

ENTREPRENEURSHIP • BALANCING WORK/LIFE

COMMUNITIES

Life in Cooperative Culture

Business Ventures

Wrestling with Growth

Designing like Villagers

Vision, Money, and Sustainability

Farming in Cohousing: A Dirty Business

Local Currencies and Interest-Free Financing

Summer 2014 • Issue #163

\$7.00 / \$8.00 Canada



communities.ic.org

Network For a New Culture

Network For a New Culture holds that we can all contribute to recreating a world without fear and violence.

www.NFNC.org

We offer several avenues towards this end, believing that once individuals become aware of who they are and what their genuine desires are, they'll be inspired to act in a multitude of ways that make the world a better place. We also believe that these goals are most effectively carried out in the context of supportive community, so one of our primary purposes is to create residential and non-residential communities as vehicles for social change.

NFNC Camps

NFNC Camps provide extended experiences in building a sustainable, violence-free culture through exploring intimacy, personal growth, transparency, radical honesty, equality, compassion, sexual freedom, and the power of community. Summer Camp features a wide array of experiential workshops that facilitate self discovery, deep personal transformation, emotional transparency, honest communication, and greater intimacy in our lives.

City Groups

City Groups do this by helping their members break through emotional, mental and sexual blocks, thus allowing their "life force" energy to flow freely. We recognize the world as one community, made up of many sub-communities, made up of many individual members. We operate on the assumption that self-aware, empowered individuals won't passively accept a world rushing toward social and environmental disaster.



Communities

La'akea Community – Big Island, Hawaii
A committed group working together closely as a means to health, relationship vitality, economic stability, personal and spiritual growth in a small, family style, egalitarian, intentional permaculture community on the big island of Hawaii.



Chrysalis Community – Arlington, Virginia
An intentional community in a semi-urban setting, committed to helping create a sustainable violence-free culture through honesty, intimacy, compassion, freedom of choice in interpersonal and sexual relationships, ecological sensitivity, transparency, and power of community, Social change, personal healing and growth are central to Chrysalis.



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Find out more about the ZEGG Forum, and facilitation training available here...
nfnc.org/forum



2014 Camps

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April 10-15

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nfnc.org/camps/spring

NCNW Summer Camp Cascadia **NEW** June 27-July 6

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nfnc.org/camps/cascadia

NFNC Summer Camp East

July 11-20

New Culture Summer Camp East is an extended experience of building a sustainable, violence-free culture through intimacy, personal growth, transparency, radical honesty, equality, compassion, freedom of choice in interpersonal and sexual relationships, and the power of community. Camp takes place at a shady campground with a delightful stream alongside, about 3 hours west of the Washington DC area.
nfnc.org/camps/east

NFNC Summer Camp West

August 1-10

Join us for 10 days of connection and community building while camping in a beautiful wooded setting in Southern Oregon. Summer Camp features a wide array of experiential workshops that facilitate self discovery, deep personal transformation, emotional transparency, honest communication, and greater intimacy in our lives.
nfnc.org/camps/west

NFNC Infinite Games Camp

August 10-17

Take Summer Camp to the next level, practicing life as an infinite game, where there are no winners or losers, and the fun comes from keeping the game alive and having everyone win... where the future pulls us forward, where surprise and delight are the norm.
nfnc.org/camps/igcamp

New Culture Hawaii Winter Camp February 2015

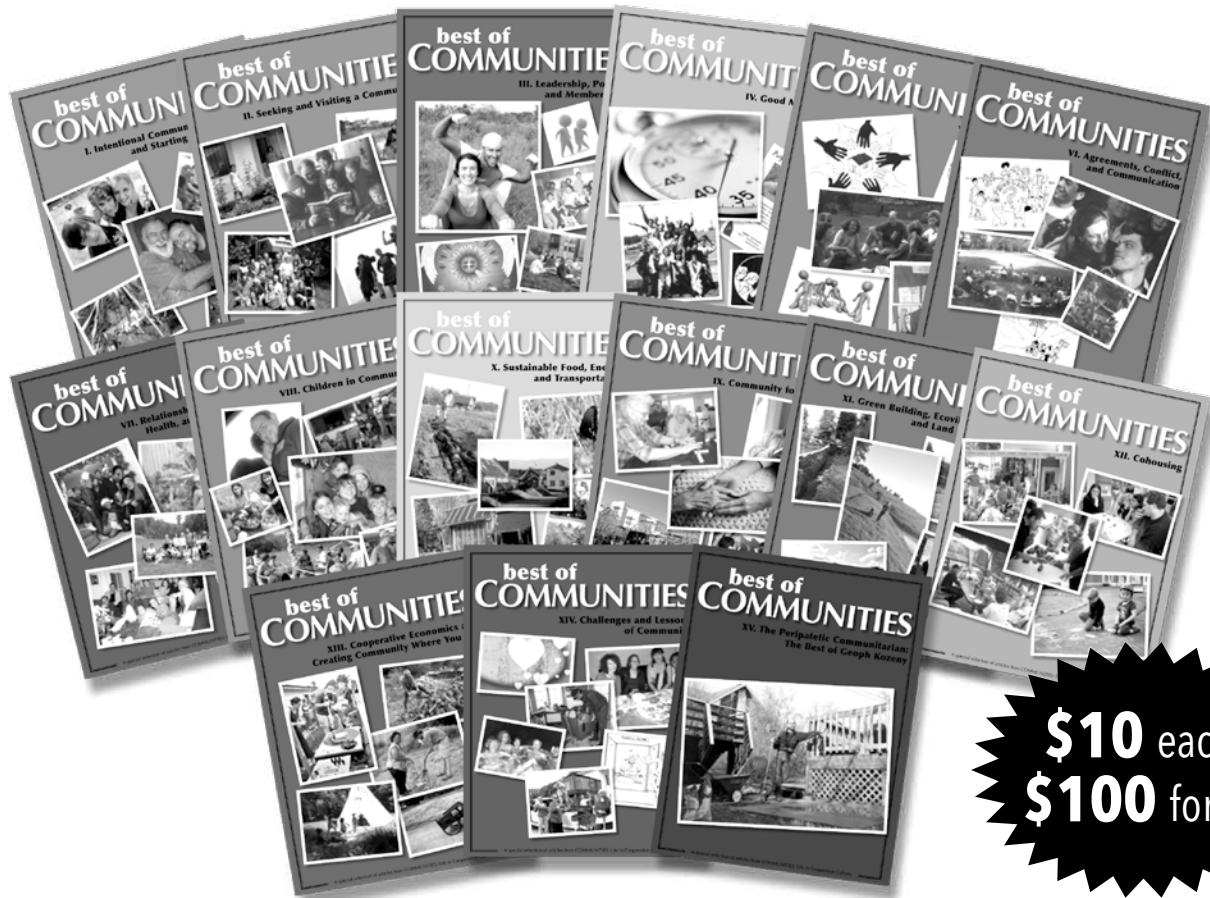
New Culture comes out of examining every aspect of our existing cultures and experimenting to find out how to create a world based on love and freedom, rather than fear and violence. In our explorations we have looked at everything from inner aspects of one's self-experience to global consequences of our societal choices.
nfnc.org/camps/hawaii

Visit us at
www.NFNC.org

Best of COMMUNITIES

Announcing 15 New Collections

The Fellowship for Intentional Community is pleased to offer you the cream of our crop—the very best articles that have appeared over the last 20 years in our flagship publications: **COMMUNITIES** magazine and **Communities Directory**.



\$10 each,
\$100 for all

In the Best of COMMUNITIES we've distilled what we consider the most insightful and helpful articles on the topics that you—our readers—have told us you care about most, and have organized them into 15 scintillating collections:

- | | | |
|---|--|--|
| I. Intentional Community Overview, and Starting a Community | VII. Relationships, Intimacy, Health, and Well-Being | XII. Cohousing |
| II. Seeking and Visiting a Community | VIII. Children in Community | XIII. Cooperative Economics and Creating Community Where You Are |
| III. Leadership, Power, and Membership | IX. Community for Elders | XIV. Challenges and Lessons of Community |
| IV. Good Meetings | X. Sustainable Food, Energy, and Transportation | XV. The Peripatetic Communitarian: The Best of Geoph Kozeny |
| V. Consensus | XI. Green Building, Ecovillage Design, and Land Preservation | |
| VI. Agreements, Conflict, and Communication | | |

Each collection is comprised of about 15-20 articles, containing a total of 55-65 pages. All are available as downloadable PDFs.

Other great products also available at our online store: COMMUNITIES subscriptions—now including digital subscriptions and digital-only options. Complete digital files of all COMMUNITIES back issues, from the first one (in 1972) to present.

Please support the magazine and enhance your own library by taking advantage of these new offerings!

ic.org/products/communities-magazine/best-of-communities



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At Dragon's Nest Cooperative Homestead in central Vermont, entrepreneurship and community sharing go hand in hand. Here, a visitor feeds Cocoa the Llama. Photo by Mary Murphy.

COMMUNITIES

Life in Cooperative Culture

EDITOR

Chris Roth (*Lost Valley/Meadowsong*)

ART DIRECTOR

Yulia Zarubina-Brill

ADVERTISING AND BUSINESS MANAGER

Christopher Kindig (*Earth-Tribe.org*)

WEB SUPPORT

Chris Deerheart

CIRCULATION MANAGER

McCune Porter (*Twin Oaks*)

ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT

Kim Scheidt (*Red Earth Farms*)

Jacob Wallenburg (*Red Earth Farms*)

Laird Schaub (*Sandhill Farm*)

EDITORIAL REVIEW BOARD

Deborah Altus

Marty Klaif (*Shannon Farm*)

Parke Burgess

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EDITORIAL OFFICE: Chris Roth, Editor, **COMMUNITIES**, 81868 Lost Valley Ln, Dexter OR 97431; 541-937-5221; editor@ic.org.

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WEBSITE: ic.org/communities.

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PUBLISHER'S NOTE BY LAIRD SCHAUB



DANCING WITH STARS

Although '13 did not turn out to be a particularly lucky year for this magazine's finances (see the financial statement below—we finished \$17,000 in arrears, about the same as the year before), we believe the stars are aligned for a *much* better '14. Here's why.

At the start of last year we were experiencing a gradually increasing decay in our website functionality. (You may be wondering why a website problem would impact the financial picture for a print magazine, but *everything* is web-driven these days. In specific, almost all sales of samples, back issues, and subscriptions—representing half of our revenue stream—come through the magazine's website.) A lot of customers got frustrated with the website and did not complete orders. Understandably, that was a hard economic pill to swallow, especially when operating on margins as thin as we are. In some ways, it was amazing we did as well as we did. When you hold expenses steady and income covers only 73 per cent of outflows, it doesn't take an MBA from Wharton to know that's no way to run a railroad.

Recognizing the problem last spring we took a deep breath and committed to overhauling our website, rewriting the code in WordPress, an open-source, widely used programming language for which there are plenty of off-the-shelf plug-ins available to accomplish many of the functions we desire. This simultaneously made us less reliant on any specific programmer (because there would be far less customized code) and

able to offer new magazine content. Now, for the first time, we're able to offer digital content in the form of downloadable PDFs. This includes electronic subscriptions and sample copies, as well as a completely revised Best of COMMUNITIES reprint series, with 15 different sets, organized by theme. We've skimmed the cream from the last dozen years and packaged it in flavor bursts 50-60 pages long. Yum!

While it took us 12 months to develop the specs, grind out the code, and iron out all the glitches, we were able to unveil a spiffy new website this spring, and we immediately experienced a bump in sales. Whoopee!

And it's better than that. Back in the fall of 2012 we hired a star, Christopher Kindig, to manage COMMUNITIES and online ad sales. He did such a whiz bang job (ad revenues last year were up a whopping 36 per cent) that six months later we expanded his portfolio by naming him Business Manager for all of FIC and putting him in charge of managing the website overhaul—which turned out to be good news/bad news. The good was that he understood the importance of moving away from customized coding and the need to devote our reserve funds to creating a vibrant, more capable website. We're in the information business and the web is the infobahn; it was either have a strong presence there or die.

The bad was that Christopher couldn't be in two places at once, the web work took longer than expected (isn't that always the case with tech upgrades?), and the need to closely manage the work effectively delayed his focusing on marketing and promoting the magazine—which would ordinarily sit at the top of our Business Manager's To Do List.

Having persevered through the dark days of our crippled website, the clouds are breaking up and the stars are out again. Christopher has been able to shift his focus to boosting magazine sales and now we're sashaying in the right direction with a twinkle in our eyes.

Care to dance? ☺

Find Love & Save the Planet

free to browse
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romance

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Communities Magazine 2013 Financial Statement

Expenses		Income	
Printing	\$16,259	Subscriptions	\$19,664
Office overhead	6,326	Single issues	550
Production labor	27,694	Back issues	1,768
Fulfillment	8,978	Distributor sales	5,409
Marketing	2,508	Advertising	11,292
Travel	360	Royalties	537
Total Expenses	62,125	Donations	5,890
		Total Income	45,110
		Net Profit (Loss)	(\$17,015)

Introduction to Consensus

A practical guide to consensus decision-making, including clear instructions for facilitating the process.

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COMMUNITIES Editorial Policy

COMMUNITIES is a forum for exploring intentional communities, cooperative living, and ways our readers can bring a sense of community into their daily lives. Contributors include people who live or have lived in community, and anyone with insights relevant to cooperative living 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, RR 1 Box 156, Rutledge MO 63563-9720; 660-883-5545; editor@ic.org. To obtain Photo Guidelines, email: layout@ic.org. Both are also available online at ic.org/communities.

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 our readers. That said, we are not in a position to verify the accuracy or fairness of statements made in advertisements—unless they are FIC ads—nor in REACH listings, and publication of ads should not be considered an FIC endorsement.

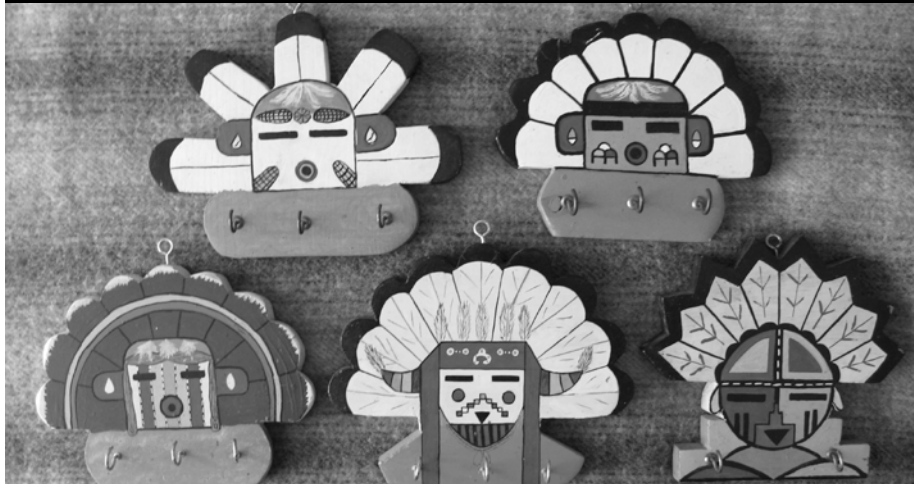
If you experience a problem with an advertisement or listing, we invite you to call this to our attention and we'll look into it. Our first priority in such instances is to make a good-faith attempt to resolve any differences by working directly with the advertiser/listener and complainant. If, as someone raising a concern, you are not willing to attempt this, we cannot promise that any action will be taken.

Please check ic.org/communities or email ads@ic.org for advertising information.

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.

NOTES FROM THE EDITOR BY CHRIS ROTH



Kachina keyholder sales helped support the Hopi Center for Human Services, mid-1980s.

Business Ventures

When Kim in FIC's Missouri office first proposed “Business Ventures” as a magazine theme, I saw its value on a collective level (as very relevant to our readers), but it didn't grab me on an individual level. Many other themes—Gender Issues (which grew out of “Overcoming Sexism,” also proposed by Kim), Youth in Community, Endings and Beginnings, Education for Sustainability, Ecology and Community, Family, Mental Health—have spoken to me personally, inspired me because they got to the heart of what has been most important in my life. “Business Ventures”? Not so much. Yet I saw others' enthusiasm for the theme, and ended up advocating for it as one of our four quarterly themes this year. Fortunately for all of us involved (and hopefully for you too), the issue has come to fruition. I think it's a good one.

Why my initial aversion to the theme?

As may be true for many communitarians, most of my life has been about anything but “business ventures.” I grew up influenced by parents and grandparents whose personal callings (toward music, education, spirituality, nurturing children) were more important to them than maximizing financial gain. I learned from them that when money becomes an end in itself, or even assumes undue weight in life choices, our spirits and relationships suffer and all sorts of trouble arises. The negative example of some others in my environment—in my home town, my first college, and the wider culture—also showed me that striving foremost for economic success and financial security can be a sure path to misery, disharmony, and a violation of those values I'd grown to hold most sacred.

At the age of 20, I left a path of relative security—at a liberal arts college where most of the students had little to worry about economically, even if they weren't business majors—to pursue instead a radical experiment in outdoor environmental education where most of us aspired to liberate ourselves as much as possible from consumer culture and the money economy. Among many other revelations, I soon learned that it is possible to live without many of the trappings of modern society. Instead of following the path of most of my former classmates, and making my life choices based on the need to pay for housing, a car, and the other elements of a typical suburban or urban life, I could live much more elementally. Not only would my life be more authentic, more in touch with and responsible to the natural world, the global and local communities of which I was a part, and myself, but I'd eliminate the need to make much if any money. By avoiding transportation and housing expenses (traveling mostly by foot or staying

put, and living out of a tent), and other creative adaptations, I'd be able to follow my inspiration and not enslave myself to a larger system I didn't believe in—one driven by "business" and especially "business as usual."

Thanks to the confidence I gained living outside for my last two years of college while embracing ecological/spiritual values over economic "value"—and thanks especially to the openness of a Native American tribe to allow me (an unknown outsider with a sincere desire to become part of their community and learn from them and their land) to join them and help—I spent my first two years as an independent adult using almost no money at all, and doing things that I believed in but for which in many cases I was not paid and didn't want to be. The connections I felt within my social circle on the Reservation (of which I was the only non-indigenous member) laid the groundwork for my later experiences of intentional community, where, when things are going well, interactions have been based not on money but on serving the forces of life.

On the Reservation, and in all of my most fulfilling phases of life since, planning to make money was usually the furthest thing from my mind—and yet I lived in abundance, with experiences richer than any I could have purchased. In fact, considering money as an important element of them would have sullied the experience for me.

Over the years, I've developed a more nuanced approach to and understanding of money. Age has brought increasing appreciation of the fact that in some situations, in our current economy, there are certain things *only* money can buy. For example, despite some progress through health care reform, access to money can still greatly facilitate health care and self-care. At the same time, living in intentional community has allowed me to engage largely in a non-monetary economy, where we work for each other, ourselves, and our wider community often with no money needing to change hands—instead modeling a gift economy or a loose, often unquantified barter economy. In the process, I've found myself involved in "business ventures" that seemed far from the competitive, soul-stealing stereotypes I once held.

I've discovered first-hand that many business ventures, when undertaken collectively—growing and preparing food, hosting events and conferences, teaching interns and students, creating and publishing magazines, holding workshops to facilitate personal growth, ecological awareness, and more—enhance my happiness and sense of community, connection, integrity, and purpose, rather than eroding them. They aren't about money—they're about growing a healthier world. I've also found that the more we can meet one another's needs through cooperation, and the more we experience the feelings of "family" with others that make sharing and giving natural and easy, the less we need money.

Based on my experiences so far, I would modify the saying "Do what you love, the money will follow" to "Do what you love, the money or the alternative to money will follow."

In the end, this issue turned out to be a lot more aligned with my values than I expect-

ed it would. Business ventures do not have to follow the "old model." Economic activity can be cooperative. And those of us with (understandable) hang-ups about money can learn from those who are more comfortable with it. Meeting our own and others' economic needs is important. In today's world, despite money's many negative associations, it is also a form of energy that we can use for the good.

Speaking of which, we very much value and need monetary support from you, our readers, to help us pay the bills that allow this venerable magazine to keep publishing. Our latest labors of love—the Best of COMMUNITIES article collections—are a way for you to support us while receiving a treasure-trove of material focusing on all aspects of community living and cooperative endeavors, encompassing magazine issues through #160. Combined with an ongoing subscription (and any issues from #161 onward that you've missed), we believe they're the richest assemblage of resources and real-life stories about cooperation that you'll find anywhere. Please avail yourselves of them! Your purchase supports this community-funded and community-created business venture whose mission is to support the evolution of a more hopeful, more cooperative world.

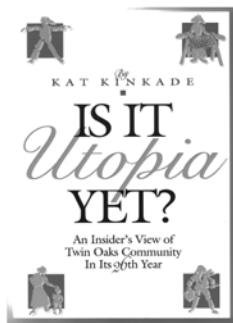
Thanks again for joining us! 🐦

Chris Roth lives in community at Lost Valley Education and Events Center/Meadow-song Ecovillage and participates in the volunteer/gift economy there and at various other locations around the Eugene, Oregon area.



At July's annual Oregon Country Fair outside Veneta, Oregon, commerce and community intersect. Here, attendees contribute to a participatory art project.

Photos by Chris Roth



**An Insider's View of Twin Oaks
Community in its 26th Year**
by Kat Kinkade

Is it Utopia Yet? is a lively, first-hand account of the unique struggles and triumphs of the first 25 years of Twin Oaks Community, one of America's most prominent and successful communes. This thoughtful and entertaining 320 page book from the author of *A Walden Two Experiment* is illustrated with 16 photographs and 60 cartoons.

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Business. Busy-ness. Coincidence?

By Christopher Kindig

Capitalism sends us out, like buzzing bees, to source, serve, and consume. Day after day, year after year. Ad nauseam.

Out in this great hive we are overworked (and underpaid), and studies show that it is biting into our quality of sleep, time with families, hobbies, activities, health, and adrenal glands.

The average American worker has less vacation time, state and federal holidays, personal days, and maternity or paternity leave, while we work more hours and have less workplace rights and social benefits than our counterparts in most advanced countries in the world. Bummer!

At the same time, the US has the highest rates of per capita consumption and waste, with only five percent of the world's population accounting for four to five times that share of resource use and waste production. Among other factors, perhaps this overworking society is both a symptom and a cause of such driven over-consumption?

The balance has been tipped, with real consequences—environmentally, socially, physiologically, economically, and existentially. This issue deserves our attention so that balance can be restored, in our own lives, with those we care about, in the organizations and businesses we work with, and in our larger culture, country, and world.

No one is going to look back from their deathbed and wish that they had put in more hours at the office.

In this article I will explore the work/life balance issue, and ways to recast and improve our relationships to money, as well as ways to use it less often. I also discuss how entrepreneurship can be a force for good, and I include a list of helpful resources to create meaningful businesses. But first, a bit about your past.

The Roots of Working Together

We were, more or less, a socialist-leaning species when you

look at our long history. If a group of hunters goes out and only one person makes a kill, the whole tribe eats. Likewise, childcare, the preparation of meals and shelter, the fashioning of items, the development of and participation in cultural activities, were all responsibilities and enjoyments shared throughout the whole tribe. This makes more sense when you know and care about everyone in your group, which was usually no more than 50 people.

Not all property was shared—there were still personal artifacts that individuals fashioned, earned, or received as gifts. Most of the general resources, however, from materials to each other's labor, cooperation, and actual care, were made available and shared throughout the group.

In human history and in our genetic relatives, there have always been “alpha” individuals who, at times or in areas, take on leadership roles. But this power was not absolute—it could shift based on the situation and the response of the tribe. In this way, decisions that affected the group were still made by the group, and many tribes that have been studied, as well as our close cousins, the Bonobos, show a much better balance between the sexes, too.

This may all sound pretty Utopian. But it is all in our nature. It was what we and our ancestors were built for and what allowed us to survive for millions of years. When the forever-familiar jungles gave way to the sparse grasslands, our ancestors could not compete with the speed, senses, and built-in hunting tools that the big cats and dogs of the world possessed, so nature doubled us down on big brains, developing technology, and group dynamics instead.

Like fingers of a hand, humans joined together to carve out a safer place in the wilderness. With this deep background of social reliance, it is no wonder so many people are living in or yearning to live in communities today. We thrive best together, and this is still wired very deeply within us. When you feel that you and your work are serving a group and a

cause greater than yourself, it matches your programming and feels like you are fulfilling your purpose.

Only in the past 12,000 or so years have humans transitioned from this closely reliant tribal structure into the “civilization” model. From small villages in the fertile crescent, burgeoning crop yields created population boosts, land and animals were divided up for care, and we began to have wider disparity in our living quarters, labor, property, resources, wealth, and power.

If the history of the cosmos were condensed into a year-long calendar, the entire experiment of this type of human civilization would take place only in the last few seconds. What is to blame for things going so out of balance so quickly, and can we steer it in a better direction?

Is the Market System to Blame?

In intentional communities, people often come up with alternative ways to share resources and responsibilities, to achieve, among other things, a better balance of work and

life, more self-sufficiency, and a smaller ecological footprint. While there are unique and difficult challenges to living in community and nurturing it to thrive, the net result is typically much more reminiscent of some of the best parts of our communal heritage.

Because completely participatory planning and distribution of goods and services can not be so easily, effectively, and equitably applied to the greater population at large, there has to be some system available to move goods and services around, and a way we can all choose to equitably access, contribute to, and be rewarded from it.

Ideally this market system should be as free and as fair as possible. We all know that is not currently the case. Many regulations and laws need to be improved, wages increased, subsidies axed or reallocated, institutions and monetary policies reformed, and financial influences over our politics neutralized. It is a large bill, but we don't want plutocracy, where corporate influence runs over the middle class, the environment, all sensible regulations, and social safety nets. This



means we have to participate to influence what becomes important, who represents our interests, and what actually gets done.

To reduce the environmental downsides of production and consumption, some concerted changes are needed to address waste issues: for example, harvesting clean energy and being more efficient in its use, producing more organic food locally, widespread 3D printing, and switching to greener materials, such as compostable packaging, plant-based plastics, and concrete that sequesters carbon while it is made. These are all in the pipeline, and we can accelerate them.

Given these types of improvements, which are all possible if the will of the people is actualized, the free market might not be so often villainized by the greener thinkers out there.

The most often demonized aspect of capitalism is money. However, it is not money itself that is an enemy of freedom, ethics, health, happiness, or sustainability. Money, in its essence, is just a form of communication. Just as we ascribe abstract value to words,

intonations, and symbols to convey ideas and feelings, we also ascribe value to an agreed-upon medium to use as a bartering and planning tool. Anything beyond that is culturally or personally applied.

Money is inherently a technology for us to use, not a system which must make us out to be the tools. Like all technology, money can be used for different purposes depending on the intention behind it. A hammer can build a house, or it can tear it down. Do not believe in its power to define or restrain you, and do not be afraid of obtaining or wielding it. Treat it like a game if that makes it easier to define and progress with. In order to leverage your hard work and to practice financial discipline, build a habit of saving a certain fixed percentage you decide upon, every single time there is income.

Like love, breathing, conversations, and intentions, money is an energy that we give and receive in our relationships to the world. It is karmic in that way. It is ultimately not the use of money that is the concern, but what one trades to obtain it, and what it supports.

To help put a regulator on your work/life balance, an important axiom worth keeping in mind is “Do not prioritize your schedule; schedule your priorities.” Make life about what matters most, and have the courage to draw the line where you will not compromise your health, sanity, relationships, morals, self-respect, or creative energy in exchange for more income or power.

While the western world focuses so intently on the amount of money earned, truly wealthy people know that financial well-being is only one aspect that contributes to a life well lived.

Alternatives to Money

Even though money can be viewed, earned, and spent in positive ways, it is also nice to reduce our reliance on it whenever possible. Some of the following are facilitated by the internet, while some of these alternatives to money are millennia old.

Self-Sufficiency: An individual, family, community, region, etc. can produce their own food, energy, materials, and medicines, thereby reducing dependency, cutting down on transportation, and ideally decreasing costs while increasing quality and satisfaction.

Skill Shares: Use a bulletin board in a common space for people to post, in two columns: what they are looking for, and what they can provide, from materials to skilled assistance.

“Do not prioritize your schedule; schedule your priorities.” Make life about what matters most.

Gift Circles: These are similar to skill shares. A group gets together and goes around the circle three times. The first time you state something you are looking for, and anyone can chime in to give you that. The second time around you offer some things you have to give, and anyone can jump on the offer. The third time each person shares about a recent gifting exchange and how it worked out.

Time Banks: This online version of the skill share allows even more flexibility in bartering. You register on the site and post what type of help you are looking for and what type of help you can offer. For each task that you do for someone else—say, fixing a computer, gardening, lessons, babysitting, etc.—you receive a credit online which you can then redeem for any other task.

Local Currency: Many cities and towns have started local currencies which encourage the cycling of value within a local economy. This encourages people to spend locally, and some act as loyalty benefits by having favorable exchange rates. For example, one can exchange 10 US Dollars for 11 “B-Notes,” which can be spent at over 200 local businesses in Baltimore.

