

INSIDE THE GLOBAL ECOVILLAGE MOVEMENT

COMMUNITIES

Life in Cooperative Culture



ECOVILLAGES around the World

**Local Solutions for Global Problems • Ecovillage Strategies in Areas of Crisis
Creating Carbon-Negative Communities • True Sustainability: Indigenous Pathways
Cohousing as a Building Block to the Ecovillage**

Summer 2016 • Issue #171

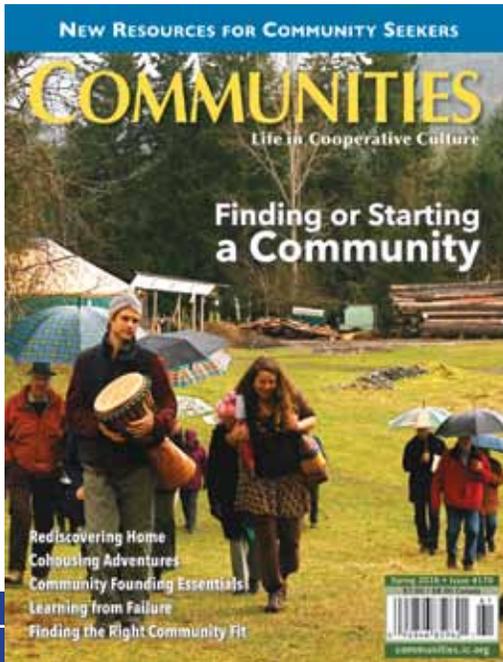
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WHAT READERS SAY ABOUT COMMUNITIES

I love COMMUNITIES magazine. I've read and kept every issue since 1972. Deciding to be communal is the best decision I've ever made in my life. COMMUNITIES has been there from the beginning.

—Patch Adams, M.D., author and founder of the Gesundheit Institute

Our mission at Utne Reader is to search high and low for new ideas and fresh perspectives that aim to start conversations and cure ignorance. To that end, COMMUNITIES has become one of our go-to sources for thought-provoking pieces about people opting out of the rat race and living life on their own terms. We're pleased to share the voices we come across in COMMUNITIES with our readers because they remind us all of the virtue of cooperation and the world-changing potential of coexistence.

—Christian Williams, Editor, Utne Reader

I've been subscribing to COMMUNITIES for over a decade. Each issue is a refreshing antidote to the mainstream media's "me, me, me" culture. COMMUNITIES overflows with inspiring narratives from people who are making "we" central to their lives instead.

—Murphy Robinson, Founder of Mountainsong Expeditions

Community has to be the future if we are to survive. COMMUNITIES plays such a critical role in moving this bit of necessary culture change along. Thank you COMMUNITIES for beating the drum and helping us see.

—Chuck Durrett, The Cohousing Company, McCamant & Durrett Architects

For more than 40 years COMMUNITIES has done an outstanding job of promoting the communitarian spirit to a public in need of that message, as well as serving intentional communities and other groups of people coming together for the common good. I read every issue cover to cover.

—Timothy Miller, Professor of Religious Studies, University of Kansas

COMMUNITIES mentors me with real human stories and practical tools: networking, research, and decades of archives that nourish, support, and encourage evolving wholesome collaborations. The spirit and writings have helped guide me to recognize and contribute to quality community experiences wherever I am. The magazine is an irreplaceable resource and stimulus during the times when community disappears and isolation/withdrawal looms; and an inspiration and morale booster when I am once again engaged with intentional and committed group work.

—Shen Pauley, reader and author, Barre, Massachusetts

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COMMUNITIES



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45

ECOVILLAGES AROUND THE WORLD

- 10 **Overcoming Apartheid—the Global Ecovillage Network**
Kosha Anja Joubert
 Communities worldwide are exploring how to heal our separation from each other and the natural world.
 • **What Are Ecovillages?**
- 13 **The Global Ecovillage Network: Focal Point for a Global Movement**
Ross and Hildur Jackson
 Two pioneers of the ecovillage movement tell their story.
 • **Of Learning and Immortality**
- 18 **Ecovillages Worldwide—Local Solutions for Global Problems**
Leila Dregger
 A wide array of ecovillages throughout the Global North and South address our shared challenges.
- 21 **Ecovillage Strategies in Areas of Crisis**
Leila Dregger and Sarah Queblatin
 Emergency situations around the world have brought together activists, experts, and teachers to offer ecovillage-inspired solutions.
- 24 **Creating Carbon-Negative Communities: Ecovillages and the UN's New Sustainable Development Goals**
Rob Wheeler
 Diverse ecovillages are modeling how to create more just, equitable, and sustainable human societies.
- 28 **Collective Healing**
Kosha Anja Joubert and Stephen Busby
—Interview by Robin Alfred
 Communities become powerful microcosms for trauma—and its potential healing—in the wider society.
- 32 **Learning in Ecovillages AND Getting a College Degree**
Karen Stupski and Giovanni Ciarlo
 Pursuing holistic education through ecovillage immersion experiences can be both challenging and rewarding.
- 36 **An Inspiring Journey in Ecovillages**
Nébesna Fortin
 From La Cité Écologique to NextGEN, a young ecovillage activist completes the circle.



38 The Bridge to a Greener World

John Ahern

This Australian community's bridge is a lot more than just a bridge.

• **The Ecovillage@Currumbin**

41 Yarrow Ecovillage: Cohousing as a Building Block to the Ecovillage

Charles Durrett and Katie McCamant

A Canadian community pioneers ecovillage zoning while incorporating both intergenerational and senior cohousing.

44 Want an Ecovillage? Stay Put!

Abeja Hummel

How can we care for a place if we're not there, day after day, year after year, paying attention?

45 Land and Culture Collaboration

Tom Shaver

Emerald Earth Sanctuary explores how to engage constructively with its northern California ecosystem.

49 Cloughjordan Ecovillage: Modeling the Transition to a Low-Carbon Society

Peadar Kirby

Irish ecovillagers achieve the smallest ecological footprints recorded in their country.

54 True Sustainability: Indigenous Pathways

Dan Schultz

At Maitreya Mountain Village, mainstream pragmatism meets radical idealism.

56 Building an Ecovillage in the Friendly Islands

Philip Mirkin

Fiji Organic Village embodies the challenges and joys of cross-cultural community.

61 Argentina: 13-Day Wavespells at Velatropa

Henny Freitas

Self-managed by students and travelers, an innovative ecovillage nestles in a corner of Buenos Aires.

62 The First Ecovillage in Palestine

Frederick Weihe

A West Bank town of about 1500, Farkha predated the term ecovillage, and is now recognized as one.

VOICES

4 LETTERS

6 PUBLISHER'S NOTE
Ecovillages and the FIC
Sky Blue

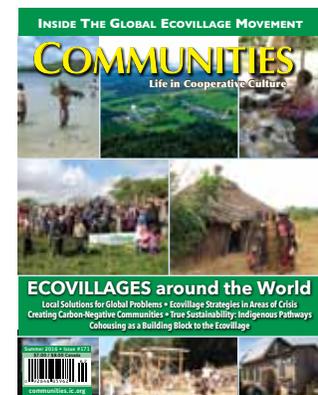
• More on the
FIC-GEN Collaboration

8 NOTES FROM THE EDITOR
Around the World
in 80 Pages
Chris Roth

66 REACH

80 REVIEW
Ecovillage:
1000 Ways to
Heal the Planet
Diana Leafa Christian

ON THE COVER



Ecovillages in diverse locations worldwide explore the many aspects of sustainability. Photo credits (from left to right, top to bottom): courtesy of Philip Mirkin, courtesy of Nébesna Fortin, courtesy of Philip Mirkin, Davie Philip, courtesy of Global Ecovillage Network, courtesy of Nébesna Fortin, courtesy of Tom Shaver, courtesy of Nébesna Fortin.

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

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Saul Of-Hearts

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Kim Kanney

Laird Schaub

Sky Blue (*Twin Oaks*)

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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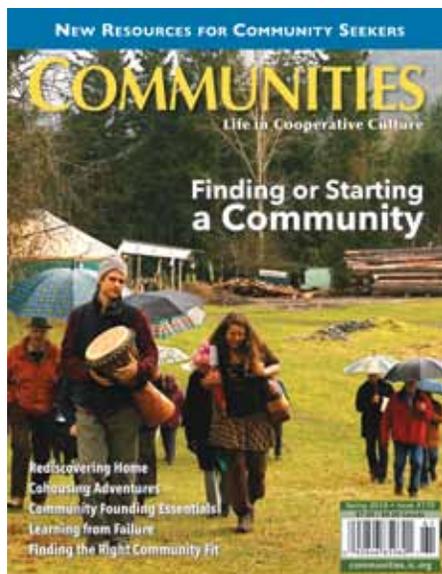
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Letters



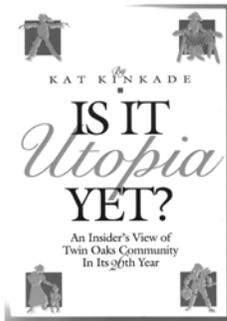
Founding a Community

I appreciate the authors in the Spring 2016 issue (about finding or starting a new community) who recommended my book *Creating a Life Together*. I'd like to send COMMUNITIES readers who may be interested a copy of a long handout I created as a supplement to the book, because it includes many new things I learned about starting a community after I wrote it. For a copy of "The 19 Steps: How Founders Typically Start a Successful New Community," please email me at diana@ic.org. I'll be happy to send it.

Diana Leafe Christian

www.DianaLeafeChristian.org

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



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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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, 23 Dancing Rabbit Ln, Rutledge MO 63563-9720; 800-462-8240; editor@ic.org. To obtain Photo Guidelines, email: layout@ic.org. Both are also available online at ic.org/communities-magazine.

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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.

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What is an “Intentional Community”?

An “intentional community” is a group of people who have chosen to live or work together in pursuit of a common ideal or vision. Most, though not all, share land or housing. Intentional communities come in all shapes and sizes, and display amazing diversity in their common values, which may be social, economic, spiritual, political, and/or ecological. Some are rural; some urban. Some live all in a single residence; some in separate households. Some raise children; some don't. Some are secular, some are spiritually based; 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.



ECOVILLAGES and the FIC

Intentional communities have evolved considerably over the last 200 years, but the sharing of common values has always been a core feature. Historically, religion has provided these values to most groups who want to carve out a space where those values can be practiced intensively. Religion still plays an important role for many communities, but increasingly the drive to create a different way of life has come from a different kind of analysis.

Ecovillages embody one of the most contemporary and nuanced approaches to collective living. The philosophy behind the concept comes the closest to replicating a religious foundation, but in a secular form. I say secular, though many in ecovillages would say that there is a deeply spiritual element. Many within the ecovillage movement see all life as connected and sacred, and believe that some form of greater force or consciousness is at play. Whether this is couched in more scientific or esoteric terminology, it's also commonly associated with an analysis of social justice, and, perhaps most importantly, an analysis of global ecological destruction and the need to create sustainable lifestyles and communities.

The term “ecovillage” came into use with Robert and Diane Gilman's study, *Ecovillages and Sustainable Communities*, for Gaia Trust in 1991. This document led to the conference in 1995 that birthed the Global Ecovillage Network (GEN), which has acted as the centralizing force for the ecovillage movement ever since. As with other types of intentional community, no one has a monopoly on the term ecovillage, there's no certification program, and any group that chooses to identify as an ecovillage may do so.

GEN currently defines an ecovillage as “an intentional or traditional community using local participatory processes to holistically integrate ecological, economic, social, and cultural dimensions of sustainability in order to regenerate social and natural environments.”

Gilman's study offers the definition, "a human-scale, full-featured settlement in which human activities are harmlessly integrated into the natural world in a way that is supportive of healthy human development, and can be successfully continued into the indefinite future."

"Human-scale" and "full-featured" capture a lot of what's important about intentional communities. These terms tie in with what GEN describes as the four dimensions of sustainability: social, economic, ecological, and cultural. They acknowledge the multifaceted nature of our lives as human beings on this planet. This connects to a fact I love to share, which is that the root word of "eco" is the Greek word *oikos*, meaning home. "Eco" isn't just part of "ecological" and "ecovillage," it's part of "economy" as well. Economy is not just about money; it's about how we as a society provide for our basic needs.

A central idea behind ecovillages is that how we provide for our basic needs should not be divorced from the social and cultural aspects of our lives, nor from the ecological impacts of how those needs are met. Ecovillages remind us that it's all connected: where we lay our heads, where we make a living, all the goods and services, the relationships and culture, the natural world, the technology, the governance, the caring and loving and growing and cooking and building, it's all part of it, and we're all in it together.

The sickness and unsustainability of our society are reflected in the radical disintegration, segregation, compartmentalization, and isolation not only of people but of the various aspects of people's lives. This scenario not only allows, but encourages us to make choices from a narrow, self-serving, fear-based perspective. If we can re-integrate our own lives, and our lives with each other's lives; if we can bring each other into our homes, and make decisions about our home together, on a micro scale; then we can begin to cultivate the caring and compassion and intelligence necessary to make decisions that consider people on the other side of the planet. GEN has been a crucial advocate for this worldview in the recent evolution of the intentional communities movement.

The FIC was already an established organization when GEN formed and when its local ambassadors, the Ecovillage Network of the Americas (ENA), started organizing. It was unique that there was an existing organization like the FIC in the regional networks GEN was developing. ENA focused its work on Latin America, in part because the FIC was already active in the US and Canada, and because they didn't want ENA to be dominated by white English-speakers from North America. For the last 20 years, the FIC and ENA have had important connections and overlaps, but have maintained separate activities. In 2012, the Latin America contingent spun off from ENA to form El Consejo de Asentamientos Sustentables de las América Latina (CASA), and the Ecovillage Network of Canada (ENC) formed. Around 2014, ENC and US-based ENA, along with the newly invigorated youth arm of GEN, NextGEN North America (NextGENNA), started a dialog with the FIC about establishing a partnership.

Inter-organizational politics are never simple, and the dialog had its challenges. Then last year GEN held a 20th anniversary celebration at Findhorn Community in Scotland, its headquarters. Players from each group attended, sharing in this important milestone

and plotting a path forward. I was honored to participate in this, along with people from communities from dozens of countries on every continent. It was amazing to experience an affinity born from a radical experience of community between people from such a diversity of cultures. GEN has truly managed to create a global movement, and FIC clearly needs to be a participant.

It's with great pleasure that the FIC presents this issue of COMMUNITIES on Ecovillages around the World in partnership with GEN and Gaia Trust. The FIC is also pleased to have signed on to a partnership agreement last Fall to re-establish the Global Ecovillage Network of North America (GENNA). Additionally, GEN recently hired our beloved Business Manager, Christopher Kindig, as its Operations Director (and also IT Director), putting him in a key position to foster collaboration (see his comments in the sidebar).

While the FIC does offer its services globally, its focus is on North America, particularly the US and Canada, and this isn't likely to change. Partly it's an issue of capacity, but it's also an issue of what's appropriate. A US-based organization should not be the direct service provider to communities in India or West Africa. This is what GEN is about, fostering regional networks by and for the communities in those regions, that can provide the support those communities need.

GEN's vision is of a world of empowered citizens and communities, designing and implementing their own pathways to a sustainable future, and building bridges of hope and international solidarity. The FIC is proud to be part of this movement and, in this issue, give you a glimpse of what global transformation looks like. 🐦

Sky Blue (sky@ic.org) is Executive Director of the Fellowship for Intentional Community.

More on the FIC-GEN Collaboration

It is an amazing privilege to work with both FIC and GEN! Long before I had ever heard the term, I knew somewhere in my heart what an ecovillage was, and yearned for it. Now I am excited to come to work every day because it means helping brilliant and passionate people in both organizations to grow this movement towards ecological communities, and spreading ecovillage technologies and lessons to the larger society.

In addition to this special issue of COMMUNITIES, we are also partnering to offer more Community Bookstore titles through a new store on ecovillage.org. Most exciting of all is that FIC and GEN agreed to collaborate on their databases, which will add thousands of community listings to each directory, and further enhance the detail and usefulness of the information. Connecting the sites together is a tall order, but the stakes are much higher. Humanity has to unite around a more sustainable, resilient, and satisfying model of society, and ecovillages around the world can play a vital role.

—Christopher Kindig

*Anna Jackson of Meadowsong Ecovillage uses an artist's conk (*Ganoderma applanatum*) as a canvas to celebrate interspecies community.*



Photo by Kyle Shepherd, Artwork by Anna Jackson

Around the World in 80 Pages

Among all the issues of *COMMUNITIES* I've edited, this one has by far the largest proportion of non-North American content. That is no accident, given the theme. Compared with North America, especially the United States, most of the rest of the world has an undeniable head start in creating replicable ecovillage models. In an era when even US citizens are waking up to the myth of "American exceptionalism"—when documentaries like Michael Moore's *Where to Invade Next* and political campaigns like Bernie Sanders' are reminding people that other countries have much to teach us about creating healthy societies—American communitarians too may be ripe for embracing the simultaneously humbling and empowering truth that people on other continents are, in general, significantly more advanced in ecovillage development than we are, with a few notable exceptions.

This wasn't always the case. Turtle Island was home to many long-lived indigenous ecovillages (before that word existed, and before those ecovillages were decimated by the effects of white settlement and conquest of the "New World"). Remnants of those ecovillage cultures survive, but they are understandably reluctant to invite more conquest or cooption by outsiders, and are also at a considerable economic, social, and political disadvantage in the modern world. Some of the white settlers' more traditional ways of life, in small towns and in farming or spiritual communities, contained significant ecovillage elements, but they too have largely faded out or been substantially diluted. People who have *not* been part of those generations-old traditions together, who are not united by blood, tribe, and history, do not have an easy avenue to join into or replicate the surviving North American models.

And although the continent is also replete with examples of non-

human "ecovillages" in the natural world—from ant hills to prairie dog colonies to heron rookeries to aspen groves to oak savannas to redwood forests—those tight-knit, interdependent, regenerative communities too are not necessarily looking for new members, especially of the modernized bipedal variety.

Fortunately for the ecovillage movement, the world is larger than North America, and ecovillagers around the world have created networks to help spread the word even to "late adopters." Foremost among those networks are the Global Ecovillage Network (GEN) and its various branches, and a primary catalyst of these groups' work has been Gaia Trust, established by Ross and Hildur Jackson in 1987. Gaia Trust's latest of countless essential contributions to the ecovillage movement is sponsorship of this issue of *COMMUNITIES*. Sponsorships like this embody the spirit of visionary cooperation that, in these challenging times, is so essential to the continued evolution of our species and of its social strategies. While helping keep us out of the red, they also enable the collaborations—like that between our staff and GEN staff and activists—that make this magazine a joy to work on. We'd especially like to thank Ross Jackson, Maya Norton, and this issue's many authors for their unique, substantial, practical, and inspiring contributions to the creation of this volume.

Please consider subscribing (if you don't already), giving gift subscriptions, ordering back issues or "Best of *COMMUNITIES*" collections, and/or supporting *COMMUNITIES* and the FIC in other ways, so that we too can continue to be catalysts in the movement for a more cooperative, regenerative world.

We hope you enjoy this issue! 🐦

Chris Roth lives at an "aspiring" ecovillage in Oregon (see lostvalley.org).



Labor Day Weekend September 2 - 5

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OVERCOMING APARTHEID —the Global Ecovillage Network

By Kosha Anja Joubert

*Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.*

—Robert Frost

I was born into apartheid. The word itself comes from my first language, Afrikaans. It means “to set apart” or “to be in a state of separation.” In the South Africa of my childhood, people were set apart by the colors of their skin. And even though it was a country that was abundant with diverse cultures, I grew up in the incongruent monotony of an all-white neighborhood and an all-white school. It simply did not feel right. Even as a child, I started asking uncomfortable questions of my parents and teachers. As I came to realize the depth of injustice and pain the system inflicted, I became a very angry youth, and as a young adult, after moving to Amsterdam, I became an anti-apartheid activist.

I studied cultural anthropology and linguistics in hope of learning how to bridge gaps through intercultural communication and help heal what was broken apart. Unfortunately, that is not what was taught at universities in the late 1980s. What I started to understand, though, and fully realized later, is that apartheid did not die in the early 1990s in South Africa. It was alive and kicking then and is alive and kicking today, being reinforced with every fence and every wall that is going up. On a global level, people’s access to healthcare and wealth, their level of education and their freedom of movement are all decisively influenced by the passport they carry. And, on a more fundamental level, as humans we have set ourselves apart from the natural world and other species that share the planet with us. The abolition of apartheid is still waiting for its fulfillment, even in South Africa.

In order to acknowledge our oneness with all living systems and live accordingly, we need to have courage. We need to leave the highways that lull us into a false sense of security and start exploring some of the roads less traveled, both within and beyond ourselves. As Einstein said: “We can’t solve problems by using the same kind of thinking we used to create them.” We need to start thinking and seeing things afresh, experiencing and being in our bodies anew.

Scientists posit that we are aware of only around five percent of the total information that flows through our nervous systems. We could know so much more. We could practice broadening our awareness. We could shift the habitual pathways we travel within our own nervous systems. If we take a moment now to focus on our breath, on the in- and out-flow of air, on the stillness that lies within this movement, and how it connects us to all

living things around us, we can sense our awareness shifting into a more connected and spacious mode. In a similar way, we can change the well-trod avenues we follow in our everyday realities. This is a time to have courage and go to places we haven’t been to before, make connections we haven’t made before, and create new synapses, insights, and solutions.

When I was 23 years old, in 1991, I walked a path less traveled. Nelson Mandela had just been released from prison. The transition was finally coming, but tension and violence were at an all time high in South Africa. I returned to my country on a pilgrimage, wanting to walk its land and finally visit all the places where I had not been allowed, or had not dared, to go before. I was told I would be raped, if not killed.

Setting off on foot, on a journey of about 1,000 km, from Stilbaai, the site of all my childhood summer holidays, up the east coast to Port St Johns in the Transkei, I felt a mixture of fear and determination. For the sake of my own integrity and healing, I felt I had no choice but to do this. People were shocked and sometimes amused to meet a young, white, Afrikaans woman walking through townships and deserted stretches of wild nature, sleeping in the dunes, swimming through rivers. I lived off the food and water that was offered to me and encountered nature, animals, humans, and even God in a way that healed something deep inside of me.

Finally, close to Port St Johns, I ran into a community where people of all skin colors were living, building huts, and tilling the land together, learning about each oth-

What Are Ecovillages?

Ecovillages are intentional or traditional communities, consciously designed through participatory processes to regenerate their social and natural environments. The social, ecological, economic, and cultural aspects are integrated into a holistic sustainable development model that is adapted to local contexts. Ecovillages are rural or urban settlements with vibrant social structures, vastly diverse, yet united in their actions towards low-impact, high quality lifestyles.

—KAJ

er's cultures. They had found a niche, in one of the so-called "homelands," to live their dream of the future. They were living their dream in the now; without fighting existing structures.

