual beliefs, food choices, decision making, and more.

All data is based on the Online Communities Directory at directory.ic.org.

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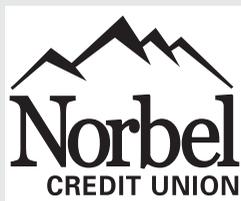
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Ask Not What FIC Can Do for You...

The subtitle of Gladwell's book is "How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference." Here's a couple little things FIC has to offer that, with your help, might accomplish a lot.

First, we have a package of information about how to start a discussion group to talk about community and what it means to each person. Community is foremost about people and you can start to experience

connections with others in the process of exploring what it means to one another—just as the book groups plumbed intimacy in discussing

Wells' book about it. We call this the Community Dialog packet and it's available online as a free downloadable PDF: fic.ic.org/community_dialog. If you want help getting started, or would like an experienced FIC member to attend an initial session, contact our Office to see what we can set up: fic@ic.org or 1-800-995-8342.

Second, over the years we've figured out that there are two kinds of business where their clientele is the same as our target audience: natural food stores and independent bookstores. While not all of these offer magazines, most do—and only a handful currently carry COMMUNITIES. That's where you come in. We're

asking you to take the copy of COMMUNITIES that is right now in your hands and visit as many of the natural food stores and indie bookstores in your area as you're inspired to, showing the magazine to the person in charge of periodicals and asking them to consider carrying COMMUNITIES if they aren't already. We have a downloadable PDF of a template (at communities.ic.org/store_script) that will spell out how to do this, step by step. We are not asking you make a hard sell; we are

just asking you to talk with people about a product you believe in. Plus, stores take much more seriously the recommendations of customers than

*Take this copy of COMMUNITIES
and visit as many of the
natural food stores and
indy bookstores in your area
as you're inspired to.*

they do of vendors.

We're in an interesting position—the magazine has never been looking better, and yet the finances have never looked worse. Together, we can tip this thing over. ❁



Laird Schaub is executive secretary of the Fellowship for Intentional Community (FIC), publisher of this magazine, and cofounder of Sandhill Farm community in Missouri, where he lives.

He authors a blog which can be read at communityandconsensus.blogspot.com.

COMMUNITIES Magazine 2008 Financial Statement

Expenses

Printing	\$22,843
Office overhead	4,959
Production labor	31,390
Fulfillment	11,119
Office expenses (postage, phone, copying)	560
Travel	1,839
Marketing	966
Total Expenses	73,676

Income

Subscriptions	\$27,152
Single issues	784
Back issues	2,641
Distributor sales	11,241
Advertising	7,408
Royalties	503
Donations	9,309
Total Income	59,038
Net Profit (Loss)	(\$14,638)

RELATED BACK ISSUES

Ecology and Community



The following COMMUNITIES back issues speak to our current Ecology and Community theme in various ways, as do some others not listed here. See communities.ic.org/back_issues for a complete list of back issues and ordering information. You may also order back issues (\$5 apiece plus shipping) using the form on page 14.

- | | | |
|------|---------------|---|
| #141 | Winter 2008 | SCARCITY AND ABUNDANCE |
| #139 | Summer 2008 | GREEN BUILDING |
| #137 | Winter 2007 | COMMUNITIES MAKING A DIFFERENCE |
| #135 | Summer 2007 | WHAT DO YOU EAT?
WHERE DOES IT COME FROM? |
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Balancing Outer and Inner Ecology



Q: Our community is dedicated to a wide range of goals, from ecological responsibility and sustainability to healthy interpersonal relationships and personal and spiritual growth. We strive for a holistic integration of them all, but in reality people who come here have varying priorities. Some interns and members focus intently on living lightly, eating locally, assessing the impacts of every potential purchase, becoming “native to this place,” and educating others about permaculture, environmental issues, and responsible global citizenship. Others find the natural world, environmental issues, and sustainability skills relatively unexciting, and focus much more on human relationships, personal evolution, individual choice, and freedom from strict guidelines, categories, judgments, and right/wrong dichotomies

(like “sustainable”/“unsustainable”). On a bad day, the eco-oriented group perceives this inward-focused, relativistic attitude as a frustrating obstacle to making necessary changes in the way we live, and sees the others as clueless about the natural world and the global situation. The relationship-focused group, in turn, can experience the eco-group as overly judgmental, dogmatic, afraid of feelings (other than those they project onto external situations), clueless about healthy communication, and no fun. When issues come up, each group seems to provoke defensiveness in the other, and those of us caught in between are not sure what to do.

How can all of us come together to support one integrated vision? How can we learn from one another rather than see each other as threats?



Tree Bressen responds:

From the outside, it seems obvious that each side is holding an important part of the truth. But from the inside, the group is getting caught in an archetypal polarization.

Ideally, everyone's consciousness would be raised so that in the future when this conflict emerges, people

would recognize it for what it is and keep the polarity in check (by actions such as kindly challenging each other on blaming or stereotypes, reminding each other that both sides are important to the well-being of the whole, and so on). There are a bunch of methods for raising consciousness, many of which involve the use of meeting formats that move well beyond general discussion. For example:

1. Present a roleplay with exaggerated versions of both sides having an argument. Use techniques from "Theater of the Oppressed" (Paulo Freire) to freeze-frame, replace actors, and otherwise explore possible outcomes.

2. Ask people on each side to take structured turns answering questions, perhaps in small groups. The following sample questions draw from the work of the Public Conversation Project:

a. Please share something about your life experience that you think may have shaped your perspective on this issue.

b. What is at the heart of the matter for you?

c. Within your thinking about this issue, are there any dilemmas, value conflicts, or gray areas you'd be willing to share? Where is it that you question or don't fit the ideology of your side?

d. What beliefs about your side do you experience from others as hurtful? What is it about who you are and what you care about that makes those beliefs upsetting?

e. Are there some stereotypes of your own side that you feel are somewhat deserved, even if they are not fully true?

f. In your highest ideals, how would the group deal with this conflict? What is one step you could take toward making that happen?

3. Ask everyone on one side to come into the middle for a "fishbowl," while the other side sits silently outside witnessing the conversation. Invite them to answer questions, such as those listed above. Then switch. And switch a few more times, so that each side is in the middle at least twice. Then have everyone go into pairs across sides for ten minutes, and then all join in one group conversation to talk about what they learned.

A proposal for an activity like this that is co-presented by someone from each perceived side is especially likely to be well-received. Once you've conducted such an activity, the challenge is to keep that learning alive and act on it. If you see a member fall into old habits, you can invite them to share about what's important to them, gently drawing attention away from their negative feelings toward others and instead focusing on their

hopes and dreams.

See if your group can learn to make friends with the conflict, and laugh together when it comes up again. Then you'll have more bonded relationships, and rich stories to share with new community members about how you learned to treat each other with affectionate respect.

Tree Bressen is a group process consultant based in Eugene, Oregon, who works with intentional communities and other organizations on how to have meetings that are lively, productive, and connecting. Her website, www.treegroup.info, offers extensive free resources on consensus, facilitation, and more. (Tree uses a lowercase "i" in her writing as an expression of egalitarian values.)



Beatrice Briggs responds:

Part of what I see here is common confusion between "vision," "values," and "mission." I find it helpful to define vision as a desired future for the community, a dream that motivates the members. Values are what guide us in our day-to-day decision-making. Mission is the action plan we adopt to

move us toward the vision.

While all three elements (vision, values, and mission) are important, I suggest starting with values clarification to overcome false dichotomies and establish common frame of reference for addressing the other issues. Here is a process that might help.

1. Hire an outside facilitator to lead the process so all the community members can participate. The facilitator should be comfortable with conflict and skilled in multi-stakeholder negotiation.

2. Pose the question "What are the values that should guide this community?"

3. Generate hot debate. Encourage people to state their views strongly, take sides, get emotional. Ask them to go stand with those who most closely articulate their position on the values question. (A third group is likely to emerge who do not identify strongly with either side and just want everyone to get along.)

4. Pause. Reflect. Ask the group if this is a familiar, community dynamic? How does it feel to be so polarized? Then suggest that there is a solution "out there" that is neither of the two existing positions nor a false compromise (a solution that everyone can agree to but no one is happy with).

5. Move from positions to interests. Form two groups, one for each side of the debate. (Divide the non-aligned between the two groups or let them form their own group.) Ask each group to draft a list of their interests in relation to the community's values. Define "interest" as bedrock necessity, what the participants need in order to remain members of the community. Distinguish interests from positions, defined as solutions to problems. (For example, "Respect the Earth" is an interest

and “Create a car collective” is a position.) Clarify that interests are NOT a wish list of things that would be “nice to have,” nor are they proposed solutions to specific problems. The interests are those needs that must be met in order for a solution to be acceptable.

6. Review the interests. Each group brings an easel sheet with its list of interests back to the plenary. Review the lists and eliminate any items that are positions (solutions). Merge the remaining needs into one list.

7. Seek solutions. Create teams comprising members of both (or all) groups. Working with the “merged” list, seek a solution that could meet all the identified needs. The facilitator moves between the groups, coaching as needed. After a specified period of time, the groups reconvene and present their proposed solutions. Depending on the degree of similarity in the proposals and the energy of the group, it may be possible to agree on a draft list of community values. If exhaustion has set in, decide on next steps for moving the discussion forward.

The key to this process is to allow the polarization to manifest and then require both sides to work together to find a solution.

Beatrice Briggs is the founding director of the International Institute for Facilitation and Change (IIFAC), a Mexico-based consulting group that specializes in participatory processes. The author of the manual Introduction to Consensus and many articles about group dynamics, Beatrice travels around the world, giving workshops and providing facilitation services in both English and Spanish. Home is Ecovillage Huehucoyotl, near Tepoztlán, Mexico, where she has lived since 1998. bbriggs@iifac.org; www.iifac.org.



Laird Schaub responds:

I think the key here is in the opening statement about goals. If it's accurate that the group embraces values that range “from ecological responsibility and sustainability to healthy interpersonal relationships and personal and spiritual growth” then the question I'd pose to both factions is

what each is doing to make room for the *other*, which is also an express value of the community?

The key here is asking each side to talk *first* about how they're honoring (both in their hearts and in their behavior) members who are focusing on different community values than they are. The answers here should be an olive branch. *Then* you can discuss how difficult it's being that everyone doesn't see things the same way. If you do it the other way around, the olive branches become kindling for the fires of resentment on the altars of righteousness.

The key here is asking each side to talk first about how they're honoring (both in their hearts and in their behavior) members who are focusing on different community values than they are.

Assuming you can get buy-in with the notion that it's unreasonable to expect everyone to be the same and that it's appropriate to honor different ways of being in the world, let me walk you through a constructive sequence for accomplishing de-escalation. I'd set aside all requests that others make changes until the following four steps have been taken:

1. For everyone who reports feeling *currently* upset in connection with this dynamic (as opposed to *remembering* being upset in the past), I'd give room for each person—one at a time,

please!—to fully express what their feelings are and what actions or statements they're connected with. To satisfy this step, you're only making sure that everyone feels heard; you're not trying to problem solve (yet).

2. Next I'd ask what's at stake for each person in connection with this dynamic. In other words, how much

does it matter, and why? Again, you're just listening. You might point out how some answers are similar and some different, yet you're not trying to determine right or wrong, or get commitments about anything.

3. Check with the group to see what aspects of everyone's answer to #2 are recognized as a reasonable expectation of what the group can provide. **Hint:** you're looking for what expectations are widely recognized as being associated with explicit common values. **Caution:** if someone's response to #2 is that they want to *feel* good about what others are doing, it's OK to point out that the group can be responsible for actions and statements done in its name, but feelings are totally the responsibility of each individual.

At the end of this you should have identified a composite of the factors that a good response to this issue will need to address.

4. Last, invite everyone (not just those who spoke up in response to #1) to answer this question: “After hearing all the responses, what can *you* do that you are currently not doing that would help balance the factors vetted in #3?” **Note:** what you are *not* looking for here is advocacy; you're looking for bridging.

If you go through this whole sequence, I guarantee you'll have new material to work with and hard edges will have softened. While I'm not promising that you'll have everyone singing Kumbayah, you should have entered an authentic and constructive space for dealing with this dynamic.

Laird Schaub, a member of Sandhill Farm community in Missouri, has been doing consulting work on group process since 1987. A longtime activist in community networking, he has lived in community since 1974 and been involved with the Fellowship for Intentional Community (FIC) since 1986; he is currently its Executive Secretary. laird@ic.org; 660-883-5545. Laird authors a blog which can be read at communityandconsensus.blogspot.com.



Paul DeLapa responds:

The issues here touch on three maintenance aspects of every group gathering: content, process, and relationships. At the content level, and speaking to the first question, is the critical need for shared vision and values (priorities being another lens on values), without which truly col-

laborative effort becomes an exercise in mutual frustration. If we aren't clear what we're co-laboring toward, and how we want to be with each other in that working together, we're likely to experience a lot of tearing and bumping as we pull and push in opposing directions.

It's not unusual for groups to avoid the difficult conversations needed to create clear shared prioritized values during their initial and ongoing visioning. A resulting "wide range of goals" invites conflict later on when choices or trade-offs are needed between values. An ideal like "holistic integration" (itself an abstract value), while sounding good, may be a set-up for conflict in daily life; what does it really mean and look like in action?

"How can all of us come together to support one integrated vision?" First, take adequate time to clarify what that integrated vision is, what it means individually and as a collective, and what it looks like in action. Presently you may have several visions operating, one of being a model community for a local living economy, and another a community experiment in freedom and personal choice. A healthy in-depth dialog on these visions may lead you to some shared discovery (e.g., are they two sides of the same coin?).

Often groups encounter differences in interpretation and execution regardless of how clear and well prioritized their vision and values. This leads me to the process level of group life. How do we work with differences? What tools and processes do we have to support and guide us when our energy rises? "On a bad day" we stereotype others, generalize their intentions, and either victimize or play victim. Any of these approaches leads to defensiveness since most of us dislike feeling judged or marginalized, or having our intentions questioned.

A first step out of a "threat and defend" spiral is being able to see what's happening in the moment or circumstance. Many groups have little awareness of what's happening because they're mesmerized by the content (and the accompanying drama as well). Individuals in groups can learn process awareness skills by practicing more objective participation through leadership, facilitation, and process-observer roles.

A second step out of paralysis is offering process observations to the group for their verification, interpretation, and choice of action. Process observations give us the opportunity to choose course and effectively reclaim our ability to respond to what's happening rather than being swept away or dumbfounded. Of-

ten what's needed isn't so much knowing what to do, but simply being willing to name what's happening without judgment and suggest optional process pathways in search for what helps. A large "process toolkit" of different approaches to dialog and engagement can be very helpful for finding a way through; what works in one moment may not be effective in another.

"How can we learn from one another rather than see each other as threats?" The ability to learn from one another rests on several things including collective intention (vision, values, aspirations, and ground-rules), a shared commitment to healthy relationships, and individual skills like self-awareness and managing emotions. People rarely consciously choose to create disharmony and conflict, and yet it happens all the time. Why? In addition to structural conflict influences (like unclear vision or values), often we don't see the connection between our actions and their impacts on others and the situation. In short, we lose our sense of responsibility and hence our ability to constructively respond.

The sense of "threat" implies a fear of losing something, and what feels at stake is often influence or power. Power issues can be explored in a variety of ways including: using meeting processes to help balance power and influence (e.g., go-rounds, talking circles, paired conversations); taking physical positions in the room relative to your sense of power (or fear of its loss), speaking from those positions, and shifting to feel other positions as well; and individuals can explore their own issues around power and share (or not share) those with the group. In these ways (and others) we can take more responsibility for how we experience others, learn to see each other with less distortion or projection, learn new options for responding when we feel fear without attacking and provoking defensiveness, and genuinely experience others as more like us (less threatening).

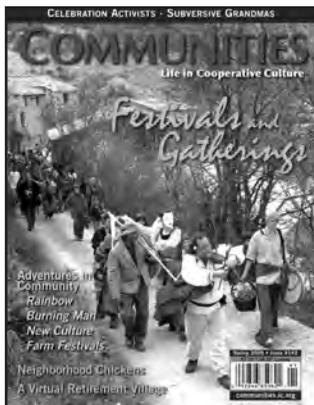
Finally, a few thoughts about the unavoidable task of maintaining healthy relationships. Each of us comes to groups and community living with a particular (limited) set of skills for collaboration. What seems to be required and may be most important for successful collaboration is a shared commitment to learning through relationship—that learning being personal development to some degree. Without this, we're stuck in old patterns and unsatisfying results. Learning through relationship (the community crucible) requires a healthy dose of humility, which is fostered by an equal measure of compassion for our selves and for each other. Practicing these two keys, humility and compassion, is perhaps a short answer to both your questions.

Paul DeLapa is a community and organizational development facilitator with extensive experience supporting groups at all stages of their work together. He resides in the San Francisco Bay Area, travels, and offers facilitation services for meetings and retreats, leadership coaching, and workshops in consensus agreement building, facilitation skills, and teambuilding. He can be reached at 707-645-8886.

Do you have a question for our Cooperative Group Solutions panelists? Please send it to editor@ic.org.

COMMUNITIES

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#142 Festivals and Gatherings
Festivals at The Farm; FIC Events; Adventures in Temporary Community; Burning Man; Comin' Home to the Rainbow; Network for a New Culture Camps; Sandhill Sorghum Festival; Celebration as a Way of Life; Festival of the Babas; Currents Community; Relocalization; Poetry in Community. (Spring '09)



#141 Scarcity and Abundance
All We Have Is All We Need; Ecobarrios; As Is: Secrets to Having Enough; Free to Serve: Notes from a Needs-Based Economy; From Car and House, To Bicycle and Tent; The Richness of Giving; Potlucks; When Community Land Is Privately Owned; Nashira Ecovillage. (Winter '08)



#140 Politics in Community
We Refuse to Be Enemies; Every Politician Should Live in a Commune; Email, Politics, & Permaculture; Searching for Elephants in the Community Living Room; Ecological Citizenship; Politics on Open Land; A World of Possibility: Communities and Global Transformation. (Fall '08)



#139 Green Building
Building Connection through Natural Building and Community; The Marriage of Natural Building with Conventional Building; A Strawbale Village in Denmark; Micro-Infill Cohousing Without Cars; Zero-Waste Chicken Tractor; Battling the Bureaucracy in Israel. (Summer '08)

#138 Women in Community
Valuing a Culture of Women; From Intentional Community to Building a Tribe; What's Masculine, What's Feminine, and What Am I?; Transgendered at Twin Oaks; Journey Inn: Gleanings from the World of Women; Building a Business in Community. (Spring '08)

#137 Making a Difference
Can We Make a Difference?; When "No" is Just an Uneducated "Yes"; Let's Do Graywater First!; From Eco-Kooks to Eco-Consultants; Turning People on to Community; A "Wife Swapping" Adventure; Preventing "Tyranny of the Majority." (Winter '07)

#136 Is Beauty Important?
Notes on Beauty in Community; Does it Really Matter What it Looks Like?; "Ten Most Beautiful" Communities in the World; When Adobe Pueblo Meets Star Trek; The Meandering Paths of Arcadia; When a Dollar is Worth More than 100 Cents. (Fall '07)

#135 What Do You Eat? Where Does it Come From?
Celebrating the Food Revolution; Making New Choices, Planting New Seeds; A New Root Cellar, Bulk Buying, and Two CSAs; Eating Local; Gardening in the Alentejo; Stocking our Community Pantry. (Summer '07)



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#143



Ecology and Community

Our current theme, “Ecology and Community,” cannot fit neatly between the covers of an 80-page magazine. While assembling and editing this issue, I’ve been struck not only by how much these articles contain, but also by how more could still be said if we had additional space. Ecology, ecological living, and their interrelationships with community are expansive subjects whose importance is likely only to increase in our changing world. Every issue I’ve edited thus far has touched on ecology, and I cannot imagine a future issue that won’t. In a very real sense, ecology is the air we breathe. We can remain unconscious about that only for a while, until a threat to that air (or to our breathing) teaches us not to take it for granted.

Our “Related Back Issue” list on page 9 reflects growing ecological concern both in the larger world and within this magazine. While not comprehensive, this sampling is representative, and the numbers are telling: one issue from the 1970s, one issue from the 1980s, five issues from the 1990s, and now 10 issues already from this decade focusing directly on themes of ecological sustainability. Even those recent issues that didn’t take ecology as a main theme still featured lots of eco-oriented content.

Because we can present only a comparatively small sliver of insight and information in any one issue, you can expect additional related stories in the future. In fact, our next issue, “Community in Hard Times,” will include some of the overflow material from this one—a good fit, because living more ecologically is often the most effective response to resource shortages and economic hard times.

The articles which follow address our theme from multiple angles. Many reveal how community living can lead participants to greater ecological responsibility, awareness, and action—simply through cooperation and sharing, and also through the synergy of shared interests, visions, and goals. Others show this process operating in the opposite direction as well, with ecological concerns drawing individuals naturally into a community orientation.

Ecology and community are so intertwined that neither subject can be addressed satisfactorily alone. A narrow focus on either ecology or community, without reference to the other, can breed oversimplified, narrow-minded approaches—even, at the extreme, fundamentalism and fanaticism. Ecological understanding remains incomplete without considering the role of human beings in the landscape, and “sustainable living” without cooperation and sharing is an oxymoron. Likewise, a

holistic approach to community needs to include the non-human parts of the web of life with which we humans share this planet. After all, no matter how self-involved they may be, human communities exist in the context of larger natural communities, and even the most anthropocentric of us cannot declare independence from the earth in any real, practical sense without deluding ourselves.

Community has much to teach us about ecology and sustainability, and ecology has much to teach us about community. Instead of simple answers and black-and-white, one-size-fits-all solutions, each offers lessons about complexity and diversity—the underpinnings of healthy human and natural systems. Experiential study of these two areas dependably reveals that there are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in any philosophy; that we and the world are intricately interdependent and full of endless variation; that change and evolution are not only inevitable, but vital; that limiting self-definitions do not serve us (for example, each of us will always be more than an “eco-activist” or a “humanist”); that as nestled organisms (composed of smaller organisms, and living within the larger body of the earth) and social beings (with similar patterns of nestling and interrelationship), we are always both separate and one.

In the end, how we think about and talk about either community or ecology means not a whit if it is divorced from how we live. If I weren’t writing this introduction during a break from working in the community vegetable garden—if I didn’t know that, despite their abstraction, these words are grounded in experience—I wouldn’t put much stock in them. The practical union of community and ecology offers paths back to that re-integration that we and the world will need to survive and thrive in the years, decades, and centuries ahead. And as the stories in this issue make clear, this union not only needs, but deserves, to be explored and experienced. By heeding the lessons learned by others on this path, we are more likely to get the ecology-community equation relatively “right” rather than “wrong.” Amidst the inevitable successes and challenges we encounter, the continual course corrections required will be much easier to make with one another’s help. May these stories inspire us to continue to rediscover our natural community as fellow organisms on earth.



Chris Roth edits COMMUNITIES.

Sharing and Climate Change

A Human-Sized Answer to a Global Problem

By Bucket Von Harmony

The global community is facing a serious ecological problem. Unless we change our way of living we may be passing on to our children a world with rising sea levels, extreme weather conditions, and disrupted ecosystems. According to governmental studies done in the UK and EU, a global average temperature increase of over 3 degrees Celsius would cause irreversible changes to our environment, the effects of which may include a potential rise of the sea level of up to 7 meters and widespread water and food shortages.

Nathan Rive of the Center for International Climate and Environmental Research in Oslo says that if we are to have any chance of preventing the average temperature from increasing over 2 degrees, “we would have to cut global emissions by 80 percent by 2050.”

How can we stop consuming resources and producing carbon at such high levels? Is it possible to do so and still maintain the level of comfort that we have in modern life? Are we willing to make the changes necessary, when the ultimate effects of our actions (or inaction) will not manifest until decades from now? We have the technology now that can help, but investment in these technologies on a massive scale is needed immediately if we hope to see the changes we need in place in time to make a difference. Government programs like carbon taxes might help motivate our industries to pollute less. However, in places like the European Union and the UK where such laws have been enacted, carbon reduction is still falling short of their goals. In addition, the US is the largest producer of carbon emissions per capita and is currently without comprehensive carbon emission regulations.

Don't give up hope yet! There exists today a solution that could drastically reduce the energy consumption and carbon emissions of the modern citizen, and it does not require new technology or a drastic reduction in quality of life. It is not anything new or complex; in fact it is something we all learned

in Kindergarten. It is called sharing.

Case in Point: Twin Oaks Community

The bylaws of my home, Twin Oaks Community in Virginia, list ecological sustainability as just one of the many purposes of our community's existence. The primary intention of our community at its founding was to create a culture of cooperation, sharing, and equality. We certainly do care about ecological sustainability and hold many discussions on how we could do better. However, we have put most of our energy into finding ways to live cooperatively, communally, and comfortably.

Only 10 percent of our residents are grid-electricity-free, we have no buildings built with cob or strawbale, and we live with most of the comforts of modern life. Despite our lack of green technologies and our lifestyle of modern conveniences, members of our community consume far less resources than those in our neighborhood, in some cases by over 80 percent less!

Below is a breakdown of our resource consumption and how it compares to that of other people in our climate.

Gasoline:

The average Virginia resident uses about 530 gallons of gasoline per year.¹ Twin Oaks consumed about 15,267 gallons of gasoline in 2007. With an average adult and child population of 96, that would put our consumption at 159 gallons per person. That is **70 percent less gasoline consumed!**

Electricity:

The average Virginia resident uses 13,860 kWh of electricity per year.² Twin Oaks consumed 268,065 kWh in 2007. With an average adult and child population of 96, that would put our consumption at 2792 kWh per person. That is **80 percent less electricity consumed!**

Natural Gas:

The average Virginia natural gas consumer uses 302 therms of natural gas.³ Twin Oaks consumed 16,221 therms of natural gas in 2007. With an average adult and child population of 96, that would put our consumption at 169 therms per person. That is **44 percent less natural gas consumed!**

Solid Waste:

The average American produces 1460 pounds of trash a year. Twin Oaks produced 18,780 pounds of solid waste in 2007. With an average adult and child population of 96, that would put our production at 196 pounds per person. That is **87 percent less solid waste produced!**

Twin Oaks Community has a fleet of 12 vehicles that we share between all our members. Each day one person runs into town to collect the day-to-day needs for us all. They also ferry people to their various destinations like doctor appointments or the library. By sharing our vehicles and carpooling, we are able to drastically reduce the amount of gasoline we use.

We all live in nine communal houses, each with different norms and culture. We use carbon-neutral wood to heat our houses. By sharing common space and having dormitory style housing, we consume much less energy to light and heat our homes than we would if we were to live in individual houses.

We serve lunch and dinner each day in a single building for our whole community. We are able to use much less energy to cook our food when we are using one kitchen to feed 90 people than we would if we each cooked our own meals.

What food and general necessities we do not produce ourselves, we buy in bulk. Because of this we greatly reduce the amount of packaging that comes onto our property. We send much less solid waste to the local landfill than we would if we were each to purchase our goods in individually wrapped packages.

By sharing so much we are able to live comfortably, but also greatly reduce our resource consumption and carbon output. Government programs and new technologies will be important in reducing our culture's output of carbon into the atmosphere, but there are things that we as individuals can do today to significantly reduce our contribution to global climate change.