Ride Sharing: Sites like Rideshare.org, Craigslist, Uber, and Lyft have given carpooling and peer-to-peer taxi services a real presence. (Check out BlaBlaCar.com and Carpooling.com if you’re in Europe.) Sites like Getaround and Relay Rides are like Zipcar but person-to-person, letting you rent out vehicles through the safety of online reviews and a third-party site.

Traveling: Next time you plan a trip, consider volunteering at an organic farm. Under an arrangement typically called WWOOFing, you exchange a few hours per day for a free place to stay and sometimes even three meals a day. This is a great way to meet people, to learn more about and gain appreciation for the locale, and to pick up some organic gardening and other skills along the way. With plenty of notice, you can also volunteer to share your skills with an intentional community through the Directory on ic.org. Or contact like-minded travelers and hosts through Couchsurfing.com. For a private room that is much cheaper than a hotel, rent directly from someone on AirBnB.com, Hospitality Club, HomeAway, Roomorama, One Fine Stay, or Bed and Fed.

Tool Libraries: This is an easy one to start in your neighborhood so that multiple people have access to good garden and power tools. People can start by each donating tools, or paying to start up or to use the library, so that high quality tools are acquired, organized, and well maintained.

Rental or Sharing Networks: There are many sites to share or rent property temporarily from others nearby. Examples are Share Some Sugar, Neighbor Row, The Sharehood, Frents, Zilok, Rentoid, Ecomodo, Hire Things, StreetBank, Toolzdo, and RentStuff.

Free Stuff: Hand-me-downs, donations, re-purposing, plus FreeCycle and Craigslist Free section. There is also Giftflow, Ziiich, Exchango, and Freally.

Creativity: Enjoy and appreciate the simple and subtle things. Do things which do not cost money or require consumption. Take a hike, write a letter, learn something mind-blowing!

Intentional Communities: Many communities incorporate the elements discussed above and many more, in order to live without the need for a constant exchange of currency.

Enjoy and appreciate the simple and subtle things. Do things which do not cost money or require consumption.

Empowering Entrepreneurship

For when money is needed, one positive way to earn and exchange it is to start or

help out a business or organization that you believe provides something of real value to the world.

I believe strongly in the power of entrepreneurship wielded wisely to improve our way of life, and to transform and spread technology, ideas, and

opportunities. An entrepreneur is a sort of alchemist who combs the earth for just the right ingredients, combines them in just the right way, and then through will, skill, and magic transforms them into something valuable in the world.

Entrepreneurs see creativity all around them. Most things and systems around us have been designed

by someone, and so can be re-imagined and redesigned. An entrepreneur sees opportunity where others see problems, and is willing to take risks, do experiments, and take action to set something right. It is an approach to the world that believes the answers are out there if you ask the right questions, that hard work and studying pay off, and that doing what is different or hard is sometimes the best and only way.

It is a view which interprets mistakes and detours as lessons and bridges towards greater understanding and awareness. It is knowing that in order to make a bigger impact and to make more money you have to serve more people and provide more value to the world.

“And in the end, the love you take is equal to the love you make.”

Business culture is evolving to care more about making positive social impacts. Some companies are espousing the “Triple Bottom Line”—which measures success not just on the level of Profit achieved, but also on the happiness of its People, and the impact on the Planet.

Social Enterprise is growing rapidly, and many master’s studies, investment groups, and accelerator programs are being built around the idea that business can do well by doing good.

Certified “B Corporations” are constructed to use the power of business to solve environmental and social issues. As an example, in addition to working as the Business, Website, and Advertising Manager for COMMUNITIES and FIC, I also work as a Baltimore Representative for an online farmers’ market and grocery store called Relay Foods. Relay Foods was the first B Corp Certified grocer, and delivers local groceries to Maryland, the District of Columbia, and Virginia. They market goods for local farmers and pay them four times what stores do, while advocating for healthier eating, building awareness about the importance of local food systems, and reducing environmental impact through lower food miles and a fraction of the food waste. (To try it out and get \$30 off an order of groceries, go here: www.RelayFoods.com/friend/47xpbt.)

Models like this are designed to address hugely important problems in our world—in this case convenient affordable access to high quality local fresh food. We need similar breakthrough models to supply energy and materials, medicines and fuels, and services which help to educate, train, heal, and empower people. Dream large, do your research and planning, and create the future! Entrepreneurship is not easy, but it is needed, and much can be learned along the way!

An entrepreneur is willing to take risks, do experiments, and take action to set something right.

Entrepreneurial Resources

I have been working on various entrepreneurial pursuits most of my life. In elementary school I was selling candy, doing yard sales, and hawking lemonade on the bike trail. Since then I have bought and sold used goods online, started a website called OrganicMechanic.com dedicated to furthering green technology, and have worked for a number of small and large businesses and nonprofits to help create brands and offerings, to define strategy for new opportunities, and to market to wider audiences. The following is a list of some resources I found use from along the way, which may help you and your crew in your entrepreneurial pursuits.

Good luck! It happens when preparation meets opportunity!

Education:

E-Myth Revisited, 80:20 Principle, 4 Hour Workweek, The Lean Startup, Rich Dad Poor Dad, Choose to Be Rich, Millionaire Mind, Tribal Leadership, Rework, Made to Stick, 1 Minute Manager, How to Win Friends & Influence People, Business @ the Speed of Thought

Business Plans:

MasterPlans.com, LivePlan.com, Equitynet.com, and score.org or SBA.gov for advice

Find Partners and Co-founders:

PartnerUp.com, FindaFounder.com, LinkedIn.com, CoFoundersLab.com, StartUply.com, StartupWeekend.org, Meetup.com

Startup Incubators:

YCombinator, Advise.me, idealab.com, VentureArchetypes.com, The Unreasonable Institute, Techstars.org, io.theapplicants.com, Ventures.io, 500Startups, ProFoundersCapital.com

Crowdsourced/Investment Funding:

Kickstarter, IndieGogo, Fund A Geek, GatheringofAngels.com, BusinessFinance.com, GoFundMe.com, StartSomeGood

Legal Services:

LegalShield (contact me for more info), LegalZoom, NoLo books, Harvard Business Services

Websites/Programming/Design/Administrative Assistance:

E lance.com, scriptilabs.com, odesk.com, freelancer.com, Fiverr.com, 99Designs

Marketing:

WebsiteGrader, Hubspot, LongTailPro, ReportLinker, Yoast.com

Communications and Administration:

Skype, Google Voice, Google Hangouts, Grasshopper (\$10/month for custom 1-800 number), EarthClassMail (virtual mailbox and address service), Scribd (online ebook/pdf/document storage/sharing), Google Apps, Google Docs, Comm100 (free chat system), MailChimp (email marketing), Freshbooks (invoicing system), Doodle.com (group scheduling tool) ☺

Christopher Kindig grew up near and now lives in Baltimore, Maryland. Christopher majored in Psychology at Texas A&M, and founded a green technology company, OrganicMechanic.com, in 2005. He now also serves as the Business, Website, and Advertising Manager for COMMUNITIES and the Fellowship for Intentional Community, and is a Sales Representative for Baltimore's first online farmers' market by delivery, RelayFoods.com. Christopher loves growing, cooking, and eating fresh food, traveling, yoga, hiking, nature, good people, intellectual inquiry, stimulating conversation, and long walks, especially with his lovely wife.



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Southern Exposure Seed Exchange Wrestles with Growth

By Irena Hollowell

At Southern Exposure Seed Exchange, we sell garden vegetable seed, mostly certified organic, with a focus on heirloom varieties that have been passed down through the generations. Our customers are home gardeners and small farmers. Our home is Acorn Community, an egalitarian, income-sharing group of about 28 members on 72 acres in Mineral, Virginia (www.southernexposure.com; www.acorncommunity.org).

We do remarkably little to promote ourselves. We encourage gardeners to save seed and reduce their dependence on companies like us. And yet we continue to grow. In the summer of 2013, in a community meeting focused on the size of the business, almost everyone in the community agreed that Southern Exposure was growing faster than would be best. In talking to Ira, who does most of our promotion and networking, I've argued more aggressively for slowing down the growth.

We agree that there is a lot to be said for growing the business. We want to help people grow more and bigger gardens, so that they can be more self-sufficient and eat healthier food. And money, though overvalued by mainstream culture, does have value. We'd like to have more of it rather than less.

In late December 2013 and early January 2014, we moved into the new office that we'd been building for two years. The new office has timber framing, a radiant floor, super-insulated blown-in cellulose walls, large south-facing windows, wide eaves to make it cool in summer, a loading dock, a small warehouse, and on the cool north side, an insulated, air-conditioned, dehumidified seed room with a strawbale wall. But in some ways, as of early March, the office is still under construction. It still has no running water. We're using space heaters while the wood furnace gets finished. One room still has more construction equipment than office space. One section of roof will be a living roof—but isn't yet. The move was very rushed due to a fire in the house where, until this winter, the business was located.

Even with all this haphazard finishing of the building, the new space fits our needs much better than the old, and makes growth of the business easier on us. When we ran the business out of our main house, up to three people could put seed orders together at once. Now seven or eight can. Before, there was one good, shared space for shipping orders and two mediocre spaces, plus whatever shipping spaces people set up in their personal rooms. Now we've had eight people shipping orders at once in our main office. People answering customer calls used to shush loud conversations in the office. A very recent step in our move into our new space was to separate the computers and phones from the shipping and seed packing areas. Now packers and shippers can listen to loud music at any time of day.

This new space is one solution in our search for a healthy kind of growth. We're also working on other solutions:

Having a more stable population

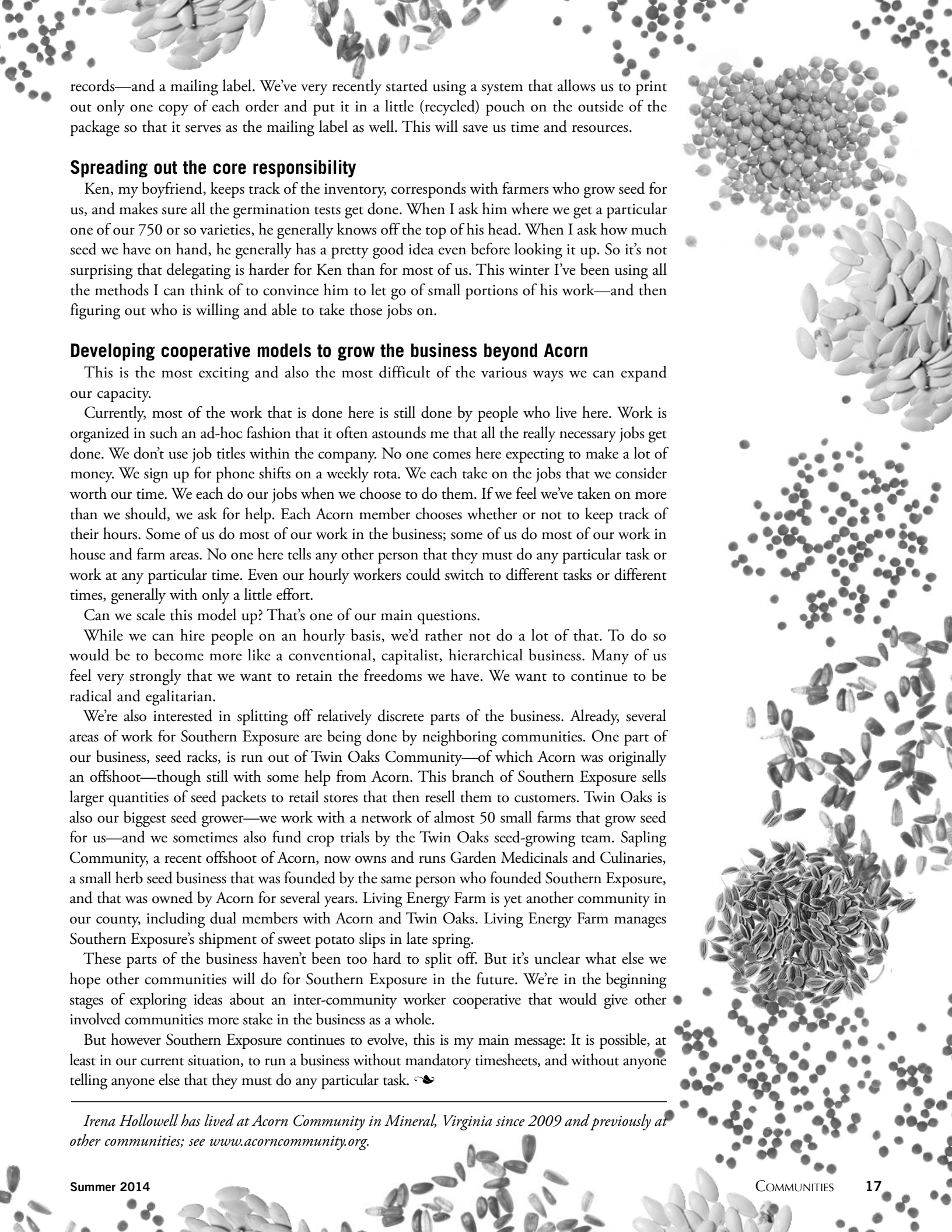
Historically, Acorn has had very high turnover, including lots of young travelers. This leads to lots of time spent training people on new jobs. Many factors, including better housing, are leading us to attract a more significant number of people who want to be more stable.

Developing efficient systems

I'll give two examples.

We have a new seed-packing machine. We're still learning how to use it. From what we hear from other seed companies, it will save us a lot of time.

We used to print out two copies of each order—one for the customer and one for our



records—and a mailing label. We’ve very recently started using a system that allows us to print out only one copy of each order and put it in a little (recycled) pouch on the outside of the package so that it serves as the mailing label as well. This will save us time and resources.

Spreading out the core responsibility

Ken, my boyfriend, keeps track of the inventory, corresponds with farmers who grow seed for us, and makes sure all the germination tests get done. When I ask him where we get a particular one of our 750 or so varieties, he generally knows off the top of his head. When I ask how much seed we have on hand, he generally has a pretty good idea even before looking it up. So it’s not surprising that delegating is harder for Ken than for most of us. This winter I’ve been using all the methods I can think of to convince him to let go of small portions of his work—and then figuring out who is willing and able to take those jobs on.

Developing cooperative models to grow the business beyond Acorn

This is the most exciting and also the most difficult of the various ways we can expand our capacity.

Currently, most of the work that is done here is still done by people who live here. Work is organized in such an ad-hoc fashion that it often astounds me that all the really necessary jobs get done. We don’t use job titles within the company. No one comes here expecting to make a lot of money. We sign up for phone shifts on a weekly rota. We each take on the jobs that we consider worth our time. We each do our jobs when we choose to do them. If we feel we’ve taken on more than we should, we ask for help. Each Acorn member chooses whether or not to keep track of their hours. Some of us do most of our work in the business; some of us do most of our work in house and farm areas. No one here tells any other person that they must do any particular task or work at any particular time. Even our hourly workers could switch to different tasks or different times, generally with only a little effort.

Can we scale this model up? That’s one of our main questions.

While we can hire people on an hourly basis, we’d rather not do a lot of that. To do so would be to become more like a conventional, capitalist, hierarchical business. Many of us feel very strongly that we want to retain the freedoms we have. We want to continue to be radical and egalitarian.

We’re also interested in splitting off relatively discrete parts of the business. Already, several areas of work for Southern Exposure are being done by neighboring communities. One part of our business, seed racks, is run out of Twin Oaks Community—of which Acorn was originally an offshoot—though still with some help from Acorn. This branch of Southern Exposure sells larger quantities of seed packets to retail stores that then resell them to customers. Twin Oaks is also our biggest seed grower—we work with a network of almost 50 small farms that grow seed for us—and we sometimes also fund crop trials by the Twin Oaks seed-growing team. Sapling Community, a recent offshoot of Acorn, now owns and runs Garden Medicinals and Culinaries, a small herb seed business that was founded by the same person who founded Southern Exposure, and that was owned by Acorn for several years. Living Energy Farm is yet another community in our county, including dual members with Acorn and Twin Oaks. Living Energy Farm manages Southern Exposure’s shipment of sweet potato slips in late spring.

These parts of the business haven’t been too hard to split off. But it’s unclear what else we hope other communities will do for Southern Exposure in the future. We’re in the beginning stages of exploring ideas about an inter-community worker cooperative that would give other involved communities more stake in the business as a whole.

But however Southern Exposure continues to evolve, this is my main message: It is possible, at least in our current situation, to run a business without mandatory timesheets, and without anyone telling anyone else that they must do any particular task. 🌱

Irena Hollowell has lived at Acorn Community in Mineral, Virginia since 2009 and previously at other communities; see www.acorncommunity.org.

Dancing Rabbit's Exchange Local Money System

The Promise of Local Currencies and Interest-Free Financing

By Nathan Brown

If you have been involved in the communities movement for a while, you've probably heard of local currencies and you might even talk positively about how they help support local businesses and local trade. However, when it comes to providing specific benefits to local businesses that can actually be measured, you probably don't have much tangible proof to back up these claims. Sadly, most local currencies couldn't pique the interest of your local pizza joint, much less your local chamber of commerce. Dancing Rabbit Ecovillage (www.dancingrabbit.org), one of several neighboring communities outside Rutledge, Missouri, is in a great position to change this and help spark a wave of small business interest in local currencies throughout the country.

I know, I'm making a bold claim, but it isn't fluff. It is backed with solid numbers that I'll share with you in a bit, but first let me tell you a little bit about our currency.

The Exchange Local Money System (ELM for short) is Dancing Rabbit's all digital local currency (www.dancingrabbit.org/about-dancing-rabbit-ecovillage/social-change/economy/local-currency). It runs on the open source software Local Exchange developed by Calvin Priest (sourceforge.net/projects/local-exchange). The currency itself is denominated in "ELMs." With a one-to-one exchange rate with the dollar and a simple online interface, it is similar to Paypal and more convenient to use than writing checks or dealing with cash.

Due primarily to its ease of use, the ELM has become the preferred currency for the members of our community. In

fact, as of December 2013, the ELM System had \$94,075.07 worth of currency in circulation. How does this compare to other successful local currencies?

Two of the best known in the US are Ithaca Hours of Ithaca, New York and BerkShares of Berkshire, Massachusetts.

Ithaca Hours: "Since 1991, \$110,000 of Ithaca HOURS, worth \$10 each, have been issued and used by thousands of residents, including 500 businesses and over 100 community organizations, adding millions of dollars of trading to Ithaca's Grassroots Local Product." (See www.paulglover.org/currencybook.html.)

BerkShares: "The popularity of BerkShares has ebbed and flowed, but with about \$130,000 worth of notes currently in circulation, the number of businesses accepting the currency has jumped to about 400 from the 100 that initially participated in 2006." (See www.berkshares.org/Video/PBSnewshour.htm.)

In this context, having \$94K in circulation makes the ELM System one of the biggest local currencies in the United States. This is a powerful accomplishment for a local currency that is accepted only by 29 businesses, nonprofits, co-ops, and community groups in rural northeast Missouri.

How is it possible that the ELM System has put almost as much money in circulation as two other local currencies that boast of having over 13 times as many busi-



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- Support Dancing Rabbit's Mission by creating money we invest in infrastructure (Ex: the New Leaf)

If you do not yet have an account, just email elms@dancingrabbit.org and we'll get you setup with one right away.

**All exchanges with ELMs are subject to the same tax regulations as exchanges conducted in US Dollars. It is the responsibility of every ELM user to report any tax liabilities, and to pay taxes, that result from exchanges conducted using ELMs.*

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nesses and community organizations accepting their currencies?

The answer is simple: depth of penetration. While Ithaca Hours and BerkShares have a very broad level of participation, the portion of trade conducted using these currencies in their respective regions is tiny relative to the amount of trade conducted using dollars. This is not the case for the ELM System, as we currently average over \$65,000 worth of transactions per month. By my estimates this represents between 70 and 90 percent of all the financial exchanges that are taking place in the local area in which the ELM circulates.

This depth of penetration is possible because we can pay for everything at Dancing Rabbit using ELMs, including rent, food, transportation, and childcare. Even our local pizza joint (milkweedmercantile.com/cafe) accepts ELMs! In fact, for the last three years I've spent only ELMs within Dancing Rabbit for all my local expenses. Plus, Dancing Rabbit's neighboring communities Sandhill Farm (www.sandhillfarm.org) and Red Earth Farms (www.redearthfarms.org) use the currency heavily, and in the last couple of years local neighbors to these three communities are starting to use the currency as well.

To top it all off, the Fellowship for Intentional Community itself just accepted its first payment in ELMs in December of 2013 when a member of Dancing Rabbit gave a \$2,000 restricted donation via ELMs to support EcovillageEducation.us. (This donation was given to the FIC because it was the fiscal sponsor for EcovillageEducation.us in 2013.) This is a rather fitting development because earlier in 2013 the EcovillageEducation.us program provided a huge boost to the ELM economy when it exchanged \$19,619.08 of US currency into ELMs. (As

a side note, this represented a full 72 percent of all the money spent by EcovillageEducation.us for the year.)

The ELM didn't achieve this depth of penetration all at once. In fact, in 2007 when our currency went all digital and took its current form, we had only two transactions conducted online in the first month for a total value of only \$10. As you might imagine, it took lots of effort to build trust and use of the currency, but with lots of persistence it finally caught on.

Now, how is all of this going to get the attention of your local pizza joint, much less the chamber of commerce in your own town? Furthermore, how is this going to spark interest in local currencies from small businesses all across the country?

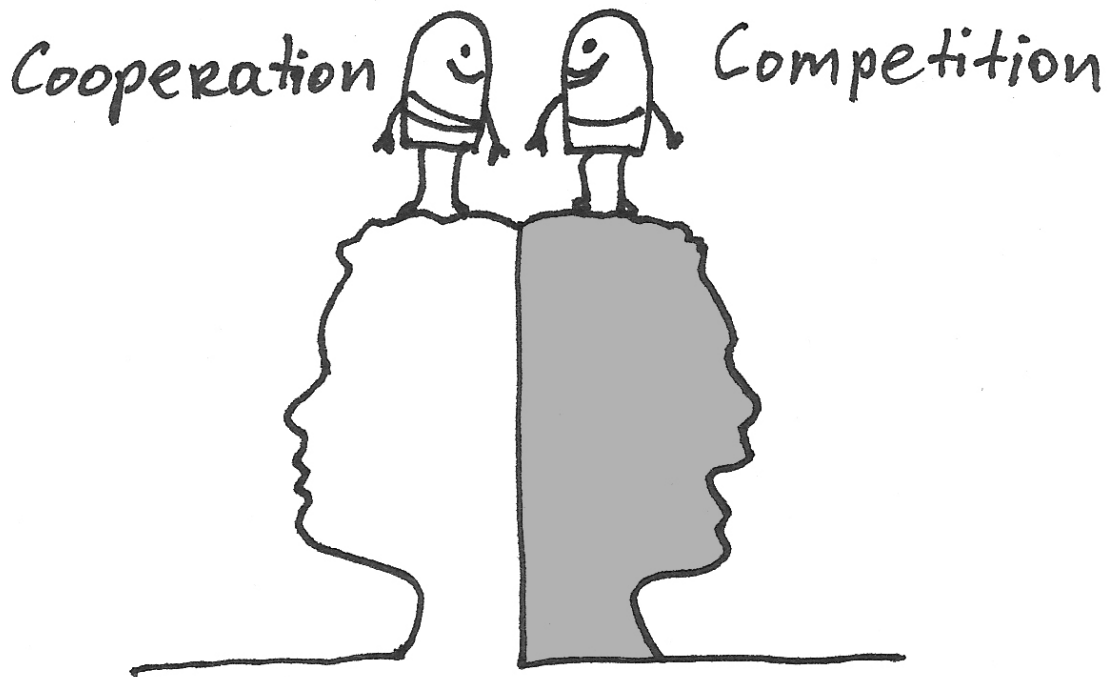
The part of the ELM System your town's chamber and businesses will care about is its ability to provide interest-free capital financing to our local organizations. At the time of writing this article, our ELM System is providing \$49,940 worth of interest-free financing to seven of the local co-ops, businesses, and nonprofits that accept the currency. In fact, a large chunk of this financing was made possible in no small part because of the previously mentioned \$19K from the EcovillageEducation.us program. Just a few short months after these US dollars came flowing into the ELM economy, we sent that money right back out to work in the community by extending a similar amount of interest-free ELM financing to Dancing Rabbit's Vehicle Co-op (www.dancingrabbit.org/about-dancing-rabbit-ecovillage/social-change/function/co-ops/dancing-rabbit-vehicle-co-op). This financing eliminated the vehicle co-op's interest-bearing loans and resulted in a savings of \$2,000 over the next five years. Expand this sort of savings across all the financing

(continued on p. 71)



The Dancing Rabbit Vehicle Co-op Members.

Tony Sirna



Cooperation and Competition in the Ecovillage

By Sam Makita

The dual spirits of Cooperation and Competition share influence over culture and personal decisions and preferences here at Dancing Rabbit Ecovillage. But for us rabbits, they are not at “war,” so much as at “warren.”

Imagine that on one shoulder we have the Spirit of Cooperation. This spirit is motivated primarily by the desire for everyone’s needs to be met. Fairness, according to Cooperation, means that everyone has the same rights, including the right to have a direct and equal say in decision-making around how needs get met. We find that the wisdom of the Spirit of Cooperation can lead us to using less resources and therefore having a more restorative impact on the global environment. By sharing things and space, we need fewer things and less space. Besides, working together can get a job done more easily than working individually.

On the other shoulder sits the Spirit of Competition. This spirit is motivated primarily by the desire to inspire people to do their best and to find ways to do things even better. Competition seeks to offer rewards to those who use their talents to

make investments of time and other resources in ways that help meet the needs of others. Fairness, from this perspective, means that each person is held accountable for their own actions, for better or for worse.

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Let’s take a look at some situations that have come up at Dancing Rabbit, and hear what the spirits have to say about them.

The Milkweed Mercantile is a combination Bed and Breakfast, pub, cafe, and shop that has been open here for four years or so. About three years ago, someone else decided to open The Grocery Store, to serve the village’s bring-your-own-container dry goods needs. However, the new store would not be able to meet the supplier’s minimum purchase size. The Mercantile also had an account with the supplier and had also been handling some of the bulk purchases for larger food co-ops and others who could afford to buy and store large quantities of

goods at once. If The Grocery Store could take on those orders, it could meet its minimums.

The Spirit of Competition urged both business owners to strive for more sales for their own business. Competition also pointed out that some goods would make more money than others. Chocolate bars, for example, can get more income for the retailer than pinto beans. The bulk orders and snack foods were making money for The Mercantile and the owner was motivated to protect that income. Stocking bulk food like beans could be a complementary addition to that business someday, which would have been harder if The Grocery Store were to take over that niche.

Competition told the budding Grocery Store owner that the bulk accounts are invaluable to getting the business off the ground, and could be worth making some sacrifice for. Undercutting The Mercantile by adding a smaller service charge to encourage people to switch was an option, but might not have the desired effect given the cooperative environment of Dancing Rabbit.

Cooperation, meanwhile, reminded The Mercantile owner that she didn't enjoy doing the bulk orders. Cooperation told The Grocery Store owner that undercutting The Mercantile would be rude; even if it did make business sense she shouldn't do it, either on the bulk orders or on sweet treats. The Mercantile is better set up to serve people browsing for a snack, so Cooperation suggests that that's where those items should be kept.

When the two business owners got together to talk about the situation they came to an agreement that The Mercantile would quit doing bulk orders so that business could freely shift to The Grocery Store and, in exchange, The Grocery Store would not sell things that were already sold in The Mercantile. They've been operating that way for three years now and all seems to be going well. Both spirits are content.

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Let's look at another situation: "Nancy" was considering providing a service to community members by picking up full humanure ("humey") buckets, emptying, cleaning, and returning them. No one else was currently providing this service, and most people end up being responsible for about one bucket per week, between personal and community duties.

Cooperation looked at the situation and wondered if Nancy's taking care of other people's humey might cause an imbalance: it's a humbling task, and if anyone is able to get out of doing it, then everyone should be. Cooperation also noticed that not everyone is equally capable of executing a humey shift. Some are more pressed for time than others, are more affected by the smell, have stronger muscles, or are simply blessed with less aversion to doing gross stuff. Is it really fair, this spirit wondered, to make the same requirement of an 85 lb. solo parent with a full-time office job and a weak stomach as of a brawny, single, part-time farm hand? Cooperation suggested that per-

haps those who are more capable could do the work in place of those who are less so.

Competition put in that Nancy should be rewarded for her willingness to use her ability to do humey in others' place, and compensated for the time she invests in doing it. If people would rather pay money or trade than do a humey shift, then by all means, someone should step into that role.

In the last four years, at least three people have done humey for hire at Dancing Rabbit, and each of them has priced the service differently. One fellow charged \$1.00 per bucket. He happened to be a young single person with negligible financial responsibility. He also claimed to actually enjoy the smell of the humey pile in summer. A while after he left the community, Nancy joined us. She charged \$3.50 per bucket in the fall and was asking for more in the winter.