Seeing this shifted something deep inside of me. I realized I could invest my energy in more effective ways than through protest. Since then, I have sought to be part of building the new instead of fighting the old. This small community around Port St Johns became my entrance point into the Global Ecovillage Network (GEN)—a worldwide web of seeded dreams and roads less traveled. I started visiting communities around the globe, following an inner red thread of nomadic movement signposted by word of mouth recommendations that led me from one ecovillage to the next. I became witness to an emergence of a new culture rising slowly through communities around the planet where people came together to manifest their vision for the future.

Each of these communities is, in their own way, bridging the gaps created by apartheid, healing relationships with the living systems of which they are a part. People are understanding that if we don't wake up and consciously design our own future, past and present realities will surely shape it for us. And in that process we might lose so much that is precious. In intentional and traditional, rural and urban ecovillage projects, people choose to reconnect to nature, to each other, to the past and the future. They choose consciously to create solidarity and prepare the ground in respect for future generations.

After celebrating the 20th anniversary of the Global Ecovillage Network in 2015, today we reach out to around 10,000 such communities all over the globe. Each of them is a local expression of the same universal exploration: how can we become true to our potential as humans? How can we heal apartheid, the separation within us, between us, and connecting us to the natural world? How can we honor life as a whole, rebuilding the connections that have been broken in the social, cultural, economic, and ecological areas of life? And in this process, these communities learn and demonstrate that, not only is there no need for us to destroy life, not only can we *sustain* life, but we can actually *regenerate* life around us if only we set our minds and hearts to it. We can tap into our intelligence and wisdom and find the solutions needed.

We can regenerate the humus and the soils around us, composting and sequestering carbon through biochar, working hand in hand with microorganisms and the cycles of life. We can replenish the water tables that we have depleted in so many places. We can channel each precious drop of rainwater into catchment systems, swales, and water retention landscapes, supporting the much needed moisture to enter our soil instead of running over it, causing erosion. We can learn from nature and set up systems that produce no waste and use minimum effort for maximum effect, systems where each element fulfills multiple functions and is strengthened, through multiple connections, to become much more resilient.

We can learn how energy runs through sunlight, winds, water flows, geothermal heat, and biomass, and we can find abundant sources for our energy needs, transitioning to 100 percent renewables in the coming decades. We can replant the forests that are the very lungs of this planet. We can grow our food in ways that support life. While even one child still goes to bed hungry, alone, and afraid, our work will not be completed. We can reconnect to our love for place, and respect for heritage, as a source of inner power. We can solve our conflicts and integrate our traumas. We can combine the best of our traditions with the most innovative solutions and ingenious updates that technology has to offer. We can find ways to marry our love for the planet with our need to make a living and rebuild economies that serve life instead of profit.

We can do all that. Communities around the planet are playing their part on the frontlines of implementation right now. But we can only do this when we come together, letting go of our fears that there is not enough, and instead rebuilding cultures of sharing and solidarity. Generosity creates abundance. Ecovillages have been finding local solutions to global challenges. In ecovillages, we have developed lifestyles that are fulfilling and meaningful, while at the same time allowing us to tread softly on the earth.

When I started out on my journey in 1991, ecovillages were hidden right at the very end of all those roads less traveled. In the past 25 years, ecovillages and the ecovillage way of life have started rising to the surface of mainstream culture. In some countries, ecovillage strategies have actually broken through the surface into visibility—leading to top-down support for bottom-up community-led approaches to sustainability. In Senegal, the government has seen how such communities can bring about positive change and have established an ecovillage program with the goal of transitioning 14,000 villages to ecovillages. In the Gambia, a bioregion of 13 villages is following this example. In Tanzania, the government has started with three pilot ecovillages and is now expanding the approach. In Thailand, Myanmar, Bangladesh, and India, we see community-led networks of change emerging from a similar impulse.

The UN Sustainable Development Goals aim to make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable by 2030. Within GEN, we have been saying that,



Kosha Joubert with members of GEN's communities in Africa.

Photos courtesy of Global Ecovillage Network

in effect, every village needs to become an ecovillage and every city a green city in order to support life to thrive around the world. The question of how the ecovillage approach can dramatically be scaled up, without losing its core value of locally owned, participatory processes, has become central.

In the past years, GEN has identified five closely related program areas, which, when combined with and galvanized by practical solutions, educational tools, consultancy expertise, and funding, may well provide an answer. GEN is developing consolidated support systems for the following impulses:

1. **Showcase Ecovillages:** celebrating the most inspiring existing examples and solutions
2. **Ecovillage Incubation:** developing tools and support systems for setting up new intentional ecovillages
3. **Ecovillage Transition:** developing tools and support systems for transitioning existing settlements to sustainable settlements/ecovillages
4. **Greening Schools for Sustainable Communities:** working with green schools as hubs for community-led sustainable development
5. **EmerGENcies:** a guide for rebuilding communities after disasters and building communities with, by, and for refugees

In order to support the above, GEN will:

- Further develop its own **educational strand**, while continuing to collaborate closely with Gaia Education, GEN's daughter organization
- Cultivate tools and skills for **social entrepreneurship** at all levels of the organization
- Work closely with academia in applying **participatory action research** to monitor, evaluate, and further evolve best practices
- Initiate a **GEN Consultancy**
- Engage in **political advocacy** in order to inspire the integration of ecovillage strategies in sustainable development plans

I believe that we can create a world that is at peace with itself. A world that lives within its own means. That we are able to come home to this planet, abolishing apartheid and stepping into right relationship with everything around, understanding that we can be caretakers, guardians, and lovers of life while we are here.

So let me ask you: what are the roads less traveled in your life? What are those dreams and visions that are calling you to change your habits? Where are you invited to expand and what gaps will you close by traveling into unfamiliar territory? Who are the people you know that you need to have a conversation with, that you need to listen to, whom you have been avoiding? Maybe you feel interested in exploring your own cultural roots and coming into alignment with your higher purpose? Would you like to explore the ecology of your everyday

life more deeply? Do you know where your food, your water, your energy comes from? Which ecosystems in your environment could you enrich through simple action? Maybe it's the windowsill in your kitchen or the space around a tree in front of your house? How do you aim to change the economy of your life in order to focus on sharing and not only your own personal profit? And who is part of the network of friends that you want to create the future with? 🍷

Another world is not only possible. She is on her way. On quiet days I can hear her breathing.

—Arundhati Roy

Kosha Joubert serves as Executive Director of GEN International, and sits on the Advisory Board of GEN Africa. She has many years of experience as an international facilitator, trainer, and consultant and has worked extensively in the fields of curriculum development, international collaboration, and sustainable development. Kosha grew up in South Africa under apartheid and has been dedicated to building bridges across all divides ever since. She has lived in ecovillages for the past 25 years and been a driving force in GEN for eight years. Kosha is also a cofounder of Gaia Education, which develops trainings at the cutting-edge of sustainability, and coauthor of the internationally applied Gaia Education curriculum, the Ecovillage Design Education. You can see her TEDx Talk on Ecovillages here: youtu.be/gGbuOBCGfmQ.



THE GLOBAL ECOVILLAGE NETWORK: Focal Point for a Global Movement

By Ross and Hildur Jackson



Photo courtesy of Bill Nickl

Introduction

The Global Ecovillage Network (GEN) is a solution-based, multi-stakeholder alliance with centers of activity around the world. Its umbrella organization, GEN International, located at the Findhorn Ecovillage in northern Scotland, represents five regional networks, which in turn coordinate and promote ecovillage activities in Africa (GEN Africa), Europe (GEN Europe), Oceania & Asia (GENOA), North America (GENNA), and Latin America (CASA). GEN International also represents a growing, global youth movement called NextGEN.

GEN was created in the early 1990s by representatives from pioneering ecovillages around the world with the intention to foster information and resource exchange between existing ecovillage projects, as well as to provide services, such as educational programs, that support the global shift towards sustainable lifestyles and more resilient societies. Today, GEN represents ecovillages in over 70 countries around the world, and is engaged in large-scale initiatives on five continents. More information about GEN can be found at www.ecovillage.org.

In the following article, the voices of Ross and the late Hildur Jackson—founding members of GEN and central figures in the early days of the ecovillage movement—share the history of GEN's beginnings, rooted as it is in their own lives' work. Their words trace the origins of what is now a thriving global movement, and are a critical thread in the story of our planet's transition towards a brighter future.

Origins: 1967-1990

Hildur's Story

When I completed my degree as a lawyer in January of 1967, I went to a kibbutz in Israel to explore whether humans were basically egoistic or not. This was a recurring discussion with my partner, Ross Jackson. I gained a deep conviction that human nature can change and that we can build a better society.

I married Ross and had my first baby in February 1968 (the same week that the Auroville Ecovillage was founded in India and student rebellions swept Europe). I started studying cultural sociology in Denmark to acquire knowledge for bringing about change.

For the next 10 years I questioned traditional science, joined and created social movements, and cofounded one of the first Danish cohousing projects. Everything seemed possible. The need for a new global paradigm was obvious.

I then heard about The Nordic Alternative Future Project initiated by Norwegian Erik Dammann (founder of The Future in Our Hands). The project linked 100 Nordic grassroots movements with the best in the scientific community in order to create a vision of how to solve global, social, and environmental problems. Research councils were created in the different Nordic countries, and I worked in the Danish group for 10 years as a coordinator and later brought a report, *Future Letters from the North*, to the United Nations Decade for Women conference in Nairobi (1985). Here I made friends with Wangari Maathai, who would go on to win the Nobel Peace Prize.

What became clear to me was that we had all the knowledge and tools we need to change the world. But we in the North needed to put our own house in order, build sustainable communities, and give up exploiting the rest of the world. This was my inspiration in 1987 for cofounding (with Ross) Gaia Trust—a Danish charitable association—and for formulating its “yin/yang” strategy: For many centuries, technology and economics (yang) determined how society was organized. Now, it was time for people to decide how they want to live together—men and women in harmony with nature in a sustainable and spiritually satisfying way that is also globally just (yin), and to develop technologies that were supportive of this vision (yang).

Ross' Story

My background was as a management consultant in the private sector specializing in operations research, with broad experience in many industries. I had for some years been concerned with the neglect of the environment and global trends that tended to increase the gap between rich and poor. I agreed with the conclusions of the *Limits to Growth* model that civilization would be facing very formidable problems in the foreseeable future, and was also in agreement with Hildur that action was most unlikely to come from politicians, who were actually part of the problem.

Between 1984 and 1986, I developed a currency trading system, which generated a significant income. In 1987, Hildur and I decided to invest the income as well as any future proceeds from the trading system into a trust—Gaia Trust—to support our joint vision. Significant money soon rolled in, and we began asking ourselves how we could best use our newfound resources.

I was attracted to the idea of creating a network of ecovillages because I saw its strategic potential as a countervailing power to the coming global economic crisis as humans reach the limits to growth. Whether the global economy collapsed or we were able to make a planned transition to a sustainable future, I understood that it would be necessary in either case to build a new culture. At the foundation of this culture must necessarily be

sustainable human settlements, and for this we needed good models. I believed that a network of ecovillages that provided such models would be an extremely valuable base on which to build.

The Early Years: 1990-2004

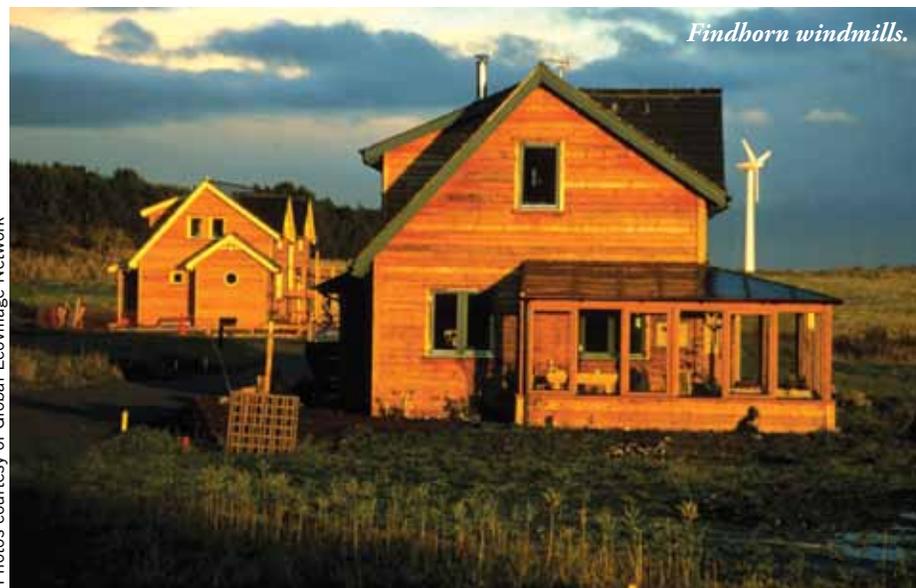
Fjordvang, Denmark

In 1990, we bought Fjordvang, a farm in western Denmark, which had been an international learning center for 25 years (called The World University) under the leadership of Aage Rosendal Nielsen. In 1991, Robert and Diane Gilman, editors of *In Context* magazine, moved there with us to build an ecovillage and work on our common cause. As a first step, Gaia Trust commissioned Robert and Diane to survey the field and identify the best examples of ecovillages around the world. The Gilmans' report to Gaia Trust showed that although many exciting and vastly different communities existed, a full-scale, ideal ecovillage did not yet exist. But, together, the existing projects made up a vision of a different culture and lifestyle that had great potential.

Based on the Gilmans' report, 20 people



Martin Stengel



Photos courtesy of Global Ecovillage Network

from some of the strongest communities and a few broad thinkers were invited in September 1991 to discuss how Gaia Trust could best use its funds. The participants included a number of people who would later be key leaders of GEN—Max Lindegger, Declan Kennedy, and Albert Bates—as well as intellectuals outside of the ecovillage sphere, such as Karl-Henrik Robert (founder of The Natural Step), David Korten (who later wrote *When Corporations Rule the World*), and Marilyn Mehlmann of The Global Action Plan. The consensus that the group reached was that Gaia Trust should support the people who were actually living the new paradigm—ecovillagers—because they were essential for the transition but were receiving no support from elsewhere, and because they could model for the world what it means to live in harmony with nature in a sustainable, technologically advanced, and spiritually-satisfying way.

Who were the first “ecovillages”? It is a difficult question because many of the members of GEN were founded before this word existed. In the 1960s several spiritually based projects were initiated in different parts of the globe: Findhorn in Scotland, The Farm in Tennessee, US, Sarvodaya in Sri Lanka, and the NAAM movement in Burkino Faso. Solheimer in Iceland has roots going all the way back to 1930. A major impulse came from the Indian philosopher and sage Sri Aurobindo and his French counterpart, The Mother, who put forth the vision of Auroville in India in 1968. So there is no easy answer. The idea of “community” goes back much further, as described by Geoph Kozeny in his video *Visions of Utopia* (2003). “Community” has always been the essence of human culture from time immemorial. But by adopting a new name (“ecovillage”), the basic concept became infused with new energy.

In 1993, Gaia Trust brought together a number of established and embryonic Danish ecovillages as the Danish Ecovillage Network—the first national network. A second global

strategy meeting was called at Fjordvang with a smaller, strictly ecovillage group and a loose network was informally initiated with a secretariat in Denmark, funded by Gaia Trust under the daily leadership of Hamish Stewart.

“Community” has always been the essence of human culture; the name “ecovillage” infused the basic concept with new energy.

Findhorn

The movement took a major step in 1995. A conference at Findhorn, *Ecovillages and Sustainable Communities for the 21st Century*, was organized by the Findhorn community (led by John Talbot and Diane Gilman) and the evolving informal ecovillage network. The conference was attended by over 400 people from 40 countries, while another 300 who wished to be there had to be turned away. The proceedings were published in 1996 by Findhorn Press: *Ecovillages and Sustainable Communities; Models for 21st Century Living*. It was clear that the ecovillage concept had hit a sensitive nerve with a lot of people.

Immediately following this meeting, 20 people from different ecovillages met for five days and the Global Ecovillage Network was formally established. Initially, GEN consisted of three regional networks to cover the globe geographically, with centers at The Farm (US), Lebensgarten (Germany), and Crystal Waters (Australia), and with an international coordinating office at Gaia Trust (Denmark). Gaia Trust committed to covering the expenses of the network for three to five years. The plan was to focus initially on forming regional networks that would link existing projects. At the same time a second longer term goal was set to create global services, like an education network, that would cut across regions, as soon as budgets and human power permitted.

UN Habitat II: Istanbul

At the Findhorn meeting it was decided—inspired by Rashmi Mayur’s passionate presence—to join the United Nations Habitat II conference in Istanbul the following summer. A major exhibition at the

Sieben Linden—Beyond Peak Oil: enjoying horse power for mobility.



NGO forum was built: a long strawbale wall, plastered with clay, so that it became an ideal place for posters with photos from ecovillages around the world. A model windmill, solar cells, and running water contributed to a pleasant atmosphere. Hildur prepared a booklet in 5,000 copies called *The Earth is Our Habitat*. More than 40 workshops covering all issues of ecovillages and global politics were held. Outside, GEN was in charge of building an old

The GEN Ambassador—Rashmi Mayur

No history of GEN would be complete without mentioning the special role played by the late Dr. Rashmi Mayur, leader of the International Institute for Sustainable Future in Mumbai, India.

Rashmi was unofficially GEN's "ambassador to the UN." He participated in all the big conferences as well as many planning meetings, as he was officially adviser to the UN and several Southern governments. At the Johannesburg UN Earth Summit in August 2002, Rashmi was appointed official spokesman for the South, and had planned 28 major speeches and workshops. But he tragically suffered a debilitating stroke during his first speech, was unconscious for four months, slowly recovered all faculties but passed away in early 2004. He is greatly missed by all his colleagues who carry on his vision to create a more sustainable, more just world.

By the late 1990s, most of the larger ecovillages were teaching in their regions.

Gaia Trust Gears Down

In June 2001, Gaia Trust warned that its financial support to GEN would be gradually decreased over the next two years. GEN would have to find new sources of funding. This was because it had always been Gaia Trust's policy to use its capital over a relatively short period while its

Harran stone house with master builders from the region.

Indian architect Suhasini from Auroville built an attractive and earthquake-resistant house in just five days from mud bricks produced on site with a manual earth-pressing machine. Hanne Strong instigated our first contact with Ari Ariyaratne from Sarvodaya in Sri Lanka. She invited 40 spiritual leaders, who in their concluding statement praised ecovillages as an important new concept. Many guests from the official conference visited and praised the GEN exhibition, and GEN was invited to address the official UN delegates, with Ross writing and Helena Norberg-Hodge delivering a well-received talk. Istanbul put GEN firmly on the global map.

Regional Networks

The next three years (1996-1999) were a period of building networks under the leadership of the three regional secretaries, namely Declan Kennedy, Albert Bates, and Max Lindegger, who constituted the initial GEN board, with coordination by Hamish Stewart, the International Secretary, based at Fjordvang.

This period resulted in the establishment and growth of three autonomous networks covering the globe: The Ecovillage Network of the Americas (ENA), GEN Europe, which also covered Africa for the time being, and GEN Oceania and Asia (GENOA). The GEN board met in many parts of the world during this time.

founders were still active, and also to ensure that GEN did not become dependent.

Ecovillage Education and Expansion: 2004-2015

Education for Sustainability

Ever since the start of GEN, the idea of creating an educational program had been on the table. By the late 1990s, most of the larger ecovillages were teaching in their regions as they naturally wanted to share their knowledge. They were typically teaching permaculture and sustainability and design of ecovillages. Some of the larger ones began to call themselves "Living and Learning" centers, a concept first conceived by Philip Snyder. But there was no universal curriculum.

In 1998, Hildur got the inspiration to invite 55 educators from within the ecovillage network to come to Fjordvang to celebrate Ross' 60th and Max Lindegger's 50th birthdays and to brainstorm on the idea of creating a comprehensive educational program for sustainability design, which would integrate the concepts of organic farming, permaculture, renewable energy, wastewater treatment, facilitation of meetings, ecological building, conflict resolution, green businesses and economy, and much more. The intention was to create a program which could be taught at ecovillages and illustrated with on-site field work, based on the "Living and Learning" concept as a new paradigm in education, i.e. you can live the new lifestyle, while you are learning how to establish and design it.

Hildur took the initiative for a further meeting at Findhorn in June 2004 with 30 invited educators. The starting point was the "sustainability wheel" described in Hildur and Karen Svensson's book *Ecovillage Living: Restoring the Earth and Her People*, which was published in 2002.

Gaia Education (www.gaiamedia.org) was formally launched in October 2005 at Findhorn at the GEN+10 Conference, and flourished under the leadership of May East. Since the GEN+10 conference, GEN and Gaia Education have worked very closely together, but as two separate entities. The first "product" was a four-week course called Ecovillage Design Education (EDE), which continues to be taught all over the world (in 35 countries at last count). In 2008 an online version of the EDE was developed with the Open University of Catalonia in Barcelona, Spain and is scheduled to become an accredited two-year Masters course in the 2015-2016 academic year. The curriculum is now available on the Gaia Education website in 10 languages.

GEN on the Upswing

After several challenging years following the final cutback of funding from Gaia Trust in 2003, a new, highly active phase in GEN's history began with the election of Kosha

Joubert as president in 2008. Kosha was one of the 30 educators that developed the Gaia Education curriculum. She had been very successful in introducing it to her ecovillage, Sieben Linden in Germany, inviting many foreign participants and getting financial support from the German government. One of the major goals of this time was to support the emergence of an independent African network, which was initiated in 2012 with financial help from the German Foreign Ministry. The new generation of GEN was very creative in extending the organization's range of activities while inspiring increasing momentum in all regions. A more streamlined organization and broader vision was established. In 2013, an independent South American network—CASA—evolved out of ENA. The youth organization NextGEN flourished.

In December 2012, the world was celebrating the end of one Mayan age and the beginning of a new one. Gaia Trust decided to give five rewards to five of the initiators and main persons of GEN and Gaia Education as symbols of all those having given birth to a new culture: Max Lindegger, Albert Bates, and Declan Kennedy for building the GEN networks, and May East and Kosha Joubert for being inspiring leaders of Gaia Education and GEN in more recent years.

Present Day

By visiting an ecovillage like Findhorn (Scotland), Sieben Linden (Germany), Tamera (Portugal), Damanhur (Italy), Auroville (India), or Ecovillage at Ithaca (US), you can experience a new culture emerging. They are all a little different but common is a whole body of culture where people are in a process of change, where the goal is to live a full and joyful life while keeping the ecological footprint low, and not forgetting the old GEN saying: "If it ain't fun, it ain't sustainable!" We are glad to say that GEN is thriving, fully engaged in its mission to support this vibrant, creative movement that holds so much hope and potential for our future on this planet. 🌱

Ross and Hildur Jackson were pioneers of the ecovillage movement. Visionary leaders, they founded Gaia Trust in 1987 and the Global Ecovillage Network (GEN) in 1995. With a group of like-minded allies, they traveled the world, learning about intentional communities based on ecological principles across diverse geographies, cultures, and lifestyles. Under Ross and Hildur's cultivation, the organizations blossomed, gaining worldwide recognition at the United Nations Habitat II Conference (Istanbul, Turkey; 1996) where 40 workshops were held on the subject of ecovillages. Today, GEN's network reaches out to more than 10,000 communities around the world thanks to the magnanimous spirits of Ross and Hildur Jackson. Beloved by many, Hildur passed away in September 2015. Ross continues his work, most recently helping arrange the sponsorship of this ecovillage-focused issue of COMMUNITIES. Both Hildur and Ross will continue to be a blessing and an inspiration.