Here are a few examples:

1. Join a food co-op! Use your collective buying power to save

1. www.nationalpriorities.org/nppdatabase_tool (comparing 2005 numbers to our 2007 numbers)
2. www.eia.doe.gov/cneaf/electricity/esr/table5.html
3. tonto.eia.doe.gov/dnav/ng/ng_cons_num_dc_u_SVA_a.htm
www.euractiv.com/en/sustainability/eu-climate-change-target-unfeasible/article-152154
www.metoffice.gov.uk/corporate/pressoffice/adcc/ExecSumFeb2005.pdf

money, while also reducing the packaging and energy used to deliver your food to your table. If there is not one in your area, start one! www.coopdirectory.org.

2. Carpool and ride-share when traveling! www.craigslist.org or www.rideshare-directory.com.

3. Join a housing co-op! Share a house with other like-minded souls, and share food costs and cook communal dinners together. You will save much more money and resources over living alone! directory.ic.org/records/coops.php.

4. Join an intentional community! There are thousands of communities out there with varying degrees of resource sharing and cooperation. ic.org.

5. Join an egalitarian community! Pool your income together with other folks to live a more sustainable and equitable life with your neighbors. Share resources to reduce your carbon footprint! theFEC.org.

6. Do you already live communally? Do an energy audit and see how your community is doing compared to others that live in your climate. Publish this information and let people know how effective cooperation and sharing is as a tool to battle climate change! Please send copies of your energy audits to bucket@twinoaks.org.

*By sharing so much
we are able to live comfortably,
but also greatly reduce
our resource consumption
and carbon output.*

twinoaks.org.

As times get harder, people will be looking for alternatives to our unsustainable economic model. We do need to look towards technology to help us and we do need our governments to regulate industry and lower emissions. These are issues of national and international politics and are beyond the reach of the average person.

However, by sharing more with members of our communities, we really can make significant and meaningful difference in our personal impact on the environment. We have the power to turn this crisis into an opportunity. By being examples for others to follow, perhaps we can make the necessary changes our world needs...one community at a time. ❁



Bucket Von Harmony is a member of Twin Oaks Community in Louisa, Virginia. Twin Oaks Community has served as an example of cooperative living for 41 years. Bucket serves as Co-Secretary of the Federation of Egalitarian Communities and is on the Twin Oaks Membership Team. Bucket also gardens, home schools a six-year-old, cooks dinner for 100 people, and makes tofu.

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REVOLUTIONARY COMMUNITARIANISM?

By Alexis Zeigler

We are facing combined energy, environmental, economic, and social justice problems of monumental proportions. We are also seeing a plethora of proposed solutions. Al Gore hosts an international concert to raise awareness of global warming, and Chevrolet is one of the primary sponsors. Chevron is running ads in major magazines encouraging people to conserve energy. Many developers and builders have jumped on the “green building” bandwagon, repackaging old plans in new green wrappers. These efforts range from well-intended to ineffectual, or just plain deceitful. We need a real conservation movement, and Intentional Communities are the sleeping giant of that movement.

I am an environmental activist and writer. As part of these efforts, I recently asked a number of my environmental activist friends to send me their energy bills. I looked at these bills, and conducted a comparison to the energy use at a few intentional communities. I expected the communities to have a smaller energy “footprint,” but the degree of the difference was shocking.

Among my environmental activist friends in the central Virginia area, residential energy use varied considerably. The surprise was that the average energy use was *above* American average per capita use. How could that be? The American average includes many people who live in urban areas in apartments. For someone who lives in an old, uninsulated house, even if they keep the thermostat set at “painfully cold” in the winter, their energy use is still much higher than someone living in an apartment with other apartments on all sides.

There were other surprising discoveries in my rather non-scientific survey of energy use. The cooperative groups I examined had energy use levels from 75 percent below to more than 90 percent below American average per-capita residential use. Some co-ops probably don’t do nearly as well, but that level of conservation is impressive. Put this in the context of the current debate over global warming. Various environmental groups have proposed radical carbon reductions goals in the range of 80 percent by 2050. This seems like an ambitious and noble goal. And yet some intentional communities are already conserving energy at a rate that is supposed to be our goal *40 years from now*.

The mainstream environmental movement has been trying to sell renewable energy by focusing primarily on production. We are supposed to believe that producing windmills, solar panels, and biofuels can create millions of jobs and eco-doodads that we can nail to the roof of every American suburban home. There’s nothing wrong with alternative energy, but we have to understand that if we tried to power the beltways of America, to heat the homes of America, to turn the tumble driers and air conditioners of the modern industrial world with alternative energy, the results would be disastrous.

Fossil fuel is very concentrated—*extremely* concentrated—energy. We have grown accustomed to using small, cheap machines to use this concentrated energy to play with as we choose. Alternative energy—be it sun, wind, or biofuel—is widely dispersed, and in the case of biofuel, easily over-exploited. Renewable en-

ergy, compared to the plethora of fossil energy to which we are accustomed, is limited and very expensive energy. If we use it wisely, in a *very modest* fashion, it could serve us well. If we imagine we can solarize American suburbia to power our current lifestyle, then we are wrong. The ecological price of the machinery that would be required would not be sustainable by any measure.

Such issues are far more than academic. We live in a world that is already very polarized between rich and poor. This polarization has grown in an age of cheap energy. Now we are entering an age of expensive energy. What does that mean? It means the number of people suffering acute malnutrition has risen by 25 percent since the 1990s, from about 800 million to around a billion people. And that means a War on Terror, and Democrats that act like Republicans used to.

Does anyone have any illusions that President Obama is going to roll back the Patriot Act? Why not? Because our world is changing. The big pie of energy and resources is now shrinking on a per capita basis, and the only way we can continue to eat gluttonously is for others to eat less, or not at all. I wish I were just making metaphors. The hungry will fight back, and our politicians will continue, left, right, and center, to frame that battle in heroic and political terms, not in its real ecological context.

In the midst of these growing pressures, the Communities Movement is a sleeping giant. We can spend decades shaving small percentages of conservation off of the American consumer's wasteline, or we can point out that alternative energy—because of the physics of collecting and using diffuse energy—only really works if you use it cooperatively.

Let me sharpen the point. When the average American drives home from work, they want to eat, take a shower, maybe wash their clothes, and go to bed in their private apartment. They could drive a highly efficient hybrid car, but that costs tens of thousands of dollars. (There are some studies that suggest that the long-term toxic outputs from a hybrid car are higher than an SUV. See Trainer, Ted, *Renewable Energy Cannot Sustain a Consumer Society*, Dordrecht, Netherlands, 2007.) The machines required to provide alternative energy to a single individual in an apartment—solar collectors, batteries, and what not—would also be expensive. The payback, either financially or ecologically, on this equipment would fall somewhere between a long time and never *if it is used only by one or two people*.

Is the individual living in an apartment likely to do the research, and spend tens of thousands of dollars to buy a complex array of solar and energy storage equipment? Not likely. Are we going to seek and enforce the global economic inequality that allows the wealthy of the world to put eco-toys in their suburban palaces while everyone else goes hungry and cold? Can we provide these expensive alternative energy systems for each and every individual in the world, all 6.7 billion of us? Clearly not.

Could we provide alternative energy systems to every *community* in the world? Probably.

When alternative energy systems are used cooperatively, whether it be sharing between kinspeople in a village, residents in an intentional community, or even just people at a local laundromat, the cost of the machines is divided between the number of users, and the savings are multiplied. This dividing of the costs and compounding of the dividends is not trivial; it is the difference between the politicized greenhype of corporate environmentalism and the real thing. In intentional community, we have answers that are cheap, use existing mechanical and social technologies, and WORK!

The crucible in which community has historically been crushed is the challenge between sustainable, more egalitarian cultures and highly stratified states. The latter have great power to organize and motivate people. The former have a great power to be wise and sustainable. It is no wonder that modern social movements face the same challenge.

The dysfunctions of what we now call equality and consensus make for amusing stories about the endless “drama” of community living. I hope we have learned something from that drama, because the stakes are going to get much higher. History is calling upon us to awaken from our nap and act. We are going to face revolutionary change whether we like it or not. If we are wise, we will rise and lead it, instead of slumbering in the

roadway until it runs us over. We have to find some means to bring people together, to generate commitment and cohesion, without creating an oppressive hierarchy. As far as I can tell, most in the communities movement are infected with the same disease that has so afflicted America at large. We respond to our immediate circumstance—relative comfort—rather than our knowledge that great changes are coming. We can talk about the coming changes, but a visceral, highly motivated response is lacking. Out of that motivation might be borne the highly coordinated, highly organized movement that is still at its heart as egalitarian and tolerant as it can be.

There are many efforts afoot these days to influence policy, to fix these our problems from the top down. I wish them luck, but we cannot wait. We need a bottom-up movement, one that does not wait on any policy changes. We need people who are willing to stick their necks out, to appear foolish and alarmist, to pursue the revolution that we know is approaching. That's you. ❁

*Alternative energy—
because of the physics of collecting
and using diffuse energy—
only really works if you
use it cooperatively.*



Alexis Zeigler is an activist, green builder, and orchardist living in central Virginia. He has lived in intentional community all of his adult life. More information, including articles, interviews, and downloadable books, can be found at his website, coneuv.org.

Cars and Rabbits

By Alline Anderson

Growing up in the San Francisco Bay Area, I was 26 years old before I went to Yosemite, 30 before I set foot on the island of Alcatraz; both trips happened because friends from out of town were visiting. Lesson learned: it often takes guests with fresh eyes to help us appreciate where and how we live.

I experienced this recently here at my home community, Dancing Rabbit Ecovillage (outside Rutledge, Missouri), with a visit from our friends Sharon and Dennis of Earthaven Ecovillage (Black Mountain, North Carolina). Seeing my own place through their eyes was a chance for me to revisit what has been accomplished, how some of our ideals have manifested into reality, and how by working together we can make a difference. Here's an example:

What separates the men from the boys, the wheat from the chaff, the truly eco-concerned from the cotton-headed ninny-muggins? Car use. While Dancing Rabbit receives a lot of attention for using biodiesel rather than petroleum, it seems to me that the way we utilize resources (in this case, cars) makes a much bigger impression, both socially and ecologically.

One of the stipulations when becoming a member of Dancing Rabbit is that we agree to—no, *choose* to—give up individual ownership of vehicles. For some this is not that much of a stretch; many Rabbits are avid cyclists, and have been getting around solely by bike for years. But for others, it is often a leap of faith; our American car culture is deep and wide, and for those accustomed to having a car available every second of every day it can initially be daunting.

It takes a bit of planning to divide car use for 35 people among three shared vehicles (two Jettas and a big ol' Ford truck). Each Sunday we gather in the Common House to do the "WIP," which stands for Week In Preview. Part of the WIP is scheduling the DRVC (Dancing Rabbit Vehicle Cooperative—yes, we are truly the land of acronyms!). Going through the week day by day, we figure out how best to utilize our vehicles. Who has a doctor's appointment, who needs to go to Kirksville for a conference, does the recycling need to go into Truman State?

Here's how this played out on a typical car trip: Cob and his son Duncan were taking the morning train from La Plata to Chicago, and Ma'ikwe was taking the evening train. They all needed to be dropped off at the La Plata station on Tuesday, albeit at vastly different times. Rather than make two trips, Kurt and I volunteered to drive, knowing that we both needed an eye exam in Kirksville. Sparky needed an eye exam too, so

she signed up to come along. And what the heck—since her train didn't leave until 8:00 p.m., Ma'ikwe called and got an appointment, too. Monday afternoon a group of Rabbits gathered to load the recycling into the back of the truck, and Tuesday morning the six of us piled into the front. We drove to the La Plata train station, dropped off Cob and a sleepy Duncan. We then drove 15 miles north to Kirksville and dropped off the recycling at Truman State's Recycling Center. Next, Kurt and I had our eyes examined while Sparky and Ma'ikwe did a little shopping on the square. We all met up for lunch, and then Kurt and I dropped Sparky and Ma'ikwe at the eye doc's while we did errands for a number of Rabbits: electrical supplies for Ted, custom cut glass for windows for Jeff's house, returning something to the Farm & Home for Rachel, picking up Sunflower Food Coop's order at HyVee, paintbrushes at the hardware store... At 4:00 Sparky and I reconvened at Washington Street Java Co. while Kurt and Ma'ikwe hightailed it to Bayview Supply to scope out supplies for the home she will be building next summer. With still a couple of hours before having to drop Ma'ikwe off at the station, we all had a delicious and relaxing dinner in town. After dinner, we stopped at the grocery store so that Ma'ikwe could get a few traveling treats. After dropping her at the train station, we had the truck back at Dancing Rabbit by 8:00 p.m. when Dan needed it to pick up another group of travelers at the Quincy train station, and were able to join the group celebrating Matt's birthday with games of charades and celebrity. (Whew!)

So what does all this running around prove? After living here for years, one tends to take it for granted; it's just how we do things. We do errands for one another, share rides, and cooperate the best we can. Yes, it sometimes is a pain in the, um, neck. But there is a certain comfort knowing that we can count on one another. We are all able to reduce our footprints just a bit—if each of us were to drive in our own cars on separate trips, we would use several times the petroleum used by the single trip.

Additionally, we not only save petroleum, we also save cold hard cash. By sharing the cost of car payment, maintenance, fuel, and insurance, our costs are startlingly less than when we each owned a car and each paid for our own. According to the Automobile Association of America, the national average cost for driving a car is \$664 per month (AAA figured in average fuel, routine maintenance, tires, insurance, license and registration, loan finance charges, and depreciation costs; fuel prices



Photo courtesy of Aline Anderson

are based on late-2006 national averages). Just think how often your car just sits there in your driveway or garage. I don't know about you, but there are lots of things I'd rather do with my money than spend it on a car I'm not using.

So what if you are interested in car sharing and do not live at Dancing Rabbit or another intentional community? Why, what a GREAT question! Car Sharing businesses are popping up all over the country. Most of them offer vehicles by the hour or the day; many offer hybrids, and some even have pick-up trucks. One of the best resources around is Dave Brook's blog, carsharing.us. It is a wealth of information for those wanting to learn more, and for those who are not in big cities. Better yet, Dave

writes regularly, and is really tapped in to the Car Share world.

Change is in the air, and to make it work we all need to participate. What are you willing to do to help with the solution? I like how Frances Moore Lappé put it: "Hope is not what we find in evidence, it's what we become in action." ❁

Aline Anderson has lived at Dancing Rabbit Ecovillage in Rutledge, Missouri since 1999, where she shares her home with her husband Kurt Kessner, and her vehicles with 30 of her closest friends. Her latest adventure is launching The Milkweed Mercantile, an Eco Inn, Organic Café, and Green General Store. Learn more at milkweedmercantile.com.

Resources

- Zipcar (www.zipcar.com) in Atlanta, Boston, Chicago, London, New York, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Portland, San Francisco, Seattle, Toronto, Vancouver, and Washington D.C.
- UCarShare (www.ucarshare.com) in Berkeley, Madison, and Portland (both Maine and Oregon)

- www.citycarshare.org in the San Francisco Bay Area
- Philly Car Share (www.phillycarshare.org) in Philadelphia
- www.communitycarshare.org in Bellingham, Washington
- www.igocars.org in Chicago
- Learn how to start your own Car Share: www.autoshare.com/beginners/guide.html



Ecovillages, HOW ECOLOGICAL ARE YOU?

By Prudence-Elise Breton

I think of myself as a good “eco-citizen”: I recycle, compost, and either bike or use transit in place of a car. I try to buy local or fair trade goods. During the winter, I insulate my windows to save energy. During the summer, I grow as many veggies as I can in my backyard. But when I look beyond my yard, I see overflowing garbage cans, cars left idling, and neighbours who have only ever grown a dandelion-free lawn. The situation is daunting. Are all my efforts the right things to do? What if we all were good “eco-citizens”? Would we really make a difference for the planet? I needed to see that another world was indeed possible, and when I discovered ecovillages, they seemed to be the perfect response. But how effective are their actions really? I decided to find out for myself by visiting a few.

My first visit was in 2004 to Ecohameau de La Baie¹ (Eco-hamlet of the Bay). Ecohameau de La Baie is a little settlement of one Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) farm and six houses, of which five are strawbale constructions. Ecohameau de La Baie is located in Saguenay, a city three hours’ drive north of Quebec City, in the province of Quebec, Canada. The family that hosted me was very inspiring. They answered my questions regarding zoning, construction materials, and community rules. They also detailed their successes and disappointments. They gave me much to think about and pushed me to want to know more about ecovillages.

After this first experience, I wanted to visit some ecovillages in more organised and formal settings. I was looking for real models of an ecovillage, closer to an actual village and impressively ecological. After consulting Michel Desgagnés, who visited 40 intentional communities in Canada and the United

States² in 2003, I chose two ecovillages located in the United States: Sirius Community in Massachusetts and Earthaven in North Carolina. While visiting these two ecovillages during the summer of 2005, I also stopped by Ganas (Staten Island, New York) for five days. Ganas does not claim to be an ecovillage. However, I thought it would be interesting to see the difference between ecovillages that are purposely working toward reducing their impact on the environment and another type of intentional community that is not specifically focusing on it.

I wanted to bring back from my trip an unambiguous image of their efforts toward sustainability. I did not know myself how to evaluate sustainability so I decided to use a sustainable development evaluation grid developed by a university instructor.³ The grid has four dimensions: ecology, economy, social, and equity. Each of these dimensions includes various indicators to be weighted and scored. I thought the ecovillages would get amazing final scores, especially for the ecological dimension. However, my experience turned out to be a little different...

After my visit, I compiled the results for the four dimensions. To my surprise, the ecological dimension for all three communities had the weakest score. It seemed counter-intuitive that ecovillages should score so poorly in the ecological department. Why did ecovillages, which focus on sustainable development and ecology, not have better results? The reasons varied from one community to another: the use of cars associated with a remote location, being on the grid, low food self-sufficiency, absence of action plans, etc. The unanimous weakness that caused the relatively low scores for the ecology dimension, however, was the lack of data, monitoring, and evaluation.



All photos by Prudence-Elise Breton

Left: Ecohameau de La Baie (Eco-hamlet of the Bay) is a little settlement of six houses, of one Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) farm and six houses, of which five are strawbale constructions. This page: The picture shows the solar panels on the Second Neighbourhood Group (SoNG) houses at EcoVillage at Ithaca. Following an assessment of their energy consumption, solar panels will soon be installed on the First Resident Group (FRoG) houses.

I felt a sinking feeling about their poor scores for the ecology dimension but I was still buoyed up by the potential of ecovillages. Although ecovillages tend to neglect the evaluation of their activities, they are fully engaged in the process of working towards a sustainable future. All the communities I visited charmed me with their incredible capacity for *doing things*. Not only did they talk about sustainability, but they were also going out and trying to implement it on a day-to-day basis. Ecovillages provide a great place to live for their inhabitants. They take into account a respect for the natural environment and its ecosystems and educate the public about various aspects of sustainable living. Consequently, I decided to undertake a master's degree to study ecovillages. I wanted to know how, in detail, everything works—how they organize their ideas, people, and resources, to move towards sustainability. For my study, I decided to look at EcoVillage at Ithaca (EVI), in upstate New York.

I chose EVI because it seemed well structured, had two farms on site, had strong educational outreach, was accessible through the town transit system, and had a respectable population of about 160 inhabitants living in two dynamic cohousing neighbourhoods. Although my thesis research was about organization and not about evaluation, unlike my previous visits to ecovillages, I also looked at their monitoring and evaluation system in terms of ecological impact. Once again, the evaluation at EVI was mostly qualitative and irregular. During tours of the community, guides were using some statistics that came from more or less outdated research done by college or university students. Other statistics came from the energy task force committee regarding household energy consumption and transportation. However, no evaluation was done on the amount of compost, the amount of garbage and recycling, or their consumption of local food, and they only had a thin idea of the species and various plants growing on the land. No specific monitoring process was in place to make sure year after year that the community was progressing in reducing its ecological footprint.

My overall experience revealed the difficulty ecovillages have coordinating their mission and actions with measurable results. How can they affirm being ecovillages if they cannot certify, supported by concrete numbers, that their actions actually reduce their impact on the natural environment? How can they educate, influence, and convince a wider public that sustainable living is worth the effort if they do not present tangible results? How can they make the right choices to get closer to their ideal of a more sustainable way of life, if they have no data to rely on?

Evaluation of ecological activities is a real need for ecovillages. During my visits I heard comments regarding evaluation such as “we know it is important but can not do it—we don't know how” or “it's too much work.” When asking for an estimation of how much waste was recycled, the person responsible for the recycling in that community told me: “I don't know, you'd have to empty the dumpster on the ground!” He seemed a little grossed out by this prospect. Evaluating is not easy; it takes imagination and time. I truly believe that ecovillages do not omit evaluation of their actions due to a lack of vision or carelessness. Thus, as an outside observer who believes in the potential of ecovillages, I would like to offer concrete and practical ideas on how to evaluate specific actions. The three simple examples of methods that I present could be used by all the communities I visited.

Compost

Compost is certainly an accessible way to reduce human impact on the environment. Among other benefits, composting reduces emissions of methane (CH₄), a greenhouse gas—300 times more harmful than CO₂—that is produced when organic matter decomposes in oxygen-starved landfills.⁴ A nonprofit organization promoting compost to the downtown citizens of Quebec City, “Eco-Quartier CJC,” in which I volunteered, is a good example. Eco-Quartier CJC set up communal compost bins in various public parks. They kept a digital hook scale and sheets in a waterproof bucket near each compost pile. Then, the willing participants were asked to weigh their deposit and note the amount on a sheet next to their name. At the end of the season, results were compiled to find how many tons were saved from going to the landfill. A big party was organized with the “composter-participants” and the numbers were revealed for each neighbourhood. It is amazing and fulfilling to realize how many tons are collected in only four months!

Energy Consumption

In 2005, EcoVillage at Ithaca devoted itself specifically to reducing its ecological footprint. It created the Energy Task Force

Committee that year to come up with long-term energy objectives for the community. The committee's mission included determining the current consumption of energy and resulting production of CO² emissions, then using this information to evaluate possible energy investments. The electricity usage was difficult to evaluate as the electricity provider refused to provide actual consumption data. Moreover, some residents in EVI were reluctant to share information on their energy consumption as they were afraid of being judged.

The Energy Task Force thus had to use a rough estimate based on a sample of households to assess electricity usage. They estimated fuel usage by sampling vehicle class (sedan, van, truck, etc) and estimating the miles driven per class, then measured carbon dioxide emissions by adding up results from electricity usage, natural gas burned, and vehicle usage over the next 10 years. They concluded that, on average, each household would spend \$30,000 for gas, oil, and electricity bills over the next 10 years if nothing were to change. They brought these powerful numbers in front of the community decision-making meetings of both neighbourhoods of EVI. These groups gave the committee the mandate to look at energy options to reduce long-term costs, cut down pollution, and reduce dependence on fossil fuels. After a study made by a handful of willing burning souls, EVI will install solar panels on a number of houses, the common house, and the community pump house. The example of the Energy Task Force at EcoVillage at Ithaca shows that a better understanding of their actual situation allowed enlightened choices regarding their energy consumption.

Local Foods

Our food choices have a tremendous impact on the planet. In the global economy, transportation requirements for food are high—such transportation ruins our air and sends tons of greenhouse gases into our atmosphere. According to the Natural Resources Defense Council⁵, products grown in the United States travel an average of 1500 miles before getting sold. Ecovillages tend to diminish their *ecological footprint* by growing food on-site and by purchasing as much as possible from local farmers. What is the proportion of local food used by the community? How much transportation was saved this year? I doubt

that any community would have an answer. In most ecovillages, individual members control and buy their own food, making an exhaustive evaluation difficult. But communal meals could provide a good opportunity to make such measurements.

At the time of my visit to Sirius community, in summer 2005, vegetable production was managed by a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) system. The rich soil of both their gardens produced an impressive amount of high-quality organic vegetables. In fact, at Sirius, I remember eating the best snap peas of my entire life! While helping the garden crew to separate the crops for the CSA members and the community meal, I thought that it would be easy to keep track of the quantity and types of vegetables consumed. These numbers could tell how productive long-term organic gardening can be. To go even further, the vegetable production could be compared with vegetables sold in the nearby markets to determine how much money and travelling was saved.

Conclusion

To go back to my original question, the one that first nourished my interest in ecovillages—"Is my drop in the ocean making a difference?"—I think the answer is yes. Because when I look at the accumulated efforts of ecovillages, I continue to be inspired. In an ecovillage, the power of living together—the support and motivation found in the immediate environment—helps inhabitants to continue working toward their convictions. If ecovillages would quantify these efforts, I think their demonstration would be even more powerful and would help them improve their own path to sustainable living. Ecovillages can use the measurable results of their own experiences in order to send a clear and universal message and inspire even more individuals to engage a way of life that preserves our natural resources and ecosystems for future generations. ❁

Prudence-Elise Breton is currently a Master's student at the University of Northern British Columbia (Canada) studying ecovillages. Her undergraduate studies in social work focused on community organization and local development. Interest in community living and passion for environmental protection led her to visit several ecovillages in order to experience their way of life and better understand their functioning.

1. Ecohameau de La Baie is one of the projects of the ecological research group called Le GREB. For further information, see website: www.greb.ca (French).

2. For further information, see website: www.cohabitat.ca/routedesecovillages/indexAmNord.html (French).

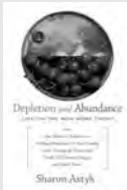
3. Villeneuve, C., (1999, reviewed 2004) Comment réaliser une analyse de développement durable?, Département des sciences fondamentales, Université du Québec à Chicoutimi (French).

4. US Composting Council, www.compostingcouncil.org.

5. Natural Resources Defense Council, www.nrdc.org/health/foodmiles/.

Ecology and Community on

Community Bookshelf



Depletion and Abundance Life on the New Home Front

by Sharon Astyk
2008; 288 pages; 8.9" x 6"; paperback
This is a much needed and well-written book. While some other books about climate change and peak oil have seemed strident, Sharon Astyk sticks to the facts, suggests realistic scenarios for what we all can do about these problems, and offers her opinions in a way that invites the reader into the dialog.



EarthScore Your Personal Environmental Audit and Guide

by Donald W. Lotter
Revised and updated 2002; 36 pages; 8 1/2" x 11"
Are you curious about your and your household's environmental impacts?

In this excellent booklet, designed to raise awareness rather than produce guilt, we are presented with questions about impact, given five choices for answers, and then tally our score as we go along. Included are explanations, resources, and lots of helpful information. Thoughtful, well-written, and actually fun and encouraging! Special rates for quantity purchases of 10 and more.



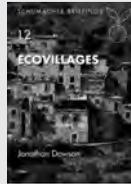
Ecological Design and Building Schools Green Guide to Educational Opportunities in the United States and Canada

by Sandra Leibowitz Earley
2005; 160 pages; 10" x 6.5"; paperback
This current and comprehensive resource covers the scope of offerings available for those wanting to further their education in the areas of natural and green building. It covers every type of course from hands-on workshops to more formal college and university programs.