A third entrepreneur ("Jo") had the Spirit of Competition on one shoulder telling her that offering humey for significantly less than \$3.50 could be comfortably done, and would be a nice job, for which she was well suited. Spirit of Cooperation also told her that \$21 for a six bucket shift seemed, perhaps, unfairly burdensome to those who were less able to perform the task themselves. However, Cooperation was worried that it would be rude to step in and offer to do the work for less. In the end, Nancy left the community and Jo has been doing humey cheerfully for \$2.50 per bucket for two years now, and both spirits are mostly content.

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Setting prices is a common topic for Cooperation and Competition to be weighing in on at Dancing Rabbit. Business owners have a lot to think about in that area.

Cooperation points out that, even if someone can afford to, charging too little for a good or service makes it very hard for anyone else to earn a living that way. In other words, it's not nice to charge less for something than the amount that will eventually equal a living wage, even if the proprietors don't need the money, because that means that no one else providing the same services will be able to earn a living wage, either. Charging too little to live on in the absence of other income creates a financial need that others will have to make up for, somehow, which is generally OK with Cooperation, though it would prefer that all parties give consent before engaging in sharing resources.

In balance with that, the Spirit of Cooperation is also holding that everyone should have the same access to goods, services, and opportunities regardless of personal abundance and scarcity, and low prices are most universally accessible.

Competition's take is a little more straightforward: Don't charge too much because the market won't bear it, and don't charge so little that it's not worth it to do the work of both present services and future innovations.

As illustrated with the humanure example, the process of set-

ting prices can be one of trial and error over time and multiple providers. It can also be a collaborative process. For example, the makers of tea and tinctures for sale have checked in with each other about prices for their products. Most business owners I talked with at Dancing Rabbit set their prices by looking at the prices for similar services and products both inside and outside the community. The businesses are all so young, and the environment is so unique, we're still figuring out what works.



There are also cases in which folks wonder whether to charge for something at all. Should the person who has spent years of time, hard work, and money collecting education and experience on a topic serve as a mentor to those who haven't made those investments so they can benefit too? Should she do it for free?

Input from the spirits is mixed on this question. Competition is clear that in the interest of rewarding these people for their work and compensating their investments, they should not give away their earned advantage. In short, no, don't give away information for free or put zero value on learned skills. If we do that, there's less to motivate people to do work, make investments, take risks, and innovate.

Cooperation, as usual, has a more complicated view. On the one hand, Cooperation likes sharing. One person in a community going through lots of trouble and expense

meals and on the paths, and recently have started to get together intentionally to talk about building. One person who brings experience as a contractor from his life before DR said, "When I learn a lot about a topic, that should benefit more than just me. I think those words 'green' and 'sustainable' lack meaning if only people with money can afford to do it; information needs to be shared so that even people who lack funds can build safe and healthy buildings."

As with valuing our services, valuing our skills is an aspect of village life each of us considers by weighing what feels right in each case, with the spirits of Cooperation and Competition both offering their input.



Should the person who has spent years of time, hard work, and money collecting education and experience mentor those who haven't, for free?

to educate herself about, for example, raising farm animals, is probably enough. It goes against the Spirit of Cooperation to give that person more power to support herself than anyone else. Cooperation is particularly concerned about cases of disparate resources. Should unearned influences like intelligence, wealth, a loving upbringing, strong work ethic, place of birth, attractiveness, innate physical strength and health, innate emotional strength and health, perceived gender, perceived race, curiosity, and luck that might lead to one person having more knowledge than another give that person even more advantage than they already have?

On the other hand, though, it is most fair for everyone to work to the same proportion of their capacity. Everyone has the right to leisure and ease—not just those who chose not to plan ahead, but also those who make sacrifices for their education and development of skill.

At Dancing Rabbit we do tend to share information and give of our skills, somewhat freely, although it varies noticeably from person to person and skill to skill. Of the two nurses who've lived here during the past four years, one was reluctant to be approached with health-related questions and the other is quite open to offering advice.

When the owner of The Grocery Store finally hires an accountant to get her books in order, it will be for about three times Dancing Rabbit's base wage, because not having to take a course in accounting is valuable to her. At the same time, it is not uncommon to see instruction in skills like massage, yoga, and co-counseling offered for a sliding scale contribution to the teacher. Sometimes people seem to feel awkward about placing a value on their skills, among such intimate neighbors.

The folks who build buildings here talk about what works and doesn't work over

We have a coin-operated washing machine in the Common House. For a while, it was privately owned, with the owners paying a fee for its use of space, water, and electricity, and handling its repair and maintenance, and setting prices based on the cost of use and some payment for their time spent managing it. When that machine needed to be replaced, we decided that the community would start a laundry co-op. One of the decisions that was stickiest was whether to charge per load of washing or per person. The spirits of Cooperation and Competition were both in the room.

We're something like 70 people plus guests and visitors who share one washing machine and don't have a dryer. That's pretty eco. We also tend to not wash our clothes after every wearing, which saves on water and energy use and extends the life of the machine. Competition is the more goal-oriented of the spirits and sees that being environmentally responsible is a goal of Dancing Rabbit. Competition can motivate people toward that goal by rewarding them for doing less laundry. Charging for each load is one way to do that.

Some people prefer to be cleaner than others, and Cooperation can care for people on all parts of the cleanliness-

wanting spectrum by advocating for a co-op fee per person, instead of per load. Also, using a monetary “penalty” on behavior that we want to motivate people to minimize is not equally effective or burdensome across the range of financial abundance, and that’s not Cooperation’s idea of fair.

In a related case, with the shower co-op, we took the route of a monthly per-person fee, which has worked fine. In addition to the cooperative ideal of taking care of everyone regardless of their bathing habits, charging per use would be prohibitively impractical to do with showers, anyway. Even so, at least a couple of folks have been heard to gripe that, “Sometimes I think the shower co-op is taking advantage of me.” \$1 per shower for those who bathe weekly feels different than \$8 per shower for those who treat themselves bi-monthly. It’s especially hard for some who see the infrequency of their showers as a sacrifice in line with Dancing Rabbit’s mission.

For the washing machine, in the end we went with a coin-operated model. It seems to be going well, although the Spirit of Cooperation was a little bummed.



If Competition has its way all the time, without any regard to Cooperation’s perspective, things can get ugly. We’ve seen examples of this in the wider US culture. The idealness of competition depends on the quality of decision-making of the consumers, who have finite time and energy for research and consideration. Perfect thoroughness in information is not always in a company’s best competitive interest either. Imagine if a t-shirt label read, “Organic Cotton, grown in the USA, shipped to China for processing into fabric, shipped to Mexico for stitching, and treated with water-polluting fabric softener and dyes.” With that level of transparency, more people might give their business to thrift and consignment shops.

Straightforward competition makes the most sense if all providers and con-

sumers had similar values and thoughtfulness about the impacts of their choices. That might be why competition among businesses at Dancing Rabbit seems to go better than out there in the wide world. As we get bigger and more diverse there will be more pitfalls to watch for, since we won’t know as much about each other and the breadth of our range of values is bound to increase.

Competition in business can lead to power imbalances, too. In the best case, people who are more capable (and consequently powerful) will be more successful and so have more money, which adds to their relative power, and can in turn lead to more success, more money, and so on. This is one of the problems with competitiveness that is talked about most around Dancing Rabbit. From early in the community’s history, people have been thinking about ways to minimize that effect, as with the standard wage.

Of course, cooperation can have its unappealing consequences, as well. If people want to cooperate they first must agree what they’re working toward and that process can be cumbersome at best. At Dancing Rabbit folks who choose to engage enough to be part of decision-making have already self-selected out of the general population; we’re more in alignment than a random group of strangers. Even so, we’ve spent hundreds of person-hours in group meetings and hundreds more of committee and personal time talking about how to reach agreement on how best to fund our new common house, and still there is some discord.

Even more so than with competition, good cooperation requires folks to be honest with themselves and others in ways that don’t always come easily. If we set out to meet everyone’s needs and make the most of their abilities, we have to be clear about what those needs and abilities are, and there’s no way to be objective about what is going on inside a person. Even that person will have a hard time distinguishing their abilities, weaknesses, and requirements. Also, in a cooperative environment, a person surreptitiously or unconsciously behaving competitively will make things easier for themselves and harder for everyone else. Some kind of accountability is called for. We already see this tension coming up at Dancing Rabbit as we consider how to fill all of the volunteer, semi-volunteer, and paid positions it takes to do the work of running this village and nonprofit organization. As we grow in size and diversity, the issues

Even more so than with competition, good cooperation requires folks to be honest with themselves and others in ways that don’t always come easily.

of trust and evaluation will only become more important to pay attention to, either to avoid imperfections, or to explicitly accept them as part of a cooperative culture.

Competition and cooperation can coexist harmoniously. Though there are challenges, the beauty is in the interplay between sharing what we have and asking for what we deserve. In so many ways, from affordable land leases, to free advice about chickens, to effortless hugs on the path, we work together in a way that makes earning a living based on responsible competition more possible for everyone. 🐰

Sam Makita moved to Dancing Rabbit Ecovillage outside Rutledge, Missouri (www.dancingrabbit.org) in late 2009 from suburban New Jersey. Among other things, Sam writes for the weekly newsletter and runs the village dry goods store.

The Entrepreneurial Dilemma

By Laird Schaub

This past summer, Terry O’Keefe and I co-taught four days of focus on the economic dimension for the Ecovillage Education US training at Dancing Rabbit. (The other three dimensions are worldview, ecological, and social.) We started the afternoon of our last day with a 90-minute discussion about the challenge of integrating entrepreneurial energy in cooperative communities.

Most of the students in the class aspired to start an ecovillage and we challenged them to consider how to fit together the following pieces:

A. Most intentional communities struggle to create a solid economic base for their members. That is, it’s rare that all members have the income stream they need without leaving home to secure it. To be clear, I’m *not* saying that all members of intentional communities struggle to make enough money; I’m saying that it’s rare for a *community* to provide its members decent work—by which I mean work that pays well, has flexible hours, can be done at home, and is well-aligned with one’s values.

(To be fair, income-sharing groups almost all tackle this challenge head on, but they’re only 10-12 percent of the field of intentional communities. The vast majority of communities leave the matter of member income almost wholly up to the members themselves and don’t even attempt to address it.)

B. Communities tend to be located in areas where property is more affordable—an unintended consequence of which is poor wages in the immediate area. Thus, unless a member’s income is unrelated to geography (perhaps they’re retired and living off a pension or investments; living off inheritance; telecommuting; or relying on off-site consulting), there is often a struggle for members to make ends meet. This can show up in long commutes, less-than-satisfying employment, or weak wages—none of which produce much joy.

C. Entrepreneurs tend to prefer working alone, with plenty of room for creativity, few encumbrances on what they can do, and minimal bureaucratic oversight. Often, if there are concerns about their ideas that arise within the group, the entrepreneur has reactions such as:

—*You’re just not open to new ideas.*

—*It’s not fun for me to do this work if you’re just going to be critical.*

—*I’m trying as hard as I can to generate new income in line with the community’s values, and instead of appreciation I get accused of compromising what the group stands for. Instead of being a hero I’m the villain!*

D. Successful entrepreneurs often accrue income, latitude, and power out of proportion to their dedication or years of service to the community, which creates tension (envy?) with those (the non-entrepreneurs) who feel they don’t have access to the same pathway to a better life or greater standing in the group.

E. The ability of entrepreneurs to be joyous about their pursuit of money-making is often viewed as suspect in the context of communities that have core values around equity and fairness. (*If money is the root of all evil, it’s suspicious that you take such pleasure in its generation.*)

F. Many of the traditional rewards for entrepreneurs in the wider culture (personal financial gain, a corner office with a view, a reserved parking place, a year-end bonus, increased power) do not necessarily transfer into the community milieu. A vibrant entrepreneurial subculture can translate into significant inequalities among the membership.

G. One of the surest ways to generate new income streams is to attract and support residents with entrepreneurial (money-making) energy. However, once you digest the complications of factors C-F above, you can see why entrepreneurs don’t flock to communities.

What are suitable rewards for entrepreneurs that: a) genuinely recognize their contributions; yet b) don’t compromise or undercut the community’s values? Keep in mind that entrepreneurial

energy manifests in more ways than just starting business ventures. It also shows up in solving problems and establishing systems and structures. Thus, there is an aspect of founding communities that is entrepreneurial, even if isn't linked directly to income generation.

This is a poignant problem. Communities *need* entrepreneurial energy, yet are conflicted about embracing it.

Among other things this is a diversity issue.

- How wide a range of views about money can exist among the community membership without incurring undue tension? If the values of the entrepreneur's product or service align well with group values, is this sufficient to bridge the gap?

- Entrepreneurs typically want to run their own businesses. If they are sufficiently successful to create jobs for others in the community (which are likely to be desirable to non-entrepreneurs, most of whom would prefer to work near home), then you necessarily walk into the schizophrenic dynamics of Member A being an employee of Member B Thursday afternoons (when they're both on the job), yet being equals at the Thursday evening community plenary. This can get awkward.

- Entrepreneurs tend to keep their eye more closely on the bottom line when assessing community proposals. For others, community living is mainly a social experiment, to enhance the stimulation and quality of one's life. When finances are mainly a personal concern (rather than a group issue), the steady insertion of financial analysis into group conversations can be experienced as sand in the gears. How much weight should be given to the question of financial impact, short of bankruptcy?

- One of the key spectra that most groups need to manage is risk tolerant members living with the risk averse. While most groups are reasonably clear about their common values and do a decent job of screening prospectives for a good fit in that regard, there is typically little attention given to where a would-be member positions themselves relative to risk—with the end result that the membership is all over the map. As you might expect, entrepreneurs tend to be more risk tolerant; non-entrepreneurs the reverse.

[For the risk averse, it can be exhausting listening to a steady stream of new things to try; what's exciting for the risk tolerant is a nightmare for the risk averse. Consequently, they come to dread meetings.

Going the other way, it's a drag for the risk tolerant, every time they introduce a new idea, to be offered up a steady diet of worry and caution from the risk averse—sucking the life out of the conversation. Consequently, they come to dread meetings.

If these issues are unaddressed, everyone loses!]

Ironically, unless groups have sufficient skill in the *social* dimension (being able to talk authentically yet compassionately about hard things), they are unlikely to be able to handle this normal range of diversity well, which undercuts their ability to be economically vibrant.

It's eerie how much these dimensions of sustainability interrelate. ☹️

What are suitable rewards for entrepreneurs that: a) genuinely recognize their contributions; yet b) don't compromise or undercut the community's values?

Laird Schaub is Executive Secretary of the Fellowship for Intentional Community (FIC), publisher of this magazine, and cofounder of Sandhill Farm, an egalitarian community in Missouri. (After 39 years at Sandhill, he is on a year's leave of absence, joining his wife Ma'ikwe Schaub Ludwig at Dancing Rabbit Ecovillage.) Laird is also a facilitation trainer and process consultant, and he authors a blog that can be read at communityandconsensus.blogspot.com. This article is excerpted from his blog entry of January 17, 2014.

VISION, MONEY, AND SUSTAINABILITY

Bringing in Renters while Building the Dream

By Jane Moran

A sunny spring morning means muddy puppies tussling gleefully around the kitchen table—on duty, sort of, keeping the free-range goats and chickens out of the kitchen and off the table and counters. The outdoor kitchen takes some getting used to, especially on cold, rainy, winter nights, but in nice weather it's one of the great joys in our little village. Guests love it. Hardly a positive review goes by that doesn't mention the puppy-dog-goat-and-chicken-show and their mealtime entertainment.

The puppies yap loudly in play and a twinge of frustration arises—nervously I hope they are not waking those sleeping roadtrippers in the A-frame cabin, that nice couple from Virginia who're here renting some of our peace and quiet for a few days. The rising buzz of the generator or power tools feeds, too, a niggling conflict—we're building a greenhouse so we can grow more of our own food, year-round, but what about the quiet retreat our guests are paying for? And what about the real vision: a sustainable village with space for more cabins and families who want to live this idealistic lifestyle, complete with work, noise, and long-term commitment?

Our remote village/intentional community in northern California, nestled on a large private parcel way out in the National Forest, was originally built around the ideas of sustainability and community. We're totally off-grid: composting toilets, gravity-fed spring water, woodstoves fueled from the dense forest around us, and a few acres of land cleared for extensive kitchen gardens and a bit of solar power. The three smaller cabins and the massive-feeling Community Center were—and still are—intended to house those intrepid souls ready to make this land their home and this their life.

Over the nearly six years since the first of the land was cleared, there have been at least several dozen of these intrepid idealists, including several families, who have lived and worked on the land for anywhere from a few days to a few years. Five years' worth of WWOOFers, commune-hoppers, past and future zen monks, and prospective community members of all stripes have helped build this place into what it is now, and for the last year or so, hundreds of short-term renters have flooded in to enjoy the fruits of their labor.

Last April, less than a year ago, a small nomadic family contacted us and let us know they were ready to move in and commit to residency—our village was everything they dreamed of and they couldn't wait to live the sustainable life, they said. Within days, they were happily housed in the Community Center and getting dirty in the gardens, learning what young broccoli plants look like and how to manage a composting toilet system. Since they had no money and no income, we took the two parents, small child, and tiny dog on as WWOOFers. We offered two months of this arrangement, time for them to figure things out and establish their own income stream, whether from work in town, online, or otherwise.

Around the same time, on a lark, we had posted one of our cabins on a popular online vacation-rental sight—never imagining the booming popularity we would find for our remote, off-grid accommodations. The family eventually moved on, and for this April, we've been contacted by an art-rock band from Canada who wants to rent the Community Center for two months to record an album—paying us \$7000. With that kind of competition, we no longer feel so free to offer up the Community Center to those idealistic “potential community members” who may or may not end up working out long-term and who, short-term, have “only” their energy and

enthusiasm to contribute. How sad that energy, enthusiasm, and idealism lose out to \$7000. And yet—running a community on enthusiasm alone is somewhere between impossible and unsustainable.

Renters have turned out to be great contributors of energy, enthusiasm, and idealism as well. They may stay for only a night or two, but the great majority seem to be nearly awestruck with what they find out here in the forest. Escaping city-dwellers, many express their dreams of living in tiny cabins in the woods surrounded by goats, chickens, and gardens. They are inspired by what we're doing and are expressively appreciative of the chance to experience this lifestyle, even if it's just en route between the city where they live and the city that they're visiting.

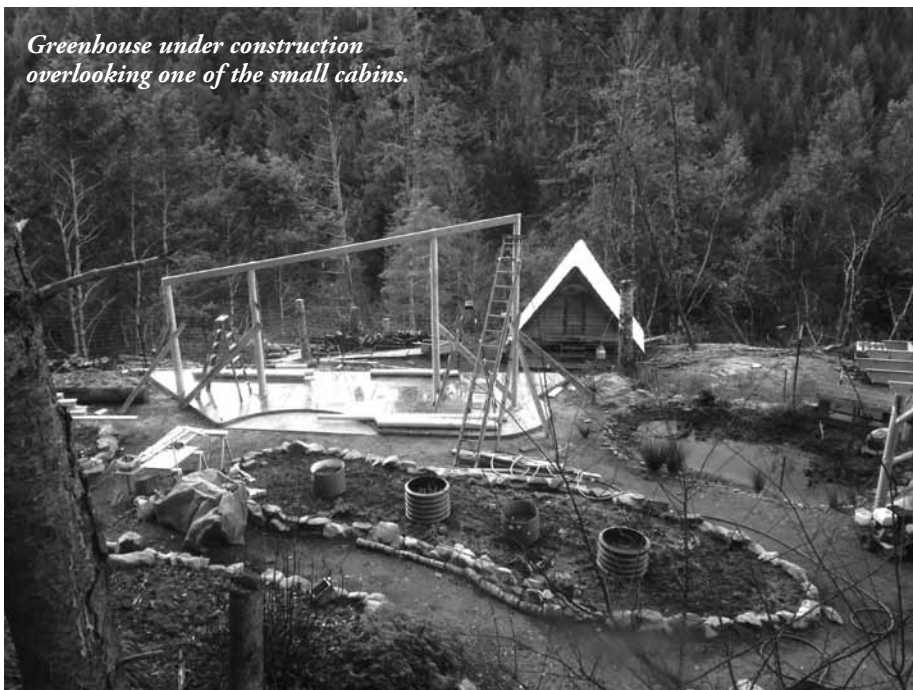
With short-term renters taking up most of the available real estate, we are faced with the challenge of growing a more permanent community while so many of our resources are dedicated to the business of rentals. Is this the sell-out end of our idealistic community visions? Or is there a way to balance long-term community with short-term financial enrichment?

In my better moments, I see the current process as an evolution of this community, in step with the larger evolution of our socio-economic environment. Just as we mix and blend species and systems in our permaculture designs, so too would an ideal human community integrate all types of participation and roles. Short-term renters can provide an infusion of energy and cash, which is used to support residents who take care of guests' needs while also caring for the land and the shared village resources. Housing can be delegated appropriately—reserving the high-dollar digs for those who choose to contribute to the community with their high dollars.

Building the roof on a sunny day.



Greenhouse under construction overlooking one of the small cabins.

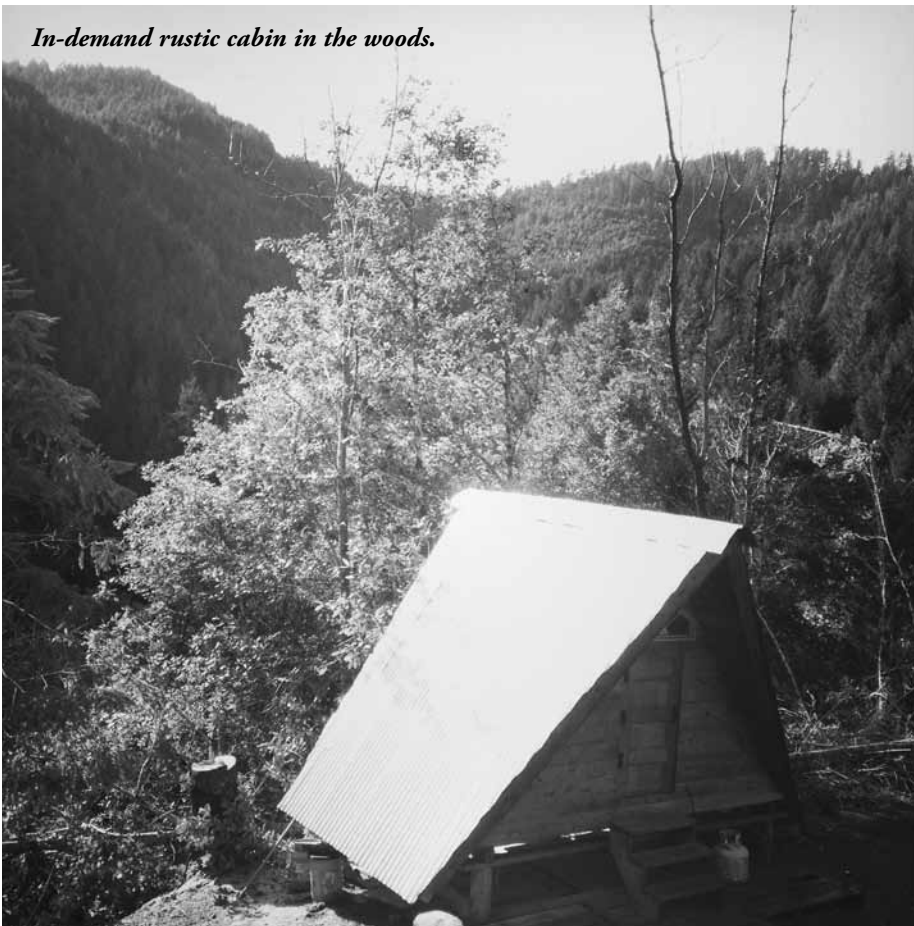


I spent a blissfully happy season at the Lama Foundation in New Mexico as a “summer steward,” paying towards a community food fund, living in my own tent, and working 20-30 hours per week running the retreat center activities, which in turn funded the whole community. I never felt like an employee, though; I chose my hours and my chores and mostly remember taking part in the bountiful offerings of the community in the form of beautiful gardens and hiking trails, classes, meals, events, drum circles, meditations, music, visiting teachers, and a rich network of “Lama Beans” from current residents to visitors to founding members. Lama maintains a vastly complicated “blended ecosystem” of community members—from summer stewards who contribute a modest amount of cash and labor, to residents who work long hours and are paid a tiny annual stipend, to guests and visitors who pay more for fancier digs and less work.

Envisioning that kind of future feels so overwhelmingly *big* as I sit here in the garden watching the sprinkler wave deliberately back and forth over the first spring seeds. It’s just little ol’ *us*—three of us living here now, including two permanent residents and one woman on a personal healing journey, who’s set up camp down by the river and mostly keeps to herself other than the one day per week that she trades for rent. On Monday a new WWOOFer arrives—bursting with enthusiasm and rarin’ to spend two weeks experiencing whatever it is he imagines we are doing out here. The weekend is crowded with Spring Break renters; a journalist and a playwright brewed us up a phenomenal ginger-turmeric-vanilla-hemp-milk-latte this morning and are now out exploring with their dog on the forestry roads. Two couples from San Francisco will spend the weekend in the Community Center; their visit pays for the polycarbonate roofing we just installed on the new greenhouse.

Last spring was my first experience with growing food. Sure, I had helped weed or harvest a couple gardens in my life, but I honestly could not really

In-demand rustic cabin in the woods.



One of seven puppies vying for guests' attention.



Photos courtesy of Jane Moran

believe that planting seeds would actually lead to food coming out of the ground. I tried to plan and record everything I did in the garden, but the organic chaos of life soon took over and, by summer, only God knew what seeds were planted where. We watered and weeded faithfully, and eventually, to my astonishment, food appeared. Some seeds seemed to have disappeared, while others magically transformed into enormous plants full of delicious food.

Part of the project here—“living in tune with nature”—means allowing space in our lives for the active, unpredictable participation of sun, rain, ice, animals, birth, death, and unplanned growth and change. As a still-beginner gardener, I don't *really* know which seeds will come up, or when, or what they'll look like. Every intentional community I've ever witnessed has been in some state of flux, with active questions about the future: how to support growth, which seedlings to thin, which limbs to prune, how to integrate all the beings that arrive on the proverbial doorstep with their gifts and needs in tow.

Especially given the remote location of our village, building financial self-sufficiency through cottage industry and renting would be the best possible situation for current and prospective residents. Our community may not *need* this business to survive, but it sure fertilizes our soil—sometimes literally. So, today I will plant seeds in the garden and change the sheets in the cabins, not *really* knowing what plants will come or how our business and community will grow together. But apparently, our merely-human efforts will combine with the somewhat unpredictable forces of sun, rain, fate, chance, etc. to produce some bountiful yield of unnameable challenge and delight. 🐾

Jane Moran grows potatoes, herds goats, and hosts visitors on an experimental mountaintop commune-of-sorts in northern California, and co-runs a holistic health center “in town” in her spare time. She can be reached at jane.v.moran@gmail.com.

The Dirty Business of Growing a Cohousing Community Farm

By Sandy Thomson

The idea of creating Heartwood Farms came about during a visioning retreat in 2007. You know the type, an all-day, community-wide retreat hosted in the common house with lots of positive energy, good food, and everyone in a good mood? Picture five or six smaller groups gathered around, on the floor, sitting on couches, hanging out around the kitchen island, all trying to come up with the perfect vision of what our community would look and feel like in 10 years!

We live on roughly 250 acres in rural southwestern Colorado. Seventy of those acres are irrigated and we as a community have agreed to steward them in the best way possible. Now we are basically a bunch of city kids wanting to experience the rural lifestyle...environmentally friendly with strawbale houses, kids collecting eggs as one of their chores, that sort of thing. So when the idea of growing our own food came up in numerous subgroups within the retreat, a group of us decided that of course we need to grow our own food. Let's do it! We produced collages, word boards, and pictures in our heads of beautiful vegetables and fruits grown organically on our land by people we love. We pictured days sitting in the grass while the children played with the baby goats and chased good-natured chickens around the pasture.

Simple, right? We had land and we had water, now all we needed were some seeds. We even had a whole community that eats organic and supports local food sources AND an experienced grower to grow that food living right here in the community. We have a word for this kind of idea at Heartwood; it is called a "no brainer." Only a "no brainer" at Heartwood is not what you think. A "no brainer" here means an idea that you think could not possibly have any opposition, that everyone will agree with, as in "duh, that's a no brainer," but in reality there are a thousand questions and almost as many concerns. This is a difficult dynamic ever-present in community; there is always a group raring to go and another group wanting to consider every possible thing that can go wrong. But what it ultimately comes down to is power and trust.

Our core identity statement (*see sidebar*) reads: "We cultivate a fertile ground in which members bring forth their gifts, talents, and passions to manifest a marvelous diversity of creations. We embrace, celebrate, and support those diverse manifestations that are consistent with our stated values."

Sounds wonderful, doesn't it? But many questions can come up when a business venture is proposed that operates within a community setting, especially if the members are creating the business primarily to meet the needs or desires of the community. Be forewarned it is not an easy process no matter how well your community functions. There are so many things to consider when resources are shared and



relationships are complicated and interdependent.

Community members might want to know:

- Who owns the business?
- What are the liability ramifications for the community?
- Should the community be compensated for the use of community resources? If so, how much? (This is a big one.)
- What kind of oversight is needed for the business entity? (We're all members here after all.)