Of Learning and Immortality

The following poem was written by Rashmi Mayur and read out loud at the 1998 education conference at Fjordvang:

Then they asked:
 Master what is education?
 The wise man spoke silently,
 "There is no master
 and no education,
 my people."
 People were bemused.
 Master continued,
 "Life is an opportunity
 to realize ourselves.
 We are creatures
 of learning.
 To learn is to be creative.
 To learn is to know
 the root of our existence.
 To learn is to preserve
 Our sacred Earth.
 To learn is to live
 in harmony with the whole.
 To learn is to give
 birth to the future.
 To learn is to reach
 enlightenment—Nirvana.
 To learn is to be liberated
 from the finiteness
 of Space and Time
 To learn is to be
 immortal."
 Master was no more.



Photos courtesy of Global Ecovillage Network

Auroville, India.

ECOVILLAGES WORLDWIDE

—Local Solutions for Global Problems

By Leila Dregger

An ecovillage can be a traditional village, a city quarter, or an intentional community that improves the lives of its members and the environment in a conscious and participative process. Ecovillages in Europe and the United States mostly follow the desire of members to lead healthier and more communal lives. In the Global South it is different. There it is often directly about surviving: about food sovereignty, protection and survival in areas of crisis, or ways out of poverty. We invite you for a trip to ecovillages throughout regions of the world.

Did You Know?

...that the ecovillage Crystal Waters in Australia, with a population of 200, simultaneously acts as a wildlife reserve?

...that in Orissa, one of the poorest areas in India, over 200 villages of indigenous people are transforming their communities into ecovillages?

...that during 13 years in Latin America, the traveling community of La Caravana taught villagers, farmers, youth, and children sustainable living techniques?

...that the ecovillage Hurdal in Norway has developed the “Active House” and created a green business by building eco-friendly houses?

...that Eco-Valley in Hungary produces an abundance of grain and vegetables to feed its 200 residents several times over, and that it effectively offers social work to some of the poorest communities nationwide?

...that the Peace Community San José de Apartadó in Colombia has formed a neutral village in the middle of an armed conflict zone and its more than 1,000 peasants have been in nonviolent resistance against expulsion for 18 years?

...that the Healing Biotope Tamera in Portugal with 170 members and a Love School at its center has ecologically regenerated an area of 220 acres of land which had been in the process of desertification?

...that the Konohana Family community in Japan has 100 members that are engaged in new agricultural methods for healthy food production and cares for psychiatrically vulnerable people?

...that the fast growing ecovillage Schloss Tempelhof in Germany with its extended economic and legal know-how has established a foundation that supports many other ecovillages and emerging intentional communities?

...that the Republic of Damanhur in Italy with more than 1,000 members was building a secret underground Temple of Humanity for more than 10 years before it was discovered and turned into an officially recognized piece of art?

Future City Auroville, India

In 1968, on the Coromandel Coast in South India, the Tasmanian traveler Joss Brook heard for the first time of the idea to found a future city: Auroville. This vision attracted cultural refugees, hippies, and truth seekers from America, Germany, and France who started to build themselves a different life. Many of them left the project—the early life of poverty in the ecovillage was too harsh—but Brook stayed. “We spoke with old village dwellers who had a huge knowledge of herbs. They were singing while planting rice, and communing with plants and animals. Through them we made contact to the soul of the original forest which grew here once.”

Sekem, Egypt.



*Favela da Paz
Brazil.*



Today, there are about 2,000 people from 40 countries living in Auroville. On the formerly barren plateau we now find houses of wood, adobe, and natural stones in the shade of many trees. Big solar systems serve for cooking and producing electricity. A daily stream of tourists visits Matrimandir, the sacred center of Auroville.

Brook's team planted a 400 hectare wide green belt and built 1,000 miles of ditches and earth dams to conserve rainwater. For Brook, it is the growing forest, not Matrimandir, that is the most sacred place of Auroville.

Meanwhile, experts from Damanhur ecovillage of Italy help the government to develop sustainability concepts for the whole region, collaborating with the local population. In the nearby city of Pondicherry, they turned a public dump into a recreation area.

Brook: "This is Auroville: people from all over the world together with locals try to find the way of sustainability. The most important thing is to perceive the soul because in the soul we find the memory of the future garden."

Favela da Paz, Sao Paulo, Brazil

According to the United Nations, the Jardim Ângela neighborhood in Sao Paulo used to be one of the most violent slums in the world. Criminal activity, drug dealers, youth gangs, street children, and poverty dominated the streets.

When he was 13, two major events occurred in the life of Claudio Miranda: his best friend was killed and he was arrested. "The policeman pointed his gun at my head and demanded that I play my saxophone to prove that I was indeed a musician. It worked. Since then I have known that music is life energy."

Much has changed since then. Today he calls the police his friends. Claudio, his brother Fabio, his wife Hellem, and many of their friends run a samba school that offers street kids an alternative to drugs and violence. After visiting the Tamera ecovillage in Portugal he had a larger idea: "I will call it Favela da Paz—slum of peace."

They turned their family home into an ecological center with a biogas digester for cooking on the roof, a solar shower, and a permaculture garden along the walls. Hellem: "Of course the neighbors became curious. Today we run courses in vegetarian cuisine and urban permaculture."

Coming together and learning, instead of fighting and stealing—this launched a process of change. The parents of the neighborhood planted trees in the schoolyard. They fought successfully against the Brazilian government's plan to destroy their Favela

in preparation for the FIFA World Cup in 2014. And every month there is a big samba party on the streets.

Sekem, Egypt

Many years ago during his university studies in Austria, Dr. Ibrahim Abouleish from Cairo got to know anthroposophy. He returned home with a big vision: he saw wa-

**Sekem engaged the children to pick chamomile in the morning—
under the condition that they could
go to school in the afternoon.**

ter, trees, animals, and people thriving in the middle of the desert. "Trees gave shade, the land turned green, flowers exuded fragrance, and insects and birds showed their devotion to the creator as if they spoke the first Surah of the Quran."

Forty years ago, he purchased a property in the north of Cairo and drilled a well. This is how Sekem started—and today it is an ecovillage, a farm for medicinal herbs, organic cotton, and cattle, a hospital for locals, an alternative university, and a Waldorf school; it also supports several ecological industries and crafts workshops.

Sekem introduced the idea of organic agriculture to Egypt. Hundreds of farmers learned to cultivate and market cereals, herbs, and cotton without chemicals.

The idea of "the chamomile kids" was controversial but effective. As the local population could not afford to do without the salaries of their children, Sekem engaged the children to pick chamomile in the morning—under the condition that they could go to school in the afternoon.

Today the ecovillage combines Islamic and anthroposophic cultural elements. Every morning, all the thousands of coworkers—from farmers to managers—gather in a morning circle: a symbol for equality and wholeness of the vision.

Abouleish: "Sekem has become a model for sustainable development throughout the world. We want to prove that through our work and investment in education we can compete with the best companies of the world."



Photos courtesy of Global Ecovillage Network

The SICE Ecovillage Initiative for Syrian Refugees in Sweden

Fayez Karimeh from Syria, 43, father of three, maintained a reforestation project in Yabroud before the war. After neighbors chopped down his trees for firewood, he searched the internet for alternatives forms of energy and came across instructions for building a biogas digester. While constructing it, he came in contact with the European ecovillage movement. When his city was bombarded he decided to take his family to safety in Europe. Tamera in Portugal offered him temporary residency, enabling a legal means to escape his country.

“Tamera was a cultural shock for me,” he remembers. “I had never heard of ecovillages before, and now, coming from a war zone, I met this community that tried to act peacefully in every element of life.”

After three months he continued to his country of choice, Sweden, and decided to build an ecovillage for refugees. “Ecovillages for refugees have many advantages,” he elaborated during a talk in the University of Uppsala. “The refugees help with the ecological revitalization of the host country, and at the same time learn techniques that will later help them to rebuild their country.”

It is very important for Karimeh that those techniques include social skills: “The communities need knowledge about social communication, basic democracy, and conflict resolution.”

On April 1st, 2015, Karimeh founded the association SICE: the Syrian Initiative Craftsmanship Ecovillage. Under SICE’s auspices, he organizes seminars in Swedish ecovillages: about clay building, harvesting wild fruits, building natural sewage systems, and more. Many Swedes support the idea, and two communities have offered land to establish the first refugee ecovillage in their country.

To learn more, visit their website at www.ecovillage.nu.

Kitzezh, Russia

Kitzezh is a community dedicated to the nurturing of foster children. The hamlet, around 360 kilometers south of Moscow, is surrounded by forests and consists of just 16 houses, a school, a workshop, and several outbuildings, including a cowshed. Though its “footprint” is naturally small, ecological sustainability is not its first priority.

In the latter days of the Soviet Union, radio correspondent Dmitry Morozov observed the plight of street children living without the

support of parents in his country. In the chaotic post-Soviet years, he set out to create a community that would offer a different way of life, aspiring to the best of human values. The community, now led by Maxim Aneekiev, helps children adapt to everyday life, overcoming their trauma and pain. Children learn care and love, not by listening to adults, but by exploring a therapeutic environment of challenges.

Morozov: “Perhaps it would be best to develop the adults first before they work with the children, but in reality, they develop alongside the children. This is the natural way. Through the reflective awareness of the reality of everyday activity...adults understand the necessity to change and work with their own attitude towards life. By helping others they are helping themselves.”

The community’s weekly meetings help bind it together. Kitzezh’s work has become better known in the region and in Moscow through the Role Play Games run during the holidays. These events, lasting up to two weeks, are designed to help children confront their own issues with courage and with the support of their friends. Through these public events, Kitzezh expands to take in children who come from “good families” but are not thriving in the region’s normal schools.

The Green Kibbutz, Israel

Kibbutz Lotan in the southern Arava desert was founded in 1983, established as a pioneering community experiment in combining the ideals of egalitarian society with creative and liberal Jewish expression, and a political agenda of disengaging religion from government. The founders were a group of 60 young adults, aged 18 to 24, from Israel and around the world.

With its many ecological activities it is a catalyst for environmental consciousness in Israel—and for liberal Judaism. With all its environmental efforts—land preservation, bird watching, waste separation, recycling and composting, renewable energy, energy conservation—the kibbutz has made a direct impact on the region. Over 50 percent of the electricity used in Eilat, Israel’s southernmost city, is produced today by solar panels, and the region practices significantly more waste separation and recycling than Israel’s other regions. Cofounder Alex Cicelsky: “We’re proud to be reminded that we were the catalyst for these developments.”

The compact photovoltaic system that powers the EcoCampus, housing students from the Arava Institute for Environmental Studies, where students live in 10 highly efficient passive solar strawbale houses, produces five times more electricity than it needs—even when air conditioners are turned on high all summer. The EcoCampus kitchen runs on biogas. It has no-water toilets and a greywater system to showcase for the 10,000 people who come every year to visit and learn from their work.

Making community decisions and airing issues publicly is both the challenge and strength of the kibbutz. Cicelsky: “In the beginning, everything was discussed in our general assembly. Now, more is processed in committees and then resolutions are brought for approval.” 🐦

Leila Dregger is a graduate agricultural engineer and longtime journalist. She traveled for many decades to all the world’s continents, encountering various communities and peace projects to identify and write about diverse lifestyles. Her primary areas of focus are peace, ecology, community, and women. She has worked for 25 years in press and radio and is a screenwriter and director for theater and film. She was the editor of the magazine The Female Voice—Politics of the Heart. She was press officer for the House of Democracy in Berlin, the ZEGG community in Belzig (both in Germany), and the Tamera ecovillage in Portugal, where she mainly lives today. From 2012-2015, she was the editor of the Global Ecovillage Network (GEN) International newsletter. She teaches constructive journalism for young professionals and students, as well as in crisis regions. She is the author of several books.

Leila is also helping Tamera host this year’s conference of the International Communal Studies (ICSA), July 1-3, 2016, entitled “Community approaches towards inner and outer peace.” ICSA was formed in 1985 during the international conference held at Yad Tabenkin, the Research and Documentation Centre of the Kibbutz Movement, in Israel. The international conferences of ICSA enable scholars and members of kibbutzim and communes to meet and exchange views and research. The participation of scholars at the conferences has promoted many reciprocal visits of kibbutz and communal scholars to kibbutzim and communes around the world. As an international organization ICSA maintains contact with parallel associations like the Communal Studies Association in the US. For more information, please visit www.communia.org/ill/icsa.

Ecovillage Strategies in Areas of Crisis

By Leila Dregger and Sarah Queblatin

“How are we responding to crises using a whole systems and regenerative approach?” This was the question that brought a group of ecovillagers, consultants, and volunteers connected to the Global Ecovillage Network (GEN) together to form the “EmerGENcies Protocol.”

EmerGENcies Protocol brings together members from all regions in the Global Ecovillage Network (GEN): activists, experts and teachers. The complexity of what is at stake—to design an innovative and holistic response to the growing number of emergency situations around the world—accounts for the diversity of the projects that make up the EmerGENcies Protocol.

As Sarah Queblatin of Mandala Earth Story (Philippines) explains: “We have been trying to help design a platform to empower ourselves to better respond to crisis situations and work on their prevention by implementing the best solutions from the perspective of regenerative system development.”

The EmerGENcies Protocol is part of a movement that emerged at a global level as one of thousands of initiatives in pursuit of the same goal: to alleviate the suffering of displaced peoples due to war, oppression, weather, or natural disaster. The more we move into humanitarian causes, the more it surprises us how this issue is not only on the front page of newspapers, but is also bringing thousands of citizens to get involved with this work. The surge in emergency situations is increasing, and it is amazing how individuals and civil society organizations are responding.

Natural disasters triggered by climate change are responsible for more than 150,000 deaths every year and force millions of people

to abandon their homes and communities to seek refuge elsewhere. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) predicts that there will be 150 million environmental refugees by 2050. Up to 250 million people in Africa are projected to suffer from water and food insecurity in the 21st century. Some studies reveal underlying climate and demographic trends linked to the ecological crisis affecting the Maghreb, the Sahel region, and the Niger Delta, as factors behind the heightening of conflicts over basic resources and threatening of state structures, regional stability, and mass migration of Africans to Europe across the Mediterranean.

Today, as more and more Syrian refugees traverse European borders, we are learning that the roots of their displacement stem from climate change related droughts from 2006 to 2009 that forced up to 1.5 million people from rural regions to migrate to urban areas shortly before the uprisings in 2011. It is this backdrop of displacement due to conflict, climate change, and economic transitions around the world that spurred several networks connected with GEN to create global initiatives aiming to model and promote ecovillage living, permaculture, and other ecologically sound and integrated approaches in response to crises.

Through stories of our shared experiences on the ground, the EmerGENcies initiative has started to map the growing community responding to crises such as natural disasters (e.g., earthquakes, typhoons) and conflict in connection with ecovillages, intentional communities, permaculturists, and anyone else keen to the regenerative design process.



RefuGEN.

Leila Dregger

Responding to Natural Disasters

One of the initiatives within the EmergenCies collective is Blueprint. Ruth Andrade from Brazil explains its essence:

“I think that in the next five to 10 years the number of humanitarian crises is going to increase. The idea of Blueprint is to create task forces of individuals who use their expertise and their knowledge to give an integrative response to disasters. We learn how we can use a crisis as an opportunity—for example, to regenerate the water systems and the food systems and restore the landscape through meeting the immediate needs.

“Blueprint offers this integrated response not from a technological or engineering theory, but sourced from living practices. Most of the people in the Blueprint group are experts and designers of new systems, coming from the experience of living practice with these techniques. We are not trying to offer something that we wouldn’t want to use ourselves. The support we offer is connected to living demonstration and educational sites. It is rising out of practice.

“The overall principle behind it is the principle of integration. Experts come together and integrate their expertise in a new system before offering it to the world. We don’t offer stand-alone solutions but rather a co-creative system that integrates whatever is best for a region. Sometimes biogas will be a big feature in a community, sometimes it is the water retention. In many refugee camps you can’t begin with the water retention landscape as they have already built the tents, so we need to begin with something else. Integration practice starts from our own inner integration.”

Blueprint sources its solutions from the resources and needs of the community. As one example, clay architect Bee Bowen worked with T. H. Culhane on a new insulation for biogas digesters with natural materials, which enabled the bacteria in the biogas digester to also work in winter despite the absence of heat.

Water expert Bernd Müller from the Tamera ecovillage (Portugal) consults with aid organizations in areas of crisis, such as Haiti after the earthquake, Kenya, Bolivia, and Palestine. His goal is to enhance not only ecologically appropriate technologies to support large-scale humanitarian responses to crises, but also systems that integrate the aspects of water, food, energy, and community.

“After the earthquake in Haiti, aid organizations couldn’t provide a sustainable response

to the disaster. As a response to the crisis, they tended to react by importing techniques that were not integrative. This resulted in further harm to a delicate balance: after the aid workers left, the system would often work even worse than before. Many responsible managers and workers in aid organizations see this and want to change it. As members of the Tamera ecology team we were invited to Haiti to collaborate on how to improve the capacity of aid organizations. Our suggestion was to not import singular techniques, but to implement an integrated system where all the parts would work well with each other. We call it Blueprint. For this, ecovillages serve as models or ‘Testimonies’ to showcase how all the parts can be integrative.”

Spiritual and Social Interventions

Another example of ecovillage intervention was the earthquake in Nepal and India. Fiorenza Bortolotti, a permaculturist from Italy, responded by using a cultural approach for the psycho-social support of communities in collaboration with an NGO partner. Pi Villaraza of Maia Earth Village and an intentional community of healers used Inner Dance for trauma healing response in Nepal, together with a local NGO.

The Konohana Family community in Japan sent support for the tsunami. Their model of monthly crisis simulation against the backdrop of Japan’s natural disasters is something that may support communities in highly vulnerable geographic contexts.

Boniface Gomes from Bangladesh is piloting a permaculture and ecovillage design program in partnership with Gaia Education and CIFAL Scotland, using best practices in grassroots-engaged climate adaptation. In this part of the world he introduces simple but effective social and ecological techniques to adapt to the increasing number of floods.

Sarah Queblatin of Mandala Earth Story in partnership with Maia Earth Village works with Filipino survivors of Typhoon Haiyan, the strongest storm on global record (2013). Inspired by her experience using creative trauma-informed practices with survivors of conflict and past natural disasters, she teaches them to build typhoon bunkers out of waste with Earthship Biotecture, and to set up solar power for the community of Batug.



Photo courtesy of Global Ecovillage Network

Conflict Response

The peace village San José de Apartadó has been active in community-led actions to address years of conflict in Colombia. Through grassroots efforts over the years, they were able to strengthen conflict prevention and develop the capacity of locals to respond as a community using nonviolence. Gildardo Tuberquia is the speaker of the Peace Village, an ecological settlement that combines earth care and peacebuilding, a new home for campesinos and refugees from the civil war.

Financial Crises and Addressing Poverty

Anna Fillipou, cofounder of the SKALA Ecovillage in Greece, confronts crisis in a country on the verge of a financial collapse. To help society become more autonomous from a financial economy, SKALA Ecovillage facilitates educational workshops and seminars to teach and train communities to transition. In national community conventions at SKALA, activists from all over Greece learn ecological techniques for sustainability, like biogas systems, alternative currencies, and building swales for natural water harvesting.

Refugees

In December 2015, GEN Europe launched the RefuGEN initiative. From December 2015 to June 2016, RefuGEN arranged for a rotating crew of five representatives as volunteers on the Greek island of Lesbos to be of direct support to refugees taking their first steps in Europe. On the island, the RefuGEN team is working to create a sustainable community in the All Together Village, helping create a camp for refugees who need to stay longer on Lesbos rather than using it as a transit stop (due to injury, disability, etc.). There, they showcase and teach techniques for social and ecological sustainability that will support refugees in rebuilding their countries and communities after the war.

Fayez Karimeh, a Syrian refugee based in Sweden, spent several months in the Tamera ecovillage. While there, he was inspired to found an ecovillage for refugees in Sweden. He

founded the association SICE (the Syrian Initiative Craftsmanship Ecovillage), which supports ecovillage resettlement projects for their fellow countrymen. They actively engage in social enterprise and training programs in claybuilding and sustainability for members of the ecovillage NGO. The Suderbyn Ecovillage in Sweden helps support this promising initiative.

A Learning Network to Respond to a Growing Need

The scope of GEN's network for emergency relief ranges from small-scale community-led efforts to expert consultants living in ecovillages around the world, prototyping replicable technology for areas in need of disaster relief. Through this work, we see that crises can be defined beyond situation-based emergencies and relate to longer-term crises, affecting regions plagued by man-made conflicts, natural disasters, economic collapse, and chronic poverty. Here, restoring humans' direct relationship with natural resources can help recover basic needs such as food and water

(continued on p. 75)

*Konohana Family Community,
Japan.*



*San Jose
Peace Community,
Colombia.*

Photo courtesy of Global Ecovillage Network



*RefuGEN:
Upcycling
Life Vests.*

Leila Dregger

CREATING CARBON-NEGATIVE COMMUNITIES:

Ecovillages and the UN's New Sustainable Development Goals

By Rob Wheeler

At ZEGG ecovillage in Germany, 400 people dine outside during a Whitsun festival.



The Global Ecovillage Network (GEN) and its many ecovillage communities have long striven to be good planetary citizens and to live in ways that are as sustainable, nurturing, and harmonious as possible. We are now working to help achieve the United Nations' new Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and to fulfill the Paris Climate Agreement; and you can help too. The SDGs were adopted by the UN last September. Many describe them as the most ambitious and inclusive set of goals to which the UN has ever agreed.

The SDGs include 17 primary goals and 169 more specific targets. They encompass such objectives as achieving full and productive employment and decent work for all; ensuring access to adequate, safe, and affordable housing and basic services; doubling agricultural productivity and the incomes of small-scale farmers; implementing resilient agricultural practices while strengthening capacity for adaptation to climate change; doubling the global rate of energy efficiency; ensuring access to affordable, reliable, sustainable, and modern energy for all; and sustainably managing and efficiently using natural resources—all by 2030.

These intentions are certainly challenging, but achievable if we set our hearts and minds to it. Ecovillages are already showing how these goals can be met.

GEN and the UN

I have represented GEN at the United Nations for the past 15 years. I have lived in an ecovillage community, and in my career as an educator and activist visited many more.

During that time I have come to recognize ecovillages as among the most sustainable communities on earth. I have also become familiar with the UN's new SDGs, having participated actively in the meetings at the UN that developed them and evaluated how they could be achieved.

GEN and our ecovillage communities are already well on our way towards helping the UN and the world's people to reach these targets and goals. For example, many ecovillages are leaders in developing and using organic farming, regenerative agriculture, biochar and carbon sequestration, biological waste treatment processes, natural building practices, and innovative means of producing renewable energy.