Ecovillages A Practical Guide to Sustainable Communities

by Jan Martin Bang
2005; 288 pages; 7.5" by 9"; paperback
Packed with tips, useful insights, sage advice, and a wealth of resources, this guide will appeal to a broad range of people interested in living in community or planning to do so. The book is enhanced by full-color case studies of ecovillages around the world.



Ecovillages New Frontiers for Sustainability By Jonathan Dawson

2006; 94 pages; 8.5" x 6"; paperback
An excellent overview of the development of ecovillages from their beginnings to the present time, this book also provides insight into their actual and potential contributions to a more sustainable world.



The End of Oil On the Edge of a Perilous New World

by Paul Roberts
2005; 416 pages; 5.5" x 8.25"; paperback
In this frank and balanced book, the author delves deeply into the economics and politics of oil and the effect they have on all of us and our future. He considers in a clear-eyed manner the potential of alternative energy systems such as wind power, hybrid cars, and hydrogen. Brisk, immediate, and accessible, this is essential reading for anyone who uses oil, which is to say every one of us.



The Findhorn Book of Community Living

by William Metcalf
2004; 128 pages; 7.5" x 5"; paperback
From one of the most successful and well-known intentional communities, Findhorn, comes a well-written introduction to community living that will interest everyone searching for a satisfying alternative to mainstream society. It provides reliable guidance, information, and resources for the community-seeker. There is also much in this book that will be of use to those who are already living in community or who have some knowledge of this lifestyle.



Passion as Big as a Planet Evolving Eco-Activism in America

by Ma'ikwe Schaub Ludwig
2007; 219 pages; 9" x 6"; paperback
This engaging book gives those wishing to translate their core beliefs to the wider community around them excellent guidance and support. It shows how to combine personal growth and spiritual exploration with social and political activism



Post-Petroleum Survival Guide and Cookbook Recipes for Changing Times

by Albert Bates
2006; 286 pages; 7.5" x 9"; paperback
This blueprint for moving into a changing energy future distills the essentials for small-footprint living, leavened with deep wisdom, a wide variety of wonderful recipes, juicy quotes, and reminders to enjoy life as we power down.



Radical Simplicity Small Footprints on a Finite Earth

by Jim Merkel
2003; 288 pages; 9 x 6"; paperback
Existing work on sustainability, resource justice, and escaping the consumer lifestyle has opened the door to the possibilities of a simpler life. Jim Merkel invites the reader to step through the door and follow the path to realizing the possibilities such a lifestyle change offers.



Superbia! 31 Ways to Create Sustainable Neighborhoods

by Dan Chiras and Dave Wann
2003; 230 pages; paperback
The dream of creating sustainable cities is a noble and inspiring one, but the harsh reality is that many people currently live in the suburbs. Transforming these areas to serve people better and to reduce human impact on the environment is a process that can start right away. Dozens of real-life examples from all over North America show you how.



Sustainable Community Learning from the Cohousing Model

by Graham Meltzer
2005; 179 pages, 8 x 10.5 inches; paperback
Providing information on successful examples of cohousing as a sustainable lifestyle, this book is an invaluable resource. Worldwide in its focus and illustrated with the author's photographs, it is a source of knowledge for those wanting live their lives in a more ecological, less isolated way.

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Findhorn's Incredible Shrinking Footprint

By Jonathan Dawson

As with all truly living systems, Findhorn's strength lies in its ability to re-invent itself as the world around it changes. So it is that yesterday's ashram has become today's ecovillage. Not that the ashram has been abandoned. Rather, as we have climbed the dynamic spiral, so the aim—in some cases achieved, in others not—has been the integration of the best of each previous meme into a whole that is greater than the sum of its parts.

In the early 1960s, when the seeds of the community were sown, the word "ecology" was limited to the dusty corridors of natural sciences faculties. Transformation of consciousness was the core focus, meditation the practice.

And yet, among the founding members of the community, one—Dorothy MacLean—held strongly the vision of "co-creation with nature." Her ability to contact the intelligences in nature—*devas* specific to every plant and other natural being—underlay the community's ability to grow prodigiously-sized vegetables on the sandy soils of the Moray Firth in northern Scotland.

Dorothy's message that the nature *devas* were all too keen to

cooperate with humans, not just in the growing of large cabbages but in the far larger work of healing the Earth, has provided the foundation and inspiration for much that has happened since in Findhorn on the ecological plane. It is the spark that has enabled the community's core spiritual impulse to manifest in ways that are increasingly relevant to a world facing converging ecological crises.

The achievements of the Findhorn ecovillage are documented in a 2006 study undertaken by the Stockholm Environment Institute. The community's ecological footprint proved to be the lowest ever measured for any settlement in the industrialized world—at 2.56 Global Hectares, less than half the UK national average, including the travel footprints of the 3000 annual course participants.

The following table and graphic from the report provides an overview of the study's key findings, including comparisons with Scotland, the UK, and the celebrated London green housing development, BedZED.

The community's home and energy footprint is 22 percent of the UK national average, for several reasons: Renewable energy

Table 22. Comparisons of the total Findhorn Foundation and Community ecological footprint and other ecological footprints.

Category	UK	Scotland	Findhorn	Bed Zed
Food	1.14	1.06	0.38	0.99
Home and Energy	1.35	1.33	0.30	0.36
Travel	0.83	0.99	0.51	0.26
Consumables	0.63	0.67	0.34	0.37
Services	0.41	0.33	0.29	0.24
Government and Other	0.47	0.47	0.35	0.47
Capital Investment	0.51	0.51	0.38	0.51
Total	5.40	5.37	2.56	3.20

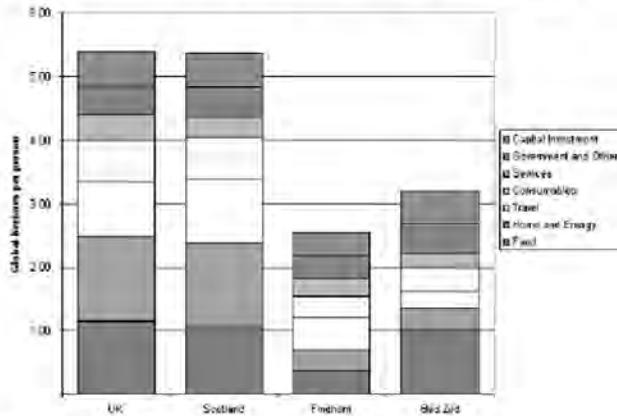


Figure 13. Comparison of ecological footprints for UK, Scotland, total Findhorn Foundation and Community and Bed Zed.

is generated on site through wind, solar, biomass, and geothermal technologies (Findhorn's four wind turbines, with a combined capacity of 750 kilowatts, generate 140 percent of the community's needs for electricity with the surplus being sold back to the grid). A growing number of highly insulated houses are replacing the old leaky caravans and bungalows that were home to early community members. And having almost 100 people—community members and course participants—sharing one large building, a former hotel in the neighbouring town of Forres, also produces large energy-saving dividends.

The community consumes a relatively large proportion of local, organic, seasonal, vegetarian food—no mean feat at more than 57 degrees north, the equivalent of northern Saskatchewan. A significant amount of this is grown at Britain's first organic CSA (community-supported agriculture) box-scheme, coordinated between three local farms. This enables it to record a food footprint just 33 percent of the national average.

Car usage was recorded as being a mere six percent of the national average; because there is so much employment generated onsite in a rich array of enterprises, few community members need to commute to work. (In the time since the study, the community has created its own carpool, dropping the car travel footprint even further.)

The community economy is distinctively vibrant at least in part due to the creation of a cooperative that has facilitated the investment of £600,000 of members' savings in community initiatives—including the wind park, affordable housing, and the community shop—and a complementary currency that keeps money circulating locally.

The footprint associated with "consumables," a general cat-

egory covering consumer goods, is a little over half the national average, partly due to the sharing of equipment like washing machines and televisions, and partly because there is less need for luxury items in a community that provides so much of its own entertainment in home-grown choirs, dance classes, writing groups, and so on.

Finally, the community was awarded a zero score (the highest mark) for waste, since so much of this is recycled into productive use. This includes food scraps that are returned to the community gardens and the clean water returned to the local water table from the plant-based Living Machine sewage treatment system—once again, Britain's first.

In only one category did Findhorn's footprint exceed the national average; Findhorners travel two and half times further by air than the average Briton, the consequence of being a highly international community.

Now, things move on and it is time for us to re-invent ourselves again.

On the one hand, rising energy prices will necessarily drive us into a more bioregional world, with international travel becoming a progressively more expensive habit. This will be a challenge to an ecovillage that sometimes seems to defy the laws of physics: the further away from it, the higher its profile seems to be.

One task before us is therefore to become more enmeshed in our back yard, of greater service as an R&D and training centre to our own bioregion. This process is already underway, with myriad new locally-based initiatives recently launched, including strengthening ties with Scottish universities and the launch of CIFAL Findhorn, one of an international network of 12 United Nations training centres whose remit is the delivery of sustainability-related training courses to the staff and representatives of municipalities and other locally-based organizations (www.cifalfindhorn.org/). (The French acronym CIFAL stands for "Centre International de Formation des Autorités/Acteurs Locaux"—or "International Training Centre for Local Authorities/Actors.")

On the other hand, the most immediate threat we face as a species is runaway climate chaos, and not all of our efforts here at the local level will be effective in slowing that on the necessary scale and timeframe. The task is to provoke a mass public mobilization that will feed into the political process culminating in the UN Copenhagen conference in December 2009, which will decide on the international agreement to replace the Kyoto Protocol when it expires in 2012.

On this level, the Findhorn community is now engaged in a series of fun(d)-raising and public awareness campaigns linked to the 350 campaign (www.350.org) for an agreement at Copenhagen to stabilize CO₂ emissions to 350 parts per million. These include helping to set up a meeting between community representatives, scientific experts, and members of the Scottish Parliament, a series of pilgrimages that will converge on the Parliament on the same day, concerts, public educational events, and 350 logos planted far and wide, including in the

(continued on p. 71)



The Nature of Our Work

By Stacie Whitney

Community living, Non-Violent Communication (NVC), process work, and conflict resolution become buzzwords when you live at a place like Findhorn (an international holistic education center and spiritual community/ecovillage of more than 300 people located on the coast of northern Scotland). I've spent years living, studying, and working in groups on everything from consensus decision making to holistic health.

I recently spent two weeks visiting my family in the States, and all of it—all of my expertise and practice—flew right out the window when I revisited my old family dynamics. The temper I thought I'd left behind bubbled up from its place of deep rest. The wall I've been working so hard to chisel away day after day rebuilt itself within hours, and fortified itself with an extra layer of bricks. Years of self-growth and improvement were suddenly nothing but words and concepts as I reverted to my old patterns, dynamics, and lifestyle choices. I heard myself responding to questions that my parents asked me with mere grunts, and I even discovered one gorgeous sunny day that I'd locked myself in our room (my husband was witness to this experience), in an ever-so-teenage display of emotional shutdown.

On return to Findhorn, I've slowly been able to chisel the wall back down to a place where I can take responsibility and apologize for my actions. But with the perspective of distance comes the unavoidable question: How do we translate all of this work that we do in community out into the rest of the world? Because if we don't, then why are we doing the work in the first place? In other words, can we make the transition from "I" to the greater "We"?

This question has huge implications for the communities movement—not only in interpersonal relationships and group

consciousness, but also in being demonstrations and training centers for the rest of the world. We can be as low-impact and carbon-neutral as we want, but if it doesn't translate into a formula that empowers visitors to make shifts in their own lives, then we are deluding ourselves into thinking that we are "being the change."

I run a semester study abroad program here at Findhorn, entitled "The Human Challenge of Sustainability." And indeed it is! Often students come here expecting us to have all the answers and be the vision of zero-carbon perfection. What they inevitably learn is that we are striving, and it is an ongoing journey. If we "reach" the goal, then perhaps we have not set our sights far enough ahead. Our aim is to empower young people to confront the challenges in the world today, and to work toward sustainable solutions, using different approaches, worldviews, and awareness than originally created the situation. So while we do show them our wind turbines and explain how they provide us with enough energy to sell some back to the grid, we also work with them to be creative about their own energy usage when they return home. We are not teaching the methods, we are teaching the thinking that brought us to discover this method for ourselves.

How we view the world, and our role in it, is the keystone to positive global change. I've recently been contemplating the world situation in light of changing worldviews. While there is a pungent whiff of hope in the air on the tail of the Obama Inauguration, it is important to keep in mind what it is that invites us to hope in the first place. Obama represents change, a divergence from old patterns of thinking, and yes, even a bit of idealism. This combination of attributes adds up to empowerment.

The times I am closest to, and most in-tune with my family,



are when I refuse to believe the stories I learned in all those years about who got more attention and who played what roles in our dynamics. The reason I fell back into old patterns on my recent trip was that I forgot that I am allowed to think in a different way. One of my greatest strengths is seeing one situation with unlimited viewpoints. And this is where I can meet an old stagnant dynamic head-on. We can all do this, if we can accept that change is not only inevitable, but it is also *good*.

We will not prevent global climate change by converting all electricity sources to wind turbines. We will, however, halt it, if we can use our deep, intuitive, creative selves to continually evolve, adapt, and create according to what is needed and what is available. With each month that passes here at Findhorn, I become clearer that this is the work we do so well here.

I will not have lasting peace and contentment in my personal and family life if I stick to old patterns and habits. It is this “out-of-the-box” thinking, which so many of us have been accused of, that is so desperately needed at this stage. If we limit ourselves to using only a few established methods, then we are allowing ourselves to be stuck in a process of repetitive, limited thinking. And now, more than ever, is a time for the new. What we are hoping to spread is a fire for rapid, creative, urgent, and beautiful change. ❁

Stacie Whitney, M.S., is an environmental educator and writer with an ardor for positive perceptual shift as a change agent in today's world. She has traveled, worked, adventured, and lived on both sides of the Atlantic, on both land and sea, and now lives in Findhorn with her husband. For more information on the Findhorn Foundation and community, please visit www.findhorn.org; for more on the Human Challenge of Sustainability, see www.findhorncollege.com.



All photos courtesy of Stacie Whitney

Left page: The Nature at Findhorn Beach. This page top: Findhorn Community Semester (FCS) students in the field discussing their world-views. Middle: Labrynth at Findhorn Beach. Bottom: FCS students enjoying Findhorn dunes with wind turbines in the background.



All photos by Chris Roth

How Ecology Led Me to Community

By Chris Roth

In COMMUNITIES, we like to feature personal stories about real experiences, rather than abstract theories or dry analyses. In this article, our editor plunges into the fun. He asks that you imagine listening to the following story around a crackling campfire, and remember that “I” is just a figure of speech, and might just as easily be “you”...

I’d never been one who tried too hard to conform, but my marching to a different drummer became decidedly more pronounced in high school. There are various ways to describe what happened: you could say that trees started to speak to me, or that long-distance running connected me with the natural world in new ways, or that an earth-centered spiritual awakening led me to find that that “God,” increasingly elusive in church, resided in the outdoors instead. Whatever the explanation, I started to take my guidance from ecologically-oriented voices that seemed at times audible only to me, but which spoke clear as crystal and left little doubt about what I needed to do.

One might think that “marching to one’s own drummer” would lead one away from community, into isolation and even

hermithood. But in fact this particular drummer led me invariably toward community, which I discovered to be inextricably intertwined with ecology. Although I was marching without a map, with little idea where I’d end up, the outcomes seem inevitable in retrospect.

Here are just a few of the off-beat marching orders I received and the mysterious places they took me:

“Avoid Cars!”

I had never liked cars. As a young child, I had to be coaxed to get into them, and I never experienced that automotive fascination that many boys develop. I disliked the noise, the fumes, the confinement, the danger, and, as I learned more about them, their other impacts (ecological, social, economic, political). In the wake of the mid-’70s oil crisis, I wrote an editorial in my high school newspaper inveighing against excessive car use. Most of my classmates, meanwhile, eagerly anticipated and then celebrated the day when they were allowed to drive and own a car. I walked, biked, ran, and tried to stay out of mo-



tor vehicles. The drummer I was marching to told me that the world could not sustain them. At the time, it seemed like a potentially lonely path.

But as I continued my education and explored different ways of living, my resolution to avoid the need for a private car produced unexpected results. The best way I could see to be free of vehicle dependence was to live and work in the same place—better yet, to seek out ways of living that seamlessly combined living and working in direct relationship with the land. (My drummer had also told me that, despite my suburban roots, revelation was to be found rurally.)

With the ability to be car-free in my daily life as a top priority influencing every decision, I have spent most of my adult years living and working together with others in land-based intentional communities and on small organic family farms. In the modern world, rural survival on one's own or even in a nuclear family can almost require a private motorized vehicle. But joining with others to create a local economy on a piece of land reduces the need to leave it, and makes combined trips and shared vehicles feasible. I did in fact eventually acquire a car, which I use occasionally (hopefully for good causes, including cultivating community connections beyond our 87 acres), but upon which I have never depended for my livelihood.

Now, in addition to gardening and helping develop my community's land as an educational center and nature sanctuary, I also telecommute to my other job (crafting a magazine out of other people's words—except when, as in the current case, my own bubble out in possibly overwhelming abundance). None of these essential activities requires a car. I sometimes go weeks without getting into one—whereas I bicycle every day, both around our own land and into the neighboring forest. I do not miss those hours stuck in traffic—in fact, I never even had to experience them. Instead, I am happy to have spent my life among pedestrians, and discovered community in the process.

“Stop Watching Television!”

My drummer sometimes lacked subtlety, and cast things in black and white that did in fact possess a few shades of gray. By the end of high school, I had identified television as one of the key elements keeping people detached from real life, out of touch with their inner selves, separated from one another, and cut off from the natural world. In my view, it was entirely evil,

and I had fantasies of some kind of cosmic pulse that would simultaneously incinerate all televisions and force people to start actually living again. (Since then, I've decided to relax my judgments and cut Mr. Rogers, at least, a little slack. I know that there is, in fact, some “good stuff” on television, though not enough to make me want to have one in my life.) I resolved to be TV-free once I left home—a resolution I have kept. At the time, this seemed like another lonely-making, solitary choice.

It turned out to be anything but that. Not owning or watching television propelled me into a multitude of television-less experiences among people who were also looking for something more real. Neither my inner nor outer explorations during and after college could have happened in the same way in an environment featuring a television—they were simply incompatible with a mesmerizing image- and noise-making machine being anywhere within sight or earshot. I lived outside, worked with Native Americans, learned to garden, and ultimately settled into a rewarding, TV-free life on farms and in intentional communities. In community, homemade culture and direct personal experience have proven so much more satisfying than manufactured culture and vicarious experience that television has never even tempted me. I've discovered that the world of birds living all around us here in the country, in three dimensions and surround-sound, fascinates me more than could anything on a screen. I've also learned to play the guitar, an almost endless source of do-it-yourself entertainment, often even better when shared with others.

Saying “no” to television made it possible for me to eventually say “yes” to community. As long as I have community in my life, I am staying unplugged (unless, for example, it's for a large-group Inauguration viewing at the local organic eatery, or for a Fred Rogers tribute show watched for old times' sake at my parents' house).

“Eat Low on the Food Chain”

Once again, that nonconformist, earth-minded drummer put a bee in my bonnet during high school, in the form of a vegetarian friend who urged me to read Frances Moore Lappé's *Diet for a Small Planet*. Once I had started thinking about food—its origins, its impacts, its larger implications—I could not retreat back into ignorance or not caring. I became the sole vegetarian



in my family and one of only two I knew in my school. This looked like another surefire path toward social isolation.

Since then, I have gone through a number of different phases, often for many years at a stretch: ovo-lacto-vegetarianism, situationally-dictated omnivory, pure veganism combined with a commitment to organic food, modified veganism, all-organic-mostly-vegetarianism-with-occasional-fish-or-fowl-thrown-in, etc. However, I have never returned to a standard American diet, and my food choices (tending toward the macrobiotic vegan much of the time, and the sustainably grown all of the time) would be considered strange by most people.

In the communities I've lived in, by contrast, my food choices are not strange—sometimes, especially in the presence of raw foodists, they seem downright middle-of-the-road. In these communities, we've eaten a significant portion of our own, homegrown whole foods—especially vegetables and fruits—and seen food as having not only health and spiritual but also political and ecological implications. Eating in ways that minimize our ecological footprints aligns us with the global community, and brings us together as a local community as well. My “small planet” food choices, far from isolating me, have helped me find communities in which I share common values with others.

“Read and Write Consciously or Not at All”

At a certain point in my education, I realized that, even though I'd dispensed with the unreality of television, I was still living mostly vicariously, through words. I had read about many more things than I'd ever experienced. I had learned how to write but felt I had little of substance to write about: I was passionately—and tiresomely—familiar only with the labyrinthine workings of my own mental circuitry. Limited by my academically-bound situation, and out of touch with almost everything outside of it, I realized that I had fled from the world of feeling and experience into a world of word-dominated thinking.

I decided to take a fast from the written word. For an entire summer, I read nothing (except for interpretive signs on Cape

Cod National Seashore and an American Youth Hostel guide-book) and wrote nothing. I focused instead on my and others' feelings (even if unexpressed) and on the land around me, unmediated by words and without other distractions. I began a process of immersion learning in the language of the natural world, and in my own feelings and relationships within that world. I joined a school that lived, learned, slept, and woke outside every day, exploring the vast areas of wild America to which

Before reading or writing anything, I tried to gauge whether it would bring me closer to understanding the actual nature of life and the world, or whether it was just human-generated distraction, overintellectualized delusion, or philosophy divorced from the earth.

my suburban upbringing had never exposed me. Before reading or writing anything (once I broke my fast), I tried to gauge whether it would bring me closer to understanding the actual nature of life and the world, or whether it was just human-generated distraction, mass-produced entertainment, overintellectualized delusion,

or philosophy divorced from the earth. If it was any of the latter, I skipped it. Like television, irrelevant words would have taken me away from, rather than toward, the kind of integrated ecological life I envisioned. I recognized that words could distract as well as communicate. I returned to reading and writing only cautiously, and, to the best of my ability, consciously.

Since then, my involvement with words has always been a byproduct of my life, rather than something defining my actual reality. In my first few years of college, being wrapped up in words had isolated me. Initially, backing away from words isolated me even more. But it also opened me up to the real world, a prerequisite to finding real community. Like freedom from television, it allowed me to experience new situations more fully, open my senses more completely to the natural world, and make actual connections with people. Rather than creating imaginary situations on paper (or in a computer hard drive, or in cyberspace), I found that I could discover and build real relationships. I was also able to recognize the limitations of human language and tune in more fully to the language of the land and its creatures. I experienced both human and non-human community in ways that most books I'd read had at best only hinted at, and that I could never have described beforehand except in the most general, theoretical terms.



“Get Back to the Land!”

Getting back to the land is not something that most people born and raised in a New York City suburb ever do. That path hadn't even occurred to me during most of my formative years, since I'd had the impression that farmers and rural people were “dumb”—that's why they lived in the country. No, I hadn't actually met anyone fitting this description, or ever lived in the country or on a farm myself, but from what I could gather from the media and from word on the street, rural people talked slowly, did boring physical work, inbred, and chewed tobacco, all sure signs of non-intelligence. In other words, blind prejudice and ignorance kept me from ever aspiring to rural life.

This all changed, in several different phases, as my drummer became more insistent. First, local wild edible weeds caught my interest. Then the notion grabbed me of not only running and bicycling outdoors, but living outdoors. My traveling environmental education program got me used to being outside almost all the time, and also familiarized me with some of this continent's original outdoor lovers, whose endangered cultures still survived to a degree. I decided I wanted to live like a Native American, and, when I had a chance, I acted on that desire, moving to a reservation for a year and a half and becoming the only white employee in a center for developmentally disabled Hopis. While there, I received a further marching order (channeled through a Hopi client of the center): I needed to learn to grow my own food. This led me to study organic gardening, which created a role for me to fulfill once I ended up going “back to the land” via organic farms and intentional communities. I also started to study local ecologies, especially plants and birds, allowing me to contribute in other realms of eco-education.

While those voices beckoning me to live in more direct relationship with the land seemed at first to be promising a lonely, socially marginalized existence, the exact opposite turned out to be the case. Each phase of my entry into more integrated ecological living brought me into new kinds of community.

From what I could gather from the media and from word on the street, rural people talked slowly, did boring physical work, inbred, and chewed tobacco. In other words, blind prejudice and ignorance kept me from ever aspiring to rural life.

Some, like the Hopi Center and the organic farms I worked on, were “unintentional” community, but community nonetheless. The intentional communities in which I've settled have been rural and committed to education, thereby developing much larger extended communities beyond their own boundaries. I've never had so little interaction with others as I did in my last couple years in the heart of urban/suburban civilization, and I've never had so much human interaction as I've had way out

in the country, becoming rural folk myself, enjoying being connected to the land together with others through organic gardening and other forms of immersion in the landscape. Getting away from human and civilized distractions has helped me discover not only the natural world and how dependent we all are on it, but,

surprisingly, the world of people as well.

“Focus on Life, Not on Money”

I grew up in a family that had enough money—not too much, but enough to meet our basic needs. Most of the people in our town, however, had significantly more material wealth than they actually needed. This did not prevent them from striving for more, and transferring that orientation toward money and things to their offspring. My parents instilled different values in me, reinforced as I grew up by poets like William Wordsworth:

*The world is too much with us; late and soon,
Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers:
Little we see in Nature that is ours;
We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon!*

I recognized that, while money is not necessarily the root of all evil, it is often associated with the squandering of our time and energy in its pursuit, the degradation of the quality of our human relationships, the distraction and demoralization of our spirits, the plundering of the earth's resources to meet manufactured demand for nonessential items, and other forms of

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Ariundelger gathering flowers for her shaman's plant mixture.



The Reindeer Herders of Northern Mongolia:

Community, Ecology, and Spirit Matters

By Marilyn Walker

The yogurt I am drinking has been made from reindeer milk and soon I will go outside to meet the reindeer it has come from. In the meantime, I can hear their rumbly, scuffly, throaty, grumbly, snorting, grunting sounds as they mill around Chulu's tent, occasionally chewing on or rubbing their antlers against the canvas walls, as if they want to be part of the conversation that at times is about them. I am staying in the spring camp of a small group of Dukha reindeer-herders, here to learn about the plants the Dukha and their reindeer use for medicine—and to experience Dukha shamanism, which I have heard is the “strongest” and the “most authentic” because it is “closest to nature.”

Chulu's granddaughter served me the yogurt which I accepted in my right hand in the customary way. As a guest, I am seated on the left side of the tent or *ger* while the family sits on the right or east side—the entrance of their homes always faces south towards the life source, the sun. Ariundelger, Chulu's daughter, is quietly sitting beside her as we talk, but it is not until later that I learn that Chulu's daughter and son, Amarjaraa, are shamans, as are her ancestors. Chulu tells me she is not a shaman herself, however—she was ill when young and so not strong enough to become a shaman.