Not to mention the complexities associated with hiring interns (*see sidebar*) to work on the business. Interns were an essential part of the farming operation and our goal of making the world a better place.

- Do they pay HOA dues?
- Where do they live?
- Who is responsible for their behavior or their use of community resources?

Well, we have a pretty amazing community. They were willing to jump right in and say go for it even though there were still so many unknowns.

The first few years were exciting and fun. We built thousands of dollars worth of infrastructure with seed money from individual community members, fund raisers, and veggie sales—not to mention thousands of volunteer hours from interns and community members. As the farm grew and prospered, changing, growing organi-



Heartwood interns Claire, Rachel, Miguel, Sammy, Gina, Steve, Tony, Cameron, and Heartwood kids Gabe and Zander.



First harvest out of the high tunnel. This is in April in southwest Colorado at 7000 feet.



Photos courtesy of Sandy Thomson



Kids, interns, and farm manager plant squash on a beautiful spring day.



Interns: The Spice of Life

Interns are the spice of life in a cohousing community. You take the soup of families with kids of all ages, older single people, retired couples, dogs, cats, and you add the secret ingredient: that 18-25 age group that is notoriously missing from cohousing. They are upbeat, idealistic, friendly, hard working, and fun. They aren't afraid to get dirty and they dive right in. The kids and dogs love them because they are willing to look silly and come down to their level. The older set love them because they can hire them to do some of the backbreaking labor around their homes. The 40-50-year-olds love them because they wake up that often dormant feeling of hope and idealism that is so important at that time of life when we are questioning if it can be done and is it worth fighting for or not?

Our interns have added so much to the experience of living in cohousing that when members are asked, "What is the best part about the farm?," it is not the food, or the land stewardship, but the presence of interns that is often the answer. They answer it with a slight smile on their face as if they are remembering that time in their own lives—the time in their lives when anything was possible.

Intern energy! I wish I could bottle that and sell it. I bet I could get a lot more for it than the dollar a pound we get for potatoes.

Intern energy is like a litter of golden retrievers with powerful brains that are working all the time.

Some things that can be heard when eavesdropping on the interns at common meals:

"Hey let's try to do without money the rest of the season."

"I finally got the recipe for shampoo right—look, my hair actually looks clean. Now I don't have to buy into all those chemical corporations."

"Maybe we can just all live in trees and live off the land, wouldn't that be great?"

"Yeah and we can play music and make art and be happy."

"I want to learn how to be totally self-sufficient. I want to learn how to grow my own food, build my own house, and make anything that I might need."

You just don't get that kind of energy from the meat and potatoes of cohousing!

—S.T.

cally, some members of the community were getting uncomfortable with the still unanswered questions. But a business like a farm is hard to pin down. A farm is not a clod of dirt; it is more like mud that slips through your hands, gets on your boots, and is tracked all through the community. We wanted this to be an integrated farm and it was—deeply integrated with the community. Now a few members were asking for it to be separated out, put in a box, and defined. Some members didn't trust the farm because the members on the farm board couldn't answer all these complex questions.

Bad feelings developed on both sides. Some of the energy on the farm turned sour. The member who was the primary grower left for greener pastures or ones less bogged down in the manure of community process. This trying to define and pin down the farm has gone on now for the last two years. We have had meetings and more meetings. We formed a task force that did great work on trust, hurt feelings, and misunderstandings. We recently consensed on a new structure for the governance of the farm, but questions still persist. Our next retreat will be with a skilled outside facilitator who will help us see where the process went wrong. He will help us further untangle issues of power and trust that have been brought to light by this experience.

For those of us who have been part of the farm since the beginning it has been an exhausting two years—much more exhausting than all the physical labor that we put in during the first two years making the farm great. I am not sure where the farm will



Sweet Ally Baba loving fresh-picked Heartwood Beets.



Summer bounty from Heartwood Farms sold on the terrace of the common house.



Jessica, one of our interns last year, was passionate about bees. She helped us get our honey production up.

Community Vision and Values

These are Heartwood Cohousing's community vision and values:

Vision

To create and live in a community which fosters harmony with each other, the larger community, and Nature.

Values

Honesty and Trust: We act with openness and honesty because of the trust we have in each other. We have the courage and trust to speak up when we see contradictions or inconsistencies between our behavior and our stated values and goals.

Cooperation: Through tolerance, generosity, sharing, and compassion, we live cooperatively with one another. When appropriate, we place the interests of the community ahead of our own self-interests.

Interconnectedness: We recognize our interdependence with all life. To all that came before us, we offer our respect and remembrance. To all with whom we share this world, we seek mutual understanding and respect. And to all who will come after us, we strive to leave for you a better world.

Commitment: Though we know that the path may be rough at times, we are committed to our Vision for the long haul.

Participation: Knowing that our community is fueled by the energy we give it, we all actively participate in community life and work at Heartwood. Each of us chooses how to give his or her energy.

Support: Our community supports friendship and an extended family environment, thereby creating a sense of belonging. We support the growth of each other individually and the relationships amongst us. Each of us is willing to work on our own personal growth so that we can improve those relationships.

Respect: We respect the freedom of each person to live as he/she chooses, so long as that doesn't interfere with the freedom of others in the community to do the same. We respect personal privacy. We respect diversity in ideology, spirituality, interests, talents, beliefs, opinions, race, age, income, and so on. And we welcome expressions of that diversity.

Equality and Fairness: We value every member, including children, equally and treat them with fairness.

Stewardship: We live gently on the Earth. We are thankful for Nature's resources, being conscious to take good care of them and use them efficiently.

Safety: Our community is a safe place—emotionally, physically, and spiritually.

Balance: We maintain balance in our community life: between group and individual; between building for tomorrow and enjoyment of today; between heart, mind, and soul; etc.

Responsibility: Each of us, as well as all of us as a community, takes responsibility for our actions.

Education: We seek the exchange of knowledge, skills, and resources with each other and the larger community.

Flexibility: Creating community is an ongoing process. We remain flexible to change.

—S.T.

go from here. The constraints from the community and from the county have us bogged down. It feels heavy, like walking through the heavy clay soil we have to work with. Some see it as a new beginning, a chance to create something new with full community buy-in. I am worried that trying to do something like this in the confines of community is too exhausting and time-consuming to deal with. But I have hope. I have to.

What have I learned from this process?

- It is very difficult to run a business within a community setting.
- It is important for people to know how to follow as well as lead.
- Nothing polarizes a community faster than talking behind each other's backs.
- There is nothing cut and dried about farming.
- Sometimes a squeaky wheel is just a squeaky wheel.
- Being in community is about letting go but not giving up.

Really when it comes down to it, it has to do with trust. Trust in each other. Trust in the process. Trust that everything will turn out all right.

If I had it all to do over again, would I do it?

Yes. It is in alignment with my values and those of the community. (See sidebar.)

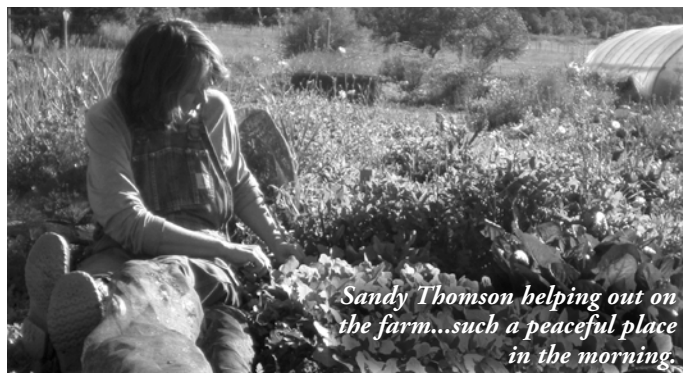
What would I do different?

I would follow our interpersonal agreements and insist that others do the same. (See sidebar.)

It seems easy when you look at it this way. Just follow your vision and values and every one of your interpersonal agreements. Anyone who lives in community knows these are ideals and hard to live up to all the time. It is the 20-somethings, those goofy interns, who continually remind us to keep striving for those ideals. It takes work and sometimes it's messy but in the end it is worth it.

If you want to start a business inside a community structure put your hat on, pull up your boot straps, and hang on. You are in for a wild ride. 🐾

Sandy Thomson is one of the founding members of Heartwood Cohousing in Bayfield, Colorado: www.heartwoodcohousing.com. She and her husband Mac have raised three children in their community. Sandy created and ran a homeschool co-op when her kids were little; now that they are in high school she has turned her attention to creating Heartwood Farms, a nonprofit foundation to support local agriculture and the education of our future farmers (www.heartwoodfarms.org).



Sandy Thomson helping out on the farm...such a peaceful place in the morning.

Interpersonal Agreements

These are Heartwood's interpersonal agreements:

To Communicate with Integrity: I agree to tell my truth, with compassion for myself and others, and to trust that others are doing the same.

To Listen with My Heart: I agree to listen respectfully to the communications of others and attune to their deepest meaning.

To Own My Feelings: I agree to take responsibility for my feelings and how I react to the words and actions of others. And I agree to express those feelings in a spirit of openness and compassion.

To Honor Each Person's Process: I agree to acknowledge that everyone, including myself, is making the best possible choice or decision we are capable of at that moment.

To Express Appreciation: I agree to appreciate others and myself.

To Cooperate with Others: I agree to maintain a sense of cooperation and caring in my interactions with others.

To Honor Our Differences: I understand that goals are often the same even though methods for achieving them may differ.

To Be Aware of Conflict: I agree to look for the unresolved issues within me that create a disproportionate adverse reaction to another's behavior.

To Resolve Conflicts Constructively: I agree to take problems and complaints to the person(s) with whom I can resolve them, at the earliest opportunity. I agree not to criticize or complain to someone who cannot do something about my complaint, and I will redirect others to do the same. I will not say behind someone's back what I am not willing to say to their face.

To Maintain Harmony: I agree to take the time to establish rapport with others and then to reconnect with anyone with whom I feel out of harmony as soon as it is appropriate.

To Freely Participate: I agree to freely choose and re-choose to participate in the Heartwood Cohousing Community. It is my choice.

To Lighten Up!: I agree to allow fun and joy in my relationships, my work, and my life.

(Note: These Interpersonal Agreements are based in large part on those of Geneva Community.)

—S.T.

Core Identity

What makes the Heartwood community distinctive?

- We are a close-knit, multigenerational, rural cohousing neighborhood.

- We are committed to deeply knowing, supporting, respecting, and caring for each other and ourselves as distinctive individuals; as a result, deep interpersonal relationships are possible here.

- We share with each other the value of sustainable interactions with the planet, though our individual efforts and choices may vary. We steward our land to maintain or improve its viability and vitality over the long haul.

- We are interconnected with all of humanity. We welcome new ideas and interactions with the larger community and are open to associations and the sharing of resources with those who share our values.

- We cultivate a fertile ground in which members bring forth their gifts, talents, and passions to manifest a marvelous diversity of creations. We embrace, celebrate, and support those diverse manifestations that are consistent with our stated values.

All of these distinctive qualities are part of our enduring core identity, which does not change. What does change are the various manifestations themselves. These dynamic expressions that come and go over time add a rich flavor to our community culture.

—S.T.

SHARING SPACES, SHARING VALUES

Entrepreneurship at Dragon's Nest Cooperative Homestead

By Mary Murphy

My community is scarcely nine months old as I sit down to write, and will be having its first birthday as this issue goes to press. We were founded with entrepreneurship at the core of our vision, and we've already learned a great many lessons about how to manage businesses operating in our shared space—and how not to!

Our story started with three women who were ready to commit to the dream of “Avalon”: land where women and their loved ones could pursue their spiritual paths and live in deep harmony with the natural world. Exactly four months after we held a community council about finding this land, we signed papers and moved in to a beautiful little homestead on a Vermont dirt road, complete with a cozy cabin, a goat pasture, a chicken coop, a babbling brook, and towering white pine trees. Through a series of miracles (a.k.a. a USDA rural development loan) we managed to buy this land with no money down, no closing costs, and a low-interest mortgage (title held by one member). Our dream was coming true even though we had no savings!

One of our founders already owned the 12 acres and two off-grid cabins next door, known as Dragon's Gate, and this new 1.5 acre parcel would be a community space and an incubator for our dreams. We named this incubator Dragon's Nest, the perfect place to hatch our dreams-eggs. We'd use the space to grow our small businesses, simultaneously creating the financial abundance to purchase a bigger chunk of land nearby, and expanding the community of people who felt connected to our vision. When we moved in, there were six people living at Dragon's Gate and Dragon's Nest: the three founders, a community-loving friend who wanted to rent for a while, and two children.

When we started looking at land, two

of us already had small businesses up and running: Liberty Chocolates had been operating for a few years and had several employees; Mountainsong Expeditions was a start-up wilderness company, officially incorporated but consisting mostly of a nice website and the enthusiasm of its sole proprietor. Our third founder dreamed of eventually starting a baking business and of putting her midwifery training to good use in the local community.

When we discovered our dream property, the central element in the plan for financial stability was for Liberty Chocolates to move its manufacturing operation into the cozy cabin, with the wilderness guide living in a tiny house in the front yard (one she'd built on a flatbed trailer that could be towed to the land on closing day). Our baker planned to move into the first-floor bedroom of the 460-square-foot cabin at



The “Huntress Intensive” Women's Hunting Class at Dragon's Nest.

Photos courtesy of Mary Murphy



Bringing in the year's firewood at Dragon's Nest.



Feeding Cocoa the Llama.

first, but to be living in a yurt in the pasture by snowfall, leaving the entire cabin to be a chocolate factory by day and a community space at night, hosting hot showers, internet use, and weekly community dinners.

That is not how it worked out, at least not for long. As we rushed to secure our perfect piece of property, we ignored classic communities-movement wisdom and neglected to put much of our dreams in writing. Since we planned to create a legal structure for shared ownership soon after the purchase of the land, we didn't bother to create leases for the residents.

The day we moved in, we suddenly realized the space was going to be a little too small for all of our dreams to share. The baker decided she would not be ready to purchase a yurt before winter, which left our chocolatier scrambling to figure out what room she would use to cool her chocolate bars after winter arrived in the toasty little wood-heated cabin. The house was bursting at the seams from trying to hold both a manufacturing business and a woman's primary home space in such a modest

square footage, and plans for building an additional wing proved financially out of reach.

It didn't help matters that the wilderness guide, who had done years of research into legal and social structures for intentional communities, was away in the mountains for much of the summer. Amid mounting frustrations on all sides, planning for shared legal ownership completely stalled.

By August our chocolatier realized that her business was growing much faster than anticipated and heard of an ideal commercial kitchen space nearby. She announced that she was moving her business out in one month and taking her rent money with her so she could pay for the new space. Up to that point Liberty Chocolates' rent had constituted more than half of the monthly mortgage and utility payment, but we had no legal agreement binding her to that contribution. While we all wanted her business to thrive, we wondered if our community would survive this financial crisis.

Two residents came very close to moving out that month, but at last we talked through the emotional tangle and came to a new agreement: everyone voluntarily raised their rent to help cover the financial shortfall, and everyone signed a lease that put their monthly financial commitment to the mortgage-holder in writing until the following May, at which point we would either revisit the idea of shared ownership or extend the leases. Whew! Disaster averted. The cabin would remain community space except for the baker's bedroom.

However, as Liberty Chocolates was taking its leave, Mountainsong Expeditions was just getting started. In October the wilderness company hosted a sold-out women's deer hunting workshop on the land (participants pitched tents on the lawn and heated up potluck food in the tiny cabin kitchen), followed by a successful hide-tanning workshop the next weekend, a bow drill fire class in December, and an herbal first aid training in January. This form of sharing space proved much more sustainable: a class would descend on Dragon's Nest for one weekend and be gone, cleaning

up all their messes before they left and leaving the cabin to be a home again during the week. Mountainsong Expeditions benefited by not having to pay a fee to use the space that first year, and hopes to prosper enough to voluntarily contribute to Dragon's Nest's finances in the future.

Lessons Learned:

- Make firm legal agreements before purchasing land, so that the distribution of financial support for the land is clear, committed, and realistic.

- Learn about the money style of your cofounders so you won't be surprised in the future. Some people are spenders, some are savers, some like to borrow and some loathe it. Share your credit scores and how they came to be. Talk about your class background and your money triggers so that you can understand each other's attitudes. Sometimes you aren't aware of your money triggers until someone sets them off, but make a good effort to share with as much self-awareness as you can *before* misunderstandings arise.

- I'm very glad that we drafted our mission statement at our first community meeting. It took us many months to finalize it, but referring back to those original drafts reminded us that our core values and purpose haven't changed since we started.

- Be realistic about how much space each person and business needs. Don't forget to plan for growth—Liberty Chocolates was expanding rapidly that summer, which was one reason why it made sense for them to move to a new location. None of us had expected their growth to come so fast—our “incubator” hatched that egg much sooner than we anticipated! Have an exit plan if you expect your business will eventually outgrow the site.

- Have good financial boundaries. Get approval for shared expenses BEFORE anyone fronts the bill expecting repayment. Don't assume anything.

- Shared legal ownership comes with shared legal liability. Make sure all members are ready for this commitment and are being realistic about it. In our case, the financial chaos of changing rents made us take a step back from this level of financial interdependence. Reverting

to singular ownership with individual leases created a less radical structure, but the reduced commitment level is what enabled us all to stick out the experiment a little longer until we could make our community arrangement more functional. You can still build a strong community without shared ownership.

The euphoric “founder's joy” of new communitarians wears off very quickly in the chaos of financial instability. I spent many of my initial months at Dragon's Nest with one foot out the door (my tiny house, after all, is on wheels), wondering if it was all going to work out and how long I could stand the chaos in the meantime. In the end it was our shared values and shared vision that saved us. Each of the founders was committed to achieving clear communication, we all framed the experience as an opportunity for spiritual growth, we all brought a lot of emotional courage to our meetings, and we all believed strongly enough in our vision of sacred land and feminist community to stick it out when the going got tough. Each resident has had to adjust their expectations of how they will contribute to this community, but we're all still here.

At the end of the day, I live among friends on incredibly beautiful land. I have very low rent that allows me to work more than half-time in my own business (unpaid) and dedicate time toward my spiritual practice. A steady stream of friends and lovers visit our home each week, adding their own contributions to the social life of our community. We share the care and bounty of chickens, milk goats, rabbits, and a llama—farm critters none of us would keep without this land and the support of our fellow homesteaders. We host monthly New Moon Circles for women in our community, and Mountainsong Expeditions is planning many more workshops on our land this year. Everyone who visits our homestead exclaims, “This is so idyllic! You are so lucky! You're living the dream!” We smile wryly and tell them, “It's not always easy...but it's worth it.” 🐾

Mary Murphy is a founding member of Dragon's Nest Cooperative Homestead in central Vermont, which she shares with four adults, two kids, and various goats, chickens, rabbits, dogs, and llamas. From Dragon's Nest she runs Mountainsong Expeditions, a small wilderness company which offers spiritually-based wilderness trips and classes on The Sacred Hunt. You can see a photo gallery of Dragon's Nest on her website: www.mountainsongexpeditions.com/dragons-nest.html. Mary also recommends that you treat yourself to a true luxury and experience the amazing sweets available for purchase at www.libertychocolates.com. You can read more of Mary's writing in the book Stepping Into Ourselves: An Anthology on Priestesses.



A Mountainsong Expeditions Hide Tanning Workshop at Dragon's Nest.

JUGGLERS IN THE JUNGLE

Innovation, Special Permits, Neighbor Issues, and the Ultimate Work/Life Balance Routine

By Dena Smith

Living in community can be a circus...literally. Tucked away in the most remote part of the Big Island of Hawaii, just down the road from where Madam Pele is creating the newest land on the planet, lives a group of bohemian egalitarians in an accidental, unintentional community known as Bellyacres.

Formed in 1987 by 12 juggling and performance apostles from around the world, the 11-acre parcel of land then known as Mangolia was just raw Hawaiian jungle tamed by a bunch of long-haired, free-spirited visionaries who dreamed of passing clubs in paradise. A land trust was created through the formation of a 501(c)2 title holding company, known as the Village Green Society (VGS). Some of the original members attempted residency but most found the harsh environment too much of a challenge, both physically and financially.

Bellyacres is located deep within the Puna district of Hawaii, one of the most economically challenged areas of the state. Hawaii County is arguably the leader of socioeconomic diversity in the US: the multi-million dollar homes lining the Kona coastline provide a stark contrast to the thousands of non-compliant homes and structures sprinkled throughout Puna. This diversity is part of what makes Hawaii County special and it provides a functioning model of economic tolerance and acceptance among its residents. However, it does provide a potential dilemma for anyone seeking to relocate to Puna, unless they are financially innovative.

Early residents and members of Bellyacres chose to embrace these challenges by brainstorming ways to use their skills, talents, and resources to serve their surrounding community. Out of this process were born several business ventures, such as the first commercial macadamia nut butter operation in the US, as well as an upscale chopstick manufacturing company. However, most of the members were performers, and since there was not much opportunity for practicing their craft in the area, the idea of creating a local venue for circus arts practice and education was born.

The HICCUP (Hawaii Island Community Circus Unity Project) children's circus was the first actualization of this dream. The HICCUPs are led by Graham Ellis, one of the original founding members of Bellyacres and the most consistent resident on the land since its inception. Ellis was quickly immersed into the often-frustrating world of grant writing so that he could fund the dream, which led to the formation of Hawaii's Volcano Circus (HVC), a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization.

Hundreds of children from all over Hawaii have participated in a variety of educational programs that HVC has presented, and thousands more across the state and even California have

been entertained and inspired by the talents of the HICCUP Circus performance troupe. The only problem was that the HICCUPs were essentially homeless. Over

Sounds of laughter, music, and applause could often be heard throughout the area. Unfortunately, not everyone was happy about this development.

many years, they trained at a variety of locations, including schools, community centers, and even the private home of Ellis at Bellyacres. However, years of transiency were taking a toll on Ellis and the other dedicated volunteers. The time had come: the HICCUPs desperately needed a permanent home. Hence, the birth of SPACE: the Seaview Performing Arts Center for Education.

The original concept was to not only provide a training facility for the HICCUPs, but also a venue for VGS members to showcase their talent. In that original business model, SPACE was designed to be a private community center, supported through membership sales and proceeds from classes and other educational programs. However, once the actual structure was erected in late 2007 and the surrounding community began to engage in SPACE activities, it was quickly realized that there was a greater need to fill.

The first amendment to the vision—as much financial innovation from Bellyacres residents as it was a response to community need—was the formation of a weekly Saturday farmers' market at SPACE. What started as a handful of dedicated "Bellymates" offering coffee, tangerine juice, pancakes,

and homemade yogurt to local neighbors has grown over its six-year lifespan to a current thriving market with nearly 50 vendors and hundreds of dedicated shoppers every week. The SPACE farmers' market epitomizes sustainable community development: between offering only produce and goods from the Big Island, to housing the most creative and comprehensive zero-waste station in the county, a network of loyal customers holds it all together.

A Waldorf-inspired school, Waters of Life, became the next addition. It was a struggling grassroots initiative that had found itself unexpectedly homeless and it sought refuge at SPACE in the spring of 2008. Over the ensuing years, the school evolved to include more students and grade levels, as well as experimenting with a variety of educational models and affiliations. The culmination of this effort is the current model, which includes multi-grade supported homeschool programs for two

local charter schools. SPACE provides a multi-use classroom for each program, as well as extracurricular activities for the students, such as circus, arts and crafts, Japanese, and ukulele classes. With as much activity as this sounds, SPACE is often eerily quiet.

Since the land that Bellyacres and SPACE are located on is zoned agricultural, it was necessary to apply for a Special Permit (SP) from the County of Hawaii to legally conduct activities that



David Branch McBride @ www.branchfineart.com

were a deviation from existing permitted land usage. However, since the needs and intentions of both Bellyacres residents and the surrounding community had changed in the 10-year gap between when the application was originally filed and when the SPACE facility was actually erected, the SP did not accurately reflect the activities that were taking place at SPACE. These activities were not anticipated and were a direct response to community need.



As previously mentioned, Bellyacres is located in an extremely remote area. It is directly adjacent to a subdivision that was designed and created in the 1950s, just before Hawaii County implemented zoning designations for subdivisions on rural land. The result is a convolution of ordinances and laws that no longer suit the cur-

Although efforts were made to placate and appease the neighbor, he was adamantly opposed to any activities taking place at SPACE.

rent land usage in the area. And, combined with the result of Madam Pele's wrath, it has left Puna Makai without any local community services. This is where SPACE stepped in to try to fill that need. From acting as a thriving community center with an innovative playground, to serving as a rental facility for weddings, funerals, and birthday parties, SPACE was suddenly flooded with requests from neighbors and local groups as a venue for personal and community activities.

Seaview was transforming from an isolated, perilous subdivision to a thriving community of friends and neighbors who finally had a place to commune and celebrate the joys and challenges of life. Sounds of laughter, music, and applause could often be heard throughout the area. Unfortunately, not everyone was happy about this development. Everything changed one day with a single phone call. It was a complaint to the Hawaii County Planning Department from a Seaview neighbor living directly across the street from SPACE. And although efforts were made to placate and appease the neighbor, he was adamantly opposed to any activities taking place at SPACE.

Regrettably, this objection eventually led to the issuance of a Cease and Desist Order (CDO) from the planning department on March 10, 2010, as some of the activities at SPACE were not listed under the original SP issued in 1998. Residents of Bellyacres and members of VGS were frustrated and disappointed by this action. But no one was as passionate about it as Ellis, who took it as a personal attack against the home of his kids, the HICCUP Circus. The CDO required the suspension of all performances, but temporarily allowed circus classes, the school, and farmers' market to continue.

Since private parties for residents of Bellyacres were allowed, even outside of the SP process, Ellis went forward with plans for his daughter's sixth birthday party on March 21st, with the blessing of the planning commissioner. A noise complaint was filed at the planning department the next day, despite the fact that the party had ended at 5:30 pm. The following month, SPACE was filled with loving friends and family celebrating Ellis's 60th birthday and paying homage to his 25+ years service to the youth of Puna. Again, the party sparked a flurry of new complaints, as word spread by uninformed neighbors that SPACE had apparently violated their CDO. This became the genesis of a new detrimental energy in Seaview—one of distrust, anger, rumor, and malice amongst neighbors.

In February 2012, in an attempt to celebrate the respectable and momentous 25th anniversary of Bellyacres with local residents and VGS members, as well as to foster peace and unity among Seaview neighbors, a two-day celebration ensued at SPACE that was open to invited guests in a tricky dance around the CDO. The notable anniversary was praised by many local dignitaries, including several state senators and even the governor. Despite this, and getting approval from HVC's legal team, SPACE was immersed in hot water with the county again when a new eruption of complaints emerged.

As fun as the celebration was, the hangover would last for years.

The planning department appealed to the planning commissioner to initiate a revocation of HVC's Special Permit application. This was met with a request from HVC to submit an amendment to the SP, an update that reflected the new activities and programs that had developed over the years.

At a very emotional hearing before the Hawaii County Planning Commission in May of 2012, where supporters flooded the room, dozens of people gave passionate testimony in support of SPACE. One brave young HICCUP Circus performer and SPACE charter school student gave a very compelling speech, a pivotal moment which influenced one of the commissioners to change his decision and thus granted a six-month deference which allowed the farmers' market, school, and performance classes to continue legally.

At the follow-up hearing in December 2012, the planning commission voted to

The real juggling act is finding balance in meeting the needs of everyone involved with Bellyacres: physically, emotionally, and financially.

allow HVC to proceed with submission of the amended Special Permit. However, it commenced a ping-pong game of shifting requirements and requests from the planning department that has delayed approval of the amended SP to this day. So while the legal matters are essentially still up in the air, life at Bellyacres and SPACE marches forward.

Years of struggle have taken their toll on the residents of Bellyacres, the members of VGS, and the Seaview neighborhood at large. Despite the jovial foundation of Bellyacres, tension is definitely in the air. While celebration was once a way of life, it is now viewed with caution, and sometimes even disdain, for fear of retribution from neighbors and/or county officials.

Due to the fact that all performances were banned from SPACE, anyone trying to survive through the performing arts was forced to find other employment. That is quite a feat in lower Puna. Most of the 36 members of the Village Green Society have had to change vocation, travel to other states and/or countries, or relocate off island where they can make a living. However, a lucky few have either found or created a niche through the existing activities at SPACE: the school, community classes, and the farmers' market. Despite these successes, the juggle to create a healthy work/life balance in the remote jungle is still a precarious challenge for some.

Bellyacres is a very special place. Housing over 30 residents—which comprises VGS members, long-term non-member renters, and short-term worktraders and interns—"The Belly" (as it is affectionately known) is a poster child of sustainable living experimentation. While the hair may be shorter and grayer now, the pursuit of a sustainable lifestyle has only grown stronger with time. The food at the Sunday evening community potluck is as diverse as its attendees and topics at the weekly "talk story" campfire circle often vary to reflect the utopian/pragmatic spectrum of the residents.

There is high demand from visitors and local community members who are curious about ecovillage living to participate in the weekly Saturday afternoon land tours that Ellis directs. Even the mayor of Hawaii County has been chauffeured around Bellyacres via a solar-powered "Belly Bug" (golf cart) and educated about sustainable

living practices such as permaculture, vermiculture, and alternative building materials.