I joined a GEN delegation that participated in the UN's Climate Summit in Paris in December, and helped to put together a

special website for it, looking at how ecovillages are helping to address and prevent climate change. I want to share with you some of the many ways that ecovillages around the world help create a more just, equitable, and sustainable world and ways in which you and your community can participate.

Transitioning to Clean and Renewable Energy

Goal 7 of the SDGs calls for ensuring access to and substantially increasing the share of renewable energy. The world community is finally taking notice and investing in the transition to a truly renewable energy future, but we still have a long way to go. According to REN21's 2014 report, renewables contributed 19 percent to our global energy consumption in 2012, but almost half of this still comes from burning fuel wood. More than a billion people still lack access to electricity. And an estimated seven million people die each year from indoor air pollution from cooking and heating fires—mostly women and children. It is thus a challenging goal but one that can definitely be met.

Dyssekilde Ecovillage in Denmark provides one example of what we can do. Almost all of the houses have a greenhouse built in on their south-facing wall. Passive solar heating is particularly efficient in houses with brick or other dense walls that absorb the heat, shortening the active heating season by a month both in autumn and spring.

When the ecovillage first started, wood was a popular fuel as it was relatively cheap,

easily obtainable, and, when sustainably harvested, CO₂-neutral. Many of the older houses are therefore heated by wood-burning mass ovens—heavy brick or stone ovens in the middle of the houses. They are fired once a day to very high heat, which gives a cleaner combustion and less pollution. The brick or stone then absorbs the heat and slowly releases it during the day. These ovens typically utilize 95 percent of the biomass energy and are thus ideal for home heating in Scandinavian and other cold climates. Many also have built-in ovens for baking and cooking.

When the Dyssekilde community built their communal house they decided to heat it with geothermal energy. This system works by absorbing heat from the ground via long tubes dug approximately 1 meter into the earth. These are filled with water and an anti-freeze solution. Electricity provided by wind power runs a compressor that boosts this relatively low heat to 30-40 degrees C, which is then used to heat floors, radiators, and tap water. Many houses also have solar water heaters on the roof. Finally, in order to be self-sufficient they built the first windmill in the area in the mid-1990s. Communally owned, it produces two and a half times the electricity needed for houses in the village. (See www.dyssekilde.dk/uk/node/126.)

Increasing Productivity and Income with Solar Dryers

Hakoritna Farm in Palestine has had great success with solar dryers. In Palestine, farmers cannot export their products because of the checkpoints and separation wall. Given the nation's minute size, farmers' livelihoods are compromised as fruits and vegetables of the same variety ripen simultaneously, often flooding the market and driving down the price farmers can ask for their crops. Farmers therefore reap insufficient profits to cover their input and labor, especially when the produce is organic. But by installing solar dryers they are able to preserve vegetables and fruits for the winter, thus getting a much better price and increasing food sovereignty.

People used to put produce on rooftops to dry but would have to take it down at night; and if it rained all could be ruined. The solar dryer makes things easy. It is essentially a plastic sheet tunnel with solar-driven fans to maintain the right humidity. The fruits can dry in just a day.

(You can read more about Hakoritna Farm in Palestine, along with many other ecovillage success stories, in GEN's new book *Ecovillage: 1001 Ways to Heal the Planet*, available on the GEN website at www.ecovillage.org/node/5746 and on the FIC website at www.ic.org/community-bookstore/product/ecovillage-1001-ways-to-heal-the-planet; it is also reviewed on page 80 of this issue.)

The Tamera ecovillage in Portugal has also been using a solar dryer that has proved itself many times over. Similar solar dryers are also used by fishermen in Bangladesh to dry fish, farmers in Togo for bananas, and merchants in China for spices. One half of the floor

Ecovillage Design Education course, Palestine, 2015.



Photo courtesy of Global Ecovillage Network



*Biogas system
for refugee
camps and
slums.*

of the tunnel-dryer is painted black and serves as the “collector.” Here, solar radiation is transformed into heat. The air is heated and thus has a lower relative humidity. A fan then blows the air across the goods to be dried, where it absorbs moisture. The sunlight falling on this drying area helps to vaporize moisture in the food. Because the fan (in the far triangular end of the tunnel-dryer) is powered by a photovoltaic (PV) module, the interior temperature can be kept constant. (You can find a detailed guide on constructing a solar dryer at www.solare-bruecke.org/Bauanleitungen/Tunneltrockner_dt.pdf.)

Biogas Digesters Can Be Cheap and Easy to Build

At Tamera, they have also built several biogas digesters that run almost entirely on kitchen and garden scraps from the community. With biogas from the first two they are able to cook on one burner for 10-20 hours a day. They estimate that this type of a system is 400 times more effective than a system using cow manure. With biogas, the kitchen can remain in service through the rainy winter season, during which time direct solar power is not sufficient. They are now planning to power a refrigerator and a generator with biogas. (See www.tamera.org/project-groups/autonomy-technology/biogas.)

T.H. Culhane from SolarCITIES helped Tamera construct and install the digesters. He has worked for years with the local people in the poorest neighborhoods of Cairo, Egypt and in other African countries to develop decentralized solutions for energy supply. They use what is available—buckets, plastic canisters, hoses, old gas cookers—to assemble a whole system: the biogas digester, an attached gas reservoir nearly as large as the digester, the inlet for kitchen waste, the outlets for gas and liquid fertilizer, and the cooker and other devices that use the gas. (See solarcities.blogspot.com.)

Cleaning Up Charcoal and Creating a Mini Grid in the Developing World

The European Union provides funding for a number of highly successful ecovillage climate projects in Tanzania that utilize multi-sectoral interventions. Zanzibar Community Forests International has assisted villagers in using a new method to produce charcoal, replacing the traditional earth mound technique with a low-cost retort kiln, doubling production efficiency. It takes half as much wood to produce the same amount of charcoal—and in turn consumes only half as much forest. This process cuts production time in half and reduces emissions up to 75 percent. (See forestsinternational.org/innovation/post/can-we-answer-tanzanias-charcoal-question-one-small-answer-at-a-time.)

In Tanzania, only 14 percent of the people have access to electricity. So they set out to

design an electricity system for the island of Kokota in Zanzibar, spanning the entire island and empowering every single inhabitant. This meant providing electricity to over 80 homes and three public buildings. With no previous access to electricity, Kokota’s energy demands were simple: people wanted electric lighting so they wouldn’t have to keep buying and burning kerosene, and to charge their mobile phones. They figured out that a week’s worth of energy to meet basic demands for a single household could be stored in a small motorcycle battery. So the community generates renewable energy collectively at a central location and then distributes it via a fleet of small carry-home batteries—a “portable” microgrid. (See forestsinternational.org/innovation/post/how-do-you-build-your-own-portable-microgrid.)

Sequestering Carbon and Improving Soil Health with Biochar

A number of ecovillages have also been experimenting with and offering workshops on making and using biochar and on building biochar pits, kilns, or wood stoves. Not only can biochar dramatically cut down on carbon emissions, it can also help to sequester vast amounts of carbon in our soils, while restoring soil health and increasing productivity.

In regions as diverse as the high mountain valleys of Costa Rica and the agricultural fields of western Kenya, biochar cook-

**A rich loamy soil, up to a meter deep,
can be restored in a matter of years.**

stoves are now being used to both clear the air and enrich the soil. Biochar is a type of charcoal produced when biomass burns in an oxygen-free environment. It can boost water and nutrients in dry, depleted soil while serving as a vehicle for burying the carbon that contributes to global warming.

At The Farm ecovillage community in Tennessee (US), they have been regenerating and replenishing depleted topsoil by putting biochar and compost tea into the soil using a keyline plow, which cuts into the soil surface without turning the earth. A rich loamy soil, up to a meter deep, can be restored in a matter of years.

In Germany's ZEGG ecovillage, the soil is sandy so they decided to use biochar (terra preta) to improve the soil quality in their gardens. Terra preta (literally "black earth" in Portuguese) owes its name to its very high charcoal content, and is made by adding a mixture of charcoal, bone, and manure to the otherwise relatively infertile Amazonian soil over many years.

According to a *National Geographic* news article entitled "Biochar Cookstoves Boost Health for People and Crops," three billion people worldwide rely on highly polluting open-fire cookstoves. The article goes on to say that a Seattle, Washington-based company, SeaChar, is testing a new style of clean cookstove that produces biochar. It can be built using local materials: a five-gallon steel paint bucket, some corrugated steel roofing material, and half of a one-gallon tomato sauce can.

In addition to wood, the stove burns garden debris, dried animal dung, corncobs, and coconut husks. A family cooking a pot of beans will use 40 percent less wood with this Estufa Finca stove than with an open-fire stove, while showing a significant reduction in exposure to harmful smoke. These stoves reduce particulate matter emissions by some 92 percent and carbon monoxide emissions by 87 percent. SeaChar offers a biochar buyback program too, through which households can earn an extra \$15-20 per month by selling the biochar produced by their cookstoves—a huge boon in the developing world. (See news.nationalgeographic.com/news/energy/2013/01/130129-biochar-clean-cookstoves.)

A family cooking a pot of beans will use 40 percent less wood with an Estufa Finca stove than with an open-fire stove.

They built and use a Kontiki steel kiln at ZEGG to make the biochar, and have figured out an ingenious way to charge it. Biochar is extremely porous. It absorbs water and nutrients and can thus deliver them to the plant root zone. But if it is not charged by soaking with either liquid nitrogen or a compost tea, or being mixed into a compost pile, biochar soaks up, holds, and thus depletes the land of available nutrients.

At ZEGG they wanted to lower the nitrogen and phosphate levels in their wastewater to improve the quality of their outflow water. They discovered that urine has the highest content of nitrogen and phosphorus, much more than human feces. In fact, 80 to 90 percent of the nitrogen we shed and 50 percent of phosphorus are in the urine. So they started soaking biochar with urine from their waterless toilets in barrels for approximately four weeks. They then use composted leaf earth, clay, bokashi, grass clippings, and charged biochar in layers to set up a compost stack and let it sit covered for a year before putting it into their gardens. (See *Terra Preta Production, Part II: Waterless Urinals—Charging Terra Preta at ZEGG*, sites.ecovillage.org/article/terra-preta-production-part-ii.)

You will find many articles, videos, and instructions on making and using biochar on the GEN climate website at www.ecovillage.org/COP21 or more directly at ecovillage.org/node/5998. Numerous organizations and businesses are also listed on the Global Alliance for Clean Cookstoves website that sell biochar cookstoves or help communities make and install them. See cleancookstoves.org (enter biochar under search).

So by making biochar and investing in cleaner energy production we can achieve many of the UN's SDGs: improving soil health, increasing agricultural productivity, reducing hunger, reducing water pollutants, and improving human health; while reducing carbon emissions, sequestering carbon, and reducing deforestation.

These are just some of the best practices and success stories being carried out in ecovillages that can help us deal more responsibly with the climate crisis while also achieving the SDGs. You can find many more examples and details under Success Stories at www.ecovillage.org/cop21. 🌱

Rob Wheeler has represented the Global Ecovillage Network at the United Nations for the past 15 years. He has participated actively in the global Earth Summit Conferences in Rio de Janeiro, in Johannesburg, and the annual meetings of the UN's Commission and now High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development in New York. Rob used to live at the Heathcote Ecovillage Community in the US, and has worked for more than 25 years as a teacher and environmental educator. He co-organized and led a Sustainable Community Campaign in Santa Cruz County in California for five years in the 1990s and has been a peace, environmental, and political activist and organizer for most of his life. Every year he joins millions of people around the planet in celebrating his birthday, or rather Earth Day, on April 22.



At Dyssekilde Ecovillage in Denmark, using distance-appropriate transport reduces carbon footprints.

Hildur Jackson

Collective Healing

By Kosha Anja Joubert and Stephen Busby—Interview by Robin Alfred

Kosha, Stephen, and Robin all live in the Findhorn Community in Scotland (when not traveling the world for their work), and have been friends for many years. Robin and Kosha have taken this a step further and are now happily married. All three share a deep interest in the development of global consciousness and collective wisdom, and will be offering an experimental Collective Healing Space in Berlin, 14-15 January 2017. For more information on this, please write to office@ecovillage.org.

Robin: What is the connection between the Global Ecovillage Network (GEN) and collective healing?

Kosha: At its core, GEN holds a high global vision of humanity, coming home to the planet with the potential of healing our relationship with each other and the world around us. The vision is gradually being manifested through ecovillage projects in many different forms and places, and through the global network where all of us come together.

Being in GEN becomes a journey towards global consciousness and global intercultural citizenship: we practice hosting global realities within our awareness through the intimate concern for the well-being of our friends and their communities around the world. As we work across continents, we meet the need for healing of the relationships that have gone before, many of which have disregarded respect for life and the dignity of other people.

We live in a world steeped in post-colonial and neo-colonial relationships, impacted by post-slavery and neo-slavery realities, a world where streams of refugees are migrating across the face of the planet seeking a safe haven from existential threats. Collectively, within the body of humanity, we hold pain. It is so hard for us to give a home to the intensity of these feelings that we easily find ourselves recreating the trauma of the past. In GEN, we are beginning to welcome and make space for the pain as it comes up for healing.

Robin: Stephen, how do you see the relationship between intentional communities and this question of collective trauma and healing?

Stephen: In reflecting on my experience of intentional communities over the last 15 years, I have the impression that most people join such an intentional way of life because they are drawn to a collective healing movement, whether this is consciously realized or not. In the last two or three years, this purpose has become more conscious. The healing approaches and tools that people have been using and evolving are beginning to be formulated and applied more explicitly.

Robin: It seems healing can happen both on a personal level and on a community level. You both speak to the power of community to heal. There are also deeper systemic traumas that spring from colonialism, or from the current situation in the countries of different ecovillage communities.

Kosha: In GEN, we speak about *I*, *We*, and *World* to distinguish three levels of our reality. I believe we have developed experience and expertise around collective healing on the *I* and the *We* levels. Leading-edge psychology has deeply influenced the communities movement. We have practiced looking at complex realities within our communities, and therefore, also within ourselves. We see that, as individuals, we need to welcome different parts of our own personality, and, as communities, we need to welcome the diversity of human natures.

We are integrating the insight that, as individuals, we are a fluid whole that flows into and is ultimately inseparable from the larger whole. Once we work through deeper levels of our personal trauma and pain, we start diving into a more collective level where we experience ourselves as an expression of our heritage and culture. As we heal ourselves, we also inadvertently start to heal the broader family and societal systems that we are a part of.

The next level, the *World* level, where we dive into global consciousness, is more uncharted territory. Not very many networks are at the same time intimately personal and deeply global, so GEN has a special potential to explore this.

Stephen: I sense that all of us who are participating in intentional communities and inner exploration are tapping into layers of trauma at the level of society and culture. Communities become powerful microcosms for trauma in the wider society—spaces where the more hidden symptoms of our wider societies are concentrated, exposed, and can be consciously addressed.

It is important for those of us who are working with this to not make our experience too personal. We need to develop sensitivities that are more attuned to dimensions of collective trauma.

For example, the refugee crisis has sharply impacted the two communities that I've had the most direct experience with over the last years in Europe—Findhorn in Scotland and Schloss Glarisegg in Switzerland. Dynamics that typically show up in community around issues of home, place, and the “right to belong” are increasingly colored by an awareness of this escalating crisis—the dynamics mirror and reflect it. Just as we are moved personally, we are also moved by the deeper systemic roots of what, on the surface, seems to be a social and political issue. Deep down we know that this isn't one issue, but a complex multilayered reality that confounds simple attempts at resolution or containment. We are touched by movements of human suffering that reflect older, shared wounds, and by complex victim and perpetrator dynamics that humanity has not been able, until now, to feel.

Robin: Kosha, how have you worked with GEN to help move trauma into more of a healing space?

Kosha: For some of my last seven years with GEN I focused on supporting the emergence of GEN Africa. I started by inviting wonderful people who were doing fantastic work on the ground in Africa to come to Ecovillage Design Education courses in an ecovillage in Germany where I was living. We worked with the method of the Forum to create a safe environment for people to share authentically and intimately. We all felt deeply honored to be present as witnesses and participants to these intimate intercultural conversations and dialogues. It was a life-changing experience.

One example that is quite stark in my memory is a situation shared by women from various countries in Africa, Asia, Europe, and Latin America. The scale of abuse that was present in our circle stunned all of us. And whereas it felt like a certain level of work around women's empowerment had been accomplished, when we heard about the horror of rapes, domestic violence, and the appalling stories of female babies that are left to die, it was clear that there is so much more that still has not been seen and integrated. A deep sense of understanding and solidarity was born between us. At the core of what we



*Stephen Busby, Kosha Joubert,
and Robin Alfred.*

Photo courtesy of Global Ecovillage Network

practiced was listening, witnessing, and embracing. These can be powerful healing modalities.

Another example was around youth stepping into their power. Some young people in Europe are encountering difficulty finding their way. They can feel overwhelmed by the complexity of the world they are meeting, whereas many young people from the Global South have a very clear commitment and direction. The existential reality of the situation in their countries is so strong and immediate that they have no questions about “What should I do?” It is very clear.

I have witnessed a mutual healing process taking place simply through this intercultural exchange. Participants from Africa could feel the power of community and clarity that they bring and this enhanced their sense of self-worth. Young Europeans were inspired and empowered to reconnect to their own roots and inner purpose. The longing for authentic connection across cultures is so strong. In meetings between cultures, there lies a well of mutual inspiration and empowerment.

If the first example is about healing through listening and witnessing, and the second about healing through mutual learning and exchange, the third is maybe the hardest: healing through acting and manifesting together. As GEN Africa emerged, we worked with funding from Europe to support projects in Africa. Funding which comes from Europe brings with it a European worldview and bureaucracy that doesn't fit smoothly into African realities—on the contrary. This has created

What I have found most important in all situations is to identify and work with people in all cultures who are wisdom-keepers. We need people who can hold the awareness of the larger field, so that intense emotions or issues can be expressed safely, within a framework of trust and growing consciousness.

Stephen: What you are calling wisdom seems to me to be an ability to show up in an appropriate way so that we stay available and alert to what is going on behind what is being spoken and externalized. We are listening to the deeper movements within any group that gathers. And then, in a second step, we train the ability to bring and express this in appropriate ways so that it can be heard and received by the collective.

Kosha: As long as we stay within our own cultural framework, we cannot see the cultural lenses and worldviews we are looking through. We are blind to our blindness. An African way of viewing Europeans might include the experience of centuries of oppression and disregard for African life and culture, and at the same time a wish for friendship. The European experience might include the longing for connection, hidden feelings of guilt, a wish to give, and much more. Working within the global networks requires a sensitivity and opening that builds on what we have learned in our intentional communities. We need to crack open our worldviews and our hearts to start seeing each other more fully. Growing a global consciousness is a very cellular process.

Stephen: The kind of skill set that we are referring to becomes necessary at the intersection of cultures and societies. These meeting points are increasing and creating what you spoke about earlier: reciprocal healing because of the confrontation and mixing of different worldviews.

Robin: I hear you talking about the wisdom and value of being witnessed and simply sharing our stories. It reminds me of Thich Nhat Hanh's practice of compassionate listening circles. Just to witness and listen is very healing in itself. I also know that you do systemic work. Could you say something about this approach?

Stephen: Well, it's another form of witnessing. Witnessing some of these hidden historical, cultural traumatic strata that are hidden underneath the surface is huge. Tools are available that allow people to begin to sense, surface, witness, hold, and express some of the collective pain in ways that are contained while not being suppressed.

Often these processes, like systemic constellation work, are ways of representing different aspects of societal trauma in precise synthesized ways. People can work with and respond to the archetypal and symbolic aspects of what is being represented in the room, rather than striving to understand it in the usual conditioned ways.

Robin: Sometimes we hear stories of emotional release and discharge and it can feel as if healing is happening. Others feel that witnessing and standing naked in front of the truth of an experience, in sobriety, is where healing happens.

Kosha: It feels presumptuous to speak for other cultures, but I can share some of what I've experienced. In Europe, a lot of personal therapy has taken place in the past decades. In Africa and other places I have visited, there has been less privilege, and less access to such methods of healing. Many of those in our networks have gone through brutally raw and traumatic experiences. Having to witness your parents being forced into a hut and burnt alive, or having being raped multiple times...these experiences are of a very different intensity. I can just bow down

to the intensity, in humility and awe at what people are able to hold. When someone is willing to share such a story we create sacred healing space together, by honoring, listening, respecting, and holding in our hearts. Whether it is expressed with an emotional release or in quiet dignity is secondary; the real question is whether we can stay with the intensity of the moment.

Stephen: The way that pain is received through a listening collective body is sig-

Funding which comes from Europe brings with it a European worldview and bureaucracy that doesn't fit smoothly into African realities.

many tensions in our networks: on the one hand, wanting to work with opportunity; on the other hand, facing the complexity of restrictions. We have been challenged to heighten our collective awareness and holding capacity, and in some instances we have, of course, also failed.

nificant. Not simply how the story is told and shared, but how we are able to receive it, respond to it, and feel through our own version of that trauma.

Kosha: Yes. Often we contract and our listening is not as full as it could be. Yet I have found that these spaces, however imperfect they might be, where people are able to share at such a depth, often create experiences of complete transformation and deep empowerment.

Stephen: Not only in those that have shared but also in those who have witnessed and received.

Kosha: There is such an intense yearning in the human soul to offer a home to each other. When spaces like this open up, people walk away from it with a sense that we have shared sacred space. People feel blessed to have been part of this. It becomes a process of restoration to host, to give space, and to honor the intensity and pain of what we have inflicted on each other as human beings.

Stephen: Yes, and to allow the related feelings of guilt that accompany that.

Kosha: Exactly. So, beyond the witnessing, we come to the question of lasting and growing relationship, collaboration, and manifestation. How can we come to lasting friendships between the “developing” and “developed” countries, the “colonized” and the “colonizers”? We can feel the charge that these words carry.

The past has not been healed and many feelings are raw under the surface. We saw this tension play out in the UN Climate Change negotiations in Paris, and the dialogues about who takes responsibility and who pays. The transfer of funds from the Global North to the South is one way of attempting to take responsibility and heal the divide.

Robin: Se let's close by asking you, Kosha, about your own next steps and leading edge in this work. Where do you go, and where can others go, with these questions around collective healing?

Kosha: The exploration of this topic seems to lie right at the core of my purpose. This is what I am here for, to help birth and heal global citizenship. Growing out of the South African reality into this global reality of GEN, this is what my heart beats for.

In the day-to-day work in GEN I meet this heart-wrenching invitation to hold space for the reality of communities around the world: the villages in Bangladesh that are being flooded again, the villages in Southern Mauretania that are being engulfed by the Sahara, the villages in Zimbabwe and Colombia where the plants are withering because the rains did not come. This doesn't come as an abstract piece of information. These are my friends telling me how they are. Just to be with this is practice...and at the same time, not to lose my capacity to be a part of an organization that functions smoothly in order to bridge these realities.