Known to outsiders as Tsaatan, the Russian word for “reindeer-herder,” they call themselves Dukha, or Tuvan to indicate their ancestral connection with their relatives in Tuva across the Mongolian-Russian border. And they are shamanists. Despite years of attempts to weaken their identity, break up their communities, sever their connection to place, and disempower their

shamans (and while most of the Dukha now live a more settled life in the town centre of Tsagaan Nuur), some of the Dukha households continue to live with their reindeer on the taiga. It is this community of Dukha Tsataan, or “reindeer people,” that I am here to learn from. I will teach my classes back in Canada about the Dukha sense of community, their deep ecological knowledge, and the values of respect that underlie all their relationships—human and non-human.

Dukha nomadism, their language, medicine, camps, living arrangements—their entire way of life—has developed over a long period of time and in a particular landscape, the taiga.

“Taiga” is used in Russian and now in English to mean the northern boreal forest that extends in a wide band across the northern hemisphere. The Dukha, however, use it to mean the mountain-tundra plateau found above the alpine treeline. This is because they distinguish amongst the forest, the mountains, and the mountain-tundra or taiga.

Taiga is actually a term indigenous to several Siberian languages, including Tuvan. The taiga is rich in *shulum*, or “reindeer moss,” which is a lichen and the reindeer's favored food.

Their perception of “ecology” is different from ours in other ways. Not human-centric, it recognizes the close relationship between humans and nature, which are interdependent. And it understands the need for a balance or harmony amongst the plants, animals, the land—all of which have a life force, a sentience. “Ecology” is about the seen or physical world, as is implied in the English term, but for shamanists, it also encompasses the unseen world of spirits. This world includes the spir-

“Ecology” is about the seen or physical world, as is implied in the English term, but for shamanists, it also encompasses the unseen world of spirits. This world includes the spirits of their ancestors with whom connections must be maintained to keep the worlds in balance.



Top left: Magser leaving for the taiga. Top right: Bolormaa's daughters dressed in their best to have their picture taken, and their cousin who wanted to be in the picture too. Middle: Reindeer polo at the Tsaatan Festival in Harmat, Mongolia in 2007. Bottom left: Chuu's grand-daughter on the spring migration. Bottom right: Tipis on the taiga, spring camp.

its of their ancestors with whom connections must be maintained to keep the worlds in balance. All Dukha have individual helping spirits which must be treated with respect and in return take care of them and the land on which they depend. Some have very strong helping spirits and the shaman's gift of accessing the assistance and guidance of the spirit world on behalf of their community.

Each shaman has their own strengths depending on their own personalities and also on the characteristics of their spirit helpers. Suyan, who died recently at over 100 years of age, was known for her reindeer medicine. She treated Chulu's reindeer and taught Ariundelger and Amarjaraa about plants. She also designated a spirit reindeer, marked by a red string or ribbon, to protect and care for the herd. And she made spirit bags for each person in the household as protection from sickness and "bad things," and to bring happiness—these hang in the sacred place of the ger opposite the entrance. For the real shamanic people, I was told, you are not even allowed to walk past or sit on the north side of a shaman's home in front of a spirit bag. During the lunar New Year, offerings of food and tea would be made to the spirit bag.

As I carefully lick out my bowl of yogurt so as not to waste a drop, we share a little bit of personal information, discovering we are not too different in age. This surprises Chulu because my hair has not yet turned grey, as hers has. She tells me I am very beautiful but I tell her, no *she* is very beautiful, and we both chuckle. When she stands up to find some plant medicines to show me, I am surprised at how tiny she is. I am tall but Chulu won't even reach my shoulder height. Her size is misleading, though, because she has a presence and strength of character that belie her diminutive size.

Chulu tells me she is getting ready to move to her summer camp on the taiga because it is becoming too warm here for the reindeer, who need colder temperatures to remain healthy. The household belongings are being packed up to be transported by horse and reindeer further up the mountain. As is customary, the spirit bag will be packed carefully on the spirit reindeer at the front of the line to keep them all—humans and reindeer—safe and well. I ask her if she has time to talk to me and she says it will be no problem to delay the move for one more day. "I know you're from far away," she tells me, "but come tomorrow early in the morning."

I've chosen a section of a much longer interview to illustrate how the Dukha sense of community is based on values that come from the heart. It also reveals the deep connection to the land that we often read about amongst traditional peoples, but perhaps don't truly understand. Chulu is speaking about a sustainable way to utilize the medicinal plant, Wanseberuu (*Sau-*

surea species) and the holistic use, too, of reindeer medicine.

"I bring people who are sick to the flower."

Wanseberuu grows in the far reaches of the mountains and is difficult to get to on horseback or even on reindeer. Global warming is devastating its habitat, and it is being over-harvested as well. People come up from the city, from Ulaan Baatar, because they have heard of this plant and its healing properties. One man, I was told, was willing to pay \$40 for a single stem, a lot of money where \$200 a year is a good income for a Dukha family. He wanted to put it in his living room as a collector's item, to show off his wealth and connoisseurship. He didn't realize, as the story is told, that as the plant dried, it would scatter its seeds and bits of itself all over the house, as if resisting its objectification.

Many of us are interested in ethnobotany and in using the plants around us, but we have to relearn the profundities of plant medicine and our subtle energetic connection to the natural world. Therapists have coined the term "nature-deficit disorder" to describe the disconnect with our surroundings that plagues urbanized and industrialized cultures. The time

The time of year to harvest, the parts of the plant to use in what combination, whether it can be used dry or fresh...but most importantly, having a personal connection with the plant and the land—these are all implicit in Dukha ecological knowledge.

of year to harvest, the parts of the plant to use in what combination, whether it can be used dry or fresh...but most importantly, having a personal connection with the plant and the land—these are all implicit in Dukha ecological knowledge.

"There is a flower called Wanseberuu which grows up on the far mountains, especially on the east taiga. On some mountains, it's very rare. We use it in many ways. ... I only visit it from June 20-July 5. So during this period, the flower hasn't fully bloomed—it's still closed. I don't collect the flower but I bring people who are sick to the flower."

Chulu speaks about when the plant is most beneficial—between June 10 and July 5 before the plant blooms and the flower is still closed. (This is before the plant puts its energy into seed production.) She doesn't cut the flower from its stem or dig up the root; instead she uses it *in situ*, taking the sick person to the flower on a sort of pilgrimage. If the sick person were an adult, the difficulties of the journey would show the intent to get better. Where it is a baby who is sick, the effort that the healer takes shows what the healer is willing to do on the child's behalf, and the power of the land to provide what is needed. Gradually, the plant changes the baby's vibration...as she makes the same journey on three separate days in midsummer—the time of year when the sun is highest in the sky and would be infusing the plant with its energy.



Top left: Flowers gathered from the taiga for the shaman's plant mixture. Left middle: Bolormaa milking her reindeer. Left bottom: Open storage in the tipi. Top right: The shaman, Amarjaraa. Bottom right: Reindeer polo at the Tsaatan Festival in Harmat, Mongolia in 2007.

"On top of it are drops of dew, drops of moisture. My father used to tell me, don't use all the dew, just one drop..."

Her father tells her she only needs a single drop. The quantity of the medicine is not important because it is understood that its life force is concentrated in its dew. And she takes only what is needed. Again it is her father who tells her when her son will be alright. How many of us have been able to maintain this connection with our ancestors and the knowledge they have acquired from years of lived experience in a particular landscape? As in other indigenous cultures, elders are key to the community's abilities to sustain itself wisely. But Chulu is also adding to the knowledge passed on to her—instead of using a spoon, she administers the "dew" to her baby from a syringe.

"The first time, I used a spoon and it was difficult, but the second time, I drew the water up with a syringe and gave it to my son—not even one year old. That winter my son got cold and his lungs were bad and his voice sounded bad. I took him to the flower for three days at the end of June. I had to climb up to the mountain because the plant grows in the higher areas of the mountain. I took my son three times to that flower (once a day). After three visits, my father told me, now your son's going to be good."

"Every part of the reindeer..."

Next, her father makes soup from a freshly killed reindeer. Mostly, the Dukha rely on hunting in the forest and on milk products from their reindeer, and Dukha wealth has been measured by the number of reindeer in their herds. A reindeer would be killed only on a special occasion such as this one, when the strength of a sick child needed to be restored.

Reindeer forage widely (when they can), eating a wide variety of plants from the forest and the tundra, from the streams and the mountains, from grasses to lichens—all these "medicines" the reindeer would eat depending on what they need to stay healthy. So all the medicines from the Dukha homelands would

be made available to those who consume reindeer milk and, as needed, their meat.

"Then my father killed a reindeer and made fresh soup for my son. He took a bit of every part of the reindeer, put all the bits into the intestines and boiled them. My father told me, you've got to give him this. I gave him soup, to my son, and little bits of meat. I cut it up really small and gave it to him off a spoon. My son got better and is grown." (from Chulu, June 18, 2006)

All parts of the animal are used "holistically," to apply a western term to a traditional practice. Chulu's father stuffed a little bit from every part of the freshly killed reindeer into a sausage cased in the intestines, then boiled in a soup so none of the goodness is lost. When Chulu fed tiny bits of meat and spoonfuls of the broth to her baby, she was feeding him bits of the land—its plants, animals, and people. She was feeding him bits of her community—and its spirit—that nurtured her child, herself, her father, and ancestors before them. ❀



Marilyn Walker, Ph.D. is an Associate Professor of Anthropology at Mount Allison University, New Brunswick, Canada, teaching courses in ecology, development, ethnobotany, and indigenous knowledge. Her fieldwork has taken her to northern Canada and Alaska, Siberia and Mongolia. For her work with Aboriginal Peoples, she was made an honorary member and elder of the Eastern Woodland Métis Nation. She believes lessons learned from indigenous people may be applied to planning intentional and sustainable communities, and to broadening our understanding of ecology.

The Dukha Community

The Dukha's sense of community is lived rather than abstract and is structured around the reindeer.

The reindeer and the Dukha are dependent on one another. Some Dukha say that if the reindeer disappear, so too will their culture. The reindeer are domesticated in the literal sense of belonging to the household. In many ways they are treated like family and shown respect. All the community's chores and activities are centred around the care and feeding of their reindeer.

Dukha communities on the taiga are usually a group of tents of two to seven households that move camp to find optimum grazing for the reindeer.

Herding tasks are shared amongst the camp with children at a young age learning to care for the reindeer and keeping them safe. The girls and younger women do the milking and the making of yogurt, cheese, and milk tea. Young men and women and elders help with herding activities in the camp. A few of the men stay with the reindeer in the winter months, living in the open air with their herds to protect them from wolves and other predators. The men also make and repair the reindeer saddles, carts, and their hunting tools. Since they rarely kill a reindeer, they supplement their diet of reindeer milk products with wild animals from the forest.

—Marilyn Walker

In Our Community— Ecology Is for the Birds



By Michael Livni

Yes, literally—for the birds, especially migrating birds. Birds were a major factor in initiating the ecological bent of Kibbutz Lotan.

Kibbutz Lotan is fortuitously located along the global flyway of migratory birds between Africa, Asia, and Europe. Between five hundred million and a billion birds (mostly small songbirds) pass through Israel twice a year—every fall and spring. During the spring migration in particular, the birds tend to funnel through the Arava valley in Southern Israel. This valley is part of the Syrian-African rift system. Thus the route of the birds going North follows the historic route of the dispersion of plant and animal species out of Africa—including us, *Homo sapiens*, as well as our predecessors, *Homo erectus*.

“Think Globally, Act Locally”

The Eilat area at the southern tip of Israel is the natural rest stop of migrating birds after crossing the Sahara desert from their wintering areas in Africa. In the last few decades, intensive development for tourism has caused severe habitat loss in this area. Upgrading and development of additional sites as alternative rest stops in the Eilat area has become imperative. The maintenance of avian biodiversity depends on the integrity of the global flyways utilized by migratory birds. Thus nature activists encouraged Kibbutz Lotan, located only 50 kilometers (32 miles) north of Eilat, to develop artificial biotopes to promote the sustainability of the migratory route. An artificial biotope is a miniature eco-system created by humans. Within what we call our “bird reserve,” we have created a number of different biotopes. In Lotan, an understanding of the significance of maintaining the **global** flyway led to **local** action.

How Do Our Artificial Biotopes Work?

Kibbutz Lotan located a suitable area for artificial biotopes at the southern end of our property—500 meters from Lotan’s inhabited area. Using compost made from manure from our dairy barn and scraps from our communal kitchen, we planted a one-half acre patch of alfalfa—a cover crop that regenerates soil quality by fixing nitrogen in the soil. Alfalfa also provides cover for small songbirds, which feed on the renewed insect life produced by the regenerated soil.

Another biotope consists of a small artificial pool with surrounding vegetation. The kibbutz’s new constructed wetland, which recycles all of Lotan’s wastewater, supplies the irrigation

water. Partial funding for the subsurface flow wetland came from the European Union’s LIFE fund and was part of our bio-regional sustainable waste management and education project.

Lotan’s Center for Creative Ecology and students in our Green Apprenticeship (Permaculture and Ecovillage design program) maintain a half-acre organic garden for teaching purposes, benefiting two different population groups. The Lotan community enjoys the produce, and for the migratory (and resident) birds, the organic garden serves as an additional biotope. In April, at the height of the migratory season, the Society for the Protection of Nature in Israel sets up a bird-ringing station on this site.

Not for Birds Only!

The new biotopes have become a magnet for other animals. Desert animals are nocturnal. In the cool of the early morning one can identify their tracks before the heat of the desert sun desiccates them. Foxes, wolves, and striped hyenas visit frequently. Live-in residents include desert hedgehogs, porcupines, gerbils, jerboas (a jumping mouse), as well as skinks (a lizard with tiny legs) and desert beetles. The area also serves as a nature reserve where desert vegetation typical for this region can be seen in its natural habitat.

Bird Hides as Examples of Natural Building

Heightened ecological consciousness (and economic constraints) led us to build bird hides by reusing solid wastes (used tires, plastic wastes) and earth plaster. This triggered additional ecological initiatives (see sidebar).

The large bird hide (120 sq. meters = 1300 sq. ft.) overlooking the alfalfa field biotope was built by filling the wood frame with old tires stuffed with waste and encased in mud plaster. The used tires were brought to Lotan by the Eilat municipality, 35 miles to the south, at their expense. Thus we incidentally made a positive contribution to Eilat’s waste disposal problem.

In addition to benefiting the birds, Lotan’s eco-tourism business has become an important part of the kibbutz economy. ❁

Michael Livni grew up in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada, where he received a degree in medicine. He has lived in Israel, on kibbutz, for 45 years. Since 1987, he has made his home on Kibbutz Lotan. He has worked in agriculture, informal education, and eco-tourism. Michael is also an active member of the International Communal Studies Association (ICSA).



All photos courtesy of Michael Livni



*Top left: Examining Spanish Sparrow before ringing.
 Top right: Author and professional birder Jonathan Meirav at the Bird Hide.
 Bottom left: Building the bird hide: old tires and adobe.
 Bottom middle: Bird migration routes through Israel.
 Bottom right: The bird hide.*

Ecological Building on Kibbutz Lotan

The experience gained in building the bird hides helped generate an ever-increasing involvement in natural building. The activity of Kibbutz Lotan's Center for Creative Ecology, both in teaching and in pioneering building regulations in Israel for strawbale building, has already been documented in COMMUNITIES. (See "Kibbutz Lotan: Teaching Natural Building to Our Arab Neighbors," Issue 131, Summer 2006, as well as "A Kibbutz Battles the Bureaucracy," Issue 139, Summer 2008.)

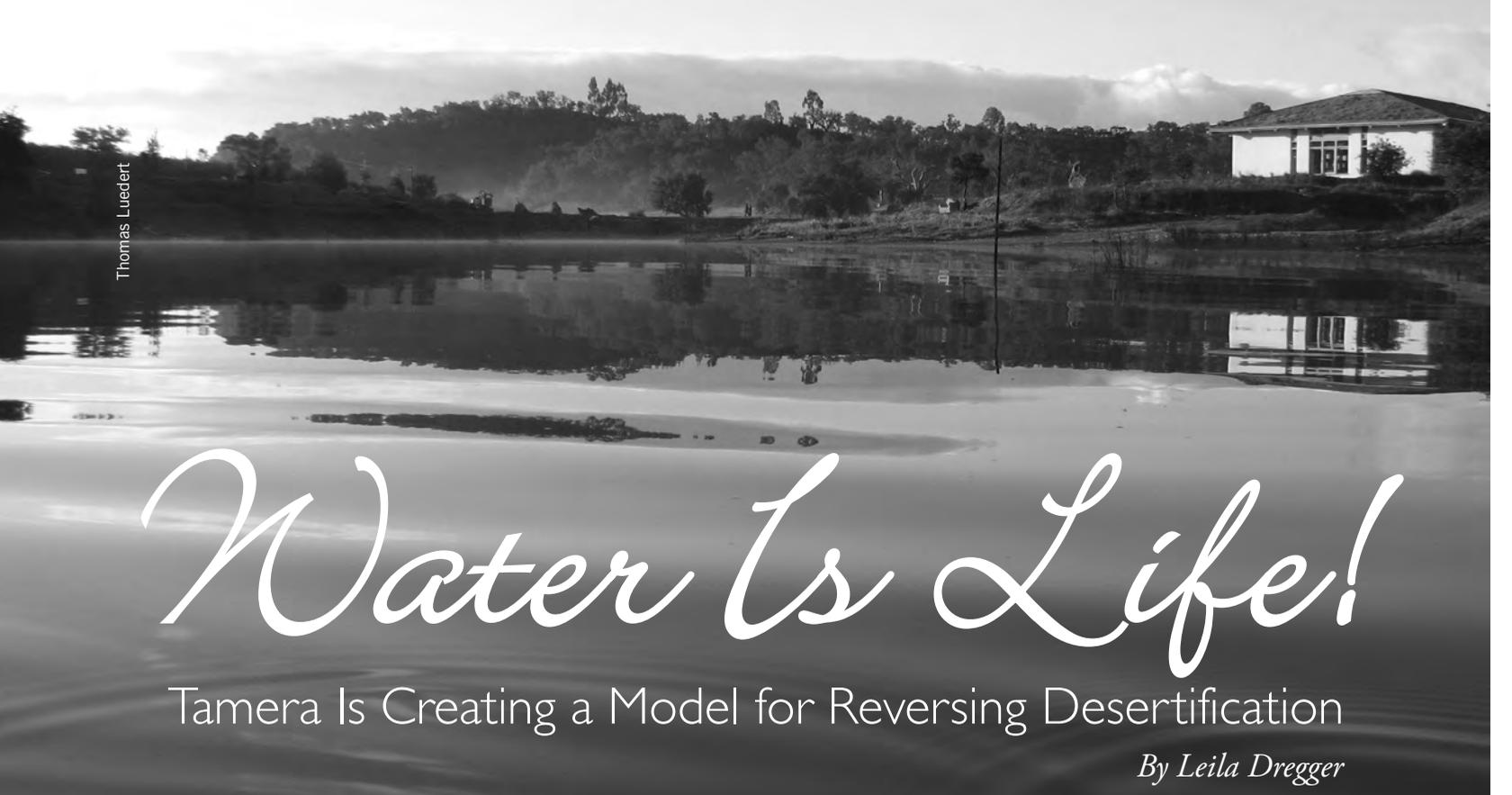
In March 2008, Kibbutz Lotan's eco-campus became operational. It has already housed our ecological interns, our Green Apprenticeship course, and an Israel semester of Living Routes—Study Abroad in Ecovillages. The eco-campus consists

of 10 geodesic domes built of galvanized steel pipe. Strawbales are attached to the frame. Five centimeters (two inches) of earth are added both to the exterior and the interior. Each dome houses two people.

The campus includes a communal kitchen, composting toilets, and showers with water heated by solar absorbers. The whole area has been licensed for occupancy by the Regional Council Planning and Construction Board.

For information on Kibbutz Lotan's ecological courses: www.kibbutzlotan.com. For information on the Living Routes: www.LivingRoutes.org.

—Michael Livni



Water Is Life!

Tamera Is Creating a Model for Reversing Desertification

By Leila Dregger

In southern Portugal, the Peace Research Center Tamera is creating a pilot model that will show how the desertification of threatened places in the world can be stopped. It is also a model for regional food autonomy.

Mother Earth lies brown and soft under my feet. Golden light shines through the leaves. Leaning against an old cork oak, I look into a little valley: the air is shimmering in the heat of a summer afternoon. The branches above give home to birds and beetles, and ferns are moving softly in the breeze.

This could be paradise. But in fact, it is not. The green of the little valley before me is created by rock roses—pioneer plants on devastated soils throughout the Mediterranean. Through their monotonous surface, the corpses of cork oaks arise here and there like sunken ships in a sandy bay. The opposite side of the valley is already clear: no oaks, no grass, not even rock roses—only grayish eucalyptus on top.

The cork oaks of southern Portugal are dying, and still no government or university has found a formula to stop it. Even the proud tree at my back shows the unavoidable signs of the coming death: brown stains in the bark from fungi. Old farmers here say that the tree is crying.

And I am crying as well. It is not only about the century-old traditional culture that shaped the look of the Alentejo that is coming to a close. Desert is also developing right before our eyes. Southern Europe is turning into a second Sahel Zone.

I wonder why nobody runs shouting through the towns, ringing a bell, sounding the alarm: Watch out, wake up—our land, our mother is dying! What will we eat tomorrow?

The Sahara is coming north. Portugal, Spain, Italy, and Greece all suffer under increasing summer droughts; forests are burning; and in Portugal every 20 minutes a farmer gives up his farm. More than 80 percent of the population lives in big cities

and on the coast; 80 percent of the food is imported; and the “delicious garden,” the fertile land of the Moors in the Middle Ages, is turning into dust.

“Who cares?” city people may say. “We get our food from the supermarket.”

An incident in June of last year showed how weak this argument is and how thin the layers of peace and richness in Europe might be. A strike of fuel truck drivers hit Portugal. On the second day, the first gas stations had run out of gas; on the third day, the first supermarkets had empty shelves; and then two people working to block some fuel trucks that were trying to break the strike were run over deliberately.

If this kind of thing should happen more in the future, we have to ask: What will we eat? Where will our water come from? Our electricity? How will we survive? When the last fuel has been used, these questions will not be answered by global systems, but in our neighborhoods, our communities, and through our relationship to the land we live on.

What can we do—we as an intentional community? Pancho, Tamera member, nature walker, and ecologist, gives a surprisingly sober answer. “We have to heal the water balance.”

In Tamera, we are working on peace—not only between people but with nature as well. On 350 acres, our ecologists develop local solutions for global problems.

“Droughts are not a natural law,” according to Sepp Holzer. This Austrian mountain farmer is one of our ecological advisors. “They are the consequence of deforestation, monocultures, and overgrazing. After decades of wrong treatment, it’s not small steps that are needed, but bigger steps of correction.”



Thomas Luedert



Thomas Luedert



Maria Soares



Lillian von Wussow



Thomas Luedert



Nigel Dickinson



Thomas Luedert

Top left: Construction site of the lake. Top middle: The lake is growing. Top right: Tibetan monks in Tamera in front of the lake. Bottom left: Sepp Holzer demonstrating the edible landscape. Bottom middle: Carrots in the edible landscape and harvest in Tamera. Bottom right: Fish in the water. Opposite page: The Lake is full.

Consulting Sepp, we began two years ago to build the water landscape of Tamera.

The first water retention basin was started in August 2007.

Now, one and a half years later, the winter rain has turned the dry landscape into a shining water expanse. Even in summer, when in the Alentejo everything has turned brown and meadows are as dry as straw, we now can see a different world: Fresh green shoots are sprouting on the terraces. Fruit trees, berry bushes, and reeds are growing. The densely-growing leaves on the terraces are edible plants such as radishes, cabbage, turnips, lettuce, and old varieties of cereals which all grow here abundantly—not in straight lines and rows, but as Mother Nature would have sown them herself. Our visitors, who come on weekends, are allowed to eat from this abundance. This first impression of the new Tamera water landscape is convincing—and tasty.

It is part of a comprehensive concept for the retention and saving of the winter rain, for regeneration of the landscape, for reforestation with polycultures, and for food cultivation. The lake supplies the surroundings with water. A “Sunpulse”—a water pump which is run by solar energy—distributes the water from the lake to the gardens on the banks.

“Water is information. Water is life. Water is capital,” Sepp Holzer says. The lake is indeed an elaborate system of self-purification and regulation of different temperatures. The flatter shorelines serve to clean the lake and to grow tropical plants. Natural marble stones are standing on the shore and in some shallow parts of the lake; they are useful giants functioning like a tiled fireplace. At night they radiate the heat to their surroundings.

Deeper zones of the lake create the differences in temperature

leading to water movements which carry oxygen into the lake and help the fish thrive and prosper.

“Edible landscapes” is a term which makes mouths water. The mixed plant cultures which were sown earlier this year are growing now. As much as possible, native species are grown—plants which will later sow their own seeds. Sepp Holzer: “In nature it is the same as with human beings: community is better than solitude.” This is something that we as human community can agree to easily.

One hundred thousand tons of soil were removed for the construction of the first water retention basin. The next two ponds were built in fall 2008—smaller, but directly in the former vegetable garden which has turned into a water garden. The design of the lakes incorporates a gently rising dam with an overflow and an outlet discharge structure that regulates the water level and makes the population of water plants and fish controllable.

Beyond its task of ecological regeneration, the water landscape can become an important economic factor. We think that in this way communities can produce their own food and take care of nature at the same time.

Together with the solar energy systems which we have been developing in Tamera for some years, this “lakescape” is a model for decentralized sustainability in times when the supermarkets can’t take care of us any more.

Maybe this could be paradise after all. ❁

Leila Dregger, ecologist and international journalist, based in Tamera (www.tamera.org), gives classes in peace journalism. She is working on a science fiction novel about a comprehensive ecological, social, and sexual transformation.



Environmental Activism: Securing Your Community's Quality of Life into the Future

By Chant Thomas

You might have been there with us...sitting in silent circle, giving thanks for the dinner we were about to eat together. Feeling so *right* in that moment...with a warm current of love coursing through the holding hands of a dozen friends in community. Sweet song of the river rushing over rapids outside the window, savory aromas wafting from pots and oven... A prayer breaks the silence; we laugh and pass the food.

Sounds of footsteps on the kitchen porch announce a visitor at the back door. An acquaintance, who'd been looking to buy land just upriver, opens the door before we could answer. Despite the feast, he declines our joyous invitation to join us for dinner, and with a most serious expression, he tells us he has bad news to share. "I went down to the government office in town today to check on their plans for the canyon. They showed me maps where they plan to clearcut the forest right to the property lines." He continued, "they told me there was nothing we could do. So, I'm not pursuing the land upriver. I'm sorry to bring Trillium this bad news." With that, he was out the door, leaving us with sinking stomachs and appetites that floated on downstream.

Truly shocking news! We were stunned! A few years before buying our Land, I had thoroughly researched land uses, wanting to avoid industrial logging, mining, and similar mischief in

the vast forests of southwestern Oregon's Siskiyou Mountains. As several of us were avid backpackers and lovers of wilderness, we knew well the power of wild pristine landscapes to uplift our spirits, helping us feel humbly embedded in the awesome embrace of Nature. We also realized our beautiful wild surroundings would provide both an important amenity for our community residents, and a valuable draw for participants in our planned cultural and educational programs. We wanted our human interplay with a wild and powerful Nature to focus and enhance our spiritual, cultural, and economic life on the Land.