Every February, VGS members from around the world descend upon the land for the organization's Annual General Meeting. Each year, the group grapples over issues that affect all the members, resident or not. The opinions and views shared are often as varied as the membership and a reflection of the perpetual identity crisis that this unintentional community somehow concedes to.

Whether a community, ecovillage, performers' club, or jugglers' retreat, the real juggling act is finding balance in meeting the needs of everyone involved with Bellyacres: physically, emotionally, and financially. So far, these sustainability pioneers have demonstrated a pretty impressive feat in doing so. As Ellis once said, "If a group of jugglers can't live together in peace, what hope is there for the world?"

Postscript: Since this article was written, SPACE has encountered yet another casualty. Due to the lack of funding (mostly as a result of the planning department-imposed moratorium on fundraising), the executive director of SPACE, Jenna Way, has resigned. Her hours had dwindled to a mere 10 hours a week and the years of stress had taken their toll. Jenna is also a vendor at the SPACE Market and a HICCUP Circus parent, with one adult child now launched into the performance world of Las Vegas, and a teenage son who is a cornerstone of the current HICCUP Circus performance troupe. A former resident of Bellyacres (for three years), she has lived across the street from SPACE for the last six years. 🐾

Dena Smith lives at Bellyacres Ecovillage with her partner, Graham Ellis, his daughter, and five of her six children. She is the founder, executive editor, and publisher of Primal Parenting Magazine. She currently writes a column for the independent monthly newspaper, the Big Island Chronicle. She can be reached at denasmithgivens@gmail.com.

Asking for Money

By Laird Schaub

A lot of people are uncomfortable asking for money. I used to be one of them.

Then, back in 1996, we had an experienced fundraiser attend a Fellowship for Intentional Community Board meeting and he enlightened me to the common need for nonprofits to get over it. That began a process that took me a couple years, at the end of which I could look people in the eye and ask them to write a check in support of the FIC.

In the world of community, there's a fair amount of uneasiness with money in and of itself. This shows up in a variety of ways:

- A commitment to sharing (reducing what you need to own)
- A commitment to voluntary simplicity (making do with less)
- A tendency to ask for less compensation than our contributions are worth (asking for more shows a lack of spiritual development)
- Hesitation to share information about what one earns or one's net assets (polite people don't do that)

In short, many communitarians are motivated to get as much distance as possible between themselves and the rootstock of all evil.

Growing up with an entrepreneurial father, I had evidence at an early age about what money could buy, and how that didn't necessarily include happiness. Moving purposefully away from that capitalist model, it took me 25 years as an adult to come to grips with the possibility of embracing my entrepreneurial heritage without selling my soul. It just required the discipline to make sure that *how* I made money and *what* I did with it were aligned with my values.

When it came to development—identifying donors in support of worthy causes—I came to appreciate that value-centered fundraising was not about money so much as it was about relationships, and matching the donor's financial capacity with the beneficiary's energy, time, and reputation to realize a com-

mon vision. It turns out that there are a good number of people who care about what's happening in the world, and are happy to see some portion of their discretionary dollars being used in support of efforts they don't have time to do themselves.

The art is in making sure that you're not deciding what to do based just on what can be funded, and that you're sensitively matching both the size and the purpose of the request with the funder's interests. Good fundraising is not about charity; it's about a dynamic partnership.

But this won't go over well if you haven't first done personal work around *your* relationship to money—as squeamishness on your part will change the energy of the exchange. This is a particular challenge in intentional community, where ease with money tends to be viewed with the same jaundiced eye as power mongering, kicking cats, driving an SUV, or living in a McMansion.

The good news is that it can be done—which is a damn good thing given how far we need to go in creating cooperative alternatives in a world that's going to hell in a competitive handbasket. It's not so easy financing one's dreams on downwardly mobile budgets and we *need* those progressive friends with hearts of gold *and* gold in the bank to be partnering with us to create a brighter future. 🐣

Laird Schaub is Executive Secretary of the Fellowship for Intentional Community (FIC), publisher of this magazine, and cofounder of Sandhill Farm, an egalitarian community in Missouri. (After 39 years at Sandhill, he is on a year's leave of absence, joining his wife Ma'ikwe Schaub Ludwig at Dancing Rabbit Ecovillage.) Laird is also a facilitation trainer and process consultant, and he authors a blog that can be read at community-andconsensus.blogspot.com. This article is excerpted from his blog entry of February 10, 2014.



Can You Export Your Mission Business to Another Country?

By Tim Bock



Jesus People USA (JPUSA) owns and operates a roofing and siding distribution center in Chicago. Lakefront Roofing Supply is one of the 30 businesses we have had during our 41-year history. JPUSA is a self-supporting intentional community with approximately 300 members. We have used Mission Business to supply almost all of our living expenses.

Lakefront Supply started in 1985 due to a simple thought that came when we were in the roofing business years prior. Our company, JP Roofers, did not know that much about all the roofing techniques and needed to ask many questions from other roofing distributors.

One such local distributor told me, "I am not going to help you figure out what to order. When you learn how to do this I will sell you the material."

Well, as time went on we became a good-sized company that had many crews all over Chicago land. That same supplier then wanted to sell to me and be my "buddy."

That's when it hit me: If we ever get into the roofing supply business, we are going to treat the small guy like a king and train them.

We found a building for our growing roofing company. It was a very big building and was more suited for a supply house. We opened our first roofing supply with this same concept: "Treating the small contractor like a King."

As we taught many contractors best practices in running honorable companies, one such man we taught was from Romania. He was an artist who had escaped Romania in the late '70s as a political refugee with his wife. He was well connected in the old regime.

In 1990, this same man came to me and said he went back to Romania recently after the revolution and found his home town of Bucharest in shambles with half-constructed buildings and cranes lining the main roads. He said, "I was on the bridge looking at the devastation in Bucharest, and asked God how can I help this situation? Your name, Tim Bock, came to my mind. So I left immediately and here I am to ask you to help me bring a business to Romania to help my fellow believers."

That was the beginning of the most amazing six-month ride.

We flew all over Romania with USG, the leader of drywall manufacturing in the US. They said they would donate a fully operational drywall plant and all they wanted was an equity share in the company. We simply needed to distribute and train folks how to use the

western-style construction products. (At this time very little drywall was used.)

We had four men sign onto this venture as an informal board with us, all pro-bono: a president emeritus of a consultant company, a finance banker, a lawyer, and an investor.

Everything came to a halt when USG went into bankruptcy and their new board said they wanted to concentrate on their US manufacturing and distribution.

Yet if the Lord opened the door with money and the right person to run the company, we were willing. We decided to open a roofing supply business—exactly what our expertise was—with the same business concept in Romania: Treat the small guy well and train them.

Unbeknownst to us, one Romanian man was also praying how he might help the people of his country in business and use the funds to help God's people do direct ministry. We met him in Constanta Romania (where he lived on the Black Sea) and realized he had the exact same heart as ours. We found the "who" to do this and then we simply partnered with his vision.

Nehemiah American Romanian Company (Narcom), a construction material distribution training center, was birthed in 1992. Narcom has taught hundreds of contractors western-style techniques of construction as well as ethical business principles for over 16 years.

We sent one of our Lakefront manag-

ers to help get it set up. All others employees and managers were Romanian.

I have always believed that the best way to start a mission would be to do it in the marketplace. You typically can have an instant influence there by bringing jobs to the area. In addition, you can contribute to the vision of establishing a mission-outreach that benefits from the profitable business, and the mission you envision can stay in a place much longer if you run a meaningful profitable business.

Because we partnered with Followers of Christ with the same vision as ours, and we were able to translate what small things we learned in business and mission, we saw our Romanian manager start his own not-for-profit called Osana. This mission built two AIDS kids' homes as well as helping out handicapped children in a nearby hospital.

Since the acceptance of Romania into the EU and the arrival of preventative AIDS medicines, pediatric AIDS is mostly under control. Searching for the most important need now, Osana deeded one of the houses to an organization that cares for physically and mentally handicapped young adults who have AIDS. The other house has plans to be a senior home. These are some of the greatest needs for Romania now in 2014.

If we had simply given money to our Romanian friend back in 1992, we would not have seen any of this mission that was 100 percent the work of our Romanian associates. They knew the greatest needs back then and they now know what are currently some of the most important needs.

In other words, if you can partner and help provide a meaningful mission business for a place to which you might have a special connection and feeling of responsibility, this could be used as an exponential means for them to meet some of the greatest needs in that area or country.

That to me is what mission business is all about—a meaningful business set up in association with the people you want to help, giving them the means to do what is in their heart; and also creating ownership, whether in stock or vision.

Simply, faithfully working in our field of business, we were able to transport our vision of Mission and Business to Romania, with people who have become lasting, dear friends. 🐦

Tim Bock is a business manager of JPUSA (Jesus People USA). He is currently the general manager of Lakefront Supply. He has the most amazing lovely wife, singer-songwriter Aracely Bock (aracelybock.com), whom he adores, along with four beautiful kids who are truly the best in the world. He is the author of Mission Improbable and a couple of other Mission Business booklets and stories.



Is Windward Egalitarian? Well, Sort Of ...

By Lindsay Hagamen and Walt Patrick

Windward (an intentional community and sustainability research center in southern Washington) started publishing *Notes from Windward*¹ back in 1988, and today the online blog contains thousands of pictures and articles that tell Windward's story. But frankly, there are words rarely used in these articles, not because those words aren't relevant, but because of a concern that using them might actually make it harder for readers new to Windward's core concepts to glean a useful understanding of how Windward approaches building long-term community. "Egalitarian" is one of those words.

Lots of people think of an egalitarian community as one that uses some form of income-sharing to create an equality of outcome. For example, the communities that make up the Federation of Egalitarian Communities see income-sharing as essential to their vision of community.² Windward, however, has taken a different path. By embracing a set of practices that focus on ensuring that its members enjoy equality of opportunity, Windward's approach enables a diversity of outcome that appears to be a key component to this community's stability. This understanding flows from a perspective that a community can have either equality of outcome or equality of opportunity, but not both.

In 1994 Kat Kinkade³ wrote, "These days I believe that secular communal economies must, to be successful, be full of holes. I think that if they are too tight, too 'equal,' they will fail, because people would not be able to stand the constraints. Give people a little chance to serve themselves on the side, and they will give heartily out of their core efforts for the group." This mirrors Windward's experience, and the community's economic structure is designed

to ensure that its people have sufficient opportunities to serve both self and community.

Windward sees itself as functioning as an "expense sharing" community. That conceptual format allows members to work together to meet their common needs more efficiently than could be done if they were acting alone. This greater efficiency then frees up resources, including time, energy, and financial capital, that can be used to pursue their individual wants and desires. Because the members of Windward are human, we have similar core needs; because we're individuals, we have different desires and private passions. As a result, Windward is an exploration of the space that lies between need and desire.

For example, the land is owned by a nonprofit corporation, governed by a board of directors comprised of community members. Residents pay monthly dues into the corporation's bank account, and that money goes to pay the electric bill, property taxes, maintenance expenses, internet access, etc. Members also have individual bank accounts that are used to manage personal affairs. The community decides as a whole how the dues income is spent, and members decide individually what's done with the remainder of their income. What each of us decides to do varies considerably since we're a diverse group of individuals who choose to spend our time and heart doing interesting things.

Windward initially coalesced in a major city, and for the first 10 years, it operated a business that employed some of its members while others held outside jobs. That didn't work well for a number of reasons, and when the community relocated to south central Washington state in 1988, the decision was made to choose another path. Rather than have the community operate another business, those involved at the time made the decision to encourage community members to start their own businesses.

One member bought a portable saw mill, while others made goat milk fudge, crafted products to sell at renaissance fairs, operated a pony ride at Saturday markets, and so on. Some ventures prospered, others didn't, but over time most members found activities that they enjoyed doing and which brought in enough income to cover their core expenses. One result is that today, a key expectation for someone on track to becoming





Teaching spinning on a hand-made drop spindle.

Selling kettle corn at a community fair.



a steward (i.e. a core member) is to work out a way to become financially independent within the context of Windward's community resources.

Some people adopted a regular practice of going away to do seasonal work for a few months when the money was good, and then returning to Windward for the rest of the year. Because of the strict focus on keeping community expenses low, it's quite feasible for someone to work elsewhere for a few months and generate enough income to sustain themselves at Windward for the remainder of the year. This approach enables members to use their off-season time to pursue non-monetary interests, build their skill set, write a book, immerse themselves in the garden, care for the animals—whatever matters most to them.

Life at Windward isn't organized around the usual weekdays/weekend format; early on we tried to explain the concept of weekends to the goats but they made it clear that this was a two-legger's problem, and would have none of it. They expected to be fed and watered every day, thank you very much. This led to a willingness to work on weekends and holidays, and there are a lot more employment opportunities out there for folks willing to work odd shifts. As a bonus, this willingness to work when others don't results in the generation of considerable workplace goodwill for the community, along with nifty cash incentives.

Windward's "expense sharing cooperative" approach keeps the monthly dues low, with the happy result that the people who choose to work outside the community are able to work part-time and still cover their needs. For example, one member currently works a night shift and a weekend day shift at the local hospital, and has considerable discretionary income left over after paying his dues.

Since Windward doesn't practice income-sharing, there's no community-driven desire to have people work full-time jobs in order to maximize community cash flow; as a community, we'd rather have them home doing things that fulfill them. Walt notes, "I don't find individual members, or Windward as an organization, to be hostile to the employment market place; it's just that collectively we

would prefer to participate in it on our own terms and in ways that we feel will enhance our lives.”

Rather than searching out a single job, some members develop an “income quilt.” By combining various small incomes streams, they’re able to generate enough aggregate income to meet their financial needs. For example, one member’s income quilt includes making seasonal wreaths from materials gathered in our forest, teaching handspinning and selling the drop spindles she makes, helping out with annual events that need reliable people for just a few days each year, and providing medical transportation for rural patients. No one income stream covers all her needs, but taken as a whole, she’s good to go.

In recent years, some Windward folk have been able to use the internet as a means to help create their income quilt. One worked as a teaching assistant for an online college, another as a tutor for ESL students, while another currently helps maintain websites. To support this work style, the community has installed its own microwave connection to the regional internet provider and added community-wide internet access to the suite of benefits covered by the monthly dues.

This concept may be easy to grasp, but making it work in real time isn’t easy. Most people who take this route try their hand at a series of projects before finding things that work for them. Even with a financially sound concept, it takes time to get a project up and running. One needs to be creative, conscientious, and able to think outside of the usual wage-earning parameters. While it isn’t easy, the good news is that as a person develops the ability to do these things that help secure their financial independence, they’re also developing their potential to be a key member of the community.

Kat Kinkade had a lot to say about the role of equality in community; for example, “Equality in a community is a relationship so structured that no member envies another. Simple.” In order to keep that sort of envy at a minimum, Windward has evolved a culture of skill sharing, creating a sort of “skills commune.” By enculturating a practice of teaching each other how to do what we do, people are able to increase their personal skill sets. The resulting cross-trained body of skills plays a key role in creating the critical mass of sustainability that ensures the community’s viability and resilience. Each year Windward members are able to meet a broader range of core needs within the community, thereby making the community less dependent on the money economy. That much is straightforward; what isn’t as intuitive is that the more we are able to meet our needs ourselves, the more we are able to meet the needs of others and derive personal income in the process. In a world of mass-produced, look-alike products, custom-made items hold a special appeal.

On the one hand, Windward has gardens, but doesn’t grow produce to sell; the community has tools and workshops, but doesn’t produce products to sell. On the other hand, Windward’s members are welcome to use these resources to develop small businesses that meet their financial needs. Also, this ability to develop individual businesses builds a sense of community in surprising ways. For example, most businesses have peak seasons, and land-based businesses are no different. To address the periodic need for additional help, Windward has embodied a practice of time-trading in which one person helps out another with their peak work load in exchange for similar support in return when the other person’s help is needed. Lindsay offers an example: “Our land is excellent for growing garlic, a crop that doesn’t require much tending, but which can be pretty labor intensive when it comes time to harvest and braid the garlic. As a result, I often can use some help at harvest, and I’m happy to help others when they need casual assistance with their work throughout the rest of the season.”

While Windward does manifest a strong desire to be able to meet its core needs on its own terms, the organization is not focused on becoming “totally self-sufficient.” Windward goes out of its way to build mutually beneficial relationships with neighbors, not only because it extends its organizational commitment to reciprocity beyond its membership, but also because such neighborly relationships allow for a tighter focus on the activities that are especially important to us. Regional networks of mutually beneficial relationships enable the community to be more efficient than it could be if it tried



Marketing medieval coinage at a Renaissance Fair.



Garlic braided up for sale at the local farmers' market.



A holiday wreath made from tree trimmings.

to do everything internally, and efficient resource utilization is a key characteristic of sustainable systems.

Most of Windward's folk could be described as refugees of one sort or another, and the employer/employee dynamic is something most of us have a strong desire to avoid. No one at Windward draws an income from the organization—Windward has no employees—and as a result the community is unable to exercise the sort of control over the members that goes with being both landlord and employer. There is little interest amongst Windward's membership in having a governing structure that has tight control over individuals' lives; a key way of accomplishing this involves making sure that the community is dependent on the members for money, instead of the other way around.

Walt offers an example: "While it is counter-intuitive, I believe that this aversion to running a company business has made the community more financially secure. By collectively relying on dozens of income streams, Windward as a whole enjoys a remarkable degree of overall economic stability. A personal example might help explain. For years, I made the bulk of my personal income by making recreations of medieval coins during the winter months and then marketing them at regional Renaissance Fairs in the summer. Over the course of a two year period, one fair lost its insurance, two lost their owners to heart attacks, and three lost their land leases. As a result, my personal income tanked and I had to regroup. While this was personally challenging, it didn't affect the community much because other members' activities went on as usual."

There is a notable downside to this "building financial independence" approach that needs to be mentioned: the community often loses members when they become financially independent. We teach people how to manage and run their financial affairs effectively. We see this as

key to their becoming a reliable and effective community member since in the long run, does it make sense for us to award a meaningful voice in deciding how the community finances are managed to people who haven't demonstrated that they have the capacity to manage their own affairs? Once someone develops fiscal responsibility, they gradually become financially independent. Overall that's a good thing, but it still hurts when someone decides to use that independence to leave. On the other hand, those who have the ability to leave and choose to stay are doubly precious.

Some people show up at Windward, not so much because they want what Windward offers, but because the system out there wasn't working for them and they want to try something different. In time, they make the psychological switch from focusing on making money to creating value, and once that change of perspective becomes well rooted, they soon find they have options they didn't realize they had before. Some will decide to exercise those options by moving on, in the same way that someone who takes in roommates in order to help pay their mortgage will often decide to stop having roommates when their personal finances improve to the point where they can afford to go it alone.

As a community, we have mixed feelings about this. Early on it became clear that Windward was good at providing a secure, stable place where people in crisis can calm down, sort through their issues, and get themselves on a better path—we found that we were effectively functioning as a transitional center. Nothing wrong with that; it's just not the role the founders envisioned. It's been observed that in the case of individuals, there's often a difference between what you want to do and what you're good at doing; evidently that principle applies to communities too. Functioning as a transitional center is an honorable path to service, and some of the people seeking refuge here came to the conclusion that the world at large is crazy-making and decided to just not go back into the madness.

However, many choose to use their new-found financial options to move off by themselves. For better or worse, this seems to be an inevitable result of people having more choices, and an inherent challenge for any system founded on consent and choice. Over the years, Windward decided that it was better to have that problem than the set of problems that's created when people feel they're trapped because they lack viable options.

Kat Kincade talked eloquently about the community problems she felt were created by over-focusing on equality of outcome. Her experience is in alignment with Windward's early history, and with why Windward chose an alternative path. The result is a focus on doing what we can to create diverse opportunities in which people can invest their time and heart in ways that work for them. Windward strives to embody the belief that it is in a person's best interests to pursue their individual passions within the context of community, and in the long run, that this is in the community's best interests as well. 🐦

Lindsay Hagamen is the President of the Windward Foundation and spends her time caring for the land and the people who tend to the land. Lindsay teaches permaculture and social permaculture in the Pacific Northwest and is a co-editor of an upcoming book on Ecosexuality. She is also the co-creator of the the EcoSex Convergence, an annual event that builds community around loving the Earth and one another. See www.ecosexconvergence.org.

Walt Patrick is a founder of the Windward community with more than 30 years of full-time involvement in studying and creating intentional community. Since stepping down as Windward's lead director in 2011, Walt has focused on ensuring the community's long-term energy security through the conversion of woody biomass into the heat, power, and fuel a sustainable community needs in order to thrive. See www.biomass2methanol.org.

1. Available online at windward.org.

2. The FEC's First Principle is that its member communities hold "land, labor, income, and other resources in common."

3. Kat Kincade co-founded the intentional communities of Twin Oaks, East Wind, and Acorn, along with the Federation of Egalitarian Communities. In "Kat Kindade and the Communal Theories of Equality and of Sharing," long time community scholar and activist Allen Butcher suggests that In "Kat's later disillusionment with communal society may be found inspiration for changing the emphasis in communal theory from equality to sharing, and for developing new experiments in communitarian design."

4. English as a Second Language.

5. Walden House Newsletter, August 1966, p. 14.

Trade School Indy

Bartering a Night School for Everyone

By Shawndra Miller

“Crazies only need apply,” jokes Indianapolis resident Blaire Huntley. She’s referring to a call for teachers put out by Trade School Indy, a self-organized continuing education program. Previous “crazies” taught such varied topics as law, nail art, beekeeping, creative writing, bookbinding, public speaking, belly dancing, and—curiously—*cuddling*.

The online course catalog reads as if representatives from Farm Bureau, Toastmasters, and the Optimists’ Club teamed up with a dance studio, art school, and encounter group to engineer a takeover of the local night school.

But what really puts the competition to shame is not the inventive curriculum. It’s the fact that not one cent changes hands. Instead, teachers request items and services in trade for their tutelage. Students wishing to attend who can’t meet teacher requests can barter a different skill in exchange for the class. Some offer to help with setup and teardown.

TSI owes its existence to Blaire’s insatiable curiosity and energy. Like many 20-somethings, she’s been cash-poor but knowledge-hungry since she left home for college. A yen to try her hand at oil painting went unsatisfied when she found exactly zero options that fit her income bracket. But instead of getting mad, she got organized.

Eighteen months later TSI offers a smorgasbord of homespun and lofty courses. Whether wealthy or broke, the proverbial lifelong learner can sign up to learn forest gardening, guitar maintenance, and web design, all in the same month. Programming runs about six months out of the year in four semesters.

Each class is a revelation. Here’s our aspirant, sitting shoulder to shoulder with other bright-eyed students. On a night she might other-

wise have frittered away at home in the glow of a screen, she’s practicing primitive natural cordage with a ponytailed survivalist. She’ll happily twist raffia strands into a clumsy rope to take home. Later that same week, she listens to a lecture by a young man with the honorific “Green Entrepreneur of the Year.” She’ll feel hope igniting as she absorbs how waste becomes fuel.

The cost of these experiences? The stalk of a yucca plant for the survivalist to whittle into a firestarter, and a simple pledge to share the knowledge imparted by the brash young entrepreneur.

TSI is part of a barter-for-knowledge network anchored by Trade School New York. Blaire encountered the organization while living in New York City. Having worked eight jobs in NYC, she was too busy to take any classes, but she always wanted to. Now, she says, she feels like “the smartest person in the world,” because she gets to learn from so many passionate, creative teachers in her new hometown.

It didn’t take long for the community to embrace the model. “As people are learning about us, once they know about it, they want to be involved,” says cofounder Brittany West, an Indianapolis native. In the year and a half since its launch, TSI has offered 177 classes, growing each semester. For the spring 2014 semester, potential instructors proposed upwards of 60 classes.

Compared to other Trade Schools worldwide (there are now 50), “we are always the one with the most classes going on,” says Blaire.

TSI is also one of the few such schools so far sustained without ongoing funding, though the organizers are accepting donations in hopes of growing into year-round programming. Both women have been working for free, devoting their off-work hours to coordinating and

(continued
on p. 72)



Designing like Villagers

By Mark Lakeman

In the first year of our design collaboration, we were already looking at world peace. Families were out walking in their own community, tending gardens bursting with food and flowers, gathering in the streets, and no cars were driving anywhere. The ink had just dried, and though it was only a lovely drawing, it was what our ordinary, grid-based neighborhood had imagined as their shared destiny with everyone else in the world.

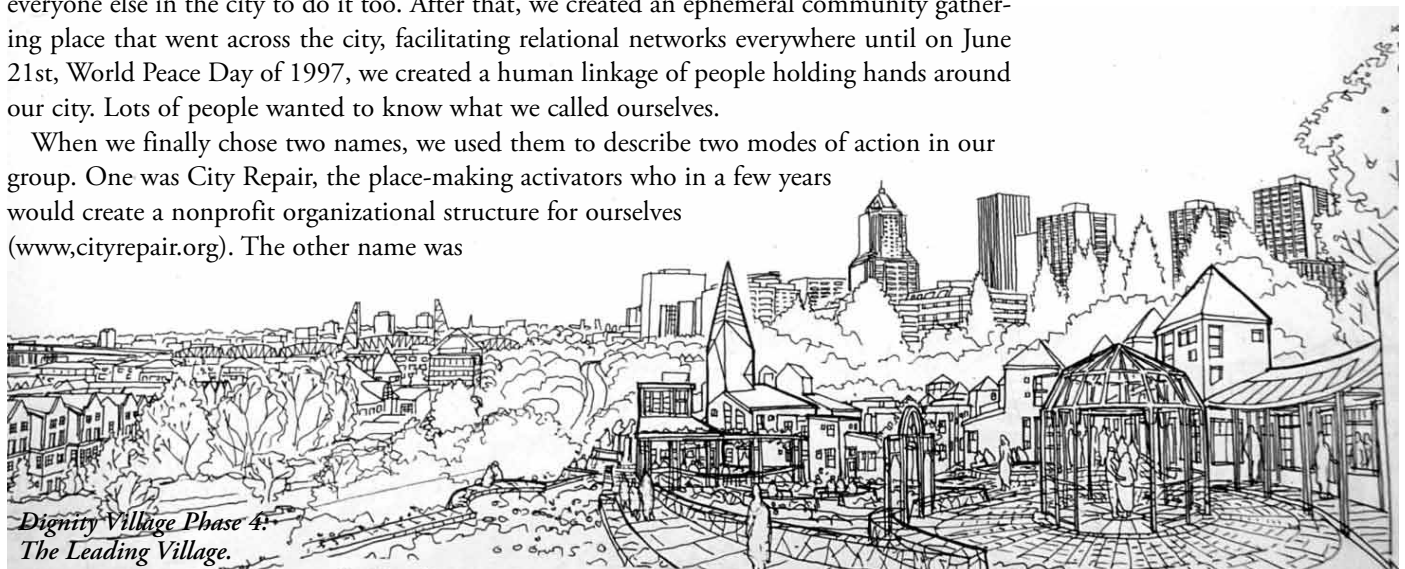
We had taken half a day to dialogue, share a meal, and spend some time to explore longest-range possibilities. It was all so simple, but then all we did was talk about the life that we were already living in our own Portland, Oregon neighborhood. The question had really become, “How do we inspire people everywhere else?” At the end of our half-day workshop called “What Would World Peace Look Like?,” someone had said: “The revolution we seek is one where people will act with what they have, where they are, right now!” Another person said: “And everyone everywhere can do this!” Then we all went outside, as if into our own drawing.

For our young design-activist group, known from the start as communitecture (community + architecture), growing up in the cradle of design-activism that is Portland, Oregon, it had become ridiculous not to intend to create a better world. We were already standing upon the work of giants, in some cases our own parents. With urban growth boundaries protecting perimeter farmland all around Portland, the spectacular new public square energizing our city, multi-modal transit expanding across the region, vast wildlife sanctuaries established to provide open space for all species, and citizen power at a zenith, we had to ask ourselves, “What more is possible, and how can we inspire more to happen in the world?” We began to answer our own questions, the more we worked with communities across the city, and the answers multiplied.

The first year of our activity was indeed ridiculously and joyously successful. We had no fear and we couldn't stop ourselves. Though we didn't yet have a name, we were well underway with a strategic knowledge of indigenous village design principles, modern development practices, planning codes, and regulations. With this knowledge, we designed and built a spectacular series of gathering place interventions that broke and changed laws left and right.

Our first community Tea House project, installed without permission in a neighborhood zone, brought thousands of people together in the summer of 1996. Then we empowered our neighborhood to transform a street intersection into a public square, and made it legal for everyone else in the city to do it too. After that, we created an ephemeral community gathering place that went across the city, facilitating relational networks everywhere until on June 21st, World Peace Day of 1997, we created a human linkage of people holding hands around our city. Lots of people wanted to know what we called ourselves.

When we finally chose two names, we used them to describe two modes of action in our group. One was City Repair, the place-making activators who in a few years would create a nonprofit organizational structure for ourselves (www.cityrepair.org). The other name was



communitecture, which even more quickly became an economically self-supporting model of collaborative design activation (www.communitecture.net).