There is a need to cultivate spaces that are specifically dedicated to global collective healing in GEN. So we are consciously exploring and experimenting and lifting the wealth of experience that comes from the intentional community context to the next level. We work with many methods: Process Work, Systemic Constellation, Forum, Coaching, Co-Counseling, the Art of Hosting, the Work that Reconnects, Ritual and Initiation, to name a few. The First Nation communities carry enormous wisdom around transformative collective healing. We have started to open spaces for collective healing at all GEN events. We are stepping into a stage of dedicated experimentation. 🌊

Kosha Anja Joubert serves as Executive Director of GEN International, and sits on the Advisory Board of GEN Africa. She has many years of experience as an international facilitator, trainer, and consultant and has worked extensively in the fields of curriculum development, international collaboration, and sustainable development. Kosha grew up in South Africa under apartheid and has been dedicated to building bridges across all divides ever since. She has lived in ecovillages for the past 25 years and been a driving force in GEN for eight years.

Kosha is also a cofounder of Gaia Education, which develops trainings at the cutting-edge of sustainability, and coauthor of the internationally applied Gaia Education curriculum for Ecovillage Design Education. You can see her TEDx Talk on ecovillages here: youtu.be/gGbuOBCGfmQ.

Stephen Busby has a coaching, consulting, and healing practice and has been serving higher human potential and purpose internationally for over 30 years. He is based at

How can we come to lasting friendships between the “developing” and “developed” countries, the “colonized” and the “colonizers”?

the Findhorn Foundation Community ecovillage: a center for holistic education, organizational and cultural innovation in Scotland. Stephen has distilled new applications of phenomenological systemic methodologies to healing in collective fields, from which his higher consciousness practices have evolved. His several careers in education and consultancy have spanned the corporate world, transnational public service institutions, and not-for-profit organizations in Europe, Africa, Asia, and North America. Information on his work is at www.stephenbusby.com.

Robin Alfred worked as a trainer, educator, and social work manager for 15 years in London prior to coming to the Findhorn ecovillage in Scotland in 1995. He is founding Director of the Findhorn Consultancy Service and was Chair of Trustees from 2009-2014. Robin has extensive experience leading and developing groups and individuals in a variety of settings including prisons, social work, police forces, communities, NGOs, multinationals, and other corporations. Robin was a faculty member of the Findhorn Foundation's Ecovillage Training for many years, and represented the Findhorn Foundation in EU programs. He has taught Ecovillage Design Education courses in the UK, Germany, India, and the Gambia and helped facilitate the GEN Europe Conferences in 2012, 2013, 2014, and 2015.

LEARNING IN ECOVILLAGES AND Getting a College Degree

By Karen Stupski and Giovanni Ciarlo

Ecovillages are fun places to live and put into practice sustainable life styles, but they are also powerful sites of learning where people can discover and practice new ways of knowing, being, and doing, and create a more sustainable, peaceful, and socially just world.

From ecological practices such as permaculture and natural building to social skills such as decision-making and facilitation, ecovillages provide an abundance of learning opportunities. A new partnership between Goddard College in Vermont, and Gaia Education, a charity organization based in Scotland, enables students to earn college credit for their ecovillage-based learning. This partnership also creates the possibility for students to design a college experience that includes learning in ecovillages and other organizations doing cutting-edge work in sustainability and social and ecological justice. This article explores some of the benefits and challenges facing these community-based programs.

The Power of Ecovillage-Based Learning

Why are ecovillages such powerful sites of learning? It is not just the immersion in the physical location and ecological technologies that make ecovillage-based learning so powerful, but rather the alternative learning methods that are used. The methods of mainstream education, where students sit in classrooms, listen to lectures, and take tests, result in learning that is disconnected from the world and from the students' whole self. If students come to ecovillages and these same methods are used, the learning experience will be nothing special. However, ecovillages use alternative methods such as democratic pedagogies, reflective immersion, action/experiential learning, and holistic education. And these make all the difference in the world.

From 2006 to 2010 students came to Huehucoyotl, a 34-year-old intentional community in central Mexico for three weeks of immersion studies in community development and leadership for social change. After an initial understanding of community research and needs assessment methodologies, they presented various projects that they could implement in the community. These led to creating recycling stations, wheelchair access ramps, garden improvement plans, community house beautification, and much more—a benefit to the community and a rich learning experience for the students, who received college credit for their work.

Democratic Pedagogies

Democratic pedagogies use education as a vehicle for social transformation through inquiry into power relations and the creation of democratic communities. Democratic educators share power with students as co-creators of knowledge and implement more egalitarian social structures and processes within the learning community. These methods give students more control over their individual and collective learning and they also promote deeper relationships and support within the community of learners. In addition, they help students to see the unjust social structures that perpetuate oppression in society, understand their own roles within those structures, and gain practical tools to help dismantle oppression.

Immersion

Most people learn about community living and group dynamics by immersing themselves in a community and learning bits and pieces of organizational skills that they need to live together and carry out common chores. This was the case with Huehucoyotl. Its founders didn't start out knowing much about natural building or food production, but they used their experience and skills in theatre to buy land and create a community from scratch by acting out what they envisioned their community to look like, in both the so-

cial and the environmental aspects, and integrating spiritual and economic elements as the need and opportunities arise. Students who participate in ecovillage-based education programs have similar immersive learning experiences.

Action Learning

The students who came to learn at Huehucoyotl were faced with problems on the ground from day one. They got to meet community members and talk about issues and aspirations of the community right there. The solutions they then offered were based on action they could take. Many ecovillages engage in an action learning process without even realizing it, as in the case of needing to start a school for their young children, or building a shelter using natural local materials. These activities bring participants in close contact with the aims of the group, and learning takes place as those involved create systems and processes for tackling common challenges. At ecovillages, students engage in action learning, helping to identify real problems and implement solutions.



Holistic Education and Systems Thinking

Holistic education is based on the premise that an underlying cause of our current environmental and social problems is our tendency to deal with elements of systems as though they were isolated parts. A holistic approach to education helps students develop their ability to deal with whole systems by taking elements that traditional education treats as separate and integrating them into a larger whole. Holistic education is interdisciplinary, making connections among the humanities, the social sciences, the natural sciences, math, and the arts. It addresses the whole person, valuing

and nurturing students' intellectual, emotional, spiritual, and physical development. Finally, it helps students understand the Earth as a whole system to which they are intimately connected. Ecovillages embrace a holistic worldview which permeates ecovillage-based educational experiences.

The Challenges of Ecovillage-Based Learning

If ecovillage-based learning is so powerful, why isn't it more popular? There are many challenges that limit the ability of both ecovillages and students to engage in ecovillage-based education. Many ecovillages are small and have limited time, energy, and resources. This is illustrated by Andres K. Cobos, one of Huehuecoyotl's members, who says that he often doesn't have the time to prepare the spirituality-based teachings that he offers, because he must focus on issues pertaining to the immediate survival and long-term viability of the ecovillage. While it is true that students can help with projects and bring much-needed energy and resources to an ecovillage, community members still must make a significant effort to organize the educational programs and support the learners so that they have a high-quality experience. Ecovillages may not have members who want to do



Ecovillage Design Course, Huehuecoyotl Ecovillage, Mexico, 2011.



Ecovillage Design Course, Huehuecoyotl Ecovillage, Mexico, 2011.



The Human Cob-Making Machine, Gaia Argentina, 2015.



Ecovillage Design Presentation, Gaia Argentina, 2015.

Photos by Giovanni Ciarlo

educational work or they may lack the expertise to develop curricula and organize high-quality educational programs. Most ecovillage-based programs that do exist cannot offer college credit unless they partner with an accredited academic institution.

The biggest challenge for students may be the lack of accessibility to ecovillage-based learning. The number of ecovillages offering educational programs, while growing, is relatively small and they are not widely known in mainstream culture. Sometimes, when students do participate in an ecovillage-based program, the experience may not be all that they had hoped for due to the challenges faced by the host ecovillage, as mentioned above. Students who want to earn college credit for their ecovillage-based learning have an even more difficult time, as there are few accredited ecovillage-based programs and those in existence face continuous enrollment challenges.

The Global Ecovillage Network (GEN) and Gaia Education

Fortunately, there are two organizations within the ecovillage movement that support the development of ecovillage-based education. The concept of “ecovillages” was born and made popular with the emergence in the 1990s of the Global Ecovillage Network (GEN). GEN’s mission is to network ecovillages around the world in an effort to move human communities towards a more harmonious existence with each other and the Earth. Shortly after its creation GEN realized that the increasing number of self-identified ecovillages in its network had parts of the pieces for becoming a sustainable settlement, but education was a much-needed piece in helping them become more coherent and effective in developing their many systems, be it in the social, ecological, economic, or worldview aspects. To accomplish these new educational goals Gaia Education was created out of the ecovillage experience, and the curriculum that resulted from this effort became the basis for Ecovillage Design courses in over 40 countries in all continents, and online. The realization that ecovillages could become the immersion site for learning about community sustainability has revolutionized the way people learn to create community, or transition their community towards a more resilient path. Gaia Education provides valuable resources to strengthen ecovillage-based education around the world.

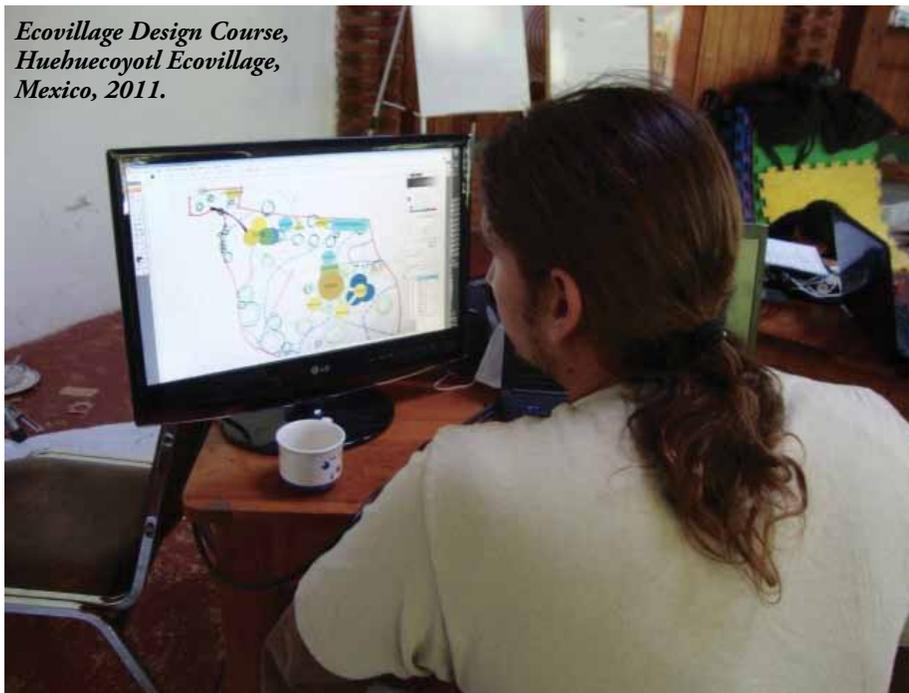
The Ecovillage Design Curriculum

The educators who developed Gaia Education’s Ecovillage Design Curriculum, a group that playfully calls themselves the GESE (Global Educators for Environmental Sustainability Education), includes ecovillage founders, sustainability practitioners, and educators from around the world, many of whom have academic training and research credentials in addition to per-

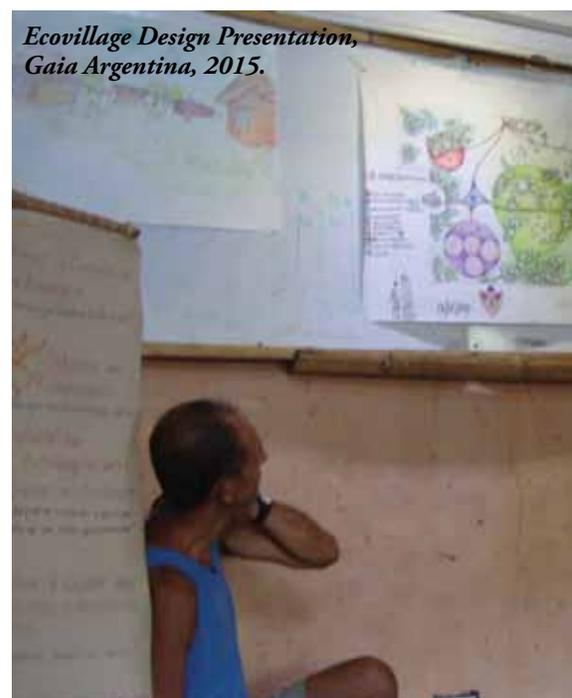
sonal experience creating ecovillages.

Each of the four dimensions (social, ecological, economic, and worldview) includes five modules and features learning goals, content, resources, and experiential learning activities. In addition, Gaia Education has published four books with reading materials that support each module. The curriculum is available for free on the Gaia Education website and it is an amazing resource for learners and ecovillages. Students can use it as a self-study guide and ecovillages can use it to supplement their own educational programs or partner with Gaia Education to offer a certified immersion course. It is also offered online in a learning community that includes an immersion experience in an ecovillage or sustainability center, often in partnership with ecovillages, universities, and training centers around the world.

Gaia Education offers a step-by-step guide on how to organize a course, and it offers a limited amount of small mentoring grants to help with the cost of organizing a course in economically challenged locations, thus addressing some of the biggest challenges facing ecovillages that want to organize education programs. For quality control, course organizers are required to have the students fill out an online evaluation form. The results of these evaluations over the past 10 years show that students around the world have had overwhelmingly positive and transformative experiences in these EDE courses.



Ecovillage Design Course, Huehucoyotl Ecovillage, Mexico, 2011.



Ecovillage Design Presentation, Gaia Argentina, 2015.

In addition, the online course, called GEDS (Gaia Education Design for Sustainability), is a valuable resource for groups wanting to start an ecovillage, as it covers the basic information needed to develop

ecovillage-based learning through immersions and action learning projects. With Goddard's program, students can spend their college years living in ecovillages while earning a bachelors or masters degree. Many students at Goddard pursue degrees based on the ecovillage experience, including the current academic director of Gaia Education, Giovanni Ciarlo, who earned his M.A. at Goddard (SBC 2008) before taking a position with Gaia Education, and Cynthia

Tina, who completed her B.A. degree with a focus on ecovillages and sustainable design (IBA 2014). Thus, it seemed only natural that Goddard College and Gaia Education would work together to provide degree credits to students.

This institutional and grassroots partnership didn't come easy or fast. The key issues are academic rigor, instructors' credentials, and documentation of learning.

A Partnership and its Obstacles and Challenges

In July 2015, Goddard College and Gaia Education created a partnership that

one, and can also supplement any onsite ecovillage-based training program.

Goddard's Sustainability Degrees and Ecovillages

While a number of mainstream colleges and universities have partnered with ecovillages over the years, Goddard College is a leader in alternative education and has many unique advantages that make it an excellent fit for ecovillage-based learning. Goddard is a small, progressive, liberal arts school in Vermont that offers low-residency programs leading to accredited bachelors and masters degrees. It has a radical pedagogy: there are no classes, no tests, and no grades. Students create their own study plans and are assessed on a portfolio of samples from their work. They can live anywhere and are free to engage in

enables students to earn up to 10 transfer credits if they complete the online GEDS course and enroll in a bachelors program at Goddard. In addition, students who enter the college through this partnership are eligible for a \$1,000 scholarship. They can then go on to design their own individualized study program to earn an accredited bachelors degree focusing on the study of ecovillages or any other topics they wish to pursue.

This institutional and grassroots partnership didn't come easy or fast, as the promoters of this academic partnership have been talking and exploring options for nearly 10 years. The key issues are academic rigor, instructors' credentials, and documentation of learning. The accreditation body that accredits Goddard college's degrees is the same body that accredits other institutions in New England, including Ivy League schools like Harvard and Yale. Goddard could risk losing accreditation if the board found that its academic credits did not meet strict guidelines.

The criteria for this partnership illustrate important challenges that must be overcome when ecovillages partner with academic institutions to offer accredited programs. The issue of academic rigor was addressed by a thorough review of the GEDS curriculum to ensure that it offers college level learning and meets high academic standards. In this process, the content of the GEDS course was correlated to Goddard's degree requirements so that students could earn credit in specific wide knowledge areas, such as natural science, social science, and the humanities. The issue of instructors' credentials was resolved through Gaia Education's rigorous requirements for the instructors who are hired to teach the GEDS course. Finally, Gaia Education requires the students to document their learning through comprehension, critical thinking reflections, and a team design comprehensive case study portfolio, so that learning outcomes can be assessed and substantiated.

Another significant challenge is lack of resources and institutional capacity. Goddard College is a tiny school in comparison to many mainstream colleges and universities. While it has an abundance of innovative ideas and visions, Goddard does not have sufficient funding to pay for the labor required to bring all these ideas and visions to fruition. However, thanks to a grant from the Jeld Charitable Foundation, which supports the Fund for Experiments and New Initiatives at Goddard College, a team of faculty was empowered to work on developing the partnership with Gaia Education and other organizations doing cutting-edge work in sustainability and social and ecological justice.

Into the Future

In his article on "Ecovillages and Academia," published in the Summer 2010 issue (#147) of COMMUNITIES, Daniel Greenberg articulated a vision of the larger potential of ecovillage-based education: "While programs offered through Living Routes and individual ecovillages are a good start, we need to further collaborate with academia to create 'communiversities' where students can spend years in ecovillages and other related organizations and gain the background and skills needed to enter the workplace as professionals in fields as diverse as appropriate technologies, habitat restoration, sustainable agriculture, group facilitation, holistic health, ecological design, and green building." (p. 37)

(continued on p. 76)



An Inspiring Journey in Ecovillages

By *Nébesna Fortin*

I was born in an ecovillage in Canada, La Cité Écologique, where I got the chance to be involved as much as possible in all aspects of the community. Starting at the high school level, we were invited to participate in one or many businesses that interested us. We could enroll in internships and practical hands-on learning classes in all areas: cooking, accounting, sewing, gardening, and others. We were invited to manage and do all the planning of great projects like the preparation of a meal for all members each week, creating a theater play by getting younger kids involved, and so on.

One of our projects was to take care of three greenhouses. Yes, it was a big challenge, and yes, at one time, all the plants burnt in the sun and were flooded the week after! Now, I can imagine how confident and patient the adults were, who sacrificed the production of three greenhouses, the plants, and all this growing space, for the only result of giving us a formidable learning experience. When my class graduated, we went to Europe. Having some friends living in France, we visited the area and decided to visit some other ecovillages such as Damanhur in Italy and Sieben Linden in Germany. At that time I discovered myself and my aspiration of creating more bridges between existing ecovillages, but it was still pretty blurry and just a dream.

At 18 years old, I was given the opportunity of becoming the kitchen manager for our ecovillage. I was happy to have this great chance, and once more, I admired the devotion and acceptance of the adults who let me have my experiences and take assurance in this managing position, while always being there to support me. This was one unique and precious opportunity to really get involved in my ecovillage. Later that year, we created a partnership with an intentional community in California, Ananda Village. This project also had businesses and a school and we did an exchange program with them. It was an eye-opening opportunity, getting to talk with young adults who had a similar childhood. We connected quickly, becoming best friends. We were sharing so many experiences, re-

flections, and dreams. It made me realise there was a bunch of like-minded people wishing for and working toward a better society. As the years passed by, I was called to change jobs and eventually was involved in public relations. It then became clearer that I wanted to create links between ecovillages in order to better support each other. I also wished to see more youth involved in the development of ecological and community-based projects.

It's been five years now since I started coordinating the internship program and the touristic aspect of La Cité. Through those years I have been able to visit many other communities and ecovillages. In the fall of 2012, with a group of high school kids, I traveled to inspiring communities such as The Farm, Sirius, and Earthaven in the US. Then an important step of my journey started in 2013 with a meeting in Schweibenalp (Switzerland) where I was introduced to NextGEN. This great group within the Global Ecovillage Network is working to connect the next generation to the ecovillage movement. It was so energising to meet with those active young adults coming from all over the globe. It made me feel part of an important worldwide family. I joined NextGEN NA core team, and later that year, traveled to Twin Oaks and Acorn for an FIC meeting. At the end of that same year the Ecovillage Network of Canada annual general meeting convened at Whole Village in Ontario. All was getting clearer: we needed more people informed about what those communities are experiencing. The lessons learned in all those micro-societies could be beneficial to so many more people wanting to be involved in this transformative movement.

My aspiration of getting more and more involved in sharing the ecovillage lifestyle with youth brought me to become involved with Gaia Education. As a NextGEN representative I wish to create learning opportunities for youth to explore their full potential and co-create community in their day-to-day environment. The Ecovillage Design Education (EDE) course offered by Gaia Education seems to me one of the best ways of making this happen. Once more I was brought to Europe, and this time to the oldest ecovillage, Findhorn, to participate in the EDE training. Wow! Being there was so energising! I could



Photos courtesy of Nébesna Fortin



feel the support; the work invested in the creation of something new, something big.

During my stay, I came across people from so many great initiatives: there was the New Story Summit just getting finished, then the Circle Project core-team meeting and the different EDE participants who were starting their communities and networks. There was a girl from a Native tribe who was studying to become a lawyer in order to protect and support the transition for her community. There were also mayors and delegates from villages and towns wishing to engage in the creation of sustainable politics for their municipalities. It confirmed for me that the time for change has come—that if all of us realize how many people are out there, moving toward a more sustainable lifestyle, we will no longer feel alone.

Having visited over 16 communities across Europe and the Americas, I can think of some divergences and preferences, but most of all, I can see the common thread of people working to create a better world. Indeed, I have a natural preference for La Cité Écologique ecovillage, since it is my home, but the beauty lies in diversity. I strongly believe there is not one unique perfect formula for sustainability, but a million. A million perfect ways of doing it right, of living in the respect of all living beings, of honoring uniqueness within all of us.

Back at La Cité, with a group of friends and the support of all our community, we set up a learning center and in July 2015 we offered the first Canadian EDE. Now I can say that the first step in this incredible journey is done. It is the starting point of the next one. It is the beginning of sharing what is going on in the ecovillage movement and getting new people involved in the creation of new community-based ecological initiatives.

I can't wait to meet more great people, living their dreams, building together the world they wish to pass on to the next generation. May our paths meet, may your journey be safe, sprinkled with joy, laughter, and love. 🌱

Nébesna Fortin works for the CAP Eco-Community Learning Center (www.capecommunitaire.org), lives at La Cité Écologique (www.citeecologique.org/index2), and is the NextGEN North America representative for Canada (www.nextgenna.org).

The Bridge to a Greener World

By John Ahern

I didn't realise my life had been hijacked until a year after it happened. I was in the car, on the way to show my mate Chris my newly built green house, reminiscing about how my wife Mandy and I had bought into the Currumbin Valley Ecovillage. "You were running late that day," I recalled.

Chris was the Ecovillage's developer. We had visited him a year earlier to catch up, but were also mildly curious to see the progress of his "eco thingy" project. To fill in time while waiting for him, we watched the Ecovillage's sales video. By the time he arrived, we had earmarked a house site to buy. As I replayed this story, he was grinning, and that's when I knew I had been hijacked. "You were never late, were you?"