After a lengthy search, we settled on purchasing a remote trout hatchery with several ponds, waterfalls, and meadows along an intimate little creek canyon that then dropped into the much larger canyon of a high mountain river. A towering peak cloaked with old-growth forests rose steeply just across the river, a powerful backdrop to our Gathering Grounds. The creek rose in a wilderness watershed with no roads, logging, or development, providing us with pure gravity-flow water. These natural features enchanted us, despite dozens of junked vehicles, appliances, and equipment. We decided that rather than buying and impacting pristine land elsewhere, we would clean up and restore this special place. Thusly, we became newly minted environmental activists and birthed Trillium Trout Farm during the back-to-the-land movement of the 1970s.

Because our Land came surrounded by wildlands managed by the federal government, we thoroughly researched the government management plans to see what they had in store. Government managers assured us their management direction for the river canyon focused on recreation, pointing out two existing riverbank campground/picnic areas and several miles of wilderness hiking trails. They told us the forests there did not grow fast enough in the arid climate to manage for commercial timber cutting. These assurances played a major role in deciding to locate our community homestead here, so the news of clearcut logging came totally unexpected.

Back at the dinner table, one of the women guided us through a visualization where we pictured ourselves in the future as elderly people out on the lawn looking up at the forests of Trillium Mountain. We could see that the forests were still uncut, and no logging roads had been built across the mountain. This visualization helped us feel well enough to continue eating dinner while discussing options for action. Turns out the visualization may have done more than just help us feel better! The very next day, a neighbor who I'd been working with on government forest issues called to report that some new neighbors, a famous author and his movie-star wife, had just agreed to get involved in stopping proposed government logging above the stretch of river in their neighborhood, several miles downstream from Trillium.

Imagine getting celebrities involved in your activist campaigns! Turns out their leadership secured victory as we stopped that logging downriver. We next worked *with* the government agency to keep their logging out of the river canyon around Trillium. During that process, we connected with some activists from intentional communities a few valleys to the west, exchanging experiences dealing with logging on federally managed forest lands. We discussed strategies for involving neighbors, fundraising, and publicity. We also shared stories about how well, or not, our various intentional communities had embraced forest activism, and how supportive these communities were of their activist members who had become involved in campaigns to protect forest and wilderness.

We realized that many intentional communities organize around positive activism as a pro-active path toward making the world a better place. Most intentional communities understand that the very act of coming together to live on the Land in community constitutes a powerful statement of ecological and cultural activism. At Trillium, for

Why Vegetarian?

Back in the 1970s, significant numbers of back-to-the-land intentional communities embraced vegetarianism as an essential part of their alternative to the dominant culture, which was characterized by a diet heavy in meat consumption. From a thousand vegans at The Farm in Tennessee to our dozen vegetarians at Trillium in Oregon, a meatless diet flavored much of our Movement. As the negative impacts of industrial meat production on our planet, its people, and its animals have become more apparent during the ensuing decades, our inspirations and reasons for choosing vegetarianism are reinforced.

Back-to-the-land intentional communities have been described as Research and Development Centers for Society. Our research indicates intentional communities owe it to themselves and our larger society to adopt vegetarianism, or at least become aware of what happens to the animals they eat, from birth to plate. Consider you are what you eat:

Vegetarians suffer from far less heart disease, cancer, obesity, and other health problems than do meat eaters. Wouldn't your community function better if your members pursued a diet that favored better health, growing stronger resilient bodies to better enjoy gardening and building, hiking, making music and love? Would there be less sickness to tend and heal?

The Land we've gone back to is so precious, as is the clean air and pure water. Yet, growing animals for human consumption in the US gobbles 80 percent of our farmland, causes more water pollution than all other industrial uses combined, consumes one-third of all the raw materials and fossil fuels we use. Would your community trash its land and resources in this manner?

Eating meat creates a planet of poop! In the US, meat animals produce over 130 times the feces of the human population, with no sewers! These feces constitute the largest source of airborne methane, which traps heat in our atmosphere 20 times more than carbon dioxide. Raising meat animals produces 40 percent more global warming emissions than all transportation combined. Meanwhile, a vegan diet requires 300 gallons of water per day, compared to 5200 daily gallons to support a meat-based diet. Is sustainability an important value for your community? How does your diet reflect your values?

Over 27 billion (that's nearly 20,000 per minute!) animals are slaughtered yearly in the US for human consumption. These intelligent creatures feel pain, and have complex social and psychological lives; most suffer horrible death and torture along the way. Do you really want to be part of this karma?

Mohandas Gandhi said that a nation's moral progress could be judged by the way it treats its animals. That concept expanded to our entire planet indicates that we need a change of consciousness at a planetary level. Heard that before? Be a part of that change now! You'll do more to help solve problems with pollution and global warming by becoming vegetarian than by trading in your SUV on a Prius, with many more ancillary benefits for you and your community. If you're having difficulty considering the change, then take this encouragement from a teenage vegetarian: "Don't be a chicken! Stop being a pig! Don't have a cow! Be the first in your community to eliminate or at least reduce your meat consumption."

For more info, check www.GoVeg.com.

—Chant Thomas

Opposite page: Combining spirituality and art in activism: Ecostery students, Trillium interns, and friends center their energy after constructing a medicine wheel of rubble, spent gun shells, and assorted trash in a gravel quarry built on a nearby mountaintop. This and other photos were printed onto thousands of postcards with a message for federal land managers to stop building logging roads into roadless areas.



Left: Discussion circles during forest activists conference hosted by Trillium Community Farm. Right: Ecostery students geared and ready for one of Trillium's environmental stewardship programs: litter pick-up along several miles of our unpaved county road.



All photos courtesy of Chant Thomas

example, we worked to start or assist in starting a local forest workers coop, a natural foods co-op and gas station, an alternative school, a national women's herbalist conference, and a film festival in town. All these projects combined "positive activism" elements of environmental, social, cultural, economic, and community activism. However, defensive activism became the more difficult and less attractive action necessary to preserve essential components of our quality of life, such as clean water and air, peace and quiet, inspirational wildlands, and spectacular scenery,

from looming threats such as logging, mining, off-highway vehicles, cattle grazing, shooters, dam construction, and development. For Trillium, like any land-based community, needed to answer several questions to determine what

Defensive activism became the more difficult and less attractive action necessary to preserve essential components of our quality of life from looming threats.

potential crises, such as government clearcutting, might spur us into defensive activism to secure the environmental amenities that convinced us to homestead on this particular Land: Who are our neighbors? What are the current nearby land uses and how might they change over time? What negative impacts could occur to our local environment? How could our community be affected? What are we going to do about it?

Thousands of acres of government wildlands surround Trillium, quite a behemoth neighbor! As we found out, one manager may favor recreation for our river canyon, while the next manager may see forests to cut. During the last few decades, government timber budgets expanded while their recreation budget shrank to near nothing. The campgrounds were neglected and abandoned; local hikers and equestrians volunteered to maintain the wilderness trails. Meanwhile, government plans for logging thousands of acres surrounding us proceeded beyond the initial clearcutting we'd stopped earlier. Such large-scale logging meant miles of new logging roads punched into the wilderness, providing access to hordes of hunters, shooters, OHV (off-highway vehicle) riders, toxic dumpers, and various other road-related problems. After any clearcutting, the government would spray

toxic herbicides like Agent Orange, fouling the water and air. Once the landscape gets developed for industrial logging, the once quiet canyons reverberate with sounds of innumerable forest crews, their traffic and activities: road construction, logging, helicopter spraying, burning, planting, in an endless rotation of perpetual industrial management.

The high stakes convinced us that we needed to succeed! It turned out by default that I became the community's resident activist, as relevant experience gained working in logging and

for various government agencies provided me with the necessary confidence to step up to the task. While some community members assisted in the activist campaigns, most were just glad somebody else dealt with it all. Some years saw the

community stepping up to support the activism by hosting activist gatherings and training sessions. Other years I had to hustle to keep up with my community work contributions, as the activist work didn't then count toward community work time, even though I considered the activism as protecting the greater wild garden surrounding Trillium.

It has taken years, many years spanning four decades now, to protect our quality of life by working hard to actively influence the planning and implementation of government projects. With sporadic assistance from my community colleagues and some neighbors, I've been able to halt or work to modify most of the huge government logging projects planned for our watershed. Our wilderness drinking watershed that supplies all our gravity-flow domestic and irrigation water still shines in nearly pristine condition since I worked with a local rancher and some sympathetic government specialists to halt cattle grazing in a 28,000 acre area for over 30 years now. Using our natural food co-op/gas station as an outreach base, I was able to gather support to stop a proposed dam on our river before the process got beyond the initial planning stages.

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Photos courtesy of Russ Purvis

Walking through the Forest

By Russ Purvis

Dappled half-light and a faint hint of an enticing smell reminiscent of vanilla hang in the air as we hike up the steep path to the next bench in the Valley. To locals the Valley is the Robson Valley. It's part of the anomaly known as the Rocky Mountain Trench that stretches for 1000 miles along the northwestern part of North America. Its many rivers, remote valleys, and diverse ecological niches provide some of the last hopes for North Americans to experience a relatively intact ecosystem where the predator-prey hierarchy is complete. This is a world where man is not at the top of the food chain. The topography is so challenging that the Trans-Canada highway that now traverses parts of it wasn't completed until the 1960s. It's where we call home at a still forming community named Kakwa Ecovillage Cooperative.

The trail takes a bend. Just ahead we glimpse the edge of the "Ancient Forest" grove. We push our bodies to propel us the last 50 feet, over the chaotically tumbling stream to the soft, henna-colored sponge of the forest floor. Its sponginess allows you to bounce along beneath the giant cedar trees that were young saplings when Leif Ericsson sailed for North America 1000 years ago. Tree ring analysis is made difficult by the tendencies of the older trees to rot at their centre, while they continue to grow. Coring an old tree isn't considered for fear of the possibility of reducing its life span. Prominent scientists believe they can demonstrate some of these cedar trees

were alive 2000 years ago. They are gargantuan...imagine nine adults standing shoulder to shoulder, and the base of the tree exceeds their span. Some reach about 200 feet in height.

For me, a visit to the Ancient Forest provokes an overwhelming sense of awe, and gratefulness. Connectedness to the web of life or the spirit of the Earth is strong here. The landscape is prehistoric. Granite faces jut out of the side of the hill that eventually becomes a mountain. These same rock faces are heavy with green moss nourished by the spray of the annual waterfalls. The understory fluctuates from parklike openness to dense stands of eight-foot-tall plants aptly named Devil's Club, with broad leaves and more barbed thorns than your worst nightmare. It is easy to imagine you have stumbled into Jurassic Park...without the dinosaurs.

My gratefulness is partially a result of something very stark and dire. It's the blue spray-painted numbers on some of the trees. As lately as two years ago there had been a cutting permit issued. These trees' destiny was to become cedar fence posts or garden mulch in someone's flower garden.

Stately huge cedar trees have always offered a welcome presence within the diverse ecosystem of the Kakwa Ecovillage site. We were thrilled to find significant stands intact on our property when we purchased it. Five years ago we learned through other environmentally oriented local groups of the ongoing destruction of the cedar forest in the Robson Valley.

Biologists postulate that an ecosystem which supports a 1000-2000-year-old tree has been basically undisturbed for long periods of time, perhaps 5000 years. An ecosystem largely undisturbed by fire or man for that length of time develops enormous diversity of life on the forest floor. However, such diversity is dwarfed by that which exists high overhead in the canopy. This canopy of the temperate inland cedar rainforest has been estimated to be home to as many or more diverse life forms as the Amazon Rainforest! The sacredness of the area is underscored by learning that it is part of the headwaters of the Fraser River watershed which reaches 820 miles to the Pacific. Wild salmon still swim the undammed Fraser and successfully spawn over 700 miles upstream.

The Ancient Forest was saved. We wrote letters to politicians and bureaucrats. Public meetings were often charged with tension somewhere between carpet static and a lightning bolt! Ultimately, the will of the people jostled the corporate timber company like a leaf in the wind. As part of the greater community, we participated in an international conference held at the University of Northern British Columbia. We co-hosted an 80-person dinner devoted to raising local consciousness to the global significance of our inland temperate rainforest. We were filmed as part of a movie made about what was at stake, and we contributed trail work to the Ancient Forest Trail. And, most importantly, the larger

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Community Composting: A Transformative Practice

By Jason Grubb and Mason Vollmer

Composting within an intentional community is a wonderful metaphor for the process of building community. It is an opportunity to transform ideals about the environment, held by many people, into real practice; and to transform waste, generated by many people, into a valuable material that nurtures the environment.

As you arrive at Camphill Soltane, set in the rolling countryside of southeast Pennsylvania, the land provides a first snapshot impression of the community. Even before you have met the people living, learning, and working here, seeing the land reflects how we, as a community, care for ourselves. As the environment around each and every one of us has an effect on our well-being, nurturing the land promotes the well-being of anyone living at—or visiting—Camphill Soltane.

Camphill Soltane is one of over 100 communities in the international Camphill movement, dedicated to community living that supports and values the contributions of all members and helps each achieve their fullest potential. Camphill Soltane provides a residential, college-like educational program for 25 young adults with developmental disabilities, and provides meaningful work opportunities and long-term residential living for about 20 older adults with developmental disabilities. Long-term residential volunteers from around the world come for a year or more of service as “coworkers,” supporting people as needed, providing leadership and assistance for our many educational and vocational programs, and helping to create community life.

Besides being home to roughly 80 people, our 50-acre estate is also home to a 200-tree apple and peach tree orchard, blueberry, blackberry, and raspberry bushes, a vegetable garden, and 11 landscaped houses and buildings.

Compost Making: The Foundation of Sustainability

Many intentional communities have as their goal to live on the earth more sustainably, and this desire runs deep at Camphill Soltane. We have a dedicated recycling group, try to get as much local produce as possible, carpool, and, of course, compost. For those of us who value that holy trinity of “Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle,” composting makes absolute sense. It is our way of ensuring that we waste as little as possible while at the same time

getting the most “bang for our buck.” Composting is both simple and complex, and, we would say, underappreciated.

The art of composting is the gardeners’ practice of mixing materials to imitate nature’s method of enriching and renewing the earth’s capacity for plant growth through the

recycling of organic materials. Nature knows no waste: everything is recycled, and the foundation of life is, strangely enough, a triumph over decay. Fallen leaves build and nourish the soil on the forest floor, and the soil, in turn, sustains the trees.

Composting always begins with an appreciation for the role soil plays in our lives. As much as the soil provides the foundation for us to walk on the earth, it also provides the foundation for us to *live* on the earth. Soil anchors plants, which capture the sun’s energy, transforming it into another energy form—food, by way of leaves, seeds, and fruit—upon which humans and other animals depend. Plants, in turn, are nourished by the soil—both the small portion of the soil that is made up of organic matter, called humus, and the larger portion of the soil that is made up of mineral particles.

In the soil live microbes, which do the actual work of transforming dead and decaying plant and animal matter into the building blocks of life—the nutrients that support plant growth and development. As it turns out, in the smallest handful of

The art of composting imitates nature’s method of enriching and renewing the earth’s capacity for plant growth. Nature knows no waste: everything is recycled, and the foundation of life is, strangely enough, a triumph over decay.



All photos courtesy of Jason Grubb and Mason Vollmer

Left: The re-purposed compost shed at Camp Hill Soltane, with kitty litter pails that households bring and exchange every day visible at the lower left. Right: The re-purposed compost shed at Camp Hill Soltane, with our tumbler (inside), and a season's supply of fall leaves stockpiled nearby to mix with kitchen waste and other green materials throughout the year.

compost, there are billions of microbes (or microorganisms), whose powerful role in the web of life is just beginning to be recognized. One recent study reported, “Beneficial soil bacteria confer immunity against a wide range of foliar diseases by activating plant defenses, thereby reducing a plant’s susceptibility to pathogen attack.” The study goes on to relate how plants, suffering from a leaf disease, can summon bacteria in the soil to their defense and successfully fend off diseases.¹ Of course, this hands-off approach to plant health is possible only when the soil plants are growing in is alive with a diverse array of these microorganisms, which are enhanced by the addition of compost.

Biodynamic Compost and the Agricultural Individuality

Rudolf Steiner (1861-1925) was a great innovator, teacher, and philosopher who encouraged farms to be self-sufficient in their biological needs. He suggested that forming an ecological entity embracing soil, pasture, and livestock could create a kind of agricultural individuality whose productive capacity would be a function of the careful management and conservation of its members. This approach came to be known as Biodynamic agriculture.

The Biodynamic approach to composting starts with the cow. The cow first takes plant matter in and “balls it up” in her rumen, then finds a quiet place to chew her cud. This re-chewing grinds up the material to get as much goodness out of the grass as possible and to create more surface area for microbial activity to continue what her own digestion cannot. Microorganisms, like bacteria, initiate enzymatic activity that helps release more nutrients to the cow. The manure thus produced is further ripened by more microorganisms, eventually creating a

compost rich in humus, with all its beneficial physical, chemical, and biological properties. Biodynamic growers add specially prepared compost activators during the final ripening phase of the compost.

Making Compost Without a Cow

- Gather as much organic matter as possible: kitchen scraps, fallen leaves, grass clippings, pulled weeds, shredded paper, etc.
- Grind these up to expose as much surface area as possible for the microbes to do their work (using a mower or shredder works well on leaves and grass).
- Mix these materials together, making sure you have a balance of carbonaceous materials (“brown” materials that do not tend to emit odors or change

color when decaying, like fallen leaves, shredded paper, etc.), and nitrogenous materials (“green” materials that often emit odors and change color when decaying, like kitchen waste or grass clippings).

- Add a scoop of finished compost or soil to jump-start microbial activity. Granular lime can be added to help neutralize odors and balance acidity.
- Stack the mixed material in a pile at least three feet high and wide, where the initial heating and de-composition can take place. Leave the pile uncovered, so rains will keep it moist, and set it directly on top of the ground, so earthworms and soil organisms can access it.
- (Optional) Add the Biodynamic preparations, cover the pile, and let the compost cool down. (See sidebar.)
- Enjoy some time with your community while you wait for nature to take its course, usually four to eight months. The compost is finished when the original materials are no longer apparent, and the compost is dark black, crumbly, and has a

A hands-off approach to plant health is possible only when the soil plants are growing in is alive with a diverse array of microorganisms, which are enhanced by the addition of compost. The smallest handful of compost contains billions of them.



Left: Andrew Schwartz, a community resident and member of the Land Crew, brings a load of decomposing materials from the tumbler to our outdoor composting yard. Right: The outdoor compost yard at Camphill Soltane, with strawbale sides surrounded by chain link fence. Materials are added to this pile after first being mixed and initially decomposed in the compost tumbler. Here, the compost matures and “finishes.”

sweet, earthy smell.

- Troubleshooting: Mix in more green matter, shred the pile, or turn the pile over if the material isn't decomposing, and mix in more brown matter if the pile is very goopy or smelly. If most of the pile looks finished, but you can still identify some parent materials, the compost may be put through a screen and any undecomposed materials can be added back to the pile.

This process mimics the transformative action of the cow, and produces fresh, living, wonderful compost. This compost can then be used to enrich the orchard, garden, or as the basis for soil mixes for raising seedlings and container plants. Accept no substitutes—this is far superior to anything you can buy.

The Practical Routine

In our community, where people have differing abilities, we wanted an approach where everyone could participate in the process of making compost.

Our work starts in the fall, when the land crew stockpiles enough leaves for a year's supply of carbonaceous material to mix with the kitchen scraps.

In each of the nine households in our community, we have at least two compost buckets—square kitty litter buckets that we got free at the recycling center, which fit well in our carts and shed. Each day, the household sends someone with the compost bucket to the compost shed, where they drop off the full bucket and pick up a new bucket half-filled with leaves and a small scoop (six ounce tuna can size) of granular lime to reduce odor and balance acidity. Our community café, which operates two days a week, gets extra buckets.

Twice a day, in the morning and after lunch, someone from the land crew checks on the compost shed and empties any buckets that have been dropped off into a compost tumbler and refills the bucket with leaves and lime. They may add a scoop of soil or finished compost to the tumbler to help get things going.

With a good mixture of nitrogenous and carbonaceous materials, the microbes go to work so vigorously that things start heating up in the tumbler, so that on cold mornings it's steaming. Twice a week, we remove about a wheelbarrow full of steaming compost from the tumbler and stack it in a pile. For this pile, we made a bin of old hay bales, and surrounded

The spirit of our times cries out: “Heal the Earth, Serve Humanity.” Make a little compost today. It will nurture and beautify your environment, strengthen your community, and support your local food system.

it with a recycled chain link fence to make an enclosure to discourage critters, which had become accustomed to feeding on our old unenclosed pile system.

The pile quickly heats up to around 120 degrees, and stays that warm for about three to four weeks, burning up any weed seeds, and purifying itself during its initial transformation. We add the Biodynamic preparations to the pile at this time.

Following this hot phase of composting, the secondary ripening or maturation occurs. It is to compost what aging is to wine after the original fermentation. Different microbes populate the pile now, and transform it into “woody-smelling humus.” This is what distinguishes good compost and great compost.

So what do we do with our finished compost? Among our community garden, berry bushes, apple trees, and the gardens around each house, the compost is all used to nurture our environment.

These practices can be adapted to fit the resources available and the approaches that are appropriate for your community.

Co-Creating Together, Celebrating Together

Through the interaction of our land crew with the other members of the community, both through shared composting and other activities on the land, we are able to nurture our environment, and celebrate the fruits of our labor together.

On the land crew, our work on behalf of the community continues year-round. Within the group, we have been able to create a strong team where our strengths complement one another's nicely. The camaraderie of a shared victory (completion of our seasonal pruning, or finishing the berry harvest, for example) and seeing the literal fruits of our labor (such as apples and berries) are extremely gratifying. Moreover, we know that the rest of the community appreciates our efforts—there is nothing more uplifting than seeing someone's mood brightened from taking a stroll through the orchard or admiring the garden's bounty.

Many times throughout the year, the land crew invites the community to join in the work on the land. For the festival of Michaelmas, which occurs in prime apple harvest season on September 29th, we invite the entire community to collect, sort, and pare apples; the celebration culminates in a shared dinner replete with fresh apple pies and cider. During Holy Week, we also work together on shared projects on the land; this is a wonderful time to renew and deepen our relationships with each other.

Transforming Our Communities

When we enrich the soil through making compost from our own waste materials, we approach the ideal of sustainable production by integrating the soil, vegetation, and animal and human partnerships.

Today we live at a turning point: much of our agricultural production uses factory farming techniques, based on fossil fuel inputs that are not sustainable, ecologically or economically. There is a new surge in interest—from universities, government agencies, businesses, consumers, and particularly in intentional

communities—towards developing sustainable, local, and environmentally sound food production systems.

As many pioneers in this movement have noted, the next step is to inspire, educate, and encourage a new generation to take up the art and practice of sustainable food production. As we transform the world, so too do we transform ourselves.

What will it take for us to restore our sense of sacredness for our dear earth, this hallowed ground of our ancestors and future home to our heirs? The spirit of our times cries out: "Heal the Earth, Serve Humanity." Make a little compost today. It will nurture and beautify your environment, strengthen your community, and support your local food system.

A wealth of composting and agricultural resources, including information on Biodynamics, is available at: www.attra.ncat.org. ❁



Jason Grubb has lived at Campbell Soltane for three and a half years. Over time, he discovered a love of getting dirty, and found himself at peace when working with a crew on the land. He is currently enrolled in the year-long, part-time Biodynamic Training Program at the Pfeiffer Center in Chestnut Ridge, New York.



Mason Vollmer was a gardening teacher for 18 years in two Waldorf schools, and has been a Biodynamic farmer and gardener since 1975. He helped to tend Soltane's orchard in its early years, and has been working with the land crew again since late summer 2008.

Tumblers and Sheds

Compost happens—anywhere and anytime a space is made for materials to decompose. However, here are a couple of items we've found helpful for our community:

Tumblers: We've come to really appreciate the value of a tumbler. First, it keeps the food scraps away from interested critters (skunks, raccoons, and rodents) and second, it mixes the material. This is a nice way to gather a big quantity of compost materials, in the right proportions, before putting everything on a pile outside. We don't empty the tumbler entirely at any one time, in order to keep the biological activity and the warmth it

generates, since if it really gets cold and everything freezes, the biological activity necessary for composting gets put on hold.

A Shed: We re-purposed a small shed that was no longer used for livestock for a convenient place to store and exchange our kitchen compost buckets, to keep them out of the snow and rain.

We have an idea to move this whole set-up into a passive solar greenhouse, where the warmth of the greenhouse would stimulate the compost, and the warmth from the compost would help heat the greenhouse—an example of a positive greenhouse effect.

1. PLANT PHYSIOLOGY at www.plantphysiol.org: "Root Secreted Malic Acid Recruits Beneficial Soil Bacteria," www.plantphysiol.org/cgi/rapidpdf/pp.108.127613v1?eaf



Photos by Lisa Grossman

Lighten Up:

A Community Energy-Reduction Experiment

By Kelly Barth, with editorial advice and guidance from fellow Kawsmonauts Deborah Altus, Doug Hitt, Noelle Kurth, and Elizabeth Schultz

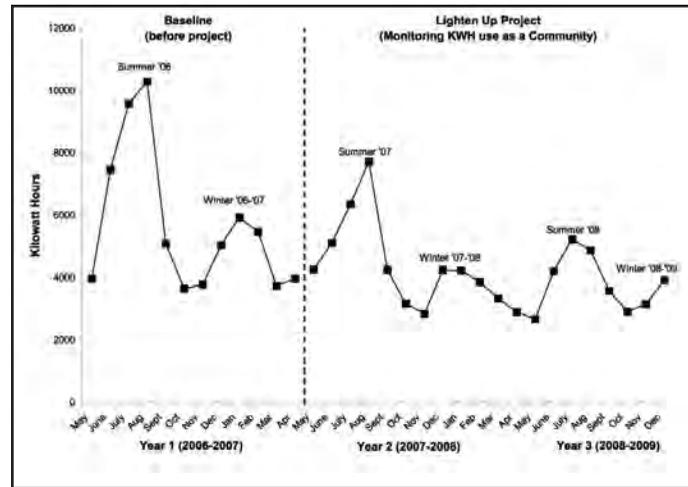
The famed Harvard biologist, E.O. Wilson, has said, “The epic of evolution is the best myth we will ever have.” Wilson joins a chorus of voices calling for us to reclaim our story, our 13.7 billion-year-old evolutionary and ecological identity. Spatially and temporally, humans don’t end or begin at our skin. We are woven into a vast and ancient web of relationship. We personally and collectively feel the reverberations of all that heals or harms that web.

What if a community of people organized themselves around this unfolding myth? How would they impact their bioregion? How would their own lives be impacted? Six years ago, a group of people, varying in ages and backgrounds, met in a living room in Lawrence, Kansas, to find out. The current gathering of 16 people, which we call Kawsmos (a nod to our local Kansas

or “Kaw” River watershed and the Kaw Nation that once inhabited the area), has organized around three core values.