Though the two parts of one activist culture have remained involved and mutually supportive over the years since, communitecture has gone on to support larger-scale initiatives and projects that cover a much wider spectrum of communities and ideas. Many diverse communities have been attracted to work with us because we use design as a means to build community.

Our creative public advocacy for important principles and goals that communities identify with include challenging existing civic structures that have historically ensured inequity and the absence of gathering places where people live. So, for instance, by supporting the emergence of new collaborative places that provide forums for gathering and sharing ideas, we work successfully to narrow the terrible gap between what we know and how we live. In fact, each project really ends up expressing such important sustainable values in social and physical forms, and then more communities become inspired by example.

The kinds of projects that we are fortunate to help create can include radical buildings made entirely of natural and recycled materials. Most of these are urban, and they are always ideas that spring from people who are creating a setting for some new form of community. For instance, The ReBuilding Center, an 80,000 square foot facility that makes recycled materials available for low cost, is a project of and for the community of people who work in it. Each person who works there has power in their shared-power culture, they all earn a living wage, and each person has full health and dental benefits, as do their families. As design-activists, our interests shouldn't stop with the shape of a building. It should matter most to us that people are empowered where they live and work, and that they are able to shape their own future while they benefit from what they do with their time.

Other kinds of projects that communities bring us in to help with include many scales of urban infill-based cohousing models that so far range in scale from four to 16 living units, each of them informed by an enthusiasm for urban permaculture, natural building, urban agriculture, and community self-reliance principles. Because we are also deeply committed to historical preservation and revitalization, we also work to modify and update existing buildings with new roles and spaces, more open

and accessible public places, as well as updated energy systems.

Our main driving choice, though, is to work with people who want to be involved in designing and also building their own community places. In this way, these places become a reflection of their living culture. Our recent work with the Capaces Institute, a youth leadership development project founded by Cesar Chavez, has resulted in an exuberant building made by that community that is now the most energy-efficient and artistically expressive office building in the US.

The way that we work is first to see that as citizens our task is to be part of a shared cultural fabric with other people, businesses, nonprofits, and institutions. We must not merely be a business looking out for our own interests; in fact it's vital that we act from a place of seeing

Dignity Edible Neighborhood.



Photos courtesy of Mark Lakeman



ReBuilding Center entrance.



*Sabin Green cohousing project
in Portland, Oregon.*



that we are already a connected ecology. Another huge responsibility we see that we share is to restore and strengthen ecological feedback loops in our local community ecology. So communitecture intends local restorative effects as an outcome. This means cleaning up brownfield sites, developing stronger communication networks and relationships, engaging youth in projects, and creating urban agriculture networks.

If we are asked to help with a project it's not merely a job for us; it must also be a long-term commitment to our community with the expectation that at the culmination of a process we will all have more friends than before. So when we help facilitate design dialogues for local cohousing communities, we are in it to help create the kinds of places that we also want to inhabit, for the communities that we intend will surround our own lives.

In terms of our business model, it is a creative hybrid that grew out of loving our work and trusting each other. When it came time to develop official systems for payroll and accounting, we kept it simple, based on trust. As the most experienced member of the team, I was happy to be the one who registered our

name and established business accounts. At that time, our team was young and mobile, and since I was most stable the ownership roles were established as my responsibility, to hold the systems in place though other people could come and go.

So what has emerged today is a trust-based model where the present team makes choices together, collaboratively runs itself, maintains a very strong and attractive ethic of community service, and pays itself. In fact, though the official ownership is held in my name, the team decides what I am paid. Since we are a kind of benefactor-co-op, a great deal depends upon my sharing of power, and the value of this aspect of our model can't be overstated. The fact that I utterly believe in and rely on my team, and they see that I trust them, is what transcends our legal configuration. Perhaps it is a transitional form of some sort.

With this kind of trust-based approach and cultural mission, it's possible that we could use almost any kind of official structure and still thrive. This attitude helps us stand for what we are committed to, and because of this our larger community has always embraced us with positive story-telling and advocacy for our services, donated space, recycled computer systems, all needed materials for our desks and office environment, and quite a lot more.

We do not like to compete against other designers for jobs, partly because it harms our intention to build common cause across the larger community. In

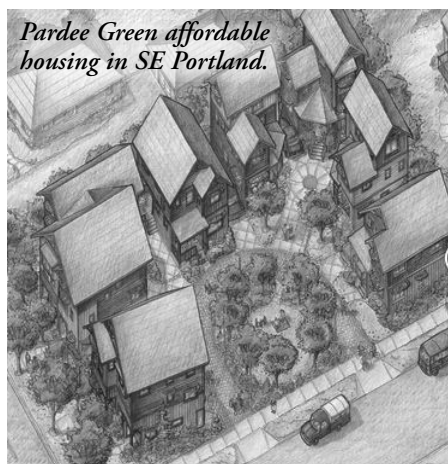
fact, we do almost no marketing because our work has the result that many people spread positive stories of our work on our behalf. When other active people, political figures, owner-builders, homeless people, and other firms are affected by our ideas and initiatives, then we are supported by the culture that we support. Also, very importantly we reserve the right to be creative initiators in our community.

While most architects are passive, waiting for someone to pay them to use their creativity, we will often creatively engage a situation whether we are paid or not. So we can also initiate strategic projects that are socially based, politically charged, ecological, celebratory, with all manner of innovations, and continue to be off-the-leash creative agents for a better world. This ethic is expressed in our active design support for numerous homeless village initiatives up and down the Pacific Coast. In these kinds of projects there is never a cost for design support, which creates more goodwill in the world than can be known.

It's important to acknowledge that our cooperative ethics and goals can come into conflict with long-standing competitive structures and behaviors. The conflicts can come in various forms, both internal and external. Internally, since architecture training is usually set in a competitive context, interns can find it challenging to learn how to collaborate without needing to have their own way, just as a mentor may find it difficult not to be dominant. Building confidence can be a challenge in any situation, but people find it much easier to help each other when they are developing strong communication skills in a cooperative environment.

What we end up designing reflects our strong emphasis on shared decision-making process. The kind of singular mentality that results in normally masculine aesthetics (common in the mainstreams threads of our profession) doesn't really get to happen in our work. Our aesthetics of inclusivity and wider emotional expression sometimes become a target for people who expect the more square forms and grayer colors of the architecture of commodity. Others may find it a problem that we overtly celebrate the interconnection of humanity with nature, which can be expressed in terms of living walls or roofs, vines growing above windows in order to provide shade, and edibles all around the site.

What can you do about such polarities except to try to learn together? In fact, our commitment to cooperate does sit strangely for a profession that has been deeply



Pardee Green affordable housing in SE Portland.



ReBuilding Center exterior.



Share-It Square 2012.



Weekly Market Concept.

educated to compete against itself.

Our attitude towards our community is essentially this: we interact with our city as if we are villagers who share the same place. The initiatives that we support can come from anywhere in the community. As villagers our responsibility is to give each community and their ideas the support and momentum that they deserve. With all that we give to our community, our relationship with our community only deepens. In fact, as we continue to see our community as a living ecology, and as we heal broken feedback loops, we build upon the stories of sharing and constructive action. Over and over, we see the power of story bringing benefit back around to us when we release our grip on the “return” on our efforts. Some have called this being “in alignment with the economy of the universe,” the way that nature showers us with gifts.

With all of the personal and community-scale benefits that we have witnessed, with communities in Portland stabilizing, and with the increasing levels of excitement and creativity all around us, it does feel as if we are in alignment with great principals and a more worthy form of economy. Something wonderful has already been happening for a long time, and now we can design in accord with it while our way of living and livelihood become the same.

For more information, please also see communitecture.net, cityrepair.org, and planetrepair.org 🐦



Sabin Green courtyard with David Sweet.



Dignity Greenhouse.

Mark Lakeman is Design Lead for communitecture—architecture, planning, and design (www.communitecture.net) and cofounder of City Repair (www.cityrepair.org) in Portland, Oregon.

STARTING A COMMUNITY: With or Without a Recipe?

By Paul Brooks

Each community process has its own group dynamic and its own goals in mind, its own collective vision. Through understanding and patience we weave the web of dynamic and self-governing co-creation. I have been so lucky to have been a part of a handful of different community start-up groups, all being quite different from each other. I have been on the fringe of several others to varying degrees, and have visited and lived in many communities around the world.

A balance between structure and flux is hard to achieve. You might have heard the famous quotes, “That government is best which governs least” (Thoreau) and “Everything should be as simple as it can be, but not simpler” (Einstein). So then, is the task at hand to create a governing system that is elegantly simple in its complexity or just plain simple? Should we use a recipe, or should we just throw something together and see how it turns out?

Solidarity

There is something, I believe, to be said about necessity. If you have a group of people who are struggling independently, they might have a stronger motivation to create community than someone who already has a nice garden, a house, and a decent income. Although they may still desire to live in a community, if it is not absolutely necessary they may not be as driven to make it happen.

In many places in Europe and the UK squatting is not uncommon; communities called squats, or occupied social centers, are established simply by moving into an unoccupied building and changing the locks. This is where the Occupy Movement gets its name.

A group of 13 Polish kids had recently been evicted from an old police station they had occupied, called the Polish Station; now they had occupied a place in Whitechapel, London. They invited me and some friends to be their neighbors, and we took them up on the offer. The protocol for opening a squat in England is that after you have secured a building, you hang a “Section 8” notice on the door to declare legal ownership. So that we did, and soon after we declared ownership of the flat, the police knocked on the door. A male officer cordially and sincerely inquired about our residence. He wanted to know if we were registered to pay Council Tax, and whether or not we were stealing electricity. Although my flatmates were not thrilled about the idea, the police were so nice that I let one of them in to look at our electric meter and assured them that we would be registering our tax status very soon.

Having participated in the opening of a couple of squat communities, having lived in several others, and visited many more, I realize that we usually had no formal governing method, but we also had no budget or big decisions to make. If we did have, in my experience it was by consensus. We ate meals together because we enjoyed it, not because it was suggested we should do so. The fact that we squatters were always aware that this type of community is almost always temporary is an important factor to take into account. The property owners are generally holding these empty build-

ings as assets and don't plan to use them; however, they still have people evicted. With no money and no other home, this impending eviction creates a strong solidarity and creates a necessity within the squat and the larger squatter community. Therefore, this kind of community is usually successful in terms of its members, but rarely sustainable.

Too Much Structure?

In Lawrence, Kansas I worked with a group of under 10 people with the common interest of procuring land to build a sustainable community. We explicitly decided that we would use consensus for our governing method. I began to see after a few weeks that it is very important not to be too rigid with your guidelines. One of our members was extremely particular about defining minute details about how everything should operate. This ranged from the use of cleaning agents like clorox to how we deal with recycling and compost. Although these are important issues, it was a bit early in our process to create a protocol for things we could not yet actively work with. Every proposal we made concerning cer-



tain areas of the community was blocked by this individual.

Eventually we gave complete power to this person in these areas to keep the process moving. Their response to this was, “Why is this my responsibility?” Under conditions like this, the rigid attachments to structure that was being established in the land project were making progress so slow that we began to lose members and eventually the project lost enough of its energy that it fizzled out.

Too Little Structure?

On the Garden Island, Kaua’i, Hawaii, a permaculture project started. The original idea was to develop a personal estate in a way that provided sustainability at least in food security. On the island of Kaua’i, when you mention free camping and permaculture, it’s not long before you have more helping hands than you need. This project and fledgling community kept itself relatively quiet for the first few months, but soon there were eight of us there full-time plus regular visitors, and the project was becoming a community.

I proposed that we use *Creating a Life Together* as a guide to help us understand what we were working with. Although this idea and others were well-received, they were not implemented due to lack of structure. The property owner and the project manager were eventually both open to the idea of community, but as we all soon realize when we step into a community-creating process, defining “community” is a daunting task. Most of us had lived communally before, but those running the show had the least experi-

ence. This might have worked out fine with regular meetings and a clear method of governance, but neither of these things seemed to be happening. With a budget, and big decisions to make, I feel governance is more important.

The months went by, and we all learned to work together very well. We created kitchen management that was very organized and economic. We built a greenhouse and planted gardens. Some of us were studying massage, some were studying geometry, one was studying traditional Hawaiian planting methods by the moon cycle. We had a breastfeeding mother and an amazing handyman who built us a beautiful artisan outdoor shower. We made raw pies and harvested coconuts and other fruits. At one point we all fasted together, and anybody who has ever done a fast knows how it can make us somehow feel more alive than life. We had all cultivated a quality of life that, probably, none of us had ever witnessed before, at least not in a group. We had fallen in love with life and with each other and it seemed like we had finally found what every human yearns for but never knew how to put to words. We were doing it...but was it sustainable?

**Community is that which is not
monetized, that which is shared
unconditionally and without obligation.**

Eventually, the property owner offered so generously to pay us for the obvious improvements to the land. Few of us, if any, had been interested in getting paid. As we learn from Charles Eisenstein in his book *Sacred Economics*, community is built upon gift culture, so community is that which is not monetized, that which is shared unconditionally and without obligation.

Even those people who were not doing the physical work were contributing to the community. For example, some people brought the bliss from the beach and one of us was breastfeeding. These things are very important too. Value is not always GDP value; the caring and the cultivation of peacefulness were, to me, just as valuable as building a greenhouse or spending the day behind a shovel. The problem is that nobody knows how to value equality from the perspective of Dollars. We held a meeting where everyone decided that, rather than create a system that would regulate our value within reasonable limitations, we would have a zero governance, anything goes model wherein, if anybody has a monetary need, just ask the property owner for the money.

The free-market ideal proved itself once again when some of us valued ourselves



Photos courtesy of Paul Brooks

independently from the community, and other members valued themselves as the community; some valued themselves higher, and some lower or equal. Most of us asked for a reasonable amount of money on behalf of the work that we had done and even those who didn't ask for anything were offered a little. The project manager, however, asked for a very large sum of money to finish the project on behalf of all of us. He did not get consent from any other members to do so other than his partner. The fact that we had no established governance model allowed him to play this sort of monarchical role.

However, I suppose the property owner was the ultimate monarch, because, after a dispute ensued, the property owner then asked everyone to leave. One of us likened it to a Romeo and Juliet scenario. We had all fallen in love, but we were forced apart, and there was nothing we could do about it. We were all acting in ways that we thought were best and we are all still great friends, and there are no hard feelings, but I hope that we all learned that none of us can see the whole picture at any given time, and that is a good reason to have at least a little agreed-upon structure.

Partnership

In the very first of the Wai Koa Intentional Community meetings it was suggested that we keep a weekly journal that we could use to refine our vision. Each week we could share ideas pertaining to that week's agenda topics. We believed that this would aid in creating a clear picture of what it was that we were trying to create and sponsor active engagement in the community process.

After a few weeks the process was clearly moving along quickly. Not many of us in our group of about 20 had ever lived in community before, so we had a lot of ground to cover. We had land but no buildings and were ready to separate into teams. The governance team began working on agreements and understanding sociocracy, while the design team worked on architectural ideas and layouts.

Things were moving perhaps too fast. When those people with a more clear vision began creating faster than others, some of us began to get nervous and it was obvious that we needed to slow down. We decided that rather than engaging in the creative process, we would continue to meet once a week to work on the vision alone, without actively moving forward. Basically, we were going to start over. This was after several months of meetings. Around half of us stopped attending meetings for the time being and the rest continued in this envisioning exercise which still continues.

It has now been more than a year. Our decision-making process, consensus, is working fabulously with one circle and we don't have a need at this point for multiple consensus circles (sociocracy). We have been so patient with the process, developed a strong understanding of our group dynamic, and got to know each other quite well.

Sometimes it will be unspoken and nearly invisible, but there is always going to be some sort of structure, whether monarchy, democracy, or consensus.

We now can carefully make the first steps in the creative process such as writing our documents and deciding on how to incorporate.

We were, and are, working together patiently and in partnership. In solidarity, while noticing the importance of structure, but without creating too much of it, we hope to see our process through to fruition.

Conclusion

The purpose of government is not to control the people, nor to protect the people from evil outside forces; it is to provide a framework with which to make decisions together and guide our vision in a balanced and sustainable way that is manageable.

There is always going to be some sort of structure. Sometimes it will be unspoken and nearly invisible, but there will always be a monarchy, a democracy, or a consensus somehow or another. If we liken society to a recipe: in a monarchy, the monarch will decide when and what the rest of us eat, in a democracy at least half of us will decide when and what all of us will eat, and with consensus, all of us will decide when and what all of us will eat, so long as we can all compromise and the process doesn't stop cold and we all go hungry.

We have heard a lot about sociocracy lately. With sociocracy, there is no monarchy, and democracy is only a default mechanism that keeps the kitchen moving when an emergency decision has to be made. It is comprised of ingredients (consensus circles) which allow the recipe to be dynamic. Even when other ingredients are not available, things still keep cooking.

It seems to me that clarity on governance issues is an important first step in creating a sustainable community, and good facilitation makes all the difference. Patience in clarifying the vision is an important ingredient too. Once we understand how we will govern ourselves, we can begin to refine our vision. The journey begins. 🐦

Paul Brooks has traveled to communities of various forms in dozens of countries around the world. His primary interests in intentional communities are social structure, governance, and community economics. He currently lives on Kaua'i, Hawai'i, where he is involved with intentional communities there as well as being involved with a community garden and Kaua'i's Food Forest at Wai Koa Plantation.

Consent Decision-Making and Community Vision, Mission, and Aim

How Sociocracy Can Help Communities, Part III

By Diana Leafe Christian

“No objection,” said the member of Park Carpool Co-op—a group of people in the Findhorn community in Scotland who share ownership of eight fuel-efficient cars. They use Sociocracy as their governance method. That evening they were considering a proposal to change their co-op’s name.

Sociocracy—also called “Dynamic Governance” in the US—is a self-governance method based on the principles of equivalence, transparency, and effectiveness. (See Part I, “Transparency, Equivalence, and Effectiveness,” in COMMUNITIES #160, Fall 2013, and Part II, “Self-Governance with Circles and Double Links,” in COMMUNITIES #161, Winter 2013.) Sociocracy uses “Consent Decision-Making” as its decision-making method.

“No objection,” said each person in turn around the circle. Car co-op members had offered various objections to the proposal in previous rounds, and—as happens in Consent Decision-Making—each objection was used to help modify and improve the proposal. However, in this latest round there were no more objections to the proposed name, “Eco Carshare.” That meant the latest amended proposal was consented to—passed—and the car co-op had a new name.

The guest facilitator that evening was John Buck, the Sociocracy advocate who brought this method to the English-speaking world. He translated Sociocracy texts from the Dutch and wrote the book *We the People* with co-author Sharon Villines. John and I were visiting the Findhorn community in October 2013 to teach Sociocracy workshops. The co-op had asked John to facilitate that night in order to help demonstrate the six steps of Sociocracy’s Consent Decision-Making process.

(Another aspect of Sociocracy is feedback loops, in which most implemented decisions are later measured, evaluated, and, if needed, modified to adjust to any real-life circumstances. At their next meeting, car co-op members evaluated their new name and realized it should include the name of their county, “Moray,” and so at that meeting changed their name to “Moray Carshare.”)

Vision, Mission, and Aim

Consent Decision-Making is based on two mutually reinforcing aspects of Sociocracy: the governance structure of circles and double-links (described in Part I, #160), and the specific Aim of each circle. (See figure 1, p. 60.) Every organization using Sociocracy has a Vision, Mission, and Aim, and each “circle” in the organization (committee, team) has its own Aim as well.

In Sociocracy the *Vision* is an imagined ultimate future that provides the inspiration—the “why” of the organization, the reason it exists. Moray Carshare’s Vision is “A world in which everyone has access to affordable and environmentally friendly travel options that build community and trust.”

The *Mission*—the “big-picture” intention for what the organization will do to manifest its Vision—is the “what.” Moray Carshare’s Mission is “To be an effective, ethical association, responsive to the needs of existing and potential members in the Moray area, providing a variety of environmentally friendly vehicles, and creating community through sharing resources with care and respect.”

The *Aim* is what the organization produces or provides the people it serves. “Produces” can mean physical things—“products.” “Provides” can mean non-physical things—“services.” The Aim of Moray Carshare is “To provide well-maintained, clean, affordable fuel-efficient cars to our members; reduce greenhouse gases and air pollution in our local community; raise local awareness of the financial and environmental costs of using cars; and build a stronger sense of community.”

Vision, Mission, and Aim in Intentional Community

In Sociocracy the Vision—the *why* of the organization—is external, global, and



Moray Carshare, a car co-op affiliated with the Findhorn Community in northern Scotland, uses Sociocracy and Consent Decision-Making.

in the future. An intentional community using Sociocracy might have the Vision: “A world in which everyone can choose to live in a healthy, thriving, successful, ecologically sustainable human settlement.”

In Sociocracy the Mission—the bigger-picture *what*—is internal, local, and in the present, not the future. For example: “To create an ecologically, economically, and socially sustainable ecovillage model in our area, provide a good home for our ecovillage members, and offer public workshops on sustainability.”

An Aim is also internal, local, and in the present but is a more specific and detailed *what*. It specifies what the community produces or provides the people it serves. A community’s Aim might be, in part: “To provide and manage all aspects of building and maintaining the social, physical, and economic aspects of the community for our members, including roads, the community building, land-use management, financial management, and membership services.”

As noted in previous articles in this series, Sociocratic organizations are governed by an interconnected set of teams, called “circles.” A “higher” (or “larger”) circle—the community’s “General Circle”—has a more abstract, longer-term Aim. A “lower” (or “smaller” or “functional”) circle has a more concrete, specific, and shorter-term Aim; e.g., Finance, Membership, and Land-Use Circles. A community’s General Circle sets up each smaller circle and determines its area of responsibility and its Aim. (One Danish community calls these “mother” and “daughter” circles, since the larger, more abstract circle “gives birth” to the smaller, more specific circles.) The Aim of a community’s Land-Use Circle might be to develop and manage the physical aspects of the community. The Aim of a Finance Circle might be to manage the community’s finances.

Policy Meetings, Operations Meetings

Circle members use Consent Decision-Making to make decisions in “Policy Meetings” or

“Policy-Making Meetings.” In Policy Meetings they propose and give consent to policies and procedures about work tasks and accomplishing their Aim. Think of these as “governance meetings.” A second kind of meeting is an “Operations Meeting,” in which circle members organize and coordinate work tasks and sometimes do the work itself, whether the tasks are physical labor or clerical/administrative work. A building and maintenance circle, for example, could have a brief work-coordination Operations Meeting before the start of a work party.

Sociocracy trainer John Schinnerer describes the two kinds of meetings as (1) “Policy-Making Meetings” in which policies about work tasks (“operations”) are decided by consent among people with equivalence, and (2) Operations Meetings, in which the previously consented-to decisions are implemented.

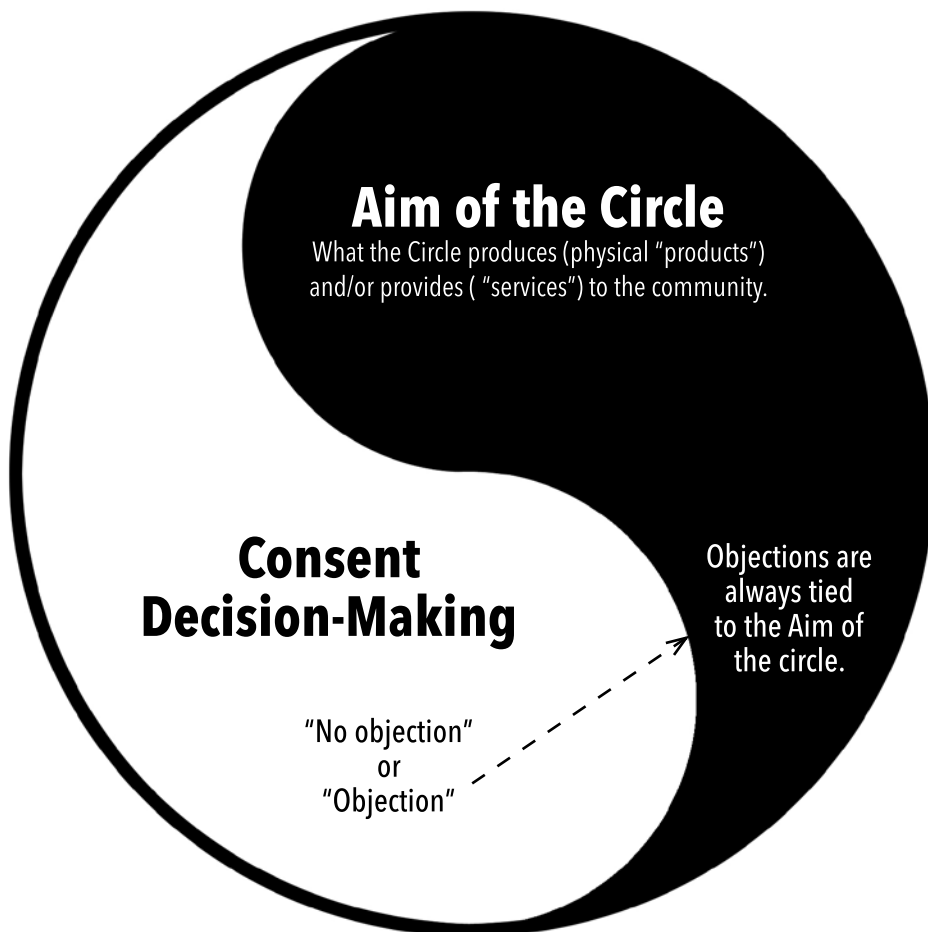
Consent Decision-Making is used in Policy Meetings. In Operations Meetings in businesses and nonprofits decisions are often made unilaterally (that is, autocratically) by the Operations Leader—hence the term Operations “Leader.” This is highly recommended for efficiency and effectiveness. John Schinnerer points out that it’s easy enough to have the Operations Leader decide policy implementation unilaterally in Operations Meetings, since the policy itself was already consented to in an equivalent way by all circle members in a Policy Meeting. Think of the Operations Leader as a “straw boss” to effectively implement the circle’s policies.

However, in Operations Meetings circle members can actually make decisions any way they like. This can include the Operations Leader calling the shots, but it also can include Consent Decision-Making, consensus, majority-rule voting, super-majority voting, or everyone just talking about things without any particular method.

The bottom line: in Policy Meetings decisions are made only by Consent Decision-Making; in Operations Meetings circle members choose the method they like.

The Six Steps of Consent Decision-Making

Every circle member must give his or her consent to pass a proposal for their



circle. Proposals are offered in order to find better ways to help the group achieve their circle's Aim. Therefore each member gives their consent depending on *how the proposal serves or doesn't serve their circle's Aim*. That is, each circle member consents to the proposal if it would *not* conflict with their circle's Aim or with their own ability to productively carry out their specific tasks for the circle, relative to its Aim. In Consent Decision-Making, every "No objection" or "Objection" in a circle is directly related to its Aim.

In circles like the car co-op meeting, each person in the circle speaks in turn, rather than the facilitator calling on people who raise their hands. These are called "rounds."

Consent Decision-Making has six steps. When someone objects to a proposal, the *Consent Round* (4th step) and *Resolve Objections Round* (5th step) are alternated until there are no more objections. This means every circle member has given his or her consent to the now-modified proposal.

Step One—Present the Proposal: A circle member presents the proposal.

Step Two—Clarifying Questions: Each person around the circle in turn, the facilitator included, says if they have any questions about the proposal. This round is designed to find out only whether each circle member *understands* the proposal, not whether they like it. A person can ask the presenter, "Does the proposal mean X?"

Sometimes, though, people try to express a reaction in this step. They may start out with a question that becomes a reaction or comment disguised as a question. (The facilitator reminds them they'll have a chance to express their reactions in the next step.)

Because the facilitator is a circle member too, he or she participates in this and all subsequent steps.

Step Three—Quick Reaction Round: The facilitator asks if there are any quick reactions to the proposal, and each person responds. The purpose of this step is for people to express a quick general response—"I like it," "I don't like it," "I think it might be OK if we change some things," etc. The Quick Reaction Round is also designed to screen the proposal before the next Consent Round in order to make

any obvious adjustments; it saves time when a proposal has significant problems that should be addressed before continuing. For example, circle members might see that the proposal doesn't include what a project will cost or an estimate of how long it will take, that the proposal is not fleshed out enough yet and thus not ready for a decision. Such comments are valuable feedback for the presenter, who might modify the proposal accordingly and bring it back to the next meeting. Or the circle could modify the proposal on the spot. The Quick Reaction Round also reveals when the proposal is fine as is.

Step Four—Consent Round: The facilitator asks each person around the circle whether he or she has a "reasoned objection" to the proposal. This is literally a call for a decision. It occurs early in the process because it's possible the proposal may pass *right then* if there are no objections.

Reasoned objections. "Reasoned" means a clear, understandable argument for why the proposal should not be passed, based on the circle's Aim. Here, "argument" means a reasoned statement of fact and the conclusions drawn from those facts, stated in a way that can be understood by other circle members. This is similar to the usage of "argument" in mathematics (e.g., a "mathematical argument").

A reasoned argument means everyone can understand the objection, even if they don't agree with it. "This is a big 'aha!' for some people," John Schinnerer says. "People are glad to realize 'Oh, I can still disagree!'" Understanding an objection does not equal—or require—agreement!