But the conversation was shut down as our car swung off the Village Way roundabout and came to a jolting halt. We were on the one-lane bridge that crossed the creek running through the Ecovillage. Another vehicle was in our path, progressing forward slowly as though challenging us to a game of chicken.

"Damn," I gasped in frustration from the passenger seat; delayed. I had come to learn the local bridge etiquette: first on, possession ruling the right of way, so we reversed back and watched as this car painstakingly crawled its way forward. "Man, this one-lane thingy can be annoying," I blurted to driver Chris.

But he was insensitive to my time-speed-needs. Instead of taking the only sensible action, revving the engine for take-off, he slid his window down and started waving at the bridge interloper with the enthusiastic fervour of a war-time sailor hanging over the rails of a departing ship.

"How ya goin', Pete?" Chris yelled.

"What are you doing?" I hissed.

The other car promptly stopped and together with our vehicle, blocked the road. "Giddy, mate!" Pete cried back. "What's happening?"

I groaned. Having known Chris for some years, I knew that such an open-ended question could only lead to long tales of adventure and discovery. And sure enough, he and Pete started sharing exactly what had been happening. They talked of herbicides in the gardens, snake-proof chicken coops, the local beach's surf conditions, and the inevitable latest village controversy; this time someone had planted a non-certified banana tree in their yard. I didn't even know there was such a thing, but "tut-tutted" appropriately, and then adopted a "say nothing" vacant stare, certain my silence would kill off this greenie discussion and we would be on our way.

However, as a newcomer to this neighbourly society, I was only beginning to learn that chats don't end so easily in an Ecovillage. As the two men prattled on, I forlornly looked across the bridge, eager to get home. I had nothing positive to add to their discussion about protecting snakes in the community, having always adopted the "only good snake is a dead snake" approach. So for want of anything else to do, I inspected the bridge. It connected the north and south parts of the 270 acre Ecovillage by traversing the Currumbin Creek, a beautiful waterway that wound through the valley from the rainforest mountains to the ocean. Not for the first time, I noticed the slight arch in its concrete roadway.

Chris once told me that this curve was a hard-won council approved feature, a rarity in modern road design, having been modelled on old European bridges. It was one of hundreds of relaxations and features across the Ecovillage that challenged and opposed conventional development standards. Others popped into my head: no street lights, a dark sky policy, country-style laneways, centralised waste collection that keeps the big noisy garbage trucks out, no fences, and even self-imposed national park rules forbidding domestic animals.

This pet-free zone caused much frustration with potential owners who refused to part with their beloved dogs and cats; so they went elsewhere. The ethos of "nature comes first" won that point, as evidenced by the 176 identified bird species that flourish on and visit the Village land. To put that in perspective, America's 522,000 acre Great Smoky Mountains

National Park, on the border of Tennessee and North Carolina, has about 240 species.

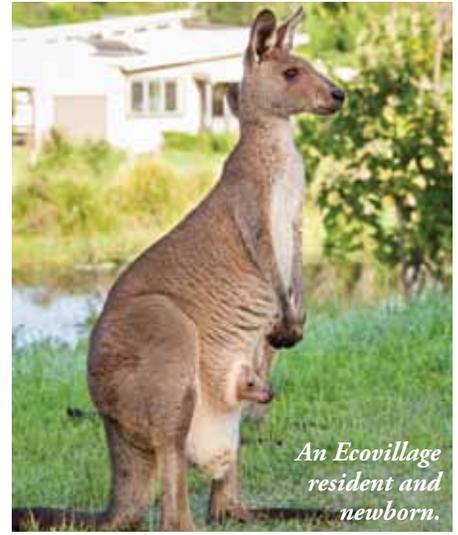
The kangaroos also love the environmental protection zone; a roaming mob of about 120 are often found resting, boxing, or love-making in one's front garden. Contrary to myth and tall tales, it is rare to find kangaroos in Australia's urban areas. And as a prior city-dweller, accustomed to the comforting night-time hum of air-conditioning and distant trains, I find few noises more unsettling than that of a giant male kangaroo grunting in the dark. I shook my wife awake the first night I heard this sound, displaying my growing knowledge of all things nature. "Honey," I whispered. "There's an old man with asthma throwing up just outside our window."

"You're not getting it, are you?" Chris's voice interrupted these thoughts, returning to my earlier delay frustration.



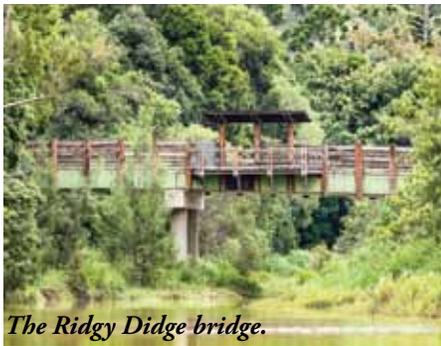


A crowded bridge.



An Ecovillage resident and newborn.

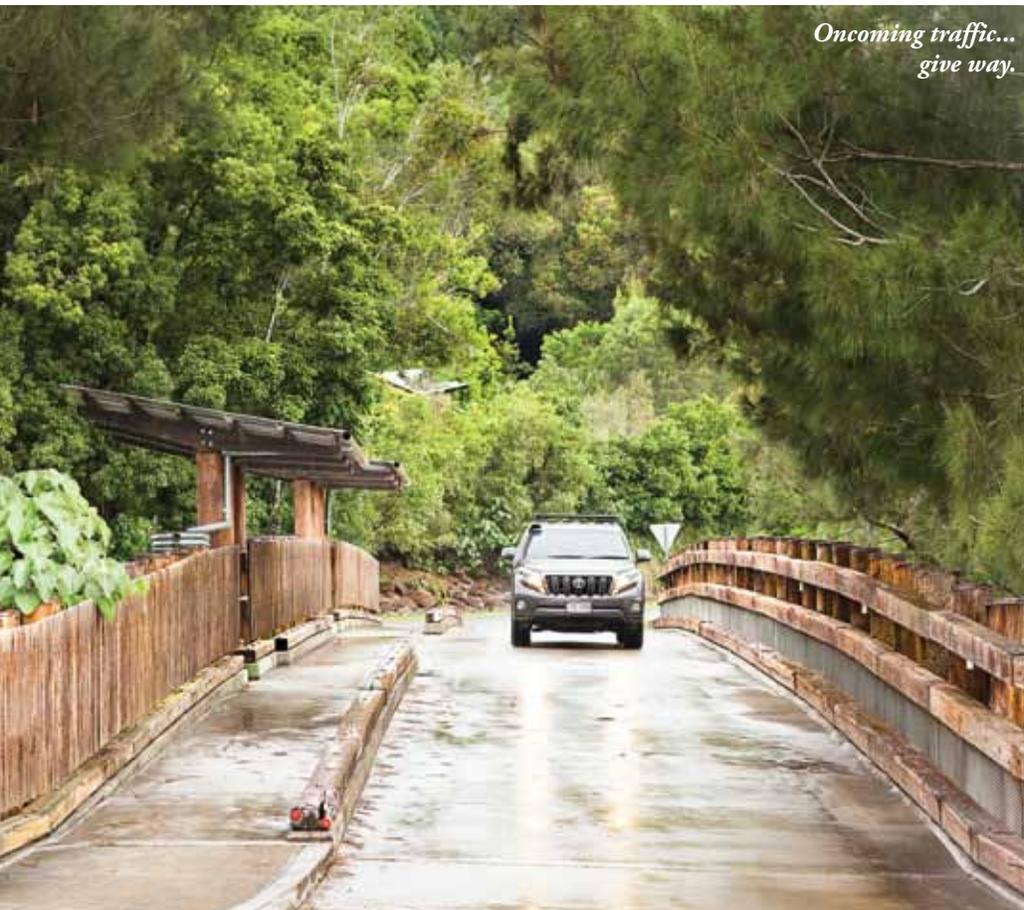
Photos by Gerrit te Grontenhuis



The Ridgy Didge bridge.



Throwing flowers into the creek.



Oncoming traffic... give way.

The Ecovillage@Currumbin

VITAL STATS

Location: Currumbin Valley, Gold Coast, Australia. Five miles inland from surf beaches in a beautiful Valley.

Land Area: 270 acres (80 percent open space including 50 percent environmental reserve).

Development: 147 house lots plus commercial precinct for shops/café.

Ancillary Development: Pool; town hall; waste water recycle plant; RRR (Reduce/Reuse/Recycle) Centre; playground; pizza oven; library; sports oval.

Key Build Codes: Solar panels; water tanks; 100 percent use of non-toxic, recycled, and local materials; thermal mass; dark sky lighting policy; solar axis design; no pets, fences, air conditioning, or clothes dryers.

Bird Species Count (Jan 2016): 176.

Kangaroos: Over 120.

Bridges: 1.

Awards: Australia's most awarded residential development with 33 awards, including "The World's Best Environmental Design" (FIABCI Prix D'excellence 2008).

Website: www.theecovillage.com.au.

Author Website: www.johnahern.co.

“Huh?” I turned, finding the other car and its chatty driver now gone.

“The bridge,” he pointed. “It’s not just a bridge.”

I squinted at this non-bridge. The structure was built of beautiful recycled timber rails, posts, and supports, parts of the balustrades being old plumbing pipes. Its two viewing platforms were quintessentially Australian with reused corrugated tin roofs, timber bench seats, and metal water tanks. It hovered over the creek like its grand master, but I had only one thought. “Well if it’s not a bridge, it’s doing a damn good impression of one.”

He went on to describe how the bridge

highest order in Australia. But even the developers did not foresee it becoming an intrinsic part of community activities; and it all began with a spontaneous party.

There had been a string of births in the Ecovillage in one particular month, sparking accusations of unnatural fertility in the soil, followed by a call-out for icy beers and a multiple head-wetting celebration. The old dairy hall was booked, so one larrikin suggested “let’s have it on the bridge.” About 40 people turned up at sunset. One rolled his barbecue up the road and started cooking German sausages, and instantly, in addition to the babies, a tradition was born. Sure, passing cars were inconvenienced by the rowdy mob spilling across the roadway, such activity challenging the norm of course, but isn’t that what Ecovillages do?

Since then, the “Ridgy Didge” has grown as a destination that draws the community together. When Libby, a beloved early resident, was fighting a terminal illness, a sunset vigil on the bridge to support her fight attracted over a hundred people. On her later passing, the Ecovillagers met there again, throwing flowers into the running waters below and laying others around the rails; a local community marking the passing of one of their own.

By rights, I shouldn’t have even been at that event. I was a self-confessed former air-conditioning addict and lover of my 30-year-old beer fridge that ran all year even when empty. Sure the old Westinghouse sucked down enough power to run a small African village, but I remained dubious as to how my family would adjust to life without “essentials” like it and clothes dryers. I was even more wary of this “community” ideal, having spent a lifetime being conditioned to stay behind fences and studiously avoid neighbourly contact, in case they wanted something. The ongoing events on the

Each unwanted “delay” is like a little injection, a daily reminder, that whatever I am speeding off to do can wait just a few seconds longer.

represented everything the Ecovillage was about. “It physically connects us, sure, but Ecovillages, they’re not just about sustainable design and nature. Look at what just happened,” Chis said. He explained how the “inconvenient” one lane was a deliberate design, forcing residents to stop, to have to give way, wave at each other, and yes, even block the road for a quick window-side chat about chickens and snakes. In this busy world, where we avoid neighbours and rush faster and faster to get somewhere a few seconds earlier, the bridge slows us down. Even by creating a meek hand-wave, it engenders a form of acknowledgement, respect, and communication. “The more we interact, even in small daily doses, the greater a community we will be,” he said, before closing with a statement of how the bridge was the ultimate example of the Ecovillage concept: physical design that creates a positive social outcome.

At that moment another car arrived, surging across the bridge at speed, the driver red-faced, talking on a phone and ignoring our gregarious waves. “Well, it’s not perfect,” he shrugged.

When the bridge opened it was named the “Ridgy Didge,” an Australian colloquialism that reflects authenticity and uprightness—or to layer one colloquialism on another, “fair dinkum,” a personal accolade of the

bridge have removed these latter doubts; I am still getting used to hanging my clothes on a line.

Maybe it’s the central location within the Village which draws us to the scene. Maybe it is the pretty, natural setting, with water running, trees swaying, and clouds wafting through the open sky, which instils a peaceful karma. Whatever it is, from the first celebration party for a newborn, to the ongoing reflective ceremonies and more casual meetups, the bridge has taken on lifeblood of its own.

The last flower ceremony I attended was for my mate, Ecovillage developer Chris, who died in a freak accident in December 2013 when a shop awning collapsed on him. Hundreds of residents from up the Currumbin Valley and beyond crammed onto the bridge that day, and even though he never planned the structure for this use, I reckon he would have been looking down and tilting his head back in typical outrageous fashion and guffawing “That’s fantastic, sustainable, and community, that’s what Ecovillages are about!”

I’ve driven across the creek every day for the past seven years as I go to and from the Village; the “Ridgy Didge” truly being my bridge to a greener world. On almost every occasion I am forced to slow or stop, for cars, cyclists, kangaroos, sun-seeking snakes, kids whizzing through on skateboards, and even hopeful fisherman clinging to the rails and flicking rods back. Each unwanted “delay” is like a little injection, a daily reminder, that whatever I am speeding off to do can wait just a few seconds longer.

In January this year I drove a friend to my house, swinging my car onto the bridge, way too fast, and meeting head on with an oncoming car. I slammed on the brakes, backed up slowly, and waved at the approaching driver. My guest from the outside world huffed, “this must give you the shits having to stop all the time; why didn’t they build two bloody lanes?”

I smiled. “You’re not getting it, are you? I think you need hijacking.” I then turned away from his confused face, slid my window down, and called to the passing driver. “Giddy mate, what’s happening?”

My friend was in for a long delay. 🌱

John Ahern is the award-winning author of the travel memoir On The Road... With Kids, which tells of his family's year-long journey across 30 countries in an old RV. He attributes that gap year, living among traveling communities, as the key inspiration for his family to move to the Ecovillage in Australia's Currumbin Valley. See www.johnahern.co.

YARROW ECOVILLAGE:

Cohousing as a Building Block to the Ecovillage

By Charles Durrett and Katie McCamant

Following the first cohousing community in the United States, Muir Commons in Davis, California, cohousing has not only continued to expand throughout the US and Canada, it has also become a model for other housing types (senior housing, nonprofit affordable housing), and a building block for other larger communities, ecovillages in particular. Yarrow Ecovillage is one such project. True to the cohousing concept in general, it aims to re-establish many of the advantages of traditional villages within the context of 21st century life.

The site of this community is a former dairy farm, left inactive in the 1980s. Quite conveniently, the site is also on a main road that connects the small town of Yarrow (drained by decades of suburban sprawl, and now incorporated with its neighboring town of Chilliwack) with both urban Vancouver (to its west) and the natural beauty of the Fraser Valley. Yarrow Ecovillage offers the possibility of creating a new town center for Yarrow, a place for living combined with commerce. The 25 acre site on Yarrow Central Road in Chilliwack, British Columbia, includes a 33-unit intergenerational cohousing project, a 30,000-square-foot mixed-use area (commercial, rental units, learning, etc.), a 20 acre farm, and a 17-unit senior cohousing community.

Yarrow Ecovillage is designed to offer an exceptional combination of cohousing, sustainable living, farmland preservation, a live/work community, a learning center, and a mixed-use town center. Three main elements—living, working, and farming—along with many other activities and amenities such as learning, socializing, sharing, teaching, playing and visiting, are designed to come together to provide a model for environmentally, economically, and socially sustainable lifestyles. In order to accomplish the many

objectives of the ecovillage, the city of Chilliwack worked with the resident group and its architects to establish an entirely new, custom zoning code. The result is an Ecovillage Zoning designation that includes residential, commercial, cottage industries, work space, public open space, recreational space, and farming.

The “town” of Yarrow has a population of about 3,000 people. It once had a concentration of commercial buildings and houses along its main street, and twice the population. It was a rural but functional small town surrounded by farms. Like too many rural towns, Yarrow’s commercial viability is eclipsed by big box stores scattered between farmland, new residential developments, and previous downtown corridors. As a result, it is nearly impossible to shop, dine, be entertained, or go to school, the library, or the park in the area without getting into a car.

Although technically part of the city of Chilliwack, Yarrow is about nine miles away from Chilliwack. (For financial reasons, the town of Yarrow was incorporated in 1980 with its larger neighboring city, population 80,000, because it could not afford its own in-town infrastructure—sewer, water, schools, police, fire, administration). The community’s disparate but numerous fruit and vegetable markets and smattering of small retail stores are too spread out to have any long-term commercial viability, much less culturally create any sense of place. Their dispersed locations do nothing to contribute to the kind of personal relationships that stitch a town together.

Ecovillage Zoning: A New, Sustainable Land-Use Concept

In the winter of 2010, MDA and a few of the members of the Yarrow Ecovillage development team met with the city manager of



The ecovillage is filled with fun!

Photos courtesy of Lindy Sexton

Chilliwack, as well as the heads of planning and public works and other staff—nine city officials in all. To begin the discussions of the site, the officials opened the zoning map, the parcel map that designates the allowable land uses for all of Chilliwack and the surrounding incorporated areas. Parcels were designated for farming, residential and commercial, or a park, a school, and so on. Then we came to the 25 acre site on Yarrow Central Road, the address of Yarrow Ecovillage. Its zoning was (in capital letters) ECOVILLAGE—the first site in Canada that we know of, and perhaps in North America, that is a zoned ecovillage.

Cohousing as Essential Building Block to Ecovillage

The 33-unit intergenerational cohousing community completed in 2015 is the first building block of the ecovillage and plays a critical role in creating the culture of the place. In building it, the group learned cooperation and development skills, as well as how to brainstorm, discuss, and decide; it is the place where well-intentioned citizens learn to make consequential decisions together to accomplish their environmental and social aspirations. It is also where the relationships built during the design and development process carry over to everyday interactions and relationships now that the community is complete.

The Getting-It-Built workshop, an essential piece in starting cohousing communities, was a large catalyst in this process, taking the group from being \$700,000 in debt for seven years with four houses, to finishing the 33-unit cohousing community in two years. Cohousing is the foundation upon which other players at Yarrow Ecovillage (such as merchants and farmers) model their legal structure to achieve a cooperative corporation. That is, they have learned how to invest together and, most importantly, how to get things done by working together.

The second and most public component of Yarrow Ecovillage is a 2.5 acre mixed-use area (commercial, learning, etc.)—effectively a town center. It includes 30,000 square feet of commercial space offering services, and places for work and creative opportunities, to the greater neighborhood. Yarrow Ecovillage and its new commercial area—including a yet-to-be-built 17-unit senior cohousing community, a refitted classic old dairy barn, and a completely

walkable environment—functions as a small town center. Its co-developer, the Yarrow Ecovillage Society (YES) Cooperative, continues to bring clarity of vision to the process. YES originally owned the site and works with new entities such as the Mixed-Use Development group (MUD) to best create the synergy on-site that will continue to set everyone up for success. Many of the original organizers of YES moved into the cohousing on-site.

The ability of the group to work together effectively yields the best strategy for accomplishing the sort of new town center that redevelopment agencies dream of. Yarrow Ecovillage is already a high-functioning hub and will grow to be a place where people can purchase locally grown organic produce (some grown on-site), park once and shop at four or five locations, meet a friend for coffee, work, get to know their neighbors, or take a class or two. It will be a place where families, seniors, and even teenagers will want to congregate. The goal is to not only enhance commercial viability and create a quality living environment, but to create a culturally viable and culturally vibrant place.

A 20 acre organic farm is located adjacent to the cohousing community. Some of the people who live in the cohousing community co-own and operate the farm, and like the commercial area, the farm is a separate partnership, managed by people with agricultural expertise (the business of farming), while remaining an important part of the larger whole—Yarrow Ecovillage.

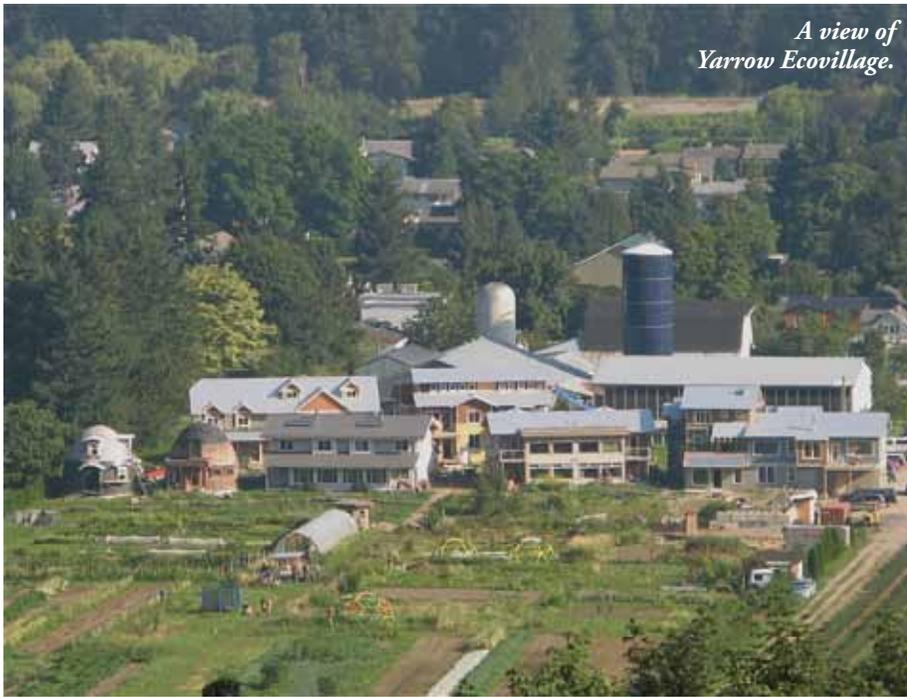
Cohousing Site Design

In January 2010, we held a site design workshop with the group to plan and focus on the cohousing site. The outcome was a site plan that achieved the group's objectives. It added a diagonal pathway that links the cohousing site in the middle with the mixed-use site at one end, and the other end serves as a sight line, giving the residents a view of an existing silo that will continue to be preserved in the redevelopment, along with the heritage barn.

The cohousing site includes 33 private residences with a variety of housing types (duplexes, flats, townhouses, and shared houses), a common house, and ample programmed and unprogrammed open space. A new 3,900-square-foot common house is built at the intersection of the pedestrian pathways alongside the parking area on the east side of the site. This central area accommodates a terrace (connected to the common house) and a children's play area (across from, but separate from, the common house terrace). The location of the common house contributes to the overall functioning of the community as a gathering place. It is visible from private homes and the path that links them to the parking area. In this way, residents pass it on their way home and are likely to drop in.

Yarrow Ecovillage is designed to foster a sense of community along the pathways and





A view of Yarrow Ecovillage.