The first, *New Story Telling*, says we will engage the insights of cosmology and ecology in artful and provocative ways. We study and discuss the teachings of Thomas Berry, Brian Swimme, and Joanna Macy, to name a few. We take field trips. We perform and create eco-rituals. We write and perform science-as-theater, dramatizing key moments in evolutionary history, such as the emergence of photosynthesis. The group explores cosmic and earthly interactions and connections through collaborative painting and embodies them through dance.

Our second value, *Quality of Interaction*, distinguishes conversation from mere discussion. Conversation—literally *being-in-company-with*—honors silence as well as words; it asks



Opposite page: The Kawsmos community after a recent gathering focused on the universe story. Above left: “Lighten Up” display used by the community to track energy usage each month. The display depicts individual maximums, minimums, and means as well as total group usage. The display serves to engage the group in meaningful, concrete discussion and provide motivation for conservation. Each full coal car represents 1000 kWh of group energy usage. Display construction and photo by Tom Mersmann. Above right: This chart depicts total group energy usage in kilowatt hours (kWh) per month over a 2-1/2 year period with seasonal changes noted. From May 2006–April 2007, we were not engaging in any conservation efforts (the data were collected retroactively). From May 2007–December 2008, efforts to lessen energy usage were underway. Data collection and graph by Deborah Altus and Noelle Kurth.

participants to be aware of not only their own internal feelings and thoughts but also those of others who might be more reticent to join the stream. Fundamentally, authentic conversation aims at the mutual discovery of wisdom—both the Earth’s and ours. All of us are responsible for creating a safe space for fully inclusive conversation, risk-taking, and play. Practically speaking, a rotating planning group arranges and facilitates our monthly meetings.

Third, we value *Enactment* within the local socio-ecological community. For example, given the urgency of climate change, we decided we could not simply wait until alternative energy infrastructures materialized around us. Our planning committee made the timely suggestion that we reduce our collective carbon footprint. To narrow and focus our efforts, we decided to tackle our electricity usage. The resulting two-year energy reduction and awareness project we called “Lighten Up.”

With some initial quakes and flutters, we committed to forwarding our monthly electric usage numbers, for the previous 12 months and each month to follow, to a member excited by tracking these statistics. We agreed this wouldn’t be about guilt or competition, unlike the programs of a growing number of utility companies around the country, such as the Sacramento Municipal Utility District. We weren’t going, as they did, to draw frowny or smiley faces on each other’s monthly utility bill.¹ But we knew changing light bulbs wouldn’t be enough. We would need to make some fairly substantial lifestyle changes if we wanted to achieve meaningful reductions. We collectively made this commitment to our bioregion and each other on the cusp of the hothouse swelter of a northeast Kansas summer. Should we lose our nerve, we needed only to look at the long trains of coal daily rumbling to the power plant belching at our

city’s edge. We needed only to remember a 10-year-old among us who volunteered to read his bedtime books by candlelight.

Some of us knew how difficult this would be. We held our tongues when a menopausal member wondered aloud whether she could survive without air-conditioning. We already knew how asexual, yet creative, everyone would become by high summer.

As expected, we sometimes arrived at meetings haggard and glistening like fellow survivors of a shipwreck. “One of my favorite chairs is molding,” one member sighed. Another confessed to succumbing to a wall unit after a string of 100+°F days. Coming home to an un-air-conditioned house after working in an office cold as a refrigerator felt like inviting a heart attack. Everyone tried to stay upbeat. It wasn’t bad if you didn’t move.

This isn’t the kind of experiment you want to undertake alone. For instance everyone had a vested interest in one member’s research about airflow. We learned which windows to open depending on sun position and wind strength and direction, when to turn on a window fan and when to leave it off. We found that window fans can be just as effective at cooling a room as a window unit air-conditioner. We all said farewell to another fiercely held myth about air-conditioning when we discovered that even on the hottest of days, leaving the A/C on all day consumes more energy than turning it off when you aren’t home and turning it on when you return. To our manifest surprise, it doesn’t take that long for a warm house to cool down again once you do turn the A/C on. “This whole project makes you think and negotiate,” said one couple. “You have to decide when to sleep, where to sleep. I’ll admit, we still have arguments about what works best. And when you’re hot and sleepy, you don’t want to argue. But ultimately, you can deal with it. You just have to be open to changing the way you do things, adjusting blinds, stay-

ing quiet in the afternoon.” Yes, it was stultifying on some nights, but we all knew that in a few days, it would be bearable again. In fact, pre-meeting potlucks often focused on the weather. Like farmers, we stood in small circles speculating about fronts. We communally rejoiced when they blew in, often purple and green with rain, cooling our skin and breaking our fever.

“We just had to turn on the A/C one week,” the most stalwart of members lamented. “The heat we could take but heat with humidity—we thought we might die, really. But then the air felt unnaturally cold, and we missed the night sounds, cicadas, crickets. It was too quiet. We felt isolated. It makes me wonder how many summers I’ve missed.” Everyone agreed that it helps knowing that, all over your town, you have a core group of others sweating, tossing, turning, and being lulled finally to sleep by the same creatures outside your bedroom window.

For some, the experiment had everything to do with the long-lost art of frugality. “I’m an empirical person,” said one member. “I don’t like giving my money to utilities, so I turn the lights off when I leave a room, and I turn the heat down when I’m away. I retired early, and even though I get a pension, I need to watch my money. I want to live my life so that the quotidian stuff is basic, so that I can save for things I really want to do like take a trip to Machu Picchu.” One member is in the process of replacing some of her electric appliances, such as her coffee grinder, can-opener, and hand-drill, with human-powered ones of the past.

Always in the back of everyone’s minds were the numbers. We depended on each other to keep these numbers in check. Ethical dilemmas arose. Friends with a new baby showed up on one member’s doorstep holding a gargantuan sack of wet diapers and asking to use her long dormant dryer because theirs was on the fritz. She had to think twice. “I sat in the light of an organic-soy-based-made-in-a-100-percent-solar-powered-factory-candle, martyr that I am, and felt the kilowatt hours ticking away.” A low point for another couple came when they got

their first winter electric bill. “It was really, really bad. We had a new hot tub, but we didn’t have it on the economy setting. After all that work, in just one month, we’d blown our savings. It was an “aha!” moment.” A wildlife rehabilitator in the group admitted her spring numbers were up because she’d had to leave a heating pad on continually for a group of neonate opossums whose mother had been killed by a car.

One member constructed a three-dimensional display of wooden coal cars stacked on pegs to represent our monthly electricity usage. Visualizing our personal electricity use as actual cars of coal was essential motivation in the face of small discomforts. With each coal car representing 1000 kilowatt hours of group energy usage, we could easily digest our impact.

In the end, consensus was that “Lighten Up” had been far less painful than any of us had imagined. Collectively, we had reduced our consumption by 25 percent. We had survived—thrived even. As we watched Kansas Governor Kathleen Sebelius tenaciously veto bill after bill that would have allowed construction of two 700-megawatt coal-fired power plants in the state, our experiment became all the more meaningful. Kawsmos has moved on to other projects, but we continue to collect and examine our electricity usage and are eager share our experience with others. We grow together as a community, energized by working collectively to reclaim our story. ❁

Freelance writer Kelly Barth and her partner and fellow Kawsmonaut, landscape painter Lisa Grossman, and their two cats live happily on little money in a very small house in Lawrence, Kansas. The two have been a part of the Kawsmos community since 2005—just in time for a year of studying the sun and the resultant “Lighten Up” energy-reduction project. All residents of Douglas County, Kansas, the Kawsmonauts meet monthly in each other’s homes for potlucks and interdisciplinary study and celebration of various aspects of their home bioregion, planet, galaxy, and universe.

How the Kawsmonauts Lowered Electric Usage

Here are a few things Kawsmonauts did to lower electric usage:

- Installed attic fans.
- Installed exhaust fans.
- Added awnings.
- Used thermal drapes or blinds.
- Installed programmable thermostats.
- Replaced aging appliances with Energy Star models.
- Used ceiling fans and turned them off when humans or pets weren’t in the room, since they cool only living things not air.
- Used a combination of water mister and fans on warm nights.
- Retreated to the basement on summer afternoons.
- Put appliances on power strips and turned them off when nothing was in use.
- Cooked outside during summer (i.e. rice cooker, crock pots).
- Used microwaves, especially in the summer.
- Used pressure cookers, which cook quickly and have the added benefit of not adding heat to the room.
- Switched to compact fluorescent bulbs.
- Hung clothes on indoor/outdoor clotheslines.
- Closed and opened blinds as outdoor temperatures demanded.
- Installed insulated, reflective paper in attic.
- Used weather stripping.
- Used flannel sheets in the winter.
- Used bamboo sheets in the summer.
- Left hot water in the tub after a bath in winter to raise room temperature and humidity.
- Painted houses a light color, since we’re in a Southern zone.
- Used solar/crank radios.
- Used analog telephones.

1. Kaufman, Leslie. “Utilities Turn Their Customers Green, With Envy,” *New York Times*, January 30, 2009.



Software, Hardware, and Ecology at Ganas

By Tom Reichert with Peggy Wonder

What do you do when the community you choose does not line up behind your most cherished values? I am grappling with this dilemma. To me the environmental crisis is obvious and compelling. I thought for sure the people in my community would want to make the small behavioral changes that could make a big difference—changes that don't require sacrifice, just change of habit (things like turning off fans and lights when you leave a room). But the community I chose did not choose ecology. Although they chose to live frugally, and some of the founders care deeply about the environment, living ecologically has not been a universally shared value.

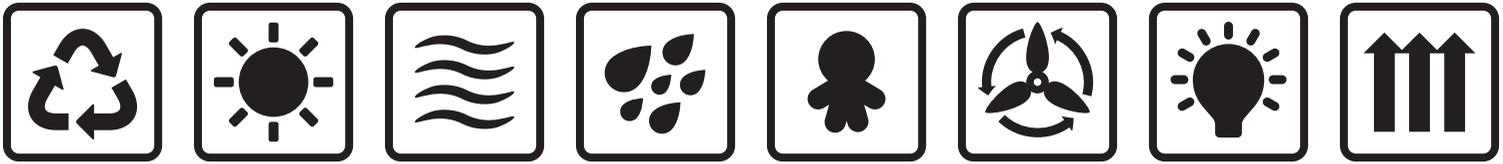
Yes, we at Ganas community have practices that are ecological, and living communally is eco-friendly by its nature. We share public spaces, refrigerators, laundry facilities, maintenance equipment, and food purchasing and preparation, among other things. We reuse materials in our maintenance and renovation operations. We compost. We recycle. We feed leftovers and yard waste to our chickens. We run a small collection of thrift and vintage stores: Every Thing Goes Clothing, Furniture, and Book Cafe (etgstores.com). Through the stores, we renew and reuse

many useful and beautiful things. From some people's point of view, we are a model of urban ecological practice.

The Software/Hardware Choice

Before I moved to Ganas in Staten Island, New York, I was part of the Kerista commune (from 1987-1991) in San Francisco, California. At Kerista, we jokingly and condescendingly referred to the ecologically-oriented communities as being into *Hardware*. We were into *Software*.

There are two basic approaches to changing one's environmental impact. The *hardware* one involves technology: things like insulation, more efficient cars, and energy-efficient appliances. The *software* approach involves behavior change. Changing one's behavior can have the biggest effect on one's environmental impact. Walking or taking public transportation instead of driving is an immediate, low-cost measure you can implement right away. But getting someone to make the software choice can be difficult. Conversely, when you convince someone to insulate their attic, it doesn't mean they have to change their behavior. If they insulate their attic, their fuel bills will go down. They could more easily just lower their thermostat in the



winter. But for many people, this is out of the question. This approach would require that they dress differently in the winter, or that they change other habituated behaviors. So again, we are back to *software*—*in this case, behavior change*.

When I left Kerista, I wanted another community committed to software. I found one: Ganas.

I chose Ganas because we are committed to communication through dialog. We try to solve problems by talking about them, instead of devising a bunch of rules to apply to the next incident. The former is quite challenging, for it forces us to look at each situation on its own merits. It is much easier to simply refer to the rules and be done with the issue. But because every circumstance is different, each warrants as fresh an evaluation as possible.

As committed as I am to ecology and the environment, I wouldn't want to live in a community that didn't place dialog as priority number one. I wouldn't want to live in one of the "hardware" communities. Sometimes I long for a more homogeneous mixture where it would be easier to promote ecological practices. But I value the openness to diversity that my partners stick to. It has made our community closer to a microcosm of the wider world. So I find in Ganas similar challenges to turning people on to ecology to those I would likely encounter in other places. And I am influenced by ideas I might not hear in a more closed community.

Bringing Ecology Home

My awareness of ecology and the environment started as a young teenager at summer camp in the north woods of Wisconsin. It has never stopped. Although it often wasn't my central focus, caring about the environment and my ecological footprint eventually shaped the ways in which I took showers and washed dishes, shopped for food and supplies for the community, and used paper and computers. This interest developed into a passion for making our buildings more efficient energy users. I sought a way to incorporate my desire to live with minimal impact on the earth and to turn my home into a model of environmentally friendly behaviors and practices.

Going Professional

I felt my way around how to get involved in these issues professionally. I got a lot of help along the way: money, ideas, support, labor. And yet I found that without a partner I wasn't really going to get anywhere. I went from insulating our own

buildings to starting a Home Performance contracting business, to deciding to work for someone else. Before my first day at the new job, our maintenance and renovation crew joined me for a major push to finish insulating two of our buildings. It was fantastic! We had as many as six of us working at any given moment, together. It was what I had dreamed of. Great workers, interested in doing a good job, partners.

In the new job, I got to advise homeowners on how to make their houses more energy efficient, comfortable, and safe. I could easily respond to customers' energy consumption questions with "set your thermostat temperature lower" or "this will save money and energy." The fact that they were rarely going to follow my advice didn't bother me. I just shared my observations and opinions and that was that; I was on to the next appointment.

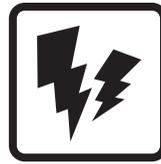
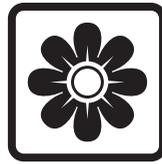
I value the openness to diversity that my partners stick to. It has made our community closer to a microcosm of the wider world.

Powerful Software to the Rescue

But when issues involving choices that affect energy efficiency came up at home, it was a different story. The issues mattered in a very different way to me. I could not maintain the same level of detachment and even objectivity. When our housekeeping manager presented her proposal to get a top-loading washing machine instead of a front-loader (widely considered to be more efficient and effective), I had a hard time considering her reasons. And time was short. In the initial discussion, there was tension in the air. Did any of it originate anywhere but from me??? She had good reasons: lower initial cost and better expected reliability. My only hope for having it go my way was to do more in-depth research than she had already done—and do it as objectively as possible. I couldn't lie to her and my partners, and I couldn't lie to myself.

So I searched. I used Julie's criteria, by which she had decided that the top-loader was better. She had studied *Consumer Reports* and similar publications. But the reports noted a distinct lack of repair histories. I decided to dig deeper. I found that users of Julie's preferred top loader rated it more poorly for reliability than some more expensive front-loading models. I also noted that recently-published Energy Star® data on clothes washers' ability to extract water from clothes, thereby reducing drying time, favored the front-loaders. My research supported my initial opinion.

There was tension around the discussions, but not as much as there could have been. Knowing that I was being heard, and that I was hearing Julie, helped. But it was easy to see why people simply decide to live in a small nuclear family and not have



all these partners to answer to.

This willingness to go back and forth, to bring up the issue multiple times, and to listen to each others' concerns is why I am into the software approach to community living. All my research means nothing if I cannot incorporate everyone else's wants into mine. I think that the more concerns we can address and the more voices we manage to engage in our decision-making process, the better decisions we can make. Such a process seems to strengthen relationships between members and heighten our awareness of different ways of viewing the issues.

Software—Not an Easy Choice

The point that many people prefer to deal with hardware rather than software was driven home to me as I watched a presentation about intentional communities around the world recently. The depiction of each community described more about the type of building construction than about the group's problem-solving process. How much time each community devotes to meetings, the type of meeting structure, and decision-making process got less emphasis. This is not a criticism of the presentation, which was very well prepared and executed. I think the emphasis didn't necessarily reflect the presenter's bias, but it did reflect the focus of each community.

We at Ganas pride ourselves in having few interpersonal feuds and a well-running community. But we are also legendary in the amount of time we spend in meetings. It appears to take a long time to work issues out. We hope this is because we actually work them out, because we get beyond the surface issues to the underlying ones. And by solving the underlying issues, at least we like to think we really solve the issues.

Many people report having had community-living experiences in college or early adulthood, which they enjoyed. "But nobody did the dishes." Or we have our Ganas alternative: endless meetings, but a well-run community. To many, neither choice is preferable to having the control of a nuclear family or a single person household.

A Combination that Works

If this sounds like I think the *software* is a failure, then right, in some ways I do. As a species, we still fight wars and I don't see the communities movement growing significantly. In fact, we decided to make our own community smaller. Yet I see Ganas getting better at solving problems, and our resulting inner strength (both

individually and collectively) increasing. My personal resolve to address communication issues is as firm as it ever was.

Over the past three or four years, I have found new ways to promote environmentally friendly practices at home. I wrote many articles for our weekly Ganas newsletter, e.g. about how to conserve energy while using fans and while using computers. During this time, our fuel usage dropped. Electricity use appears to be decreasing also, but we don't know whether that's just because the summers have been mild. (Summer appliances that gobble electricity here include fans, air conditioners, and refrigerators.)

Our communal commitment to learning to listen and to solve problems together has served me well. Along the way, I

got lots of help thinking about things as they came up: what I wanted, how I was dissatisfied, what to do differently, how to decide where to work. In November, after checking out possible alternatives, I joined a young promising

start-up called Bright Power. It's challenging and offers me lots of room to grow in. This small company offers the kind of full participation I am used to having at Ganas—the opportunity to see the big picture, join in planning future directions, design my job to suit my strengths, weaknesses, needs, and desires.

So, have I resolved the dilemma? Well, yes and no. I certainly would like Ganas to focus more on ecology, but I do love what we do. Because we have such diversity of opinion and because we focus on discussion, I have honed my skills in thinking through and presenting issues well. This software approach has helped me develop my ability to open my ears to my partners, to open my mind with greater agility. The software approach has helped me to make both physical changes and changes in awareness at Ganas over the years. And when I look at other communities, I feel I have made an excellent choice.

But please! Rinse that dish in cold water! ❁

Many people report having had community-living experiences in college or early adulthood, which they enjoyed. "But nobody did the dishes."



A native of Houston, Texas, Thompson Reichert has lived in Ganas Community in Staten Island, New York since 1991. He now works at Bright Power (brightpower.biz) in Manhattan. He loves to answer questions and give advice about energy efficiency. Contact him at Tom@ganas.org.

Peggy Wonder, a California native, has been at Ganas since 1989. There she manages Ganas' Every Thing Goes Vintage and Thrift Clothing store. In her spare time she co-edits Ganas' weekly newsletter.

Seeking an Alternative Education

By Alison Cole

Ann Nguyen and Alison Cole of Boston, Massachusetts are setting sail to Auroville, India to learn effective solutions for human communities in a meaningful environment.

R. Buckminster Fuller once said “I live on Earth at present, and I don’t know what I am. I know that I am not a category. I am not a thing—a noun. I seem to be a verb, an evolutionary process—an integral function of the universe.” Fuller is not alone in this revelation. It is this discovery—that of being a verb, an integral function of the universe—that leads a person to realize their inherent worth and the interconnectedness of all things. This consciousness brings with it a lifestyle of intentional balance and harmony—a renewed sense of stewardship.

So what’s a verb to do in a land of harsh nouns, industrial adjectives, and wasteful superlatives? This is the question my friend Ann and I are seeking to answer. Although our habitat of Boston, Massachusetts exudes an ephemeral layer of ecological consciousness, the physical and social landscape is trapped under its own urban weight. The excellent universities here promote changes of the mind, but hardly changes of the heart. Ann and I believe that the mind and heart are not mutually exclusive, and that both are essential to our human relationship with the environment. From this we decided to outsource our education to a place where both are held in equal regard.

In our search for an alternative education, we found ourselves magnetized to Auroville, a village located outside Puducherry in the Tamil Nadu state of India. Auroville (meaning “City of Dawn”) was founded four decades ago on a plot of arid land by a multinational group of people as an experiment in spiritual and ecological community. Ann and I are fascinated by Auroville’s newness, its diversity, its mission, but mostly its challenges. Is it possible to create a place for all walks of life to live in balance with merely dirt and willfulness? In Auroville, the answer seems

to be *YES*. The “City of Dawn” presents itself as the ideal classroom for designing human solutions. It is my personal desire to build wastewater recycling systems using only biology and basic materials. Ann desires to design energy capture-transfer devices with simple materials. The multi-collaborative Auroville Centre for Scientific Research promotes simple technologies and provides opportunity for any interested person to learn the trade—to be a verb.

We also found ourselves drawn to a reforestation project outside Auroville in Sadhana Forest. It is a new endeavor run by Yorit and Aviram Rosin to rehabilitate the arid land and its waters by planting indigenous tree species. Their progress has been significant in the first few years and serves as a wonderful example of simple technology restoring balance to the earth. Ann and I will live and work there as we transcribe the methods of the Sadhana Forest Project into an open-source (free for all) online course for the internet-based Peer2Peer University.

When we speak to others of our desire to base our education in Auroville, few people fail to mention how far away it is from Boston. Some folks also mention to us the “noun-ness” of flying there. In response to this, we have decided the “verb” thing to do would be to sail to India, rather than fly. Sailing will be an excellent addition to our self-designed curriculum of skill-building and hopefully an example to our peers that, *YES*, two young women from the city can sail a boat across the seas to another life. In fact, classrooms of middle school students from disadvantaged neighborhoods in New York City will be corresponding with us throughout the entirety of our journey. The relationship is facilitated by a non-profit called Reach The World which enables classrooms to follow world travelers as a means to provide unique geographical and cultural curricula so often lacking in poor urban schools.

We feel that our generation has great potential to rid themselves of the noun and embrace the verb—to be conscious in-



All photos by Steve Whitman

dividuals who tend to the garden of life. We hope that our education in Auroville affords us the skills necessary to promote human growth, not stunt it. But most importantly we hope that we can transfer the skills and ideas of an evolved and whole human community to our peers here in the land of nouns.

Check out our project at www.alternativegradschool.com. ❁



Alison Cole and Song Anh "Ann" Nguyen are 24 and reside in Boston, Massachusetts. Alison grew up in the woods and received a degree in Marine and Freshwater Biology from Napier University in Edinburgh, Scotland. She currently works as an

educator and lobbyist. Ann is a native Bostonian and holds a degree in Social Thought and Political Economy from the University of Massachusetts as well as a certificate in International Conflict Resolution from the Five Colleges Consortium. She currently works in global wealth management banking and instructs sailing.



Top: Dormitory for volunteers. It is made of natural local materials using traditional building methods. Above: Two children (of volunteers) pass the photovoltaic panels that supply electricity in Sadhana Forest. This site is not tied to the grid.



What Are the Boundaries of an Intentional Community?

An Experiment in Geographically-Dispersed Community-Building

By Don Schneider and Elin England

Where and How it Began, and How it Went

In a rural community in the beautiful Cascade foothills just outside of Eugene, Oregon, a group of community-minded families joined together for a number of years to talk, share, cooperate, and eat. Elkdream Farm, an eight-acre parcel with good agricultural soils, good sun, and good water, was the primary host-location for what we came to call the Pleasant Hill Progressives—a group of mostly progressive and environmentally-oriented, secular, middle-class, and middle-aged individuals.

Many of the group's members had lived in communal households during college and for a number of years (in some cases decades) afterward. But over time, the pull of the broader culture toward individual pursuits had lured us all toward separate lives. Our family moved to Pleasant Hill just after our second child was born, drawn to the area by the promise of good schools and dreams of establishing a large kitchen garden and orchard. As we got to know the community, we discovered that we were surrounded by a mix of very conservative, old-school rural Oregonians with good hearts and rigid views; wealthy professionals busily buying up old mobile homes and replacing them with McMansions; and an assortment of young and old hippies with more alternative mindsets.

What we did not find, however, were avenues to connect with our fellow Pleasant Hill residents in ways other than attending one of the many churches or involving ourselves with the school sports programs. In an attempt to establish some community for ourselves and find others of a like mind, we instigated a discussion group based on the Northwest Earth Institute's (nwei.org) format. Starting first with Voluntary Simplicity, we went on to explore several other topics in the NWEI series revolving around environmental and social change issues, before launching onto our own path. We found our way through a Peak Oil phase, reading and discussing works by Richard Heinberg, James Howard Kunstler, and other notables of that genre. We also began discussing the question, "What does it mean to be a community?"

It became clear that we were, in some ways, functioning in a conscious, intentional way as a self-declared community. To be sure, we all lived in our own geographically-dispersed homes, none of them on the same tax lot; we had our own separate lives, and paid our own separate bills. We weren't sharing a bathroom and kitchen with each other, one measure of living communally—nor, separated by several miles, could we hope to consider ourselves a cohousing community. But we were, in fact, meeting with some regularity, sharing food, and developing our own culture, customs, and closeness. We were cooperating as an intentional-but-dispersed, rural "virtual" community.

At the peak of our group's membership, 43 people gathered for a summer potluck. But more typically, there were about 12 to 15 at any particular meeting, unless it was a special occasion. We had an email newsletter for a while that helped maintain cohesion among the larger group by reporting what we had discussed at the last meeting, what was on the agenda for the next meeting, what was on the horizon in terms of action items, and any other reminders or follow-up issues. We visited and hosted speakers from other intentional communities in our area. We had a calendar of seasonal events including bonfires, labyrinth walks, coordinated plantings among households for sharing at harvest time, coordinated bulk food purchases from local food producers, food preservation and holiday parties, and even a collective chicken harvest—an educational if somewhat grisly affair.

Because many of us had school-aged children, we were a "kids welcome" community by default. We found that Sunday gatherings at 3 p.m. worked best—discussion from 3 to 5, potluck from 5 to 7. Everyone went home on Sunday evening fed and feeling good with no need to cook dinner and plenty of time to get ready for the work and school week ahead.

We met successfully for several years twice a month from September through June. Summer vacation schedules proved too scattered to make regular meetings feasible during July and August. However, as the kids got older and busier, and as the increasingly frenetic pace of modern-day, middle-class con-



Left: Community campfire at a gathering of the Pleasant Hill Progressives. Right: Summer games.

sumerist lives took its toll, the group began to lose focus and momentum. We began meeting just once a month for what we called our “Second Sunday” gathering. And finally, at our summer break in 2008, we decided to discontinue our regular meetings. Now we mostly just get together informally, often in smaller subgroups, or for special occasions.

What Worked, What Didn't Work, and What We Learned

First, we learned that a sense of community and a feeling of belonging are not limited by geography, and that a positive aspect of having geographical distance between households is that many of the usual communitarian concerns—pets, chores, noise, and so forth—do not become issues. And we reaffirmed our belief that eating together is good, natural, healthy, human behavior and essential to feeling connected and nourished as community.

However, we also learned that it is hard to maintain momentum and move forward in a coordinated manner when you don't live within walking distance of each other. Maintaining community cohesion seems harder in a rural area than in an urban or suburban neighborhood, because you don't cross paths or see each other on the street coming-and-going as often—you have to get in a car and drive several miles after a long day. Ugh!