Objection, No objection. In the Consent Round each person says either "No objection" or "Objection."

"No objection" essentially means, "*The proposal seems 'good enough for now'—I consent to try it.*"

"Objection" essentially means, "*Hold on, I've thought of one or more arguments against the proposal as it is currently worded. I'm not ready to consent to it yet.*"

The term "No objection" is used so people assess the proposal for a reason *not* try it. This is so circle members will ask themselves whether the proposal is "good enough for now" or "safe enough to try," and *won't* ask themselves whether they "support" or "approve" it enough. If the question is "Any objections?" then the answer must be "No" or "Yes." But if the question were "Do you consent?," it wouldn't be objections that were being asked for, and in Consent Decision-Making we're looking for objections, not consent. Consent is the absence of objections.

(However, some people do say "Consent" instead of "No objection," or use either phrase.)

"Arguments" for the objection. When someone objects, the facilitator thanks that



A group of members of Windsong Cohousing in Langley, BC discuss their community's Aim.

Photos courtesy of Diana Leafe Christian

person and continues on around the circle. After hearing from everyone the facilitator returns to each circle member who objected and asks what their objection is. Each objector in turn gives the clear and reasoned arguments for their objection.

Vague feelings of discomfort. As noted earlier, these arguments must be easily understood by others, rather than expressed in unclear or confusing ways. However, some objections may start out as a vague discomfort or an uneasy feeling which has not yet become a clear and reasoned argument. The facilitator and other circle members then ask questions and suggest possible reasons, in order to draw out whatever reasoned arguments may underlie the person's feelings of discomfort.

Sometimes the circle cannot uncover what the reasoned arguments are in the amount of agenda time they have for that proposal. The facilitator could propose they adjust the agenda to permit more time to discuss the matter.

If circle members simply cannot understand the person's objection, the facilitator might ask another circle member to work with that person outside the meeting to get at the argument that supports their objection, and then speak on behalf of that person to make the argument(s) for their objection more obvious to other circle members.

If there is time, the facilitator might propose an ad hoc committee (called a "Helping Circle") to explore the objection and bring a modified proposal to the next meeting.

If a decision must be made in the same meeting when it's introduced, however, or if none of the above methods help, the circle may not be able to spend more time trying to uncover the actual arguments for the person's discomfort, and may need to declare the partially formed objection invalid and move on.

Objections are not blocks. Objections are gifts to the circle. They help improve the proposal by identifying aspects that may need modification. Objections also stimulate creative thinking as circle members attempt to resolve apparently contradictory ideas. Objections are not vetoes or blocks and do not stop the proposal (unless they cannot ultimately be resolved in the nine ways suggested below). Offering clear, reasoned, arguments to support one's objection is essentially a positive, good-will action designed

to improve the circle's effectiveness relative to its Aim.

Six legitimate reasons to object to a proposal:

- (1) Aspects of the proposal conflict with your circle's Aim.
- (2) You see one or more obvious flaws in the proposal or important aspects that were left out, relative to your circle's Aim.
- (3) You see potential unintended consequences of implementing the proposal, relative to your circle's Aim.
- (4) One or more aspects of the proposal may not be well-thought out or may be expressed in a confusing way.
- (5) The proposal doesn't have criteria for measuring and/or evaluating the proposal after it has been implemented, or future meeting dates at which to do this.
- (6) One or more aspects of the proposal would not allow you personally to carry out your assigned tasks relative to your circle's Aim.

No personal objections unrelated to the circle's Aim. When Sociocracy is practiced correctly, circle members don't allow purely personal objections. This means objections must be related to the circle's Aim or occur because a circle member could no longer effectively perform his or her tasks in the circle if the proposal passed. If someone tried to object for a personal reason, the facilitator might say, "I'm sorry, that's not related to our Aim," and the objection would not be valid. The facilitator might then read the circle's Aim out loud to remind everyone again what it is.

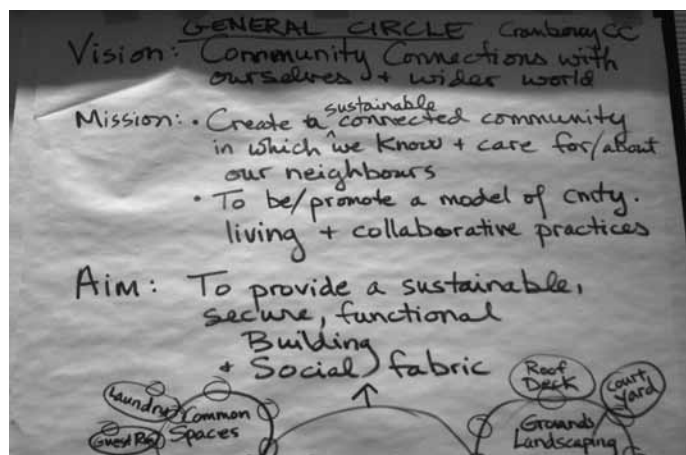
But what if the Aim needs adjusting? On the other hand, sometimes objections may reveal flaws in the Aim itself, or how it is stated. Like everything else in Sociocracy, a circle's Aim is subject to review and potential revision too. Some circle members' objections may indicate that they are no longer in alignment with the Aim (good to find out!). Maybe they are in the wrong circle. Or maybe the Aim itself needs to shift.

Step Five—Resolving Objections: Circle members listen in turn to the arguments each objecting member gives for his or her objection in the Consent Round. If the group is new to Consent Decision-Making, someone could briefly note each argument on a flip chart or whiteboard visible to everyone. Having the arguments written and visible can help people still learning Sociocracy to more easily create an amended proposal.

The circle then modifies the proposal, based on these arguments, and considers the modified proposal in the next Consent Round. They can modify the proposal in a number of ways, combining the concerns revealed by the arguments with the original purpose of the proposal.

Nine ways to resolve an objection:

- (1) The person(s) objecting could propose changes in the proposal to resolve their objection.
- (2) The facilitator could suggest an amendment to the proposal.
- (3) The originator of the proposal, one or more others in the circle, or everyone in the circle could suggest amendments to it.
- (4) Circle members could add specific concerns raised in the arguments to the criteria for measuring and evaluating the proposal after it is later implemented. They could also move up the date for measuring and evaluating the implemented proposal so this will occur sooner.
- (5) The facilitator could go around the circle and ask each



A draft Mission and Aim some members of Cranberry Commons Cohousing in Burnaby, BC came up with for their community.

Consent Decision-Making

1. Present Proposal

2. Clarifying Questions

"Do you understand the proposal?"

"No questions." Or, "Yes. What about...?"
(In a round or popcorn-style)

3. Quick Reaction Round

"What do you think of it?" (Brief!)

4. Consent Round

"Do you have any reasoned objections to this proposal?" "No objection."

Or, "Objection." "What is your objection?"

Five Reasons to Object:

1. One or more aspects of proposal conflict with circle's aim.
2. One or more obvious flaws, or important aspects left out, relative to circle's aim.
3. Potential unintended consequences of implementing proposal, re circle's aim.
4. One or more aspects are not well thought out, or are expressed in a confusing way.
5. One or more aspects would not allow you to carry out your tasks in circle, re its aim.

5. Resolving Objections:

1. Add concern as new criterion for evaluation, and/or make first evaluation date sooner.
2. Facilitator amends it.
3. Proposal originator amends it.
4. Person(s) objecting, one or more others, or everyone in circle could amend it.
5. Round: "How would you resolve this?"
6. "Fishbowl" of two-three people in middle.
7. Refer to Research Team.
8. Refer to Resolution Team.
9. Refer to higher or lower circle.

6. Announce Decision and Celebrate

You've made a "good enough for now" decision.

person, "How would you resolve the proposal, given these argument(s)?" After two or three rounds, a way to revise the proposal might become obvious, based on people's suggestions. The facilitator and/or others could then modify it.

(6) If the arguments for an objection are not clear, the facilitator could ask two or three circle members to sit in the middle of the circle, "fishbowl-style," to talk about their feelings and arguments. Becoming more clear first about feelings and arguments for an objection may help people suggest helpful amendments.

(7) The facilitator could ask several circle members to become a "Resolution Team" to create a modified proposal, either before the next meeting or during a break in that meeting.

(8) If an objection shows that more information is needed for the proposal, the facilitator could ask several circle members to become a "Research Team" to

compile additional information with which to amend the proposal, perhaps before the next meeting or during a break in that meeting.

(9) If the objection(s) indicate the proposal addresses a larger or more abstract issue than the circle's more specific and concrete area of responsibility and Aim—or that it will be controversial or is actually a community-wide issue—the circle could refer it to a "higher" (or "larger") circle such as the General Circle. Or if the arguments indicate the proposal addresses a more specific and concrete issue than the circle's area of responsibility and Aim, it could be referred to the more appropriate "lower" (or "smaller") circle.

"Resolving objections can be playful and satisfying," says John Buck, "like the group solving a jigsaw puzzle together."

Repeating and alternating the Consent Round and Resolving Objections Round.

If the proposal is modified in any of the above ways, the facilitator conducts another Consent Round with the modified proposal.

If there are objections to the now-modified proposal, the circle repeats the Resolving Objections round.

Alternating these two steps, the *Consent Round* and the *Resolving Objections Round*, occurs until the proposal has been modified well enough that no circle member has a further objection.

A proposal passes when there are no more objections to it.

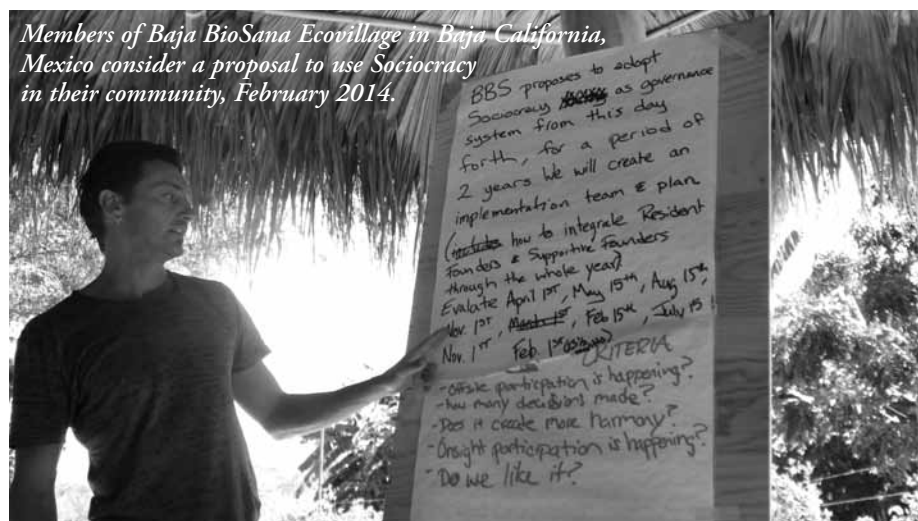
Step Six—Announcing the Decision and Celebrating: This step acknowledges that the circle has just accomplished one of its agenda items and can move to the next item. It may not celebrate the decision they just consented to. Rather they may celebrate that they just used the Consent Decision-Making process successfully (or more successfully than the previous time).

There is no "standing aside" in Consent Decision-Making—if someone has a concern they must express it as an objection.

Group Discussion

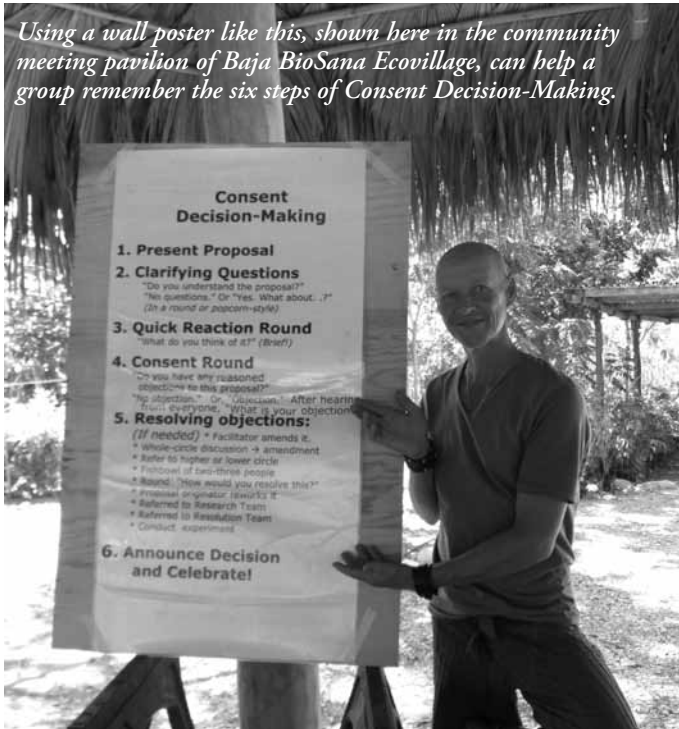
The relatively rigorous structure of Consent Decision-Making—drawing ideas and feelings through the filter of "Objection" or "No objection"—may seem strange at first when one is used to free-form discussion in which the discussion takes awhile and meanders because people want to be heard for the sake of being heard. Consent Decision-Making is not about being heard for the sake of being heard, however. It's about sharing clear, helpful reasons why a proposal is not fine to approve as is and pointing out how to modify it.

The issues raised in a group discussion usually emerge anyway through the "No objection" or "Objection" structure, but more efficiently. This focused, concentrated process—with people asking themselves why they can't just consent to the proposal as is—brings to light the same kinds of observations, insights, questions, or concerns



Members of Baja BioSana Ecovillage in Baja California, Mexico consider a proposal to use Sociocracy in their community, February 2014.

Using a wall poster like this, shown here in the community meeting pavilion of Baja BioSana Ecovillage, can help a group remember the six steps of Consent Decision-Making.



Check-Ins, Talking Stick meetings, Wisdom Circles, Sharing Circles, and so on.

Facilitating Sociocracy

Facilitating Consent Decision-Making requires modest facilitation skills and an understanding of how Consent Decision-Making works. The facilitator's primary job is to keep the process moving, even though all circle members hold responsibility for the quality of facilitation. Also, please keep in mind that the facilitator has no power beyond that granted to this role by other circle members.

When people are first learning Consent Decision-Making, it helps to display a large poster on the wall showing the six steps, to help both the facilitator and all circle members. The facilitator needs to keep the group to the agenda times, and needs to sense if anyone in the circle is upset at any point, find out why (is it related to an objection?), and get the circle back on track. If anyone goes off on a tangent, says "Objection" or "No objection" before the Consent Round occurs, or makes helpful suggestions when they're not in the Resolve Objections Round, the facilitator gently reminds circle members which step they're currently on, perhaps using the wall poster. Ideally the facilitator uses these times as educable moments, helping circle members recall how Consent Decision-Making works, learning as they go.

I personally have found Consent Decision-Making easier to facilitate than the consensus process, and I suspect new facilitators would find it easier too. This is probably because the structured, step-by-step process of Consent Decision-Making doesn't require the facilitator to remember so many things at once or be responsible for myriad small process decisions.

Rounds—Leveling the Playing Field, Creating Group Energy

In steps two through five each person in the circle speaks in turn, rather than the facilitator calling on only those who raise their hands. Using rounds levels the playing field. It allows quieter circle members to share their views naturally when it's their turn—they're not forced to suddenly become more assertive just to be heard. And it reins in the more outspoken or verbose circle members, who may speak too much already.

Moreover, going around the circle repeatedly tends to create a kind of spiraling group energy—it feels good! *We the People* co-author Sharon Villines observes, "Rounds are about listening. They should be transformative, not just about information-collecting." And Quebec Sociocracy trainer Gilles Charest says, "Rounds form a group!"

Must Every Proposal Be Approved?

A proposal doesn't have to be approved just because circle members are expected to modify it to meet objections. People can certainly postpone a proposal until a future meeting or reject it altogether if the arguments for objections don't seem easily or immediately resolvable or if there does not seem to be enough support for it.

that might normally emerge in a group discussion. The structure hones any random insights or chatty observations into more rigorous and immediately useful information. It's like pushing unorganized, amorphous material through a fine filter so it emerges in more clear, discrete, and usable ways. When circle members learn how to do this, decision-making can become faster, more efficient, and more satisfying than seeking the same information through prolonged discussion.

Another purpose for doing rounds instead of discussion is to build equivalence in the group. "What we are used to as discussion is often 'dominator discussion,'" observes John Schinnerer. "The dominators argue with each other while no one else gives input, or they're given token representation when someone remembers to ask them what they think." John notes that after a group completes its first reasonably smooth process of consenting to a proposal—with self-correction on crosstalk, reactions-disguised-as-questions, random observations, etc.—he invites them to notice that they've just had a "discussion" in a different form. Then he asks them how they liked it. "Once a group has the pleasure of a Sociocracy 'discussion' like this," John says, "and they experience how quickly they get things done, they tend to save discussions for social occasions."

A discussion step can be added, however. Sociocracy is such a flexible method that any circle member can propose an open discussion, which will happen if the circle gives consent. A circle can also build discussion time into their Consent Decision-Making process for a given time period (to be assessed and evaluated later), again by making and consenting to a proposal to do this.

Communities using Sociocracy certainly still share feelings and ideas in free-form discussions with plenty of time and space to hear one another deeply. But they usually do this in other kinds of meetings outside of the official Sociocracy process, such as

If some circle members strongly support a proposal that other circle members equally reject, this may indicate the circle's Aim is so vague it can be interpreted in several different ways, or that some of them don't correctly understand it. If so, the circle may need clarification of their Aim from the next higher circle.

Consent Decision-Making as the Basis of Sociocracy's Four Meeting Processes

Consent Decision-Making is the basis of three other meeting processes, which we'll examine in future issues of this article series.

(1) *The Proposal-Forming Process*, in which people identify the elements necessary to create a proposal, and then create a proposal that addresses all of the elements they identified.

(2) *Selecting People for Roles* (also called "Sociocracy Elections").

(3) *Role-Improvement Feedback*. People serving in circle roles choose a small team of friends and colleagues to give them, in a courteous and good-will way, feedback about what they're doing well in their role and what may need improvement.



In the Fall 2014 issue we'll see how there can be no "tyranny of the minority" in Sociocracy when it is practiced correctly, and how people can remove someone from their circle if the person's behavior disrupts the circle or if that circle member objects repeatedly, and/or consistently cannot support any suggested modified proposals. We'll also look at the Proposal-Forming Process.

In the following issue we'll describe Selecting People for Roles and Role-Improvement Feedback.

In the next article we'll examine how specific intentional communities use Sociocracy, the benefits they've gained from using it, any challenges they've faced, and how they resolved those challenges.

In the last article we'll look at three ways communities can implement Sociocracy if they're now using a different governance method and consensus decision-making. 🐦

Diana Leafe Christian, author of Creating a Life Together and Finding Community, speaks at conferences, offers consultations, and leads workshops internationally. She teaches Sociocracy to communities in North America, Europe, and Latin America. See www.DianaLeafeChristian.org.

"Consent Decision-Making," "Consent Round," "Consent"

"Consent Decision-Making" is the name of the decision-making method used in Sociocracy. (*I've capitalized these terms in this article to highlight them, although in Sociocracy literature they are not capitalized.*)

A "Consent Round" is a step in the Consent Decision-Making process.

"Consent" is what circle members give a proposal when they pass it. "Consenting" to a proposal offers a different emphasis than "approving," "supporting," "passing," or "consensing" to a proposal.

—D.L.C.

Consent Decision-Making and Consensus—Similarities and Differences

Both methods are based on the intention to include everyone's input in the decision-making process and exclude no one. In both, people modify a proposal well enough so everyone can approve it (consensus) or consent to it (Consent Decision-Making). Both methods use an agenda, proposals, a facilitator, and a minute-taker. In both there are times for clarifying questions and for deciding whether to approve the proposal. In Consent Decision-Making usually there is no discussion, although discussion time can be added if circle members want to add discussion.

The skills of facilitating and minute-taking are the same in both, although I believe it's easier to facilitate Consent Decision-Making. In the latter the facilitator includes himself or herself in each step; in consensus the facilitator doesn't participate in the decision-making process.

Consensus provides the option to block a proposal. In contrast, Consent Decision-Making has no blocking; an objection is not a block and does not stop a proposal *unless* the objection cannot be resolved (see "Nine ways to resolve an objection," p. 62-63).

When consensus is correctly practiced, proposals are modified based on people's stated concerns, and the group modifies the proposal before testing for consensus. However, when consensus is *incorrectly* practiced—as unfortunately can occur in intentional communities—there is often a polarized "go/no-go" energy: either a proposal is modified and passed or stopped altogether.

As with correctly practiced consensus, Consent Decision-Making is based on solution-oriented collaboration to create a modified proposal.

—D.L.C.

Sociocracy Resources

- Video: "Lost Valley: A Tale of Sociocracy." Youtube.com
- Article: "Sociocracy: A Permaculture Approach to Community Evolution," Melanie Rios, COMMUNITIES, issue #153, Winter 2011
- Sociocracy.Info: www.sociocracy.info
- The Sociocracy Consulting Group: sociocracyconsulting.com
- Governance Alive: www.governancealive.com
- Sociocracy UK: sociocracyuk.ning.com
- Sociocracy Center in the Netherlands: www.sociocratie.nl

Sociocracy Trainers Who Teach Intentional Communities

North America: John Schinnerer: john.schinnerer@sociocracyconsulting.com

Jerry Koch-Gonzalez: jerry.koch-gonzalez@sociocracyconsulting.com

Diana Leafe Christian: diana@ic.org

UK: James Priest: jamespriest@thriveincommunity.co.uk

Australia: Gina Price: ginaprice@optusnet.com.au

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- Aldo Leopold

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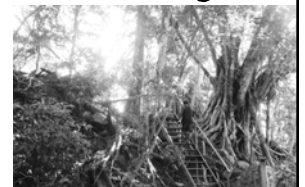
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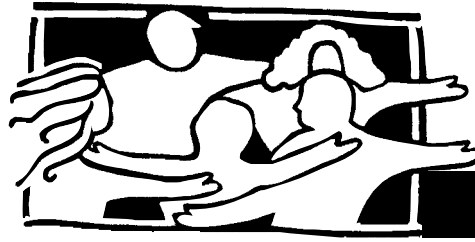
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Contact: Irene_Perler@hotmail.com

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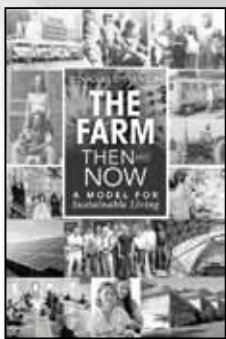
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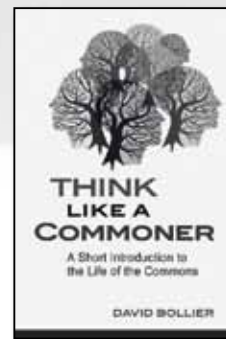
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DANCING RABBIT'S EXCHANGE LOCAL MONEY SYSTEM

(continued from p. 19)

that the ELM System has provided so far, and the savings on interest payments adds up to \$13,797.50 over five years. In reality our actual interest savings isn't this high yet because most of our organizations are not fully utilizing the financing that's been provided to them, but the opportunity is there.

\$13K is a notable cost reduction in interest payments. Maybe it is even enough to get your local pizza joint interested, but likely not enough to excite your chamber of commerce, and it certainly isn't going to spark a local currency revolution.

Don't worry, it gets better, a lot better...

From 2007 to 2012 the ELM System doubled in size every two years. In case you don't understand exponential growth, this is fast, really fast! In fact, it is as fast as the computer industry. (See en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Moore's_Law.)

With this last statistic, I bet the members of your chamber of commerce are raising their eyebrows, but there's more...

In 2013 the ELM system doubled in size in just under a year. Yep, that's right. Last year the ELM system grew twice the speed of the computer industry, and with it so did the amount of interest-free financing that we can provide to our local organizations. This is possible only because of the depth of penetration that we've achieved with our currency. This is something that can happen with any local currency that follows the lessons learned from Dancing Rabbit's experience. (See en-na.ecovillage.org/ena-dancing-rabbits-successful-local-currency.)

Do you think your local chamber of commerce will want to learn how they can help the small businesses in your town to acquire interest-free financing that grows at a faster rate than the computer industry? I think so!

Do you think the success of Dancing Rabbit's currency could spark a wave of interest from small businesses all across the country? It could, but only if they know about it. Please share this article with the small business owners in your town. Better yet, share it with your local chamber of commerce. Help make local currencies a central part of this country's economy so we can provide critical financing to the small businesses that keep our communities connected and thriving at a local level. ☺

Nathan Mackenzie Brown is the Secretary of Exchange Local Money System and he has lived at Dancing Rabbit Ecovillage since 2005. Nathan is a professional online business consultant who prides himself in his ability to work an average of 15 hours a week while donating half of his adjusted gross income to worthy causes. In addition to being the Secretary for the ELM System, Nathan is an Executive for Dancing Rabbit's Cattail Cooperative, he's a founding member of Dancing Rabbit's Men's Group, and he loves to play Ultimate Frisbee when it is warm and to go sledding and play broomball in winter.



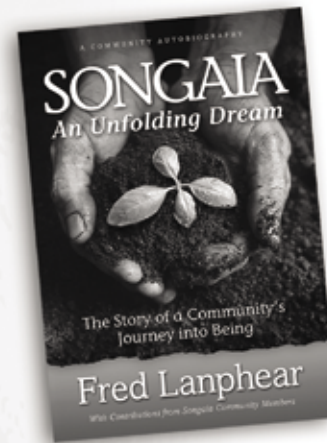
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This book is a great resource for anyone interested in community & cohousing.

Written by **Fred Lanphear**, a founding member of Songaia and a passionate communitarian who spent the last 40 years of his life engaged in building community. He began writing *Songaia: An Unfolding Dream* soon after he was diagnosed with ALS, knowing this would be the closing chapter to his life.

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TRADE SCHOOL INDY: BARTERING A NIGHT SCHOOL FOR EVERYONE

(continued from p. 48)

attending classes and publicizing events. Classroom space is donated in several venues, including rent-by-the-hour commercial kitchen Indy's Kitchen, which has played host to culinary experts on "real food" cooking, cocktails and elixirs—and that unsung delicacy: kale.

Brittany says the philosophy behind TSI, that "education should be accessible to everyone," seems to resonate deeply with all comers. "And I love that I can bring an apple or a bag of oranges in exchange for learning these great things."

Besides, people engage with each other differently when payment is made in nonmonetary gifts instead of cash, the women say. Bypassing the money economy—with its faceless credit card numbers, its indifferent cash register checkouts—creates a shared experience that deepens human connection.

Furthering that spirit of interconnectedness, teachers sometimes give their "payment" to a local cause—offering an Indian cooking class in exchange for donations for a food pantry, or teaching sewing skills in exchange for business suits to help battered women seek employment.

This learning revolution, powered by "crazies" and fueled by generosity, shows no signs of waning. 🐦

Shawndra Miller is a Mennonite-born urban homesteader, community organizer, and writer who lives in Indianapolis. In 2007 she cofounded a grassroots neighborhood resilience group called the Irvington Green Initiative. She is currently at work on a book about the community resilience movement. Meanwhile she blogs about the world's remaking at shawndramiller.com/blog.



The Great Experiment: everyday life in senior cohousing in Denmark

*Det store eksperiment, hverdagsliv
i seniorbofællesskaberne*

By Max Pedersen

Statens Byggeforskningsinstitut,

Aalborg Universitet, 2013; additional information

available from anthropologist Max Pedersen at max@zenior.dk

The *Great Experiment* is a welcome addition to the conversation about what makes for a quality lifestyle, especially during the senior years. The book describes the transition from an initial idea, some 25 years ago, to a well-established and economically feasible lifestyle for seniors.

The first two senior cohousing units came about through the stubborn persistence of a group of elderly, strong-willed Danish women in 1987. Even though it was a social and economic experiment it quickly caught on, and today there are between 200-300 senior cohousing facilities with over 5000 seniors choosing a lifestyle that offers a sense of security, with the added benefit of companionship.

The author of *The Great Experiment*, anthropologist Max Pedersen, collected extensive data through questionnaires and interviews. The book examines and answers questions regarding daily living in senior cohousing, such as: Does this type of living arrangement live up to the residents' expectations? How to delegate and implement duties, and other practical matters? What about democracy within the cohousing community? The necessity of study groups? How do the residents deal with the onset of advanced age, and progressing illness, and to what extent can you expect your neighbours to take care of these needs? What is the common house used for? How often do members share a common meal?

Another interesting section deals with sources of conflict, and how they could be dealt with. The book also addresses the concerns and conclusions made by the architects, the builders, and the municipalities, such as which building materials to choose and optimal layout, how many units are ideal in a typical cohousing project, and is it worthwhile to build green? Affordability is also discussed, with the priority being on providing rental units. The last section looks at the senior cohousing unit on a global scale, with a noted escalating trend in North America.