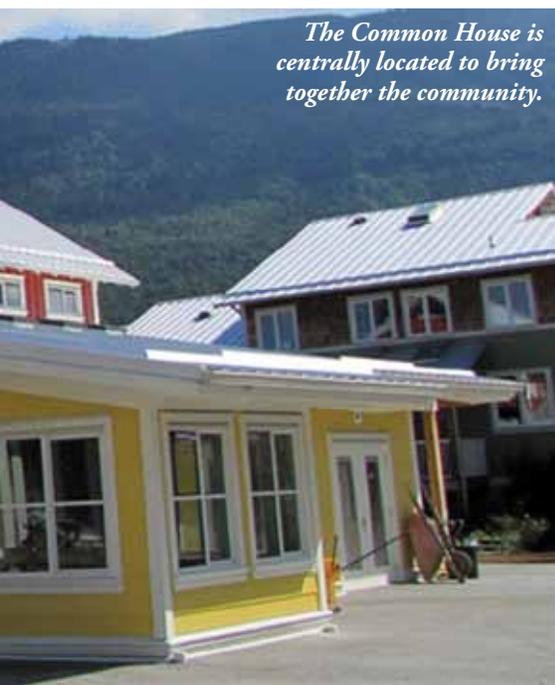
The original barn still exists.



Gerry, one of the village sages, with a couple of young residents.



The group planned their ecovillage together.



The Common House is centrally located to bring together the community.



Yarrow Site Plan.

in the various outdoor spaces, balanced with adequate room for privacy in more secluded areas, such as private backyards. It is also well suited to passive and active heating and cooling possibilities, and overall sun control.

Reviving the Town Center

The town center is almost as old as human settlement. Members of Yarrow Ecovillage understand that the combination of positive, usable public space, combined with commercial activity and spaces for creativity and learning, activate the environment. Such public space doesn't just provide retail opportunities; it provides opportunities for meaningful human interaction. Over time, these spontaneous, informal interactions may grow into more formal friendships. You get to know the person who bakes your bread, grows your carrots, or relaxes in the public square on a sunny day, and he or she gets to know you and your children. The variety of relationships and diversity of people, skills, and interests will likely establish a vibrant culture of learning, doing, and being—as a functional, interrelated society.

Cohousing Design to Facilitate Community

Yarrow Ecovillage, while a model project in its own right, is part of a larger, growing trend in neighborhood design in which cohousing has played an important role.

(continued on p. 77)

Want an Ecovillage? Stay Put!

By Abeja Hummel

Last spring, for the first time in my 43 years of life, I noticed when a bird returned from his winter migration and started singing to establish his territory. I was ecstatic! It was the Pacific-Slope Flycatcher, but it wasn't that I am in some way partial to the Pacific-Slope Flycatcher. It was that I NOTICED.

And here's where I get sad. How is that I, with my "eco-girl" persona, always outside doing something—playing, working, hiking, biking, climbing—never noticed what any young indigenous child would have found obvious? How is it that I just learned that there is information that humans can understand in the language of the birds—the pleasant "elevator music" that was rarely noticed in the background of my life? Why? Because no one around me noticed, either.

I've logged some time and miles on this big blue spinning ball, and I've got stories, let me tell you! Places I've lived. Trails I've hiked. Mountains I've climbed. Continents I've traversed. Communities I've visited. It's been fun and exciting.

Yet, in all that exploring, what I found was that the people I admired most were the ones who were connected and committed to their homes and their lands. Adivasi villagers in India fighting the government to protect their homes from being flooded by big dam projects. Quechua Indians of Peru maintaining their ancient system of trade, festivals, and work-exchange from the alpaca farmers on the top of the mountain, to the citrus farmers in the valleys, and all the villages in between. Dancers in Swaziland carrying the reeds they harvested for building in a celebration dance.

These people knew where they were from, and I was jealous. I always struggled to answer that question, "Where are you from?" Growing up we moved about every four-five years to follow my dad's work. Am I from Utah? Kentucky? Michigan? Virginia? It was always new. Always interesting. And in our time off from school, we'd load in the car and drive far away for a family vacation, somewhere different and exciting every year.

You may recognize yourself in parts of this story. Cheap oil has made ours the most mobile human culture in history. Moving can be a very valuable step forward in your life. And it's important to travel and be exposed to different cultures, new ideas, other ways of doing things. But we've kinda over-done it, and it's destroying our ecosystems and our communities.

Probably around three-quarters of the inquiries we get from people interested in community are from folks in their 60s. A regular statement I get from folks in their 30s and 40s who come

through this land—many of whom consider themselves very eco-conscious—is "I would love to be a part of this community, but I need to travel and not feel tied down."

How can we care for a place if we're not there, day after day, month after month, year after year paying attention? Who will notice the changes—be it the early return of the Pacific-Slope Flycatcher or the slow creep of box stores and parking lots? "Wasn't that Walmart always on that corner? Doesn't anyone remember the forest? No, none of us are actually from around here."

Even setting aside nature, how can we develop deep human community connections if it's always so easy to move on to "greener pastures"? Our lack of commitment to place is mirrored in our lack of commitment to each other. I know, I've lived in and left three intentional communities now. I'm a great Facebook friend and all, but those pictures of your kids don't really amount to a relationship with them.

If you, like I was, are part of some "ecovillage" in a foreign country (for me it was Costa Rica), knowing that you'll need to come back to the States to visit family and make money every year, then I have some sad news for you. That's not "eco." And that's not a "village." Sorry.

One of the most radical forms of resistance we can perform right now is the act of being content in one place, despite its being mundane and inadequate. Staying put and paying attention. Being there for the land and each other. And what's really cool is, that it IS exciting, interesting, and fun.

Each year that I witness the same cycles in the same place, I go deeper, notice changes and nuances, and get excited about what I know is coming, like an old friend.

I've lived here at Emerald Earth Sanctuary for nine short years now. Longer than anywhere I've ever lived in my life. What's to keep me here in this, my fourth intentional community, when the world is so full of options and this place is such a headache sometimes? Maybe it's my relationship to the Pacific-Slope Flycatcher. 🐦



A nest of Pacific Slope Flycatchers in the eaves of author's house.

Tom Shaver

For reasons still mysterious to her, Abeja Judy Hummel has spent 17 of the last 21 years living in intentional communities in Virginia, Costa Rica, and California. You'll now find her well-ensconced at Emerald Earth Sanctuary in Boonville, California with her husband Tom, 10-year-old son Garnet, a rotating band of community members, a herd of wily goats, some fat chickens, and a Pacific-Slope Flycatcher family in her eaves. Abeja has been fascinated with bird language since learning of its existence several years ago. See www.birdlanguage.com or www.8shields.org for more information.

A ritual in progress at Emerald Earth's labyrinth with people writing on a sculpture the author created.



Land and Culture Collaboration

By Tom Shaver

At Emerald Earth Sanctuary outside Boonville, near-coastal northern California, we are called upon to “heal the relationship between humans and the earth.” No small task... yet it’s one I have taken on wholeheartedly over the past nine years. The land has shown me that a relationship of mutual support and reciprocity is available for us to choose—with the land and among ourselves.

As I read and network to seek others thinking similarly, I sense a growing movement aimed at building a nature-connected culture that supports ecosystem vitality. Since the basic component of this emerging culture is a small group of people intimately related to a specific area of land, I see how ecovillages could play a pivotal role in this movement.

I greatly appreciate that the founding members of Emerald Earth, in the early years following the purchase of the 189 acre property in the late '90s, devoted so much energy to building a deep spiritual relationship with the land. I sense that the spirits of the land are accustomed to people evoking their presence and that the spirits are adept at presenting themselves in ways that people can comprehend.

A second wave of residents thankfully created the physical and organizational infrastructure that allows me to feel largely disengaged from destructive mainstream culture. I get to live in a home built of materials from the land, eat food that was mostly grown or foraged here, use electricity and water from our own systems, and contribute my voice to our annual planning and long-term visioning.

As we delve more deeply into how to inhabit this land in an ecologically responsible manner we have come across the notion that the ecosystem of this area evolved with human participation (1491, Charles C. Mann). We began studying native land management practices in which the materials for life were derived from activities that supported the reproductive success and habitat quality of the species harvested (*Tending the Wild*, Kat Anderson). I began to realize, contrary to popular belief, that ecologically sustainable native cultures lived in balance with their environment, limiting their take to no more than the ecosystem could easily handle; that they actually provided ecosystem services that far outweighed the amount of materials they took for human use.

We did some experimental burning of grassland, building up to covering about an acre swath. We made a plan for revitalizing an oak woodland area. We took over a cow herd share operation and began practicing rotational grazing to build soil according to principles of Holistic Resource Management. I started taking on the notion that we, too, could have a relationship with our land such that we give to the ecosystem more than we receive from it.

This realization led me to notice how things I was already doing fell in line with this notion.

As I forage for mushrooms, I have gotten in the habit of throwing bits of past-mature or rotten caps up hill, far to the side or in an area far away that looks like it would be good habitat for, but is currently devoid of, that mushroom. I am called to help the organism to spread in space in ways that it wouldn't do normally. My intimate connection with mushrooms—through sometimes daily forays to find them, eating them, providing them for group meals, selling them to the public, and leading workshops in mushroom foraging—compels me naturally to serve the organisms that give me and my family life and livelihood.

A pivotal moment in our group happened during discussion of a plan for managing a three acre section of oak woodland. It was an area of crowded canopy with stunted underbrush and mossy soil. It is likely that this area was kept clear of underbrush by Indian burning, then overgrazed by settlers who left the landscape degraded. We discussed ideas for bringing vitality and diversity to this zone

browse height. These then sprouted new growth which is now a convenient source of fodder to coppice and bring to the goats. We also are reserving some branches to put into debris swales that increase water retention. The plan gets modified based on new information that was unforeseen at the beginning.

As one of the main people choosing which trees to cut or save, cutting fodder for the goats, and processing the woody material into wood chips, biochar, firewood, and lumber, I have a very deep connection to the process. When I see how the ecosystem benefits while we get materials for life, I experience a profound sense of belonging to the land. When I hunt, I know that the animals I cull were supported in life by my actions. When I eat, amend garden beds, or feed

the woodstove, I know that those materials for life came from the gift of my creativity and facilitation to the land.

Having some experience with a few pilot projects, we are looking at taking on larger-scale efforts. We are working with a forester to plan a timber harvest to improve the health of the dense second and third growth forest. I am drafting a Land and Culture Collaboration Plan to provide a context for our activities in support of the ecosystem.

I've come to realize that there is only a very

limited amount of impact I can have on the landscape in my lifetime. What occurs to me to do is to initiate a culture of human collaboration with the ecosystem that can be passed from generation to generation, building and morphing over time.

As I look at our forest, I see that it has been clearcut and used as sheep pasture for many decades, then selectively cut again about 40 years ago. I see that it is growing back very crowded. Many trees are deformed or stunted. I see how eventually things will get sorted out with mostly redwoods dominating the stand. I can also envision the next generation beyond the current one. My ability to see the forest as a living, changing entity is related to my experience of being

What was once a pocket of foreboding gloom is now an inviting, vibrant landscape where wildlife abounds.

through the introduction of domestic animals. I felt a wave of energy flow through us as the group mind came together in common purpose to boldly insert ourselves into the ecosystem to support its vitality.

The plan called for marking the trees to save, the ones to bring down in the first round of felling, and those to put in the “wait and see” category. We sought to preserve diversity of tree species while allowing more sun to reach the ground. Since we were feeding the leaves to the goats, the pace of felling was determined by the rate that the goats could consume the fodder. The bare branches were later either chipped or burned to produce biochar. The larger branches and trunks were bucked for firewood. We borrowed a portable saw mill to produce lumber from the larger fir, redwood, and oak trunks.

As each section opened up, we brought in the cows by distributing piles of hay. Each day a new area was trampled and left with a deposit of manure. Then we brought in the mobile chicken coop to distribute the manure and further stir up the ground surface. In some areas we spread a mix of pasture grass seed. Mostly we just let the native grasses and forbs reestablish. What was once a pocket of foreboding gloom is now an inviting, vibrant landscape. Wildlife—deer, pigs, turkeys, and quail—sweep over the area in greater numbers. A nearby colony of Acorn Woodpeckers became more raucous.

As we proceed, new opportunities present themselves. The approach on some oak trees, rather than felling them at the base, was to cut the major limbs, leaving a living trunk above

View of the land including labyrinth.



Photos courtesy of Tom Shaver



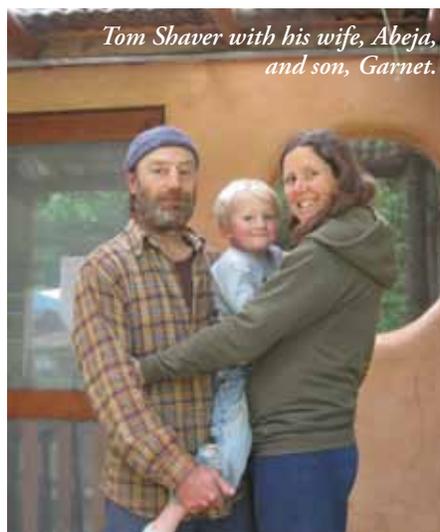
Goats eating brush at the barn.



Solar panels and power house.



Dense redwood forest.



Tom Shaver with his wife, Abeja, and son, Garnet.

involved in the oak woodland area and roving over the forest repeatedly throughout several winters while mushroom foraging. I see what I could do to support the growth of the trees that are likely to emerge from the chaos, how I could encourage the buildup of duff to increase the depth of the soil, and that I could lay branches on contour to enhance the infiltration of water. It is out of empathy and knowing that I can do something helpful for a living being I am in relationship with that I am compelled to take action.

The ecosystem of my place calls me to participate in its growth and change. I see what I could do to support ecosystem processes such as biomass production, succession, and water cycling. I am inclined to facilitate greater diversity by discouraging elements that crowd out others, encouraging less well represented elements, and introducing elements that add functionality. I sense that I am engaging the land in a conversation in which I do something with the intention of helping and the land answers by exhibiting greater vitality. The materials for life that I get out of the process are the thanks I get that encourage me to continue and deepen my motivation to further the conversation. In this way, the ecosystem itself is in the lead. I am a follower with a clear role.

As we come to grips with our inability to stop global climate change, I'm wondering if I am experiencing the paradigm shift of consciousness that humankind needs to undergo. My inclination to participate in the growing, changing ecosystem leads me to see that, if I can be one with the ecosystem, then I will be one with the change.

As I look at what I might do to bring to others the experience of belonging to place, I have been attracted to the deep nature-connection practices of the Nature Awareness movement (8 Shields Institute). I realize that, even though I sense in myself a natural proclivity for perceiving the pattern language of nature, I have a long way to go and that I need mentoring and community support to take to higher levels my capacity to perceive what nature has to communicate.

I also recognize the need to shed the debilitating historical trauma that I hold from many generations of separation from the land. Indigenous cultures have rites of passage and vision quest practices that I have not gone through. I see that I need to build a culture around me to enable my deeper connection

to nature. This is the same culture that is needed to carry further the work of engaging constructively in ecosystem processes into perpetuity

Fortunately, humans are programmed mentally and socially to operate optimally in the context of a culture that plays a supportive role in the ecosystem. All of us have ancestry who, for millions of years, lived in cultures that constructively participated in the vitality of their home place. It is only in the last few thousand years that a malignant civilization has arisen that has deliberately separated people from their home place and dismantled the cultural forms that held people in supportive relationship to their natural environment. A major task of our time, as I see it, is to reconnect people to the natural elements of a home place and rebuild the cultural forms that provide us with a constructive role in our local ecosystem and community.

Ecovillages, especially those in relationship with a large land base, are particularly strongly positioned to play a catalytic role in creating the eco-positive culture that will displace destructive civilization. Planning to play a long-term constructive role in ecosystem processes is more easily done for a specific area of land that is controlled in perpetuity by the group doing the planning.

Because it is hard to envision an eco-positive culture when one is dependent upon the current destructive one, the efforts to lower their ecological footprint make ecovillages more capable of being culturally creative. Ecovillages are well positioned to build in the archetypal forms of eco-positive culture—such as mentoring, rites of passage, and ceremony—that enable people to shed emotional baggage, connect more deeply to nature, and clarify their role in nature and society.

As ecovillages seek to derive more and more of their lives from place through regenerative land management practices, the creative process of designing systems to process goods for the ecovillage can be scaled up to the level of cottage industries that produce surplus for the public. I see, waiting to be developed, a whole new marketing realm—beyond Organic, Wildcrafted, or Local—which is something like “Buy Regenerative Culture.”

As we learn how to engage constructively with the ecosystem, we learn to be more deeply aware of each other and what we can do to support others. At Emerald Earth Sanctuary, while just beginning to immerse ourselves functionally in the ecosystem, we sense that the land is directing us on the path of regenerative culture, and what we can offer people is a taste of the experience of having a constructive role in nature. We are in the midst of putting together a program of eco-positive cultural training oriented toward establishing these cultural forms within our core group while training others who will return to their own communities with eco-positive cultural mentoring skills. We are also looking at ways to infuse our local community with these cultural forms.

I can see how these principles of eco-positive culture building could be applied to neighborhoods and other social groupings. Groups could arrange to build relationships with private or public nature reserves. I see how roving bands could have a series of land areas that they rotate through in a year, doing constructive work in the ecosystem while building

eco-positive cultural forms.

That I have a vision of eco-positive, place-based culture is a product of my life experience and time spent living in emerging ecovillages. Lately, I've been harvesting seaweed and foraging mushrooms as a big part of my income. Together with my relationship to the land and my community, I see how my whole life has led me to this point of alignment such that I get to experience, even if for fleeting moments, the human culture that I envision. It's challenging for me to express in words what I feel in my gut. My sense is that I am receiving a message from nature. I hear her say “Come play!”

While I feel compelled to deliver that message to the world, what occurs to me to concentrate on at the moment is providing people with the experience of playing a constructive role in nature. Emerald Earth Sanctuary is an ideal palate to work with. The land already speaks to people, but the work of creating an intentional program of personal transformation is just beginning. I'd love to network with people who are interested in building eco-positive, place-based culture. 🍷

Tom Shaver lived at Loma Mona Ecovillage in Costa Rica before moving to Emerald Earth Sanctuary in 2007 with his wife, Abeja, and son, Garnet. Tom's professional life spans from possum trapping in New Zealand, to teaching English at an Islamic boarding school in Indonesia, to decades of carpentry and grassroots political organizing. Tom builds flammable symbolic forms that people add to in meaningful ways and then burns the resulting sculpture ceremonially.



Round pole building work.



Pool and waterfall in the creek that runs through the middle of the land.



Clearing in progress.

CLOUGHJORDAN ECOVILLAGE: Modeling the Transition to a Low-Carbon Society

By Peadar Kirby



Photos (all taken at Cloughjordan Ecovillage, Ireland) by Davie Philip

While Ireland was living through the most severe economic collapse of its history since independence, a group of pioneering people were sowing the seeds of a new society through founding the ecovillage of Cloughjordan. Seeking to model sustainable living for the 21st century, the ecovillagers conceived their project during the boom years of Ireland's Celtic Tiger in the late 1990s and early 2000s, but by the time the infrastructure was being laid in 2008 and the first houses built in 2009, the Irish banking and construction sectors were in freefall and the ecovillage became the country's biggest building site.

Now with 55 houses built and a population of around 100 adults and 35 children, Cloughjordan has been recognised as one of Europe's most successful "anticipatory experiences" showing the way to a low-carbon society. As an educational charity, it draws thousands of people a year to learn the lessons of this pioneering community. Central to those lessons are the combination of some modern technologies that help lower emissions, embedded in a resilient community that seeks to foster a rich sense of interdependency, not without its tensions.

Among ecovillages, Cloughjordan is unusual in that its founders decided to integrate it into an existing urban settlement. They

chose the small village of Cloughjordan (around 500 people) in county Tipperary. A site of 67 acres (27 hectares) was available on the south side of its main street, on a train line, and some leading people in the local community recognised it as an opportunity for regenerating a village that was in decline. Before buying the land, members of the ecovillage project worked with children in the local schools and with the residents of Cloughjordan to win support for developing the project.

Cloughjordan ecovillage therefore models not just ecological sustainability but also rural regeneration, drawing visitors to the existing village and fostering a new social, economic, and cultural dynamism. Readers of *The Irish Times* voted Cloughjordan one of the 10 best places to live in Ireland. The ecovillage embodies the important message that low-carbon living does not mean reverting to the privations of the past, but can be the catalyst for drawing together a diverse group of people who, through their wide range of talents, make it a lively and interesting place to live.

Integrating with the Natural Environment

The greenfield site that was bought behind Cloughjordan village was developed in a way unique for an Irish urban settlement. The

village's planners confined the residential area to about one-third of the site closest to the main street, while devoting a further area beyond that to support services and amenities including a district heating system, an eco-enterprise centre, allotments for growing food, and a community farm. Ecovillagers have planted native varieties of apple trees in this area; throughout the village, various varieties of herbs and fruit bushes create an "edible landscape." An area of 12 acres (5 hectares) devoted to farming in a biodynamic way constitutes one of Ireland's few Community Support Agriculture (CSA) projects.

On the final third of the site, devoted to woodland, villagers planted 17,000 trees in 2011—mainly native species such as oak, ash, Scots pine, birch, rowan, cherry, hazel, and alder. This is regarded as an amenity area for visitors and a contribution to promoting biodiversity. A labyrinth, built according to an ancient Celtic layout, provides a quiet space for reflection amid the woodland. According to the ecovillage website (www.thevillage.ie), "the community's land use plan is based on the principles of environmental and ecological diversity, productive landscape and permaculture." The design of common and private areas includes corridors for the movement of wildlife, and the composting of organic matter to regenerate the soil and avoiding toxic or other harmful substances is strongly recommended to all members. Since all are responsible for the upkeep of the common areas, the community organizes regular periods of communal work on the land (the Gaelic word "meitheal" is used for these, recalling the traditional practice of communal work among Irish farmers).

Central to the success of the project is the combination of low-energy technologies and robust community living. The Village Ecological Charter, drawn up by members, contains the guidelines for the development of the built and natural environments so as "to reduce the impact of the project on the natural environment and so promoting sustainable development." This includes detailed and specific targets for energy supply and use, plans for land management, water and solid waste, construction (including materials, light and air, and ventilation), and community issues such as transport, social and communal facilities, and noise and light pollution.

Towards Low-Carbon Living

Combining both cutting-edge technologies and some traditional technologies gives a rich and unique mix to the ecovillage. One of its most innovative features is its district

heating system, the only one in Ireland powered by renewable sources of energy. This supplies all the heating and hot water for every house in the ecovillage, using no fossil fuels as primary energy sources and emitting no greenhouse gas emissions. (Electricity supply to drive the pumps and for other purposes is taken from the public mains at present, but there are plans for on-site generation in due course.) It saves an estimated 113.5 tonnes annually of carbon that would be emitted by conventional heating systems for the number of houses served. Though the ecovillage has the largest bank of solar panels in Ireland, these haven't yet been commissioned due to faults in their installation; the district heating system relies on waste wood from a sawmill about an hour away.