We also learned that it is hard to keep motivation, commitment, and leadership going unless people really grasp the concept of what it means to be a self-organizing group. *Everyone* has to take responsibility for making the group happen, or it will fizzle out. In the early stages of the group, meetings were held at various members' houses on a rotating basis. Although this was difficult when families with children came to meetings at homes that were not childproofed, it did facilitate more of a shared sense of responsibility for the group by those serving as the host.

Connected with this, we found that while some people have issues with structure and leadership, in fact, having some structure is helpful—it brings continuity, coherence, and meaning to

time spent together. When there is a predictable schedule that can be planned around, a set number of meetings so there is an end in sight, a specified ending time that is respected, and tasks assigned in between meetings having to do with specific topics or agenda items, then cohesion and satisfaction are strengthened and people are more willing to make time in their busy schedules for the group. This was evidenced in the early stages of the group, when we were utilizing the structure provided by the eight-week Northwest Earth Institute discussion courses. The expectations were clear, the beginning and end points were clear, and structure was provided, even if we strayed from it at times. The group seemed to flow very well, and meetings were well attended. In contrast, when we moved away from NWEI, guidelines and expectations were hazy, and participation dropped off.

In addition, in our desire to be egalitarian about steering the direction of the group, we also suffered from a lack of leadership, particularly after we moved away from using the NWEI courses. As a result, the aim or purpose of the group, other than coming together as community, was not always clear. Without more leadership and structure to mobilize the potential of the group for satisfying and effective action, the focus faded and people began to drift away. We were not, it seems, able effectively to move the group focus from being a social gathering back to having a greater purpose, despite our attempts to encourage the group to engage in self-reflection and refocus.

We knew that working toward emotional closeness and strong relationships is essential to realizing our vision of a better world, but we were unable, except on rare occasions, to provide an effective context conducive to talking about deeper emotions. As a result, on the occasions when discussion turned, for instance, to deeper feelings of concern about the state of the world (e.g., despair, frustration, fear, etc.), these expressions were too often met with a somewhat cynical, joking attitude, or other interjections which tended to derail the discussion and prevented deeper exploration that might have led the group to a stronger level of commitment. We also lacked a specific, agreed-upon

process or method for resolving conflicts. These factors, along with the natural pull to socialize and seek pleasure rather than explore and possibly experience discomfort, led, over time, to stagnation and kept the group from evolving. Our collectively conditioned middle-class tendencies to keep things pleasant conflicted with the possibility of greater depth and closeness. The cultural tendency toward individualism prevailed over the ideal of communitarian pursuits. People drifted off and the group disbanded.

We began the group with a rather relaxed attitude of “Come if you want, hope you can make it,” without requiring any sort of commitment. And out of a desire to be inclusive, we had a policy of “taking all comers” without any sort of pre-screening or criteria for inclusion. These were errors and proved to be detrimental to group cohesion and progress in numerous ways. The constant churning of new faces resulted in frequently having to go back to square one in terms of information that had been presented. Not being more selective resulted in some amount of interpersonal discomfort that kept interactions at a more superficial social level and was disruptive to the formation of a solid, committed core group. Comments from established

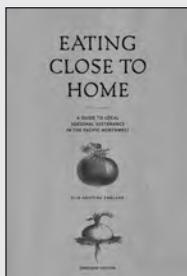
members such as “I’m sorry, but I’m never coming again if that person is going to be part of this group” revealed just how important the screening process is.

So What’s Next?

We are still interested in cooperative community and cooperative economics. There is still interest among several of the past members in building a community group with more commitment, depth, and focus that is outcome-oriented. What that will look like is, as yet, undetermined. But we are very clear about the importance that community has in our lives. ❁



Don Schneider and Elin England have been together through several life-chapters over the last 27 years. They hosted the Pleasant Hill Progressives at their home, Elkdream Farm, in western Oregon for eight years. They are currently looking into prospects for developing a senior-friendly (though not exclusively elder) cohousing community in the south Willamette valley of Oregon. They can be contacted at elkdream_farm@yahoo.com.



Eating Close to Home

Eating Close to Home: A Guide to Local Seasonal Sustenance in the Pacific Northwest by Elin Kristina England. 2009, 232 pages. ISBN 978-0-578-00069-5. elkdream_farm@yahoo.com.

The author collected recipes from her own kitchen and from gardeners, farmers, and food-lovers in her local community (including some of the Pleasant Hill Progressives) to create a bioregional, seasonal cookbook intended to help Pacific Northwesterners eat close to home year-round. Sections take readers through Winter, Spring, Summer, and Fall, describing both familiar and almost-forgotten vegetables and fruits and how to prepare them into delicious “nibbles,” salads, soups, main dishes, side dishes, baked goods, and tasty treats. Additional chapters contain dishes that fit any season, instructions on putting food by, and resources for going more local. The following are excerpted from a list of helpful websites on pp. 220-221:

The 100 Mile Diet. **100milediet.org**. A website started by Alisa Smith and J.B. MacKinnon, authors of *Plenty*, the book detailing their year of eating only what food could be obtained within a 100 mile radius of their home in Vancouver, BC. The website has stories from people all over the world interested in eating locally, lots of suggestions for how to make your diet more sustainable, and a mapping tool to help you figure out the parameters of your local foodshed.

Chef’s Collaborative. **chefscollaborative.org**. A national net-

work of chefs, food producers, educators, and food lovers who come together to celebrate local foods and foster a more sustainable food supply. On their site you can find restaurants all over the country that serve locally grown foods.

Eat Local. **www.eatlocal.net**. An extremely informative, easy-to-use website with links to many great resources across the US. It also has lots of great recipes, inspiring articles, and lots of support for those who want to make their diet more sustainable.

Eat Well Guide. **www.eatwellguide.org**. A guide for finding fresh, wholesome, sustainable food in the US and Canada. The site lists farms, stores, restaurants, and outlets.

Edible Communities. **www.ediblecommunities.com**. Their mission is to transform the way communities shop for, cook, eat, and relate to the food that is grown and produced. Through printed publications, websites, and events, they connect consumers, from a variety of regions across the country, with local growers, retailers, chefs, and food artisans, enabling those relationships to grow and thrive in a mutually beneficial, healthful, and economically viable way.

Urban Edibles. **urbanedibles.org**. An intriguing site created by a cooperative network of wild food foragers. Based in Portland [Oregon], their ideas could well be expanded to include other areas. The site includes a map of where in Portland one can find various wild edibles, plus information on identifying and harvesting edible and medicinal plants, preservation techniques, and other useful tidbits.

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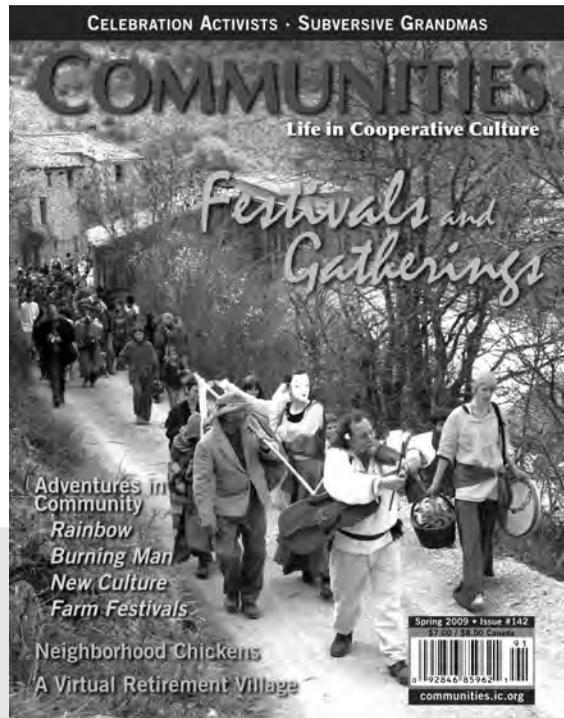
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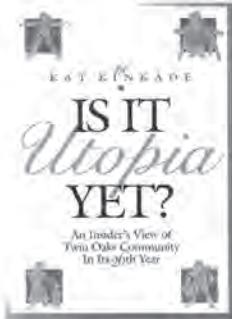
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**An Insider's View of Twin Oaks
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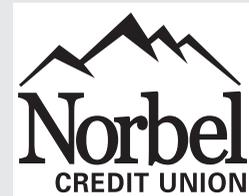
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REACH

REACH is our column for all your Classified needs. In addition to ads intended to help match people looking for communities with communities looking for people, Reach has ads for workshops, goods, services, books, conferences, products and personals of interest to people interested in communities.

You may use the form on the last page of Reach to place an ad. THE REACH DEADLINE FOR ISSUE #144/FALL 2009 (out in early September) is Friday, July 24.

The special Reach rate is only \$.25 per word (up to 100 words, \$.50 per word thereafter for all ads) 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: John Stroup, Business Manager; COMMUNITIES Magazine, 10385 Magnolia Road, Sullivan, MO 63080; message line: 573-468-8822; email: ads@ic.org. (If you email an ad, please include your mailing address, phone number and be sure to send off the check at the same time.)

Intentional communities listing in the Reach section are invited to also visit our online Communities Directory at <http://directory.ic.org>. Listing on our web site is free and data from the site is used to produce our print version of the Communities Directory, with a new edition coming out annually. Contact: directory@ic.org for more information on being listed in the upcoming Communities Directory.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

ENTROPY PAWSED. Entropy Pawsed is a nature-linked low energy living demonstration site in rural West Virginia. Visit: www.entropyawsed.org.

FIRST ANNUAL TUBAC/TUMACÁCORI, ARIZONA, MUSIC FESTIVAL WEEKENDS. Friday – Sunday, June 19-21 & October 23-25, 2009. Global Change Music presents Gabriel of Urantia & The Bright & Morning Star Band's Sacred Global CosmoPop Concerts. Booths, food, camping, agricultural EcoVillage experience. Donation. Bring the family. No alcohol, no drugs on premises. Make a pilgrimage. (520) 398-2542 globalchangemusic.org

2009 NATIONAL COHOUSING CONFERENCE IS IN SEATTLE, WA from June 24-June 28. The theme for 2009 is "Growing Community!" While we've hosted conferences in the past, we have graduated to an annual conference to accommodate the increased interest in the growing cohousing movement. This conference is THE venue for those who already live in cohousing, who are currently seeking a community, and professionals serving cohousing communities to learn new ways to "grow community". This conference is also the ideal place for newcomers to learn about cohousing - whether you are exploring the idea of living in community or a public official trying to understand how to encourage community oriented development. Come to the 2009 National Conference and see the power of community for yourself. With more than 50 program offerings - featured speak-

ers, workshops, seminars, and tours-there's something for everyone! For full information visit the Cohousing Website at www.cohousing.org/conference.

COMMUNITIES WITH OPENINGS

COLUMBIA ECOVILLAGE, northeast Portland, Oregon. We are a newly completed 37-unit urban cohousing ecovillage cultivating supportive relationships with each other, the larger community and the Earth. Located on two major bus routes in the city with 3.78 acres of land including an organic farm, orchards, vineyards, extensive rainwater storage, bees, greenhouses and more. Only a few units left for sale. Condominiums have been renovated for energy efficiency, healthy indoor air and environmental responsibility. Come live in our village. See www.columbiaecovillage.net and www.columbiaecovillage.blogspot.com

COMMON GROUND, Jefferson National Forest, Virginia. Find sacred space: Intentional community of 30 years with cooperative focus on productive large gardens has homesites available, located in picturesque area near college town of Lexington, VA. Live in the quiet beauty of nature in the wooded mountains of the Jefferson National Forest. Seeking young families/ individuals of a hardworking homesteading mindset/ spirit to add to our small but growing group. Kids welcome. 80-acre land trust, community spring, cold pond, warm swimming pond, pavilion, schoolhouse/ visitor's center. Lots of potential

for creating a sustainable future. Transitional housing currently available with partial work-exchange possible. Interested visitors contact Glen Leasure at 540-463-4493.

DANCING RABBIT, Rutledge, Missouri. We are a growing ecovillage of more than 30 individuals and are actively seeking new members to join us in creating a vibrant community on our 280 beautiful acres in rural Missouri. Our goals are to live ecologically sustainable and socially rewarding lives, and to share the skills and ideas behind this lifestyle. We use solar and wind energy, earth-friendly building materials and biofuels. We are especially interested in welcoming natural builders and people with leadership skills into our community. Help make our ecovillage grow! 660-883-5511; dancingrabbit@ic.org; www.dancingrabbit.org.

EARTHAVEN ECOVILLAGE, Black Mountain, North Carolina. Earthaven is an aspiring ecovillage founded in 1994 on 320 forested acres in western North Carolina, 50 minutes from Asheville. Our 53 members are spiritually diverse, and value sustainable ecological systems, permaculture design, and healthy social relations. We make decisions by consensus and have independent incomes. We lease homesites from the community and pay annual dues. We have a few small businesses and members who offer internships and workshops in permaculture design, natural building, consensus, creating ecovillages, herbal medicine, and healing. We are seeking hardworking, entrepreneurial people with organic growing, solar electrical or mechanical skills; healers, and families with children.

OCCIDENTAL ARTS & ECOLOGY CENTER

Permaculture Design Course

July 11 – 24, 2009

September 19 – October 2, 2009

March 2010 (tentative)

Starting and Sustaining Intentional Communities Course

November 11 – 15

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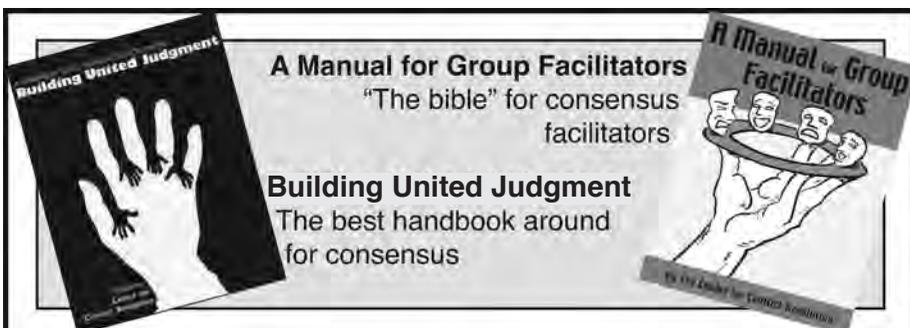
Occidental is located in western Sonoma County, 20 minutes west of Santa Rosa

ELDER FAMILY, NEAR CHEROKEE, North Carolina and Smokey Mountain PARK and easy drive to Asheville. Your best investment—shared ownership in a loving “family of choice” sanctuary. For active elders with lots of free time to enjoy group activities, such as gardening, hiking, shared meals, spiritual gatherings, fire circles and lots more. Non-smokers, healthy and financially secure. Two new shared homes on eight acres in private cove with private bedroom/office/bathroom and large common kitchen. We are part of a larger community with community building, swimming pool, organic garden, trails and 46-acre spiritual retreat land. See union-acres.org for information on the area and community and click on Elder Family Shared Housing for our web page. 828-497-7102; or email annariel@dnet.net.

FELLOWSHIP COMMUNITY, Spring Valley, New York. We seek co-workers. 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 elderly, co-workers and children, we grow our own fruit and vegetables bio-dynamically. All ages work together in our practical work activities. They include a candle shop, metal shop, wood shop, weaving/handwork group, greenhouse, publishing press, bakery, outlet store and medical practice. The spiritual science (anthroposophy) of Rudolf Steiner is the basis for our work. There is a Waldorf School and several other anthroposophical initiatives nearby. Our lifestyle is an intense social/cultural commitment to the future of mankind. Check out our web site at www.FellowshipCommunity.org. If you are interested in co-working or need additional info, please contact our office at 845-356-8494; or write to: Ann Scharff, c/o The Executive Circle at 241 Hungry Hollow Rd., Spring Valley, NY 10977; rsffoffice@fellowshipcommunity.org.

GLOBAL COMMUNITY COMMUNICATIONS ALLIANCE, Tubac, Arizona. Founded by Gabriel of Urantia and Niánn Emerson Chase in 1989. Currently 110 adults and children. International members. EcoVillage, green building, sustainable living. God-centered community based on teachings of The URANTIA Book and Continuing Fifth Epochal Revelation (The Cosmic Family volumes). Organic gardens, farm, & ranch. Children's school, landscaping, Soulistic Medical Institute. Spiritual commitment required. Non-spiritual internship program also. PO Box 4910, Tubac, AZ 85646 (520) 603-9932. info@GlobalCommunityCommunicationsAlliance.org; www.GlobalCommunityCommunicationsAlliance.org; www.GlobalChangeMusic.org; www.GlobalChangeMultiMedia.org.

HEARTWOOD COHOUSING, Bayfield, Colorado. Located in southwest Colorado, with easy access to the high peaks of the San Juan



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Mountains and the red rock canyons of Utah, we are a cohousing neighborhood with a deep sense of community. Built in 2000, we support a population of approximately 40 adults and 20 children in a cozy cluster of 24 homes nestled within 250 acres of pine forest and pastureland. We make decisions by consensus and value open and honest communication to accommodate the diverse needs, backgrounds and perspectives of our members. Find out more about Heartwood and available property: www.heartwoodcohousing.com; mail l@heartwoodcohousing.com; 970-884-4055.

HEATHCOTE COMMUNITY, Freeland, Maryland. We are an intentional community of 12 adults and 4 children living cooperatively on 110 acres, on land held in trust with the School of Living since 1965. Our mission is to live sustainably and share with others through education and service. We are seeking new members. Come visit during our monthly Visitor Weekend or join us for a workshop or an internship! We are offering the following workshops in 2009: Facilitation (June 12-14), Permaculture Design Course (Jul 17-Aug 2), Cob (Aug 15-16), and Nonviolent Communication (Aug 28-30). We have openings for internships in permaculture and sustainable community living. 410-357-9523; info@heathcote.org; www.heathcote.org.

HYGIEIA HOMESTEAD, Sterling, Michigan. Fifty-five (55) acres of organic land near Sterling, Michigan – seeking other RAW VEG-ANS to grow healthy food, be self sufficient, and teach the live vegan lifestyle. Especially could use people with carpentry skills. Janet and Mark, rawnursejanet@yahoo.com.

RED EARTH FARMS, Rutledge, Missouri. We are an ecological homesteading community on 76 acres of pastoral rolling hills. We are exploring sustainable practices like local food production, permaculture, and natural building, and we are committed to being accountable for our impact on the earth and respecting our non-human neighbors. Within our land trust, each household enjoys a measure of autonomy on its leasehold. We value cooperation, nonviolence, compassion, and diversity. If you want to build a close connection with a small piece of fertile ground surrounded by like-minded neighbors, and if you have the initiative, energy, and skills to build your place from the ground up, consider making Red Earth Farms your home. www.redearthfarms.org; 660-883-5330; redearth@galatea.org.

SANDHILL FARM, Rutledge, Missouri. We are a small family of friends living together on an income-sharing organic farm. We value cooperation, initiative, living simply, caring for our land, growing most of our own food, working through our differences, making good ecological choices, and having fun with

our friends. We've been at this for 33 years and continue to grow in our visions and our capability to realize them. Sound like home? POB 155, Rutledge, MO 63563; visitorscm@sandhillfarm.org; 660-883-5543; www.sandhillfarm.org.

SANTA ROSA CREEK COMMONS, Santa Rosa, California. We are an intergenerational, limited equity, housing cooperative 60 miles north of San Francisco. Although centrally located near public transportation, we are in a secluded wooded area beside a creek on two acres of land. We share ownership of the entire property and pay monthly charges that cover the usual expenses of home ownership. We have kept our costs reasonable by sharing all of the responsibilities of our cooperative and much of its labor. All members serve on the Board of Directors and two committees oversee the welfare of the community. We enjoy a rich social life and a mutual concern for the natural environment. Contact: Membership 707-575-8946.

TRILLIUM FARM COMMUNITY, Applegate Valley, Southwest Oregon. Envision living on magical Land with abundant gravity-flow sweetwater, productive organic gardens, heirloom fruit trees, ponds, creek, waterfalls, river, forest, meadows, historic community buildings, private cozy cabins, excellent solar exposure, long growing season, magnificent wilderness watershed with views of deep canyons and high Siskiyou Mountains! Envision living with creative people, building and growing community as best friends, trusted business partners, and peers. We're seeking enthusiastic, financially stable and emotionally mature singles, couples and families with some life experiences relevant to homesteading and community, ready for the great adventure of living together as community, 4-6 households on the Land. We believe in these shared core values: Striving for sustainability: growing beautiful abundant food, alternative building, appropriate technology. Vegetarianism: non-cruelty to all. Healing: creating sacred space. Environmental activism: conservation and protection for future generations. Communication: cooperation, compassion, consensus. Education: learning and sharing. Spiritual aesthetics: love, harmony and beauty. Wilderness sanctuary: connecting and caring for the Land and its unique biodiversity, no dogs, much wildlife. Envision joining us, hosting educational/arts/healing programs, retreats, workshops and gatherings through Birch Creek Arts and Ecology Center; living a great life and helping create sustainable futures. trillium@deepwild.org.

TWIN OAKS, Louisa, Virginia. "Not the revolution, but you can see it from here." We are an income-sharing, non-violent, egalitarian community that's been living this lifestyle

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Communal Studies Association

Encouraging the study of Intentional Communities

Founded in 1975, the Communal Studies Association publishes *Communal Societies*, a journal covering many aspects of historical and contemporary communal societies with articles and book reviews written by academics, communitarians and preservationists.

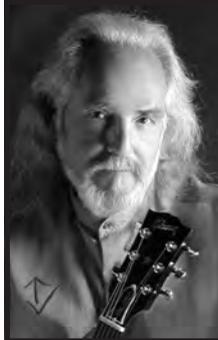
CSA hosts an annual conference at various historic and contemporary communal sites. Awards and fellowships promote research and honor those who help achieve a greater understanding of communal living.

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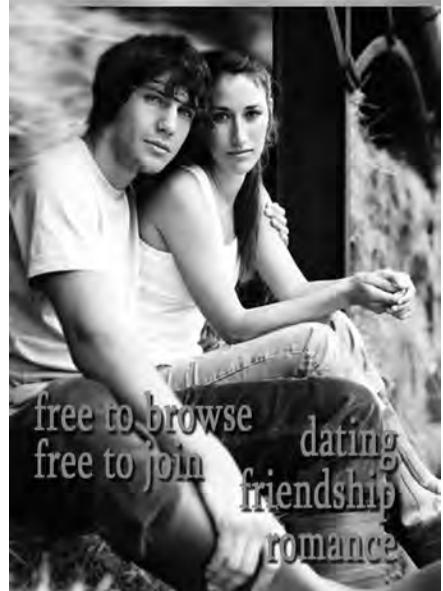
Dancing Rabbit is a growing ecovillage whose members are dedicated to sustainability and social change. We're especially seeking natural builders and people with leadership skills.



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ZEPHYR VALLEY COMMUNITY COOPERATIVE, Rushford, Minnesota. Zephyr Valley Community Cooperative (www.zephyrcoop.org) is a rural cohousing community with 11 members and 10 kids on 500 acres of stunningly beautiful land in the hills of southeast Minnesota. We have four ponds, a creek; wetlands; pastures; bluff & forest lands and 80 acres of land in crops farmed organically. We strive to live lightly on the land. There are seven individual homes; and sites for six more, a common house; two barns and several out-buildings. We have a community center and a spring fed swimming pond, a rec field, trails and barns for animals and storage. Decisions about the land and community are made by consensus, all others are individual. If you're interested in small-scale, organic farming or just in living in a rural cohousing community, contact us at zephyrcoop@yahoo.com.

COMMUNITIES FORMING

ECOVILLAGE FORMING, outside of Kansas City. Seeking investors in small farm with 10 wooded acres being used for non-profit retreat center; organic veggie gardens and chickens. Plus 25 acres in natural wildlife sanctuary. Buy shares in LLC that holds title = owning percentage of entire property. Opportunity to build & own outright a portable cabin. Seeking partnership with people wanting to create a sustainable lifestyle. See www.lightcenter.info; info@lightcenter.info; 785-255-4583.

TERRASANTE DESERT COMMUNITY, Tucson, Arizona. Looking for resourceful people who want to build community on 160 acres of vegetated Sonoran desert surrounded by State land trust. Explorations in alternative building, solar energy, permaculture, natural healing, quiet living, artistic endeavors. Abundant well water; good neighbors, mountain vistas, awesome sunsets. Contact Bruce at 520-403-8430 or email: scher@terrasante.org

TRUE NORTH, Canton, New York. Can't afford \$250,000 cohousing units or \$50,000



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ecovillage buy-ins? Looking for small, rural community with goal of economic affordability as well as ecological sustainability? Into less sweat gardening and more fun cross-country skiing, and being in on the creative beginning? In spring we will be three full time and one part time person in 50s/60s. About 45 years of community living experience between us. Farmhouse, new barn, 35 acres with stream, fire circle, fenced fields, organic gardens and orchard, artesian spring, back road but only 6 miles from town. Four universities nearby, plus Adirondack Park, St. Lawrence River, Ottawa, and three other intentional communities. We have lots of skills and will be building a cabin in the spring. Looking for a few healthy, spiritual, emotionally mature, peak oil aware people, especially those with green building, farming, permaculture, self-sufficiency, group process skills. Well-behaved dogs and pagans welcome. peagreen@earthlink.net 315-386-2609.

COMMUNITY HOUSES AND LAND FOR SALE

LAND FOR SALE: North Georgia/Gilmer County. Would like to sell to someone who appreciates the beauty of mountains instead of slash & stack developer. 234 acres and 43 acres. Serious inquiries only please. Greg Reese 706-369-1486.

CONSULTANTS

FACILITATION, CONFLICT RESOLUTION, AND CONSENSUS TRAINING. Are your meetings poorly attended, boring, or nonproductive? Could your group's communication skills and decision-making processes use a boost? Does your community need help processing a difficult, emotional, or contentious issue? Eris Weaver can help! 707-338-8589; eris@erisweaver.info; www.erisweaver.info.

GROUP PROCESS RESOURCES available at Tree Bressen's website. Topics include con-

sensus, facilitation, peace-making, blocks and dissent, community-building exercises, alternative formats to general discussion, the list goes on. Dozens or helpful articles, handouts and more—all free. Contact: Tree Bressen, 541-343-3855; tree@ic.org; www.treegroup.info.

INTERNS, RESIDENCIES

SANDHILL FARM, Rutledge, Missouri. Internships in Sustainable Community Living. April 1 to November 1, 2008. If you love gardening and would like to gain experience in organic farming, food processing, tempeh production, homestead maintenance and construction skills, consensus decision-making, group and interpersonal process. Learning is informal and hands-on. Come for ten weeks or longer. More information about the Sandhill Farm Intentional Community and applying for an internship: 660-883-5543; interns@sandhillfarm.org; www.sandhillfarm.org.

PEOPLE LOOKING

SEEKS COUNTERPART, Hawaii. Single male, 40, at small 13-year-old egalitarian community in Hawaii seeks female counterpart. Parenting. Music. Children's theater. Homestead-based elementary school. Permaculture. Write dkern@coconut-wireless.net.