Why did the seniors decide to move into senior cohousing? According to research presented in the book, 55 percent wanted to move into a more manageable living arrangement, 50 percent wished for a smaller house, 44 percent were searching for a sense of security, 43 percent wished to spend more time with neighbours, 31 percent preferred spending time with people their own age, and 16 percent expressed a desire to live in a more modern house. The priority placed on quality and on a more manageable housing arrangement seems surprising, considering that the concept of senior cohousing compared to traditional housing focuses on the social aspects of human interactions. The author explains that just because the seniors express fear of spending their old age alone in too big a house as their primary impetus for moving into cohousing, it doesn't mean that most haven't thought a great deal about the importance of being a good neighbour—they also prioritize this.

The residents' answers generally represent a bright picture of living in communities. 95 percent of the surveyed residents say they are content or very content with staying in their houses, and as many think they have a good neighborhood. 98 percent indicate that they feel safe or very safe in this type of living arrangement. 88 percent indicate that they

have made new acquaintances and friends amongst their neighbours. Surprisingly the expectation that this type of living arrangement would encourage lots of common interactions through shared meals and activities has seemingly not been realized. Yet most residents (88 percent) indicated that they are satisfied with the existing level of social interactions.

It would be interesting to examine the hypothesis that living in senior cohousing has a preventative effect on overall physical as well as mental health risks associated with living alone. Another hypothesis might be that the social cohesiveness of the group would encourage a more active and extroverted (senior) lifestyle than traditional living arrangements would.

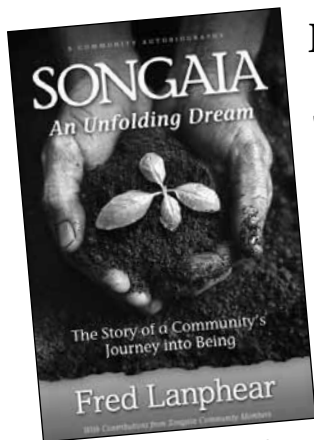
The book paints a dynamic picture of old age where being retired does not necessarily lead to a passive life. Instead many use their free time by being physically as well as mentally active, enjoying cultural experiences, traveling, and at the same time selecting a living environment that suits their lifestyle. A sense of security is central, as is the choice to live in a more modern and manageable housing unit.

The Great Experiment is indispensable reading for all who are considering establishing or who currently live in a senior housing community. The book is available only in Danish, but according to the author, plans are underway to have it translated to English. 🐦

Ariane Kelleris is a Danish/Canadian Psychologist who is considering this attractive type of living arrangement. Please feel free to contact her at jankel@iname.com. She writes: "Being at this transitory point in my life, of moving to that often-dreamed-about phase of being retired, empty nester, 'yeah, time to really live,' my husband and I are still searching for that perfect place to be. My search has brought me to examine cohousing in Denmark (where we live), in France (where we would love to live), and in Canada (where we most likely will settle). I am really pleased that someone has done a lot of work to examine the many facets of senior cohousing in Denmark. Translating its highlights from Danish to English doesn't do the book justice, nor do the conclusions necessarily transfer from one country/culture to another, but I really appreciate it as a working tool."

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FRED'S LAST SONG

Songaia: An Unfolding Dream: The Story of a Community's Journey into Being

By Fred Lanphear

Lanphear Design, Bothel, Washington, 2013

Back in January I received in the mail a freshly printed copy of Fred Lanphear's posthumously published history of Songaia (www.songaia.com), a cohousing community in Bothell, Washington that he helped form in 1990. It brought back memories...

—September 1993

I first stepped foot on the Songaia property to attend the FIC's fall organizational meetings, immediately on the heels of our having hosted a six-day Celebration of Community on the campus of The Evergreen State College in Olympia, Washington. One thousand people had participated in our event and we were basking in the afterglow of that stupendous achievement. I recall sleeping in the barn that visit.

—September 2006

FIC again held fall meetings at the community—this time in conjunction with one of our Art of Community weekends (held on the campus of Bastyr University in nearby Kenmore). Long-time Songaia member Craig Ragland was the event coordinator and this gathering, too, was a big success. That visit I slept in one of the guest rooms below the dining room.

—June 2008

I was at Hummingbird Ranch outside of Mora, New Mexico for FIC's spring organizational meetings. One day our entourage was wending its way to the spacious yurt where the plenaries were being held when Fellowship Board member Fred Lanphear lost his balance and fell.

Fred was in the early stages of suffering the irreversible neural damage associated with ALS. His balance wasn't what it used to be, and the thinner oxygen at 7000+ feet didn't help. Fortunately, Fred wasn't seriously hurt, but it was a graphic foreshadowing of the ever-increasing limitations he would be facing. In that instance, there were plenty of friends at hand to help him get back up and Fred was able to participate fully in the meetings.

But that was the last time he was in the FIC circle; 27 months later he was dead. While it was hard to see a compatriot suffer, Fred wanted no part of our pity. He came to the Board meeting because he liked what we were doing and wanted to be actively engaged for as long as he could.

We were inspired by his dedication and positive attitude. He had had a full life and was appreciative of having pre-knowledge about his limited remaining time: it helped him focus his attention on how best to use his final months. I still smile when recalling his commitment to continue singing for as long as he could, and to dance until all he could manage was to shake his body and move his eyebrows in time with the music.

—June 2009

FIC selected Fred as the inaugural recipient of the Kozeny Communitarian Award, honoring his lifetime achievements in building and promoting community. I had the pleasure of personally presenting this to Fred in a ceremony at Songaia, where I read the citation in the presence of the community that he loved, and who loved him in return.

Fred was in a wheelchair then. While his legs would no longer sustain him, his vibrant spirit was undiminished. It was the last time I saw him.

—January 2014

The book I had in my hand—*Songaia: An Unfolding Dream*—is the main thing that Fred worked on in his final years.

• • •

The book is an easy read, which I'm sure was exactly what Fred had in mind. It's 189 pages of straightforward narrative interlarded with poignant and heartfelt vignettes from no less than 22 community members. This not only makes the story come alive (placing the reader in the events), it yields a product that's more of an edited collective story than just the-world-

according-to-Fred.

While the editing is down home (it's "Brussels sprouts," plural; not "brussel sprouts") and there's a fair amount of repetition, it should be read in the same spirit in which it was created: as a labor of love. The power of the book is that it's a success story about how dedicated amateurs succeeded in overcoming whatever obstacles came along to build a highly functioning community with treasured personal bonds that transcend age and income.

To his credit, Fred did not shy away from naming the things that have vexed the community. He describes the chips right where they fell.

The things that stood out for me are:

- How much Songaia has succeeded in manifesting the glue of community through frequent common meals (5x/week), Monday night songfests, and abundant ritual.

- The lovely balance they've effected between practicality and idealism. They use principles as a guide, not a straightjacket. They see the sacred in the mundane, yet have a day-to-day willingness to change things to suit new circumstances and a new configuration of who's in the family. They don't let precedent get in the way of good problem solving.

- Proactive engagement with their neighbors. Residents do not see Songaia as a walled city or as an enclave; the community is a platform for activism, which starts at home.

While I found myself longing for details about some of the solutions they've cooked up over the years, that's quibbling. While my attention flagged during the sections devoted to the sequence of development and construction in the early '90s, the pieces about parenting, relationship, and end-of-life support are riveting. That is community at its best: helping everyone have a better life by showing up to go through it together.

The final chapter distills some of the lessons they've learned after 20 years:

—Shifting from "Are you getting your fair share?" to "Are you getting your needs met?"

—Discovering the Passion Principle: asking residents to do only work they enjoy in amounts they can sustain, effectively undercutting any incentive to martyr oneself.

—Being intentional about how far to shift one's personal boundaries from the "I" end of the spectrum toward the "we."

—Encouraging flexibility, but not to the point that it turns to apathy (or worse, cynicism).

—Embracing a wide range of parenting styles; not expecting there to be a "Songaia" style.

—Appreciating the leverage of different per-

- spectives; not expecting homogeneity.
- Exercising discernment about what's appropriate for plenary.
- Using economies of scale; purchasing in bulk and sharing resources as much as possible.
- Investing in integration of people and ideas (rather than just hoping that it will happen spontaneously).
- Appreciating the value of being willing to engage when things are hard.
- Understanding how all of the above adds up to trust.

In short, this book will never be a success in the bookstalls at airports, but it's a delightful inspiration if you're thinking about starting a community or seriously shopping for one that's genuine and heartfelt.

One of the joys of being FIC's administrator is the opportunity both to meet people such as Fred and Nancy Lanphear, and then to have the first peek at their publications. It was a pleasure to have the coals of all those good memories stirred up by reading this memoir, and I can think of no better way to end this review than by quoting Carol Crow's memory from pages 10-11:

How Songaia Got Its Name

The time was late winter or early spring in 1991 and the place was the Residential Learning Center (RLC) in Bothell. Three youths were part of the RLC at that time, and that evening they had joined the adults living here for the express purpose of creating a new name for this beautiful 11 acres in Canyon Park. The RLC was coming to a close and the new vision was to create a cohousing community.

We gathered in the living room, youths on their bellies on the floor, and we agreed we would not leave until the job was accomplished. We first talked about what characteristics or images we wanted represented in the name. Music, sun, Earth were a few that emerged. Some combinations were in Spanish, as in Casa something. After an hour or so of thinking and stating many possibilities without success, in frustration we went to the kitchen where ice cream sundaes were served to crystallize the spirits.

Clearly, people continued thinking while they ate and upon our return to the living room, we resumed. Soon Bob Lanphear, on staff with the RLC, in a hesitant voice and obviously grasping for the right combination began, "How about Song... song... gaia... SONGAIA!" We each said it a few times, looked at each other and said, "That's IT!"

Within 20 minutes, everyone returned to their rooms, pleased as punch and firm in the realization that Songaia, which can be interpreted as "Song of the Living Earth," was who we were and how we wanted to be known down through the years. Our community had once again pooled its wisdom and created a symbolic name for a new entity coming into being.

You can order a copy of Fred's book from Community Bookstore: www.ic.org/community-bookstore. ☺

Laird Schaub is Executive Secretary of the Fellowship for Intentional Community (FIC), publisher of this magazine, and cofounder of Sandhill Farm, an egalitarian community in Missouri. (After 39 years at Sandhill, he is on a year's leave of absence, joining his wife Maikwe Schaub Ludwig at Dancing Rabbit Ecovillage.) Laird is also a facilitation trainer and process consultant, and he authors a blog that can be read at communityandconsensus.blogspot.com. This article is excerpted from his blog entry of February 1, 2014.



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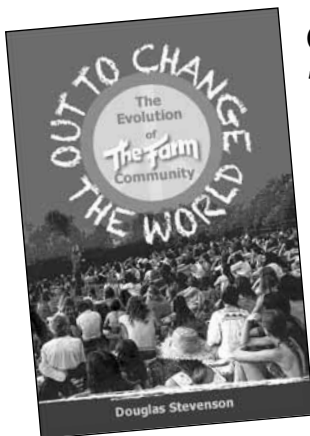
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Out to Change the World: The Evolution of The Farm Community

By Douglas Stevenson

Book Publishing Company, Summertown,
Tennessee, 2014

Out to Change the World—an engrossing story of a brave, committed group doing something extraordinary—is also a wonderful entry point for understanding the communities movement today. In the '60s and '70s The Farm, along with Twin Oaks and Findhorn, pioneered the 20th century iteration of this radical way of living—rejecting mainstream values and practices in favor of cooperation, shared resources, and increased self-awareness.

Douglas Stevenson is the perfect Farm member to tell the tale. He arrived at the gates as a 19-year-old in 1973 and has been deeply involved in The Farm ever since. He covers the remarkable accomplishments of The Farm's early forming years, its nadir and life-changing transition in the early '80s, and how it has evolved and thrived since then.

Here's what I mean by "remarkable accomplishments." These city-bred West Coast hippie youth made friends with and gained the respect of their rural neighbors in Tennessee's Bible Belt. They taught themselves how to dismantle old buildings and construct funky multi-family homes with salvaged materials. They invented their own utilities, including a community-wide telephone company jerry-rigged with scrap copper and their own municipal water service with a tall water tank and miles of pipes. They invented brand-new technologies like a hand-held radiation detector. They invented new ways to feed themselves on little money, finding dozens of new ways to process and cook soybeans. They invented new soy products too, like Ice Bean. Stephen's wife Ina Mae Gaskin and the Farm Midwives learned, mastered, revived, promoted, and gained respect internationally for the art and science of midwifery, and the Farm Midwives safely delivered hundreds of babies. Through Plenty, a nonprofit they started in 1974, The Farm responded to the needs of homeless victims of a Guatemalan earthquake. In Guatemala they built innovative small homes, piped clean, potable water to the village, taught rudimentary sanitation principles, and set up a soy dairy that village women could use by grinding soybeans on their stone *metates*. They organized a free ambulance system in the South Bronx and trained dozens of local unemployed people as professional ambulance drivers, dramatically increasing the Bronx's previously abysmal ambulance-response time. For these and similar good works, in 1980 Plenty and Stephen Gaskin received the international Right Livelihood Award, sometimes also called the "Alternative Nobel Prize."

What leaps out in this book is how hard Farm members worked in those early years, and how extraordinarily well-organized they were. Consider, for a moment, the theory of self-organizing systems. It postulates that if you expose equal elements to a powerful outside energy source, the elements organize themselves in beautiful and unexpected ways. Our biosphere is one example, self-organized in its myriad interconnecting aspects by the energy of the sun. The Farm's countercultural members were exposed to the energy and ideas of Stephen Gaskin, their spiritual leader. From his original Monday Night Class in San Francisco to his weekly sermons in a Farm meadow, Stephen advocated—and positively reinforced—kindness, fairness, neighborliness, responsibility to others, treating people with courtesy and respect (particularly to women), fidelity, marriage, raising children, the vow of poverty, charity to others, and—with the help of one's friends and one's critics—the relentless search for increased self-awareness, self-responsibility, and personal growth. No wonder they accomplished so much!

As someone who studies how people form and maintain successful communities in order to share that information with others, I was especially interested in The Farm's economy, governance and decision-making method, and membership process. It used to be an income-sharing economy, with each community-owned business keeping its own books and establishing its own local credit. In terms of decisions, Stephen and his family made all community decisions. Its membership process consisted of, first step, new arrivals were interviewed in the gatehouse for several hours by several Farm members; step two, newcomers spent three days as official visitors; and step three—voilà!—they joined! In my experience, these are the kinds of idealistic, visionary, theoretical ideas that inexperienced people *imagine* will work in community but which don't actually work in real life.

Well, these methods *did* work for The Farm. But only for a while.

Increasing numbers of newcomers arrived, with The Farm feeding and housing them all. The population swelled to 1700 at one point. But large and famous as The Farm was, its members actually lived a subsistence existence. They crowded together in substandard housing. They ate plain, basics-only food. They didn't have cars, or access to transportation. They couldn't afford to visit their parents. Ten years on, their vows of poverty and minimalist lifestyle no longer elicited super-human efforts, but had ground them down. So naturally they felt confused and dismayed when Stephen seemed indifferent to their plight. Instead, he decided to go on a speaking tour of Europe, with the financially strapped community paying all travel and other expenses for him, his family, and a retinue of assistants.

At about the same time, Farm members learned that for years they'd been collectively spending far more money than they earned. And because of the combined local debt of all The Farm's individual businesses the whole community was in debt half a million dollars, perhaps more.

Over the early '80s various Farm Board Members became aware of this debt and the fact The Farm might actually have to shut down. So, in order to save the community, the Board organized the Great Changeover of October 1983. Overnight, The Farm shifted from an income-sharing to an independent-income economy. Now people must either get outside jobs or work for one of the Farm businesses. Each business must financially support itself and pay its employees wages. Each family must pay their own housing, food, and other monthly expenses, and make monthly payments to help pay off the community's debt. Their governance method shifted to a democracy using consensus decision-making, with each adult member having decision rights. Stephen was asked to step down, and he did. Hundreds left, heartbroken and in shock, unable or unwilling to get jobs or pay the monthly fees. The remaining 100 adults—also heartbroken and demoralized—took over Farm businesses as individually owned enterprises, and paid the monthly fees. Over the next few years they slowly paid off the awful community debt.

The community began to thrive again. With time and experience, The Farm revised its membership process, eventually developing a clear, thorough, and even quite rigorous step-by-step process. Many of their newer members are their grown children returning with their toddlers. These young parents want their own kids to have the same kinds of wonderful experiences living in community and roaming the same meadows and woods they did. Now there

are three generations at The Farm.

And after four decades, the Farm Midwives are continuing to deliver babies safely and naturally. In 2011 Ina Mae Gaskin and the Midwives were also awarded the Right Livelihood Award—the Alternative Nobel Prize.

Out to Change the World is well written. Although I knew this story already, I found myself engrossed in each chapter, as the narrative is not only absorbing but filled with heart. It feels good to read it.

I think any aficionado of the communities movement—or anyone simply curious about what it takes to start a community, live in community, or manage one well (what works and what surely doesn't)—might enjoy *Out to Change the World* just as much as I did.

By the way, Douglas Stevenson is also author of a longer, more in-depth book about the same topic: *The Farm Then and Now* (New Society Publishers, April, 2014). 🐰

Diana Leafé Christian, author of Creating a Life Together and Finding Community, speaks at conferences, offers consultations, and leads workshops internationally (www.DianaLeaféChristian.org).

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DIGGING INTO COMMUNITY

(continued from p. 80)

it. Members of Rockway Mennonite Church discussed how their church community honored and celebrated important life milestones: “(making) you feel truly part of something bigger; you feel a part of the community.”

Churches were also recognized as important sources of socializing: bingo nights, kids programming and other opportunities to have fun together. Today, this has changed significantly. Attendance at churches and other faith-based organizations is in decline in many places. An interfaith group in Halton lamented that some people attend their faith congregation as solely “a service stop for people’s spiritual needs but not a community that plays a large role in their lives.”

A Shift Towards Greater Transience

We are becoming more transient as a society. A group of men who had come from the same village in India shared how their family had always lived in that village. Now, their children and grandchildren were spread out across the globe. They talked about how it was hard to keep the family connected.

Our neighbourhoods are also being affected. In Hamilton, we met with a group of seniors who proudly shared the sense of connection they felt on their street. They talked about how everyone kept an eye out for each other and how, during the war, the whole street would mourn or celebrate together.

In contrast, Jessica from Kitchener-Waterloo talked about how “the people you live next to are not necessarily the people you do life with.” In her neighbourhood, many of her neighbours’ lives were already full with other things and therefore they do not have time for meaningful connection with those on their block. She also shared how many of the people she used to know on her street have now left, making her feel isolated. Instead of putting energy into building connections with her new neighbours, she now focuses on the social groups that have greater stability, like family.

In reflection, two of the primary places where seniors expressed community—faith groups and neighbourhoods—are no longer central in many people’s lives. One group of seniors raised the concern that today’s youth are seeking community without “knowing what (it) looks and feels like.”

Despite some elders’ concerns about the changing experience of community, we found that youth had a far more optimistic view. A group of student leaders in Guelph felt they have new tools that allow them to connect, share, and mobilize in a way that could never have been possible previously. They see their communities as being far more open and diverse than their parents’ generation. Previously, if you did not fit into your community, you were alone. Now, you can find a community no matter who or where you are. We found that this generation feels they can build the communities they want on their terms, seeing a world of possibilities.

At the beginning of this campaign, we wanted to understand what people meant when they used the word “community.” We asked over 100 different people. What we found was that for seniors community was grounded most strongly in a sense of place, whereas youth often focused on a common area of interest. This highlights some of the shifting nature of community.

Group Identity and Boundaries

When we started engaging with churches, we stumbled upon a debate involving identity and boundaries that a couple of churches were starting to wrestle with. One of the earliest conversations we had was with East Zorra Mennonite Church, which sits in the countryside outside of Kitchener-Waterloo in Ontario. This church community had a special presence about it—a palpable joy that emerged whenever they came together. At

the core of East Zorra is this idea of family. For many of the members, this place is more to them than a faith community; the relationships go much deeper. Family implies a strong sense of identity. This identity is important because it makes us feel like we belong, like we are home.

At St. Christopher’s Church in Burlington, the group pushed back against the idea of church as a family. They felt that it implied a high barrier to entry. How would it feel to be a new person in a church that describes itself as a family? One person in particular had a negative experience in a church that described itself as a family. She felt that there was a lack of personal boundaries; everyone was in each other’s business.

Pat, a member of the leadership team for the 1000 Conversations Campaign in Halton, talked about identity as a set of social norms for interaction and that as these social norms become entrenched they form a culture, which forms a boundary for the group. He talked about how this is often unconscious on the part of the community.

At Mannheim Mennonite Church, group members wrestled with wanting to have a strong sense of identity with clear values while also being welcoming to new ideas and people. They debated about how important it was to have clearly defined values and identity, with no clear consensus reached. We found this tension between having a strong sense of identity and still creating space for new ideas existing in many communities.

Technology: Shifting How We Connect

Technology is dramatically changing the landscape of how we interact with each other. “It is now the medium through which we build community,” said a member of the maker space in Hamilton called Think Haus.

Here is an excerpt from that conversation: “Technology lowers the barriers for

engagement. Before, if you had an interest in a particular topic—for instance, model trains—you had to actively seek out other people with a similar interest by browsing through the local newspaper, reaching out to the community hubs (like the library), and talking to lots of people. Now, a simple search online and you hear about the local model train club: where and when its next meeting will take place. The internet makes it really easy to find groups that you are interested in and any sort of information, generally. You are also no longer restrained by geography, which means you have a much larger pool of options and opportunities. This means that no matter how strange or unique your interests, you can find and interact with like-minded individuals.”

A group of University of Guelph students discussed how we are able to engage with a much greater diversity of people, ideas, and cultures than ever before. This access to information is helping increase our understanding of each other, thus raising our empathy. It makes it easier for people to jump from one geographic location to another.

A group of young adults in Hamilton wrestled with the pros and cons of technology. They talked about how it makes finding people who are the same and also those who are different easier. Technology creates the space for people to expand their perspectives and access great diversity, while at the same time it creates space to foster greater extremism because you can choose to focus very narrowly on things that you’ve decided to care about.

Staff at the John Howard Society talked about how most communication is nonverbal and that this type of communication is lost when we move online, which is mainly text-based. As a result, our brains do a lot more work to fill in the gaps, making us susceptible to misinterpretation. As the internet continues to evolve, people find new ways to communicate, as demonstrated by the rise first of emoticons, and later memes and avatars, all designed to help us communicate the nonverbal social cues. Ultimately, though, “a virtual hug or shoulder to cry on does not have the same power as it can in real life,” as an artist in Milton stated.

Technology has opened up a lot of opportunities for connection and communication but we are still learning how to use it to support efforts to build a sense of community with one another.

Join the Conversation...

At Tamarack we believe deeply in the power of community. It is for this reason we have launched the 1000 Conversations Campaign to learn how we can help deepen and strengthen communities across the continent. We hope the insights from these conversations that we share on www.seekingcommunity.ca will inspire policies, programs, and practices and create space for us all to learn together. We cannot do this alone; we need your help.

If you’re a subscriber to COMMUNITIES, we know that community is deeply important to your life and the work that you do. As such, it’s likely that the insights we’ve shared aren’t anything too new for you. So far, we’ve only collected conversations with mainstream groups. We are eager to hear your thoughts and perspectives on the same questions since we know we have much to learn from you. We’d so value your insights as we conduct this research. Bring together your friends, neighbours, intentional community, colleagues, and have a conversation. Then, share what emerged. Tamarack is sponsoring the next issue of COMMUNITIES and would love to feature your documented conversation in this issue. For more information about this initiative, visit www.seekingcommunity.ca or email Derek@tamarackcommunity.ca. 🐦

Derek Alton is Campaign Animator for 1000 Conversations to Shape our Future.

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Digging into Community

A reflection from Tamarack's 1000 Conversations Initiative

We live in community. It's in our DNA. We need one another, plain and simple. Community shapes our identity and quenches our thirst for belonging. It helps us put life into perspective and sort out real danger from perceived danger. Community has the capacity to improve our physical, mental, and economic health, as well as our overall sense of happiness and fulfillment. It has the power to unite us all in a common bond as we work together for a better world.

—Paul Born, excerpt from *Deepening Community*

At Tamarack, we like the Margaret Wheatley quote, “whatever the problem, community is the answer.” We hold a belief that when we build communities that are deeply connected and resilient, we will be better equipped to face many economic, social, and environmental issues and uncertainties.

A year and a half ago, Tamarack began a journey to learn how we might deepen our sense of community. To explore this idea, we launched the *1000 Conversations to Shape our Future* Campaign. The campaign's goal was to co-host conversations about what community means to people today and discover the kind of communities that people hope to create moving forward. These conversations are taking place in churches, schools, with local businesses, governments, in neighbourhoods and at festivals. Through this process, we wanted to create the space where stories about community could be shared; new connections could be fostered; and, new insights could be gleaned. We hoped these conversations could help uncover the assets and strengths already present in these groups, neighbourhoods, and organizations.

Already, more than 130 conversations have been documented, representing the perspectives of a great diversity of groups. This

has already generated such rich insights and we are eager to now share some of the common themes and patterns that are emerging across these many conversations.

Common Themes

- The Shifting Expectations of Community: Stories of Youth and Seniors
- Group Identity and Boundaries
- Technology: Shifting How We Connect

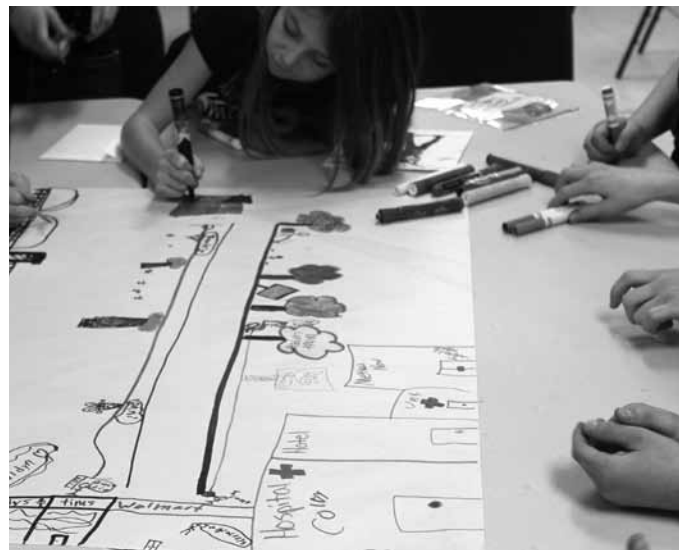
The Shifting Expectations of Community: Comparing the Stories of Youth and Seniors

The experience of community has changed dramatically in the last 50 years. Nowhere is this shift more pronounced than when we compare the conversations of youth and seniors. We have now engaged 25 groups of children and youth (6-24) and nine groups of seniors (65+). Highlighted below are some of the insights that emerge from these contrasting perspectives:

Many seniors shared that their faith group was the center of the community and that most people built their lives around

(continued on p. 78)

Photos courtesy of Derek Alton





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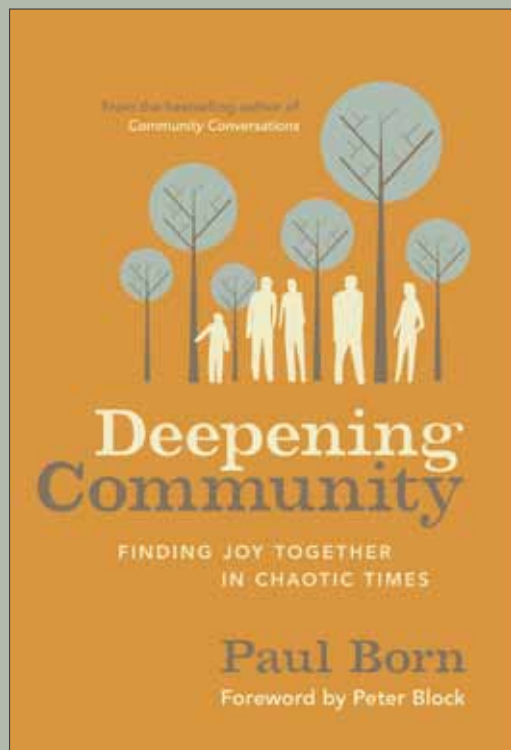
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Community shapes our identity, quenches our thirst for belonging, and bolsters our physical, mental, emotional, and economic health. But in the chaos of modern life, community ties have become unraveled, leaving many feeling afraid or alone in the crowd, grasping at shallow substitutes for true community.

In this thoughtful and moving book, Paul Born describes the four pillars of deep community: sharing our stories, taking the time to enjoy one another, taking care of one another, and working together for a better world. To show the role each of these plays, he shares his own stories—as a child of refugees and as a longtime community activist.

“I listen to Paul Born when I want to know how people get together for the common good. He is a master practitioner and storyteller. If you want to know what lies beyond the radical individualism and collective incompetence that plagues our modern lives, read this book.”
—**John McKnight**, Codirector, Asset-Based Community Development Institute, and coauthor of *The Abundant Community*



Paul Born is the cofounder and President of Tamarack—An Institute for Community Engagement, a global leader on issues of place, collective impact, and community innovation. The author of four books, including the bestseller *Community Conversations*, Born is internationally recognized for his community building activities that have won awards from the United Nations and as a senior fellow of Ashoka, the world’s largest network of social innovators.

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Host a conversation, blog a reflection and get a FREE copy of Paul Born’s newest book, **Deepening Community!**

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conversations