PUBLICATIONS, BOOKS, WEBSITES

COHOUSING.ORG, the Cohousing Website, is filled with core resources for cohousing community – a thriving segment of the intentional communities movement. The site includes the Cohousing Directory, info on National Cohousing Conferences, Classified Ads, and FREE publications including Cohousing Articles, online Cohousing Books,



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RESOURCES

FEDERATION OF EGALITARIAN COMMUNITIES (FEC). LIVE YOUR VALUES, LEARN NEW SKILLS. For 25 years, the FEC has welcomed new members to our groups based on cooperation, ecology, fairness, and nonviolence. No joining fees required, just a willingness to join in the work. We share income from a variety of cottage industries. For more information: www.thefec.org; fec@ic.org; 417-679-4682; or send \$3 to FEC, HC-3, Box 3370-CM00, Tecumseh, MO 65760.

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FINDHORN'S INCREDIBLE SHRINKING FOOTPRINT

(continued from p. 27)

local town's annual floral displays.

Tying together the threads of growing ecovillage activism in the face of the twin threats of peak oil and climate change, a new annual conference series launched at Findhorn in 2008—Positive Energy (PE). The first PE conference carried the strapline *Creative Community Responses to Peak Oil and Climate Change* and was the occasion for a great gathering of the ecovillage, transition, bioregional, and localization clans. The 2009 PE, scheduled for early October, focuses on the theme *Building Bioregional Resilience* and aims to further strengthen the links between intentional and more conventional sustainable community initiatives (www.findhorn.org/programmes/programme349.php).

These new challenges provide us with a rich and welcome opportunity to become a more truly Scottish community, one that is tied into the fabric of our own bioregion. As the links that tie us into relationship with our neighbours strengthen, so we can feel the gifts of solidarity and resilience deepen. ❁

Jonathan Dawson is a sustainability educator based at the Findhorn Foundation in Scotland (www.findhorn.org). He is recent President and still a serving member of the Board of the Global Ecovillage Network (gen.ecovillage.org).



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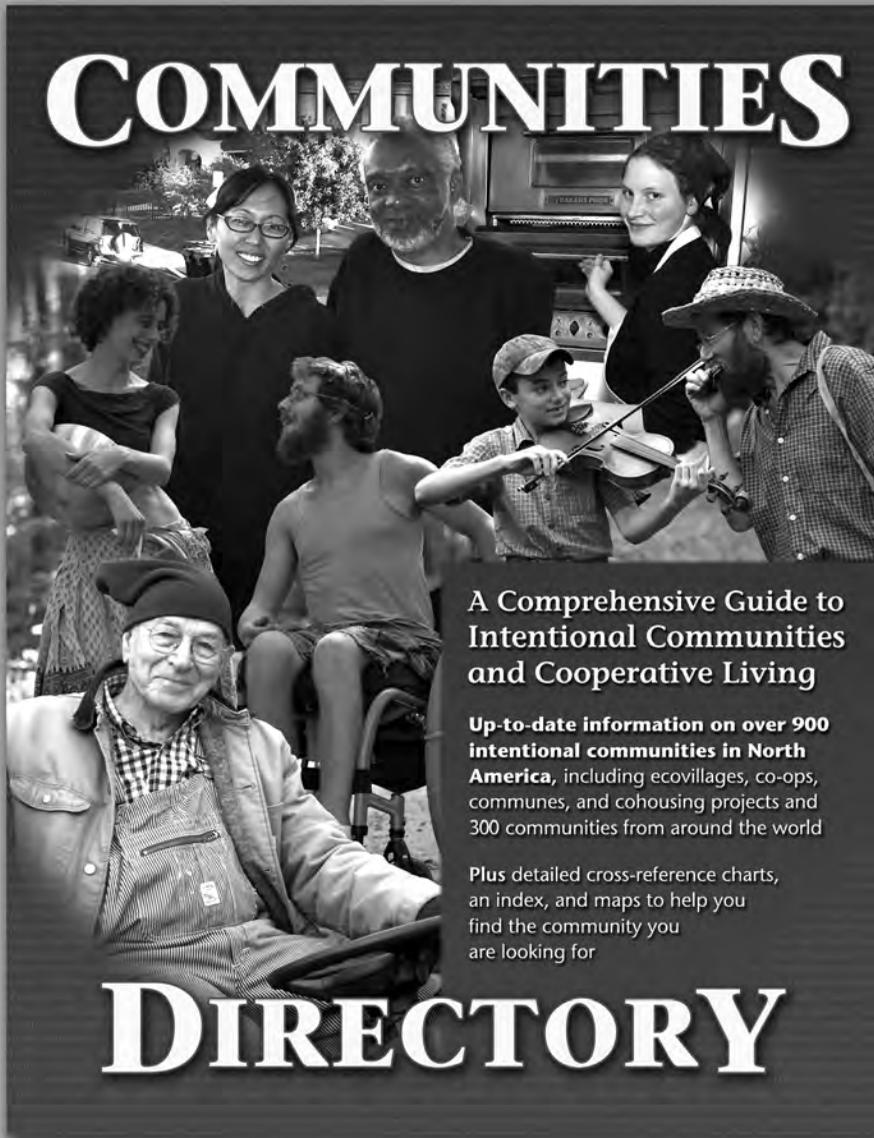
124 minutes profiling 10 contemporary communities:

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- The Farm (Summertown, TN)
- Ganas (Staten Island, NY)
- Goodenough (Seattle, WA)
- Hearthaven (Kansas City, MO)
- Miccosukee Land Cooperative (Tallahassee, FL)
- N Street Cohousing (Davis, CA)
- Remote Hamlet (CA)
- Sandhill Farm (Rutledge, MO)

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DIRECTORY

COMMUNITIES DIRECTORY

Over 900 North American communities, plus 325 from around the world, provide contact information and describe themselves—their structure, beliefs, mission, and visions of the future.

Includes articles on the basics of intentional communities and tips on finding the one that's right for you. You'll also find information on how to be a good community visitor.

MAPS

For the first time we've included maps showing locations of communities throughout the world. See at a glance what's happening in your area or plan your community-visiting adventure.

CROSS-REFERENCE CHARTS

These charts allow you to quickly scan for the communities that fulfill your criteria, including size, location, spiritual beliefs, food choices, decision making, and more.

All data is updated through 2007 and based on the Online Communities Directory at directory.ic.org (see below).



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ONLINE COMMUNITIES DIRECTORY

Don't miss the latest community listing information, available at directory.ic.org. All the data in our book and more. Browse our alphabetical list or search on a variety of characteristics to find the community of your dreams.

Hey Communities! You can update your listing online at directory.ic.org. Our interface allows you to update all aspects of your community listing so seekers will get the most up-to-date information possible. Update your information today!



HOW ECOLOGY LED ME TO COMMUNITY

(continued from p. 33)



destruction of the natural world. As a conscientious objector, I also saw that tax dollars fueled the war machine. I resolved to have as little to do with money as possible: to spend little, and therefore to need to earn little. Aspiring to be “downwardly mobile,” to follow Henry David Thoreau’s example rather than John D. Rockefeller’s, I sensed myself in the distinct minority in my economically privileged town.

Despite its reputedly low survival value (about which I didn’t care, since I had my marching orders), I doggedly pursued voluntary poverty. Fresh out of college, I moved into my first house: a tent, pitched on the aforementioned Native American reservation. I spent in the low double-digits per month for food, cooked with free fuel (the sun) in a solar cooker, lived unhooked from the electrical grid (a small solar panel and rechargeable flashlight supplied my lighting needs), traveled on a \$50 used bicycle, and had few other expenses. I became a full-time volunteer, knowing that my several thousand dollars of savings could last me quite a while in this situation. Meanwhile, my own unique experience in the heart of Native American country could not have been purchased at any price. I spent all my time with the de-

velopmentally disabled in an ancient culture—taking them for walks on land that their ancestors had known for thousands of years, and helping them cope with daily tasks made challenging by their disabilities (many of which resulted, no doubt, from the uranium mining perpetuated by the white culture for which I could never hope to do full penance). Even after being hired as “direct care staff” several months into my time there, I continued to volunteer during the hours that I wasn’t employed. Despite donating 20 percent of my salary back to the Center, I still saved enough money to bridge me through a number of the years which followed, in which I pursued “right ways to live” rather than money. All of my needs were already met, and I was surrounded by the kind of community that most of us from nonindigenous “settler” culture can only envy for its longevity, depth, and cultural richness.

When I felt the call to leave that culture and return to my own, I also knew that I could never in good conscience return to a resource-intensive lifestyle. And as luck would have it, in pursuing organic food-growing and eco-agricultural education, I chose one of the least remunerative, yet most rewarding, paths that modern society has to offer—one in which com-

munity, whether “unintentional” or intentional, is a most essential component. My second organic gardening internship turned out to be in an intentional community and educational center dedicated, among other things, to voluntary simplicity, self-reliance, and “deconsumerizing.” Shared efforts and shared resources made many things possible in this setting that no amount of money could have bought—and with negligible or even positive impacts on the natural environment. I have lived in settings with similar ecological orientations (all manifested, of course, slightly differently) ever since.

Over the years, I have relaxed my attitude somewhat toward money: I no longer see it as necessarily a virtue not to earn it or spend it, and I have gradually done more of both. But my cautious attitude and valuing of “life” over money have stayed with me, continued to bring me together with others sharing similar values and similar paths, and made my life “rich” with forms of nonmonetary wealth that can never be owned or hoarded, but only shared.

I’ve found that, more than anything we can do (or refrain from doing) as lone individuals, community has an unrivaled ability to lessen the toll we take on the earth, establish new relationships between the human and non-human worlds, and inspire and educate both ourselves and others. This “community” does not need to be strictly intentional in structure, but it does need to involve both intention and action: a commitment to sharing that reflects the truth that we are all interdependent parts of the web of life.

Perhaps my drummer wasn’t so off-beat after all. ❁

Chris Roth edits COMMUNITIES *and is a long-time resident member, gardener, and nature-trail maintainer at Lost Valley Educational Center (www.lostvalley.org) in Dexter, Oregon.*





Minding the “P”s for Cues

By Laird Schaub

Plumbing for Patterns

As you'll recall, lead character Harold Hill focused on the dangers to community of a pool hall in Meredith Willson's hit musical, *The Music Man*. Just as Professor Hill made a big deal out of the fact that “pool” begins with the problematic letter “P” (Oh, there's trouble my friends), it's occurred to me over the years that intentional communities—not just mythical towns in Iowa—are plagued by the same letter.

Did you ever pick up on the plethora of challenges that start with the letter P? I have, and it's preposterous (not to mention pestilentially proliferating to the point of paralysis). As a pacifist and peripatetic process consultant, I'm always looking to give P's a chance—to help me pinpoint group predicaments and determine promptly which ones I'm in a position to prevent, and which poisonous potentialities I'm probably better placed to simply palliate. With that in mind, I hereby publish my prize profile of the most popular potholes in the pavement to paradise:

Pets
Progeny
Parenting
Power
Parking
Pesticides
Prejudice
Parties in public space
Picking up after one another

The perspicacious will perceive that I'm only producing the plain ones here. (I've put aside such preeminent potboilers as philandering, polyamory, psychoactive drugs, pornographic pictures, and peeing in the pool.)

Partly persuaded? How about problem personalities—such as pushy, pokey, paranoid, petty, pigheaded, pretentious, profligate, parsimonious, patronizing, pernicious, platitudinous, or pusillanimous (never mind those peculiar persons with a pedantic

penchant for polysyllabic alliteration posted parenthetically).

Plowing ahead, it's my premise that the most potent group polarities are also P-dominated:

Process versus Product
Public versus Private
Policing versus Permissiveness
Purity versus Plurality
Privilege versus Parity
Positive thinking versus Pessimism
Passive versus Participatory
Polite versus Potty-mouthed
Passionate versus Phlegmatic
Pausing versus Precipitous response
Propriety versus Promiscuity
Prepared versus Playful
Past lessons versus Present needs

Does this plenitude of prickly P's provoke perturbation? Are these powerful permutations producing paroxysms of puzzlement and pique? Please put panic aside! Perhaps I can persuade you to persevere by pondering the predictability of problems with People—possibly the most perplexing P of all.

P.S. Pressured by press time (as opposed to any paucity of erudition or panache), I was prevented the pleasure of placing any of the following personal favorites in the primary portion of this piece: platypus, periwinkle, pachyderm, pecuniary, peccadillo, philately, posthumous, pomegranate, piñata, or puissant. Phew! Pray pardon my purple prose. ❁

Laird Schaub is executive secretary of the Fellowship for Intentional Community (FIC), publisher of this magazine, and co-founder of Sandhill Farm community in Missouri, where he lives. He authors a blog which can be read at communityandconsensus.blogspot.com.

ENVIRONMENTAL ACTIVISM: SECURING YOUR COMMUNITY'S QUALITY OF LIFE INTO THE FUTURE

(continued from p. 46)

Still, government agencies keep me busy tracking nefarious plans for huge logging projects, road building, mining, and development of vast landscapes dedicated to OHV playgrounds. However, such tasks have become a bit easier lately, even during the reign of W. During the late 1990s Trillium morphed through yet another stage in her evolution as an intentional community. We now focus more than ever before on environmental activism, primarily the education and training of future activists. Some of these new activists have settled in the area; some work as staffers for local and regional environmental activism organizations. Having these wonderful, energetic, younger activists working on similar issues makes my activist work more collegial and less demanding.

Now, when I'm asked what we grow at Trillium Farm, one of my replies is "activists!" Our organic farm intern program exposes participants to activism through growing organic food and assisting with various activist and arts programs we host through Birch Creek Arts and Ecology Center. The interns also learn, and teach us more, about our many efforts to become more sustainable with a smaller ecological footprint as a community, from recycling and buying in bulk to our vegetarian diet.

In our Ecostery program, college students come to Trillium for eight-week residential semesters where they earn 17 university credits in an interdisciplinary curriculum specifically designed to groom and educate future earth activists, land stewards, and communitarians. (See "Wilderness is our Classroom: Growing Education and Community at Trillium Farm," COMMUNITIES #108, Fall 2000,

p. 36). Research conducted by Ecostery participants informs our community as we learn and adopt more innovative ways to be better earth stewards. Ecosterians (as we affectionately call them) introduced us to compact fluorescent lighting, rocket stoves, and some alternative building methods.

Ecostery activist learning opportunities range from monitoring government resource plans to studying a recently burned forest to learning to grow food organically. The Ecosterians form their own intentional learning community embedded within the Trillium Farm Community. They learn to live and work together conducting regular meetings and studying non-violent communication and consensus, all important skills for successful activists.

Well aware of the high numbers of threatened, endangered, and listed species in our local habitats, Ecosterians work in our ongoing collaboration with Oregon Fish and Wildlife to monitor a population of threatened western pond turtles in our old trout ponds. We've also been monitoring the only known Oregon location of endemic birch trees in our watershed. The students work with a Forest Service botanist to identify alien plants that threaten native habitat, putting that knowledge into action by working to eradicate certain alien plants at Trillium and in nearby sensitive locations. The interns and students learn about our community responses to ecological concerns and opportunities, such as our prohibition of dogs at Trillium, our enhancement of anadromous fish habitat along the river, and our environmental stewardship programs

Our environmental stewardship programs present great opportunities for Ecostery students and interns to have fun outside while improving our local transportation routes. We work together to maintain several miles of nearby wilderness hiking trails, a pleasant scenic project despite the poison oak! Our most public such program provides Trillium with an invaluable opportunity to enhance our image within our local community: we pick up litter along four miles of the awesome dirt road that snakes up the canyon from the valley below. Several local folks of the conservative political stripe have expressed gratitude for our work to keep the canyon clean and beautiful.

Operating a teaching/learning center at Trillium brings us the special responsibility to walk our talk. Our interns and Ecostery students keep us on our toes, enriching our environmental sustainability efforts through their previous experiences and their research while here. Participants in our arts and cultural programs can then learn about what we're doing at Trillium Community to lessen our ecological footprint, move toward sustainability, defend our wildland habitat, and enrich our local community. As my beloved parther Susanna Bahaar summarizes, "It all comes down to creating more love, harmony, and beauty—inside and out." ❁



Chant Thomas practices environmental activism as a spiritual path at Trillium Community in the Siskiyou Mountains of southwest Oregon.



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WALKING THROUGH THE FOREST

(continued from p. 47)



community established or renewed many trust relationships. The wisdom of the majority of the diverse stakeholders who worked together to find a solution finally came to the same conclusion: there was more to be lost than gained by harvesting the Ancient Forest.

Developments since then have brought more victories and expanded more relationships. The company that was harvesting the cedar has closed. The British Columbia Provincial Forest Practices Board has proposed a moratorium on all cedar harvesting in the Robson Valley for 10 years. Their justification would be that our knowledge base of the ecosystem is too limited. How can we sustainably manage something we haven't studied? However, we recognize that the old paradigm of greed, money, and jobs at any cost, and insensitivity to our place within the web of life, has not been transformed within society at large. We remain hopeful. The challenge is to maintain vigilance. ❁

Russ Purvis, M.Sc. Architecture, is founder of Kakwa Ecovillage Cooperative (www.kakwaecovillage.com) located in British Columbia, Canada. Currently he is Vice President of the Ecovillage Network of Canada.



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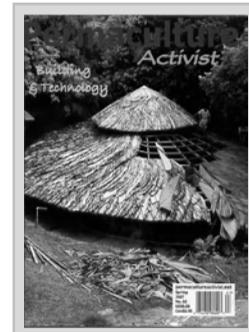


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(continued from p. 80)

this video happen. Yes, it's Geoph's idea, and his project, but its creation was truly a community effort. He could not have a more fitting memorial than this testimony to the power and vision of those who work toward a positive future for the human race by joining others to create a cooperative society.

Keep watching until the credits have finished. The video closes with a touching final scene. Geoph is on-camera to make a final statement. But he flubs his lines and kind of dissolves, laughing at himself. A very human being has made a visual document that testifies to the life commitment that he and thousands of others share. By all means get the video and pass it around. Get Part One as well, if you don't have it yet. The world of competition and strife is too much with us; it's high time that as many people as possible were introduced to other possible ways to live. There's no better place to begin than right here.

Tim Miller teaches in the Department of Religious Studies at the University of Kansas and is a historian of American intentional communities. Among his books are The Quest for Utopia in Twentieth-Century America and The 60s Communes: Hippies and Beyond, both published by Syracuse University Press.

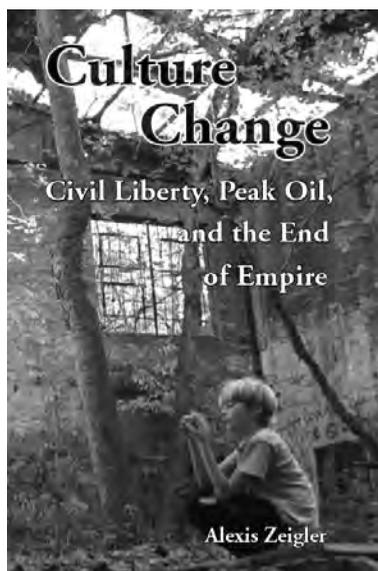
Culture Change Civil Liberty, Peak Oil, and the End of Empire

By Alexis Zeigler

Ecodem Press, Charlottesville, VA, 2007.

Available from Community Bookshelf (store.ic.org).

Reviewed by Laura Berol



Culture Change by Alexis Zeigler addresses the global crisis we will face when the amount of oil being produced begins to drop. It describes how the depletion of our energy supply is likely to affect our nation and the world ecologically, economically, and politically. It also outlines, all too briefly, the changes Zeigler believes we must make to avert the devastating consequences that may flow from this inevitable and profound

shift in our way of life.

Culture Change is a valuable tool for awakening even those already concerned about environmental issues to the possible magnitude and immediacy of the problems posed by oil depletion. But this book is much more as well. Drawing on the fields of economics, history, anthropology, sociology, and women's studies (among others), Zeigler analyzes how cultures function. Any book that addresses such a broad range of issues is bound to oversimplify some of them. Yet, given the ambitious scope of *Culture Change*, it coheres remarkably well. Zeigler identifies forces at work on multiple levels of our culture preventing us from addressing the imminent drop in our supply of fuel. The current efforts of environmental activists are doomed to failure, Zeigler asserts, unless they begin to take these forces into account.

The core of Zeigler's book is his contention that ecological and economic factors are by far the most influential determinants of the direction a society takes. Whether a society is democratic or totalitarian, what rights women and minority groups possess, how children are educated, even what is considered right and wrong—all of these can, in Zeigler's view, be traced back to the ecological resources that are available and the way those resources are distributed and circulated. According to Zeigler, cultures create myths to conceal the real economic basis of their institutions and values. Taking these myths for reality, people fail to understand how their society operates and thus are unable to change it in an intelligent, intentional way. This lack of control over the direction society takes can be disastrous in the face of a crisis such as a shortage of oil would create.

Culture Change also explores the political ramifications of resource scarcity, showing that democratic freedoms have historically been tied to conditions of prosperity. Given this trend, Zeigler argues, a sudden drop in our energy supply is likely to predispose our nation to accept more authoritarian leadership. Unless we drastically reduce our energy demands before a lack of fuel forces us to change, we may lose our political liberties as our industrialized society crumbles.

The specific cultural changes Zeigler proposes in anticipation of a fuel shortage merit a book in themselves. Despite Zeigler's assertion that they are simple and obvious, they demand radical transformations of American society, and anyone interested in undertaking them could profit from more detailed explanation and guidance. Probably the simplest change Zeigler advocates is a transition from single-family homes and private cars, which he asserts are ecologically unsustainable, to cooperative living and economic activity (such as employment and shopping) within walking or bicycling distance from one's home. Zeigler clearly communicates the value of this proposal and others, such as educating children to analyze the myths enshrouding their culture so that they can consciously direct their lives rather than blindly fulfilling predetermined social roles.

Laura Berol holds a Ph.D. in literature from Princeton, and is currently a stay-at-home mom raising her three boys in Virginia.



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Reviewed by Tim Miller

Geoph Kozeny lived in community for more than a decade and then created a new life for himself—one of community networker extraordinaire. He lived mainly out of his pickup truck for many years, traveling around the country and visiting hundreds of intentional communities. Along the way he devoted a great deal of energy to supporting the work of the Fellowship for Intentional Community. It's a fair statement that no one in recent memory has done more to promote communal living and to strengthen ties among America's thousands of communities than Geoph Kozeny did.

I remember berating Geoph for keeping a vast library of information in his head but not recording it permanently. He said I shouldn't worry about it. And he was right. The cream of Geoph's info-trove has surfaced as his inspiring two-part video, *Visions of Utopia*. Part One came out in 2002, but Part Two needed to be issued posthumously, alas, because he died after completing the filming but not the editing of that portion of the project. Many of his friends then joined together to see that his project reached fruition.

Part One featured an overview of the long history of cooperative living and then provided video snapshots of seven communities founded since 1961. The new Part Two provides portraits of 10 more communities, all founded since 1970. One real strength of the video (both videos, really) is the diversity of the communities featured. In Part Two we visit Catholic Worker houses, which provide front-line service (food, housing) to persons in deep need. We take an excursion to The Farm, a classic hip commune that has evolved into an ecovillage that has changed its economic structure but kept its ideals largely intact. We drop in on Remote Village, a pseudonymously-named enclave in northern California so remote that its residents are snowed in four months of the

year. We take a look at N Street Cohousing in Davis, California, whose residents have crafted a cohousing village from existing neighborhood homes. The other groups in Part Two are the Community Alternatives Society (with two locations in British Columbia, one urban and one rural); Ganas, of Staten Island, New York; the Goodenough Community of Seattle; Hearthaven, in Kansas City; the Miccosukee Land Cooperative, near Tallahassee, Florida; and Sandhill Farm, near Rutledge, Missouri.

I found it all both enjoyable and informative, and came away with a greater appreciation than ever for the real diversity that exists in today's intentional communities. Indeed, diversity exists not only among communities, but within them. Ganas is especially intriguing in that regard; as one member says in the video, you can choose a level from total involvement, including income

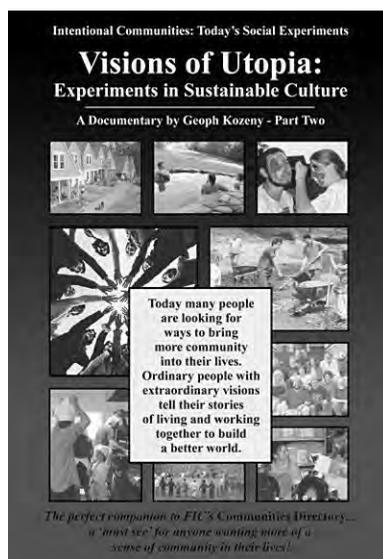
sharing, to not much involvement beyond sharing space with others. Several other featured communities, including Goodenough, Miccosukee, The Farm, and N Street Cohousing, are sufficiently decentralized to allow members to make their own choices about levels of involvement, even if they do not have income-sharing core groups. On the other hand, several communities retain tighter structures. The income-sharing Sandhill Farm, for example, really resembles nothing so much as a loving family.

I was also struck by the continuities American communities have with those of the past. The Catholic Worker houses remind us that intentional communities have long served the needs of the down-and-out of society.

Sandhill Farm is still agriculture-based, something that has characterized communal life as far back as we can see. One particular historical reenactment is apparent in the Community Alternatives Society, with its two locations, including a rural one that lets the urban members spend time on the land. The intentional community that is usually reckoned the

first of that genre in what became the United States, Plockhoy's Commonwealth, or Swanendael, in Lewes, Delaware, had just that same dual-arrangement, with one base for the community's urban merchants and another for the farm workers. (Or at least that was the community's plan; it was wiped out by an invading army a year after its founding in 1663, a fate that most contemporary communities, happily, are not likely to face.)

At the end of the video I sat transfixed as the long list of credits scrolled across the screen. Again the power of the communitarian ideal was evident: all kinds of people pitched in to make
(continued on p. 79)



I remember berating Geoph for keeping a vast library of information in his head but not recording it permanently. He said I shouldn't worry about it. And he was right.

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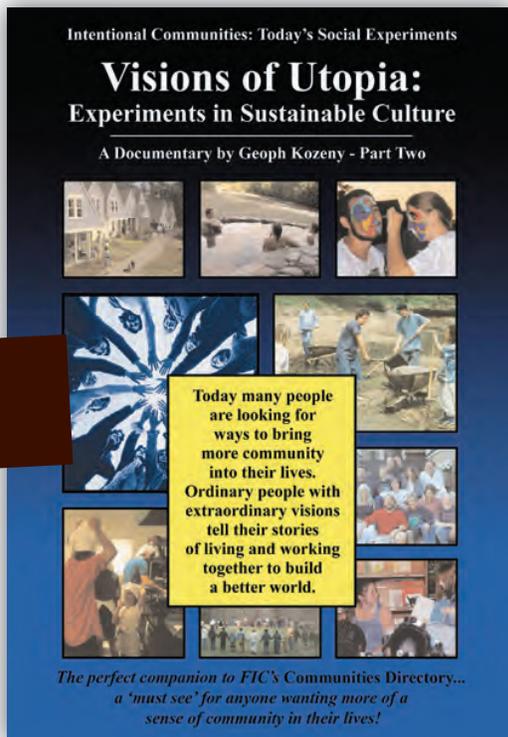
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