Members buy sites from the cooperative which owns the estate (of which all site owners must be members), building their own houses to their own designs, in keeping with the principles and specifications of the Ecological Charter. As a result, many different building types have been used, including passive timber frame with a variety of insulations and finishes, Durisol blocks (blocks of chipped wastewood bonded with ecocement), sheep's wool, cellulose (shredded newspaper), hemp-lime (lime is a tradi-





tional Irish form of finish but the addition of hemp, a fibrous plant material, gives it strength and insulation), cob (clay, sand, and straw), a Canadian stick-frame house with double stud walls (with no cold bridging), and kit houses, while natural slates or recycled plastic roof tiles and “green roofs” are widely used. These provide a colorful variety of different designs and finishes that gives the ecovillage a very distinctive look compared to other residential areas in Ireland. It also has some of the lowest Building Energy Ratings (BER) in Ireland.

The ecovillage includes Ireland’s first member-owned and -operated CSA farm. Some two thirds of ecovillage households are members and the rest come from the wider Cloughjordan community. Currently it grows 4 acres (1.6 ha) of vegetables, 1 acre (0.4 ha) of cereals, 1 acre of green manure (humus building), and 6 acres (2.43 ha) in permanent pasture. Members pay a monthly fee (around €130 for a household of typically two adults and two children) and can take what food they want from a central distribution point that is supplied three times a week, all year around. Two part-time coordinators act as the main producers, are paid from the farm budget, and are answerable to the farm board which is elected by members. They rely on WWOOFers (Worldwide Opportunities on Organic Farms) and interns as well as on the voluntary labour of members when called upon.

Not only does the form of food production and distribution link the producer and consumer in a deeply interactive relationship, but it changes practices of consumption since members rely on whatever food is available according to the season, the weather, and the amounts planted. The farm also contributes to the resilience of the ecovillage itself, lessening reliance on commercial producers (often very distant), improving greatly the quality of food consumed, and enhancing skills and practices among members. It recently returned to the use of horses to plough the land to avoid the compacting that resulted from the use of tractors, and has hosted public demonstrations of horse-drawn ploughing.

The farm also links in with other projects through which ecovillagers earn a livelihood, such as the award-winning Riot Rye bakery and baking school, members who turn the food produced in the farm into tasty wholesome meals for ecovillagers and visitors, and the Green Enterprise centre with Ireland’s

only community-based Fab Lab (fabrication laboratory with 3-D printers). Ireland's largest cohousing project is being developed in the ecovillage to offer low-cost accommodation to those who want to come and sample life or live in the ecovillage. All these exemplify the "ecosystem of innovation" through which synergies grow, enhancing each of the elements of ecovillage life.

Finding a governance structure that reflects its values is a particular challenge for any intentional community, particularly one as complex and multifaceted as an ecovillage. By 2007, the existing organisational structure of Cloughjordan ecovillage based on multiple committees was under strain, unable to deal effectively with the many tasks and challenges facing the project. This led members to turn for support to consultants Angela Espinosa and Jon Walker, who promote the use of the Viable Systems Model (VSM) in cooperatives and large communities looking for alternatives to traditional hierarchies. This resulted in the restructuring of the ecovillage governance structures according to the principles of VSM, identifying the primary activities (PA) of the project and establishing groups to promote them. Two PAs exist in early 2016, one on education and the other on land use. A Development PA, looking after the development of the built environment, has recently been disbanded as it wasn't working well, and a replacement is being put in place. Each PA has a number of task groups within it responsible for different aspects of the primary activity.

The PAs are known as System One groups in VSM. Supporting these are what are called the meta-systemic management

functions, Systems Two to Five, each of which fulfills essential functions in the organisation.

These include a Process group to oversee the smooth functioning of the whole structure and to resolve problems as they arise, and a coordination team drawing together the activities of all the various groups and providing a monthly reporting mechanism to members. System Four involves keeping a close eye on what is happening in the wider society so as to strategically relate to developments. This led to the establishment of a Navigation group. Finally, System Five involves oversight and direction of the whole project, and includes the Board of Directors and the monthly members' meeting supplemented by an Identity group which deals with issues of membership and purpose. VSM allows a horizontal rather than a hierarchical management of the project, which ensures that bottom-up initiatives flourish while at the same time the coherence of the project as a whole holds together.

Horizontal rather than hierarchical management ensures that bottom-up initiatives flourish while preserving the coherence of the project as a whole.

Community Resilience

Beyond the technologies, both ancient and new, what is essential to the character of the ecovillage is that it is an intentional community. The dense web of interconnectedness that characterises relationships is strengthened and at times tested through a myriad of different kinds of activities, from the often tense discussions attempting to reach a community consensus on key issues to the enjoyment of community meals and parties where rich encounters take place. A special Process group exists to facilitate community interactions, and the monthly community meeting establishes a period in which any member can voice any issue that is troubling them, including issues of grievance and pain caused within the community. Successful community, then, depends not on avoiding or minimising pain and tensions but rather on facilitating their expression in an atmosphere of mutual respect. A diverse membership, which includes professional facilitators, counsellors, and psychotherapists, helps this process.

Ecological Footprint

Having put in place the means to transition to low-carbon living, the ecovillage needed evidence that it was succeeding. This required measuring its ecological footprint and comparing it to other similar communities in its locality as well as nationally and internationally. The concept of the ecological footprint (EF) is widely used internationally to quantify



the amount of carbon emitted by a household through measuring energy consumption, waste assimilation, food consumption, water consumption, built land area, and travel impacts. Aggregating household measures allows an estimate for a community to be produced. In mid-2014 all households in the ecovillage received a survey that gathered data to measure the EF of ecovillagers. The survey used a measure developed at the Centre for Environmental Research at the University of Limerick and implemented in communities in the region by Tipperary Energy Agency (TEA), which compiled and analysed the results. The survey covered the following areas:

- Household characteristics (number of dwellers; size and type of house)
- Household energy use and its sources
- Household waste (amounts and disposal)
- Food consumption and its origin
- Transport (modes and frequency)
- Water use, including water-saving measures and water harvesting

The questionnaire achieved a 94 percent response rate, indicating a high level of interest. Based on the survey, an EF of 2 global hectares (gHa) was estimated for the ecovillage, the lowest recorded for an Irish settlement. This compares to an EF of 2.9 gHa for the nearby town of Ballina after a four-year campaign to reduce its footprint, 3.9 gHa for a commuter community, and 4.3 gHa for 79 settlements throughout the country. Apart from measuring the ecovillage's EF, the results also allow the sources which constitute each of these EFs to be compared. The Global Footprint Network, an NGO which has developed and implemented the methodology for measuring EFs internationally, estimates an average EF of 4.6 gHa for Ireland (www.globalfootprintnetwork.org). It recognised the significance of Cloughjordan's EF by including an article on it in its newsletter. Globally, it is estimated that the maximum EF for each human being that allows them to live within the planet's biocapacity is 1.8 gHa. Based on this, ecovillage residents would currently need 1.1 planets to continue living the way they do. A plan for the systematic reduction of the ecovillage's EF with targets and periodic measurement to establish progress is being developed in early 2016.

International Recognition

Cloughjordan ecovillage faces many challenges. It is still only in its early phase of growth with more than 70 sites yet to sell, which will draw in new members and more than double its population. Yet already it is winning national and international recognition. Cloughjordan won the National Green Award for Ireland's greenest community three years in a row from 2012 to 2014 and won a gold medal award at the 2013 International Awards for Liveable Communities (LivCom), also known as the Green Oscars, hosted by Xiamen in the People's Republic of China and supported by the UN Environmental

Programme (UNEP). The Milesecure consortium of 15 research centres throughout Europe was funded by the European Commission to learn the lessons for European policy of how to transition to a low-carbon future. As part of its research, it examined 1,500 projects all around Europe to identify the most successful "anticipatory experiences" to help guide EU policy. Among the 23 finally selected was Cloughjordan ecovillage and it was the only project to be highlighted in the "manifesto for human-based governance of secure and low-carbon energy transitions" that the consortium wrote as one outcome of its three-year project (see www.milesecure2050.eu). In these ways, the project is helping establish itself as a beacon for the challenging future that confronts humanity. 🍁

Peadar Kirby is Professor Emeritus of International Politics and Public Policy at the University of Limerick. He is the author of many books on models of development in Ireland and Latin America. His recent books include Adapting to Climate Change: Governance Challenges, co-edited with Deiric Ó Broin (Glasnevin, 2015) and Transitioning to a Low-Carbon Society: Degrowth, austerity and wellbeing, co-edited with Ernest Garcia and Mercedes Martinez-Iglesias (Palgrave Macmillan, forthcoming in 2016). He is writing a book on pathways to a low-carbon society to be published by Palgrave Macmillan in 2017. He was one of the first residents of Cloughjordan ecovillage in 2009 and is currently chair of the Board of Directors of the ecovillage.



TRUE SUSTAINABILITY: Indigenous Pathways

By Dan Schultz



Editor's Note: *We offered contributors to this issue this prompt (among many others): "Robert Gilman has defined an ecovillage as 'a human-scale, full-featured settlement, with multiple centers of initiative, in which human activities are harmlessly integrated into the natural world in a way that is supportive of healthy human development, and can be successfully continued into the indefinite future.' How does (or doesn't) this definition resonate with your understanding or vision of 'ecovillage?'" The founder of Maitreya Mountain Village chose to respond:*

Since 2008, Maitreya Mountain Village has defined itself as an ecovillage primarily using the yardstick of sustainability. Gilman's definition of ecovillage is fine, but I find the terms "human-scale" and "full-featured" too nebulous and "harmlessly integrating" innocuous. I like that concise, pithy word, "sustainable," overused, borrowed, and bludgeoned as it may be. It's brassier. It raises the bar for our responsibility as members of the human race. A sustainable culture speaks to the depths of generations all the way to genetics and back to Genesis.

If you're thinking I'm about to get up on my high horse and sing some kumbaya song or sermon, let's get that out of the way. Whether sustainability is a difficult tune to dance to or not (I'll get to that later), we've stumbled regularly since we began this project. We have not been, nor are we now, purists. But I have personally witnessed people move beautifully to the drumbeat of sustainability: the indigenous tribes.

Years ago, I had the good fortune of living amongst native Amazon tribes and also with the agrarian Nepalese. These pure of heart form the true sustainable communities on our planet. To me, their daily lives were a testimony and a template. In contrast to urban American life, the word that seemed most fit to describe their culture was "sane." It was a breath of fresh air. My experiences there (among others) were profoundly influential and led to the creation of Maitreya Mountain Village.

At the time Nepal was the so-called "poorest nation in the world" yet I witnessed no signs of squalor. They were a happy people. While they made their clothes or baskets, while they farmed and foraged for food, both the Huaorani and Nepali people smiled often in conversation with each other and when they sang, too. When they were still and silent, I felt the peace within them. In a moment of indulgent imagination I pictured the tribesmen in our world, handing over their credit cards at grocery stores, obsessing over their iPhones. It robbed them of something.

My friend, author, and eminent radical environmentalist Derrick Jensen believes that the only sustainable communities are the ones that resemble the indigenous ones, and

he's a vociferous opponent of civilization, inasmuch as it is defined as city life (civilization, from *civis*, meaning citizen, from Latin *civitas*, meaning state or city). He posits that civilization and cities can never be an ethical or sustainable model for human society, largely because they denude landscapes (through mining, etc) to import resources to the high-density populations and inevitably lead to ecocentrism, human supremacy, slavery, and violence. It's hard to argue with that but, as Derrick says, no one is really talking about it much.

Here at MMV, while we haven't returned fully to the ancient ways, we're talking about it and transitioning toward it. Let me tell you a few of our successes and shortcomings, at least as I contrast them with the practices of my more pure and native friends.

We do not make our own clothes, but we do buy them at thrift stores. Not my underwear, though. Nope. Straight from the evil corporate behemoth Walmart (one of a few "big box" stores that are the only options in our remote area), and probably and unfortunately made with child slave labor, seven

thousand miles away, or something like that. Darn it.

Our living systems combine livestock, forage, horticulture, and permaculture, producing much of our own food, but we still shop at Safeway twice a week through the winter (even though we *could* produce 100 percent of our own food). Non-organic and even GMOs work their way into our diets sometimes. It happens.

The mountainous landscape is advantageous in that it allows us gravity-fed water systems right from our springs. Still, the water runs into polypropylene storage tanks and PVC plumbing. Alternatively, we could make our own watertight containers and carry water up from the rivers.

Rainforests here love to grow mushrooms and we recently hosted an educational community mushroom foray/walk with over 30 people registering—it was marketed entirely on Facebook and email. It's not what the Huaorani do. Oh well.

I use concrete, a chainsaw, and a few weeks ago, we actually installed a satellite internet dish. We're still questioning whether this is really right (for us). But for now, e-commerce is part of how we participate in the cash economy, so we can pay our car insurance and property taxes. Those demands are real. But seeing someone staring motionless into a rectangle, absorbed by its flickering dots, seems out of place here. I imagine that WE may be robbed of something.

We're not the only ones who make compromises to integrate homesteading-permaculture protocols into (mainstream) market-monetary economy. Bill Mollison and Sepp Holzer, icons of the permaculture movement, made such compromises, fully acknowledging the virtues of heavy (fossil fuel) equipment, like excavators and bulldozers. At least we're in good company there. But I would be intensely interested as to what Henry David Thoreau (my mentor and hero) or the Huaorani chief would have to say about chainsaws, bulldozers, and a sustainable culture. What a conversation!

No matter how I look at it, we still don't measure up to the tribes. For now. I long for their purity of heart, their unwavering social responsibility and integrity. But I do not apologize for our compromises. I am OK with keeping one foot in the door of mainstream pragmatism and one in the door of a radical idealism. I am hoping to connect the two.

Our area here in the very north of California is rich in its own native history—home to the Tolowa, Yurok, and Takelma tribes, whose presence is felt even today. They collected and processed acorns as their staple food from the plentiful supply of tan oak trees. We follow in their footsteps, and participate in the community acorn festival in October.

MMV honors ritual as the native peoples do. I recall that the Huaorani woke every morning about 5 a.m. to share about the dreams they dreamed. Ritual keeps community together. MMV members practice Heart Club once a week, sharing feelings, hopes, fears, gratitude, whatever is alive in us.

There's so much to do, not only to "save the planet" but enjoy the fruits of community the old-fashioned way—by returning to a land-based culture where people think in terms of cultivating a relationship with their environment and caretaking it for generations, even centuries. I feel enlivened by the idea (and we're doing it with fig trees) of planting

shade trees which we will never sit under.

I truly believe that sustainable culture and community is making a grassroots comeback. People from all walks of life are deeply drawn to it—I think they can feel the need for this change in their bones. So many of us feel disenchanting with the unsustainable precisely because we are all hardwired as humans to live in community, with real connection to other human beings and the living environment that surrounds us.

Transitioning both as individuals and

We are all hardwired as humans to live in community, with real connection to others and to the living environment that surrounds us.

as communities, we can look to the indigenous tribes for guidance on how to get there. But these truly sustainable, traditional ecovillages are dwindling fast. There are only about 150 million tribal individuals left worldwide, less than two percent of the world population. But as their contemporaries, we neo-ecovillage peoples can carry the torch forward. As the unsustainable machinations fail and fall away (by definition, they have to), we can consciously transition into a sustainable, better world by building bridges from our modern knowledge to their ancient wisdom. 🌱

Dan Schultz is co-director of Maitreya Mountain Village (www.maitreyamountainvillage.com), which creates intentional, caring community and farming in an off-grid, wilderness setting. Dan hosts and produces a talk radio program called New Culture Radio focused on sustainability, and together with his partner Jane leads Transition Del Norte in Northwestern California.



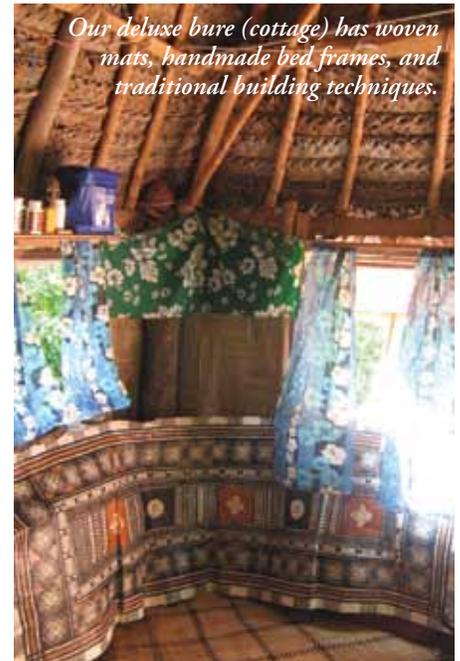
Photos courtesy of Dan Schultz

Building an Ecovillage in the Friendly Islands

By Philip Mirkin



Community members build the author a cottage as a thank you for the gift of a new boat. Here they are plastering Hybrid Adobe over the woven bamboo walls.



Our deluxe bure (cottage) has woven mats, handmade bed frames, and traditional building techniques.

We began Fiji Organic Village (FOV) in 2006, and a year later built a sustainable lodge we named “the Flying Fish.” As cofounder I faced the challenges and joys in cross-cultural community. On a tiny island in the Blue Lagoon, happy Fijians became family. Many ask me how we started and sustained an Ecovillage in paradise. They have no idea how crazy and wonderful this funny adventure truly was.

Bula Vinaka! (Big Welcome!)

I left Waiheke Island, New Zealand, for Fiji in early 2005. Known as the Friendly Islands, Fiji is home to people who earn the moniker. Camped on a remote backpacker outpost in the Yasawa chain, I kayaked the warm turquoise sea around the tip of the island to a rocky shore, exploring coral reefs with a snorkel. Afterwards I took a lot of wave-born rubbish off the beach, roped it down, and kayaked back (as we did in NZ). Impressing the locals, word spread in the nearby village. In the morning two Fijians marched me down the loveliest beach to a stunning cove to the local Chieftain (Ratu), at his request. At my welcome feast, they served me heaps of food and strange delicacies. Obligated to eat more, I did. Then I made the Sevusevu offering of kava. We drank, sang songs. Magic. Serendipity.

With the respect I showed the Islanders, strong, smiling Ratu, a fantastic fisherman with a crippled hand, told me I couldn't camp at the outpost. I was now his guest on the island; later he adopted me as his brother. The locals wanted to build a Fijian style lodge, needing help and leadership. I became “uncle” to a hilarious crew of Fijians, staying most of six years.

Early Days

At first, we lived a traditional Fijian lifestyle, simply, without electricity, on a 68 acre Native-owned organic farm: fishing, farming, carrying water, using kerosene lamps. Their tired little boat leaked. Adorable children played in the flower gardens and loved me like a grandfather. Clan land was apportioned out for garden plots. Other lands and resources managed by community elders were joined together. Tired of working for \$1.50 per hour at overpriced resorts owned by cheap, greedy foreigners on nearby islands, they wanted to bring their family back together and create jobs for themselves.

Coconut groves and old growth breadfruit trees already grew there; we planted cassava (manioc) fields, garden veggies, four kinds of bananas, papaya, pineapple, yam and pumpkin

patches, spinach, and a chestnut tree nursery.

People power! Happy, singing, smiling locals, they had the experience and skills, but not the business savvy, nor international connections, they explained. They didn't know I designed sustainable buildings and ecovillages, or delivered humanitarian aid on Native American reservations. They respectfully asked me to join them: “kerekere Tai Felipe?” How could I say no? Founded on the simple philosophy of sustainable living and sharing, from their loving cultural perspective, we began.

Elder respect is part of the culture. Traditional practical wisdom guided the chief and me in our leadership roles. We listened to all; younger members and clan members voiced their feelings, and were heard, as respect and patience are Fijian traits. In fact, Chiefs' coalitions can be voted down by others. Women too are Chiefs (Adi).

A basic societal premise guided us: you give first, generously of your spirit, your smile, home, food, and ask for anything later. Guest hosting and loving childcare comes naturally to the soft, sweet Fijian personality, men included. Given so much I asked for little.

I purchased and transported much needed medicine, tons of food, fresh clothes, a wheelbarrow, and heaps of building supplies. They honored me. A year later we bought the village a new community boat. They built me a home as a thank you. Our gift exchange grew.

Who builds you a lovely cottage as a gift? The gift economy indeed works!

We did the physical work together, building traditional huts and a large building with kitchen, dining room, office. The community grew quickly when lodge guests arrived, as relatives wanted to join us. I would visit relatives on other islands, and ask their employers if I could take them back with me as they were needed at home. I thanked them before I paid the needed boat fare and we departed. Locals jokingly called me “the Kidnapper.”

Our relaxed pace revolved around gardening, meals, farming, land management, joking, fishing, cleanup, singing, and kava. We helped other Fijians, while enjoying the visitors to our shores. All religions and nations were respected, including LGBT persons. In the background, a sweet murmur soundscape of guitar, song, laughter. Our mantra: “seqa na leqa” (no problem).

We built with natural plant fibers, hardwoods, and earth (we rarely used dimensional lumber, just for custom doors and storm windows). Four-star chefs also used machetes in the cassava fields, prepared breadfruit, harvested yams and seaweed, and collected firewood. I shipped over a solar panel from NZ and wired the buildings with 1.5w LED bulbs. All done with happy human power.

After lunch: afternoon nap. After work: volleyball, frisbee, games, kayaking, fishing, or swimming. Tea time brought fresh baked treats, endless smiles, and sometimes a walk down the beach to support the neighbor’s tea house.

Many modern things were unnecessary.

Village elders didn’t want TV and its violence, etc., due to a strong morality about what children might see. A rare exception: to watch Fiji play international Rugby. Otherwise music was our world: guitars, lovely voices, and ukuleles. Church too was always a singing sensation.

Most importantly, we were guided by what would be best for all, as a true community, renewed in song and story around the ceremonial Tanoa (kava bowl).

Ultimately success came from simplicity, and not taking things seriously. Visitors felt part of an extended family that lovingly included them.

A couple dozen overseas friends helped, some joining us in Fiji for a few weeks. Michael Freeman of Durango, Colorado taught permaculture in free workshops. Email updates to hundreds gained grateful overseas support. Big-hearted Aletha McGee of Oakland, California did research/outreach for years, hosted fundraising benefits for hurricane relief, inspiring many others, even before her visit!

Logistical Challenges

Fiji is 333 islands (two thirds of them uninhabited) in the tropical cyclone belt of the SW Pacific, two and a half hours’ flight from NZ, the nearest bigger country, and 10 hours from LAX. Imported goods in Fiji’s cities were very expensive. There are no shops or nurse on our small island, and only rare, intermittent cellphone coverage. No local businesses or governmental agencies existed within the three to four hour boat ride to the big island, only tourism outposts in a similar situation, or a small village. We had renewable resources and items to share. If the sea was rough or the tide was low we couldn’t go anywhere except on foot or kayak. For internet connection, I loaded my laptop in a waterproof bag, strapped it to my back, and kayaked to the next island. There the Italian owner allowed me to email prospective visitors and overseas support.

My week-long shopping missions to Lautoka (Sugar City) were often dependent on unreliable supply boats. I’d have to check with three different captains about available space for our supplies and departure dates. With help from big island relatives, we prepared 15-20 boxes of supplies each trip plus tools/hardware while waiting for a boat home. I learned some Fiji Hindi to deal better with the Big Island merchants and establish relationships as a regular local customer.

Why It Worked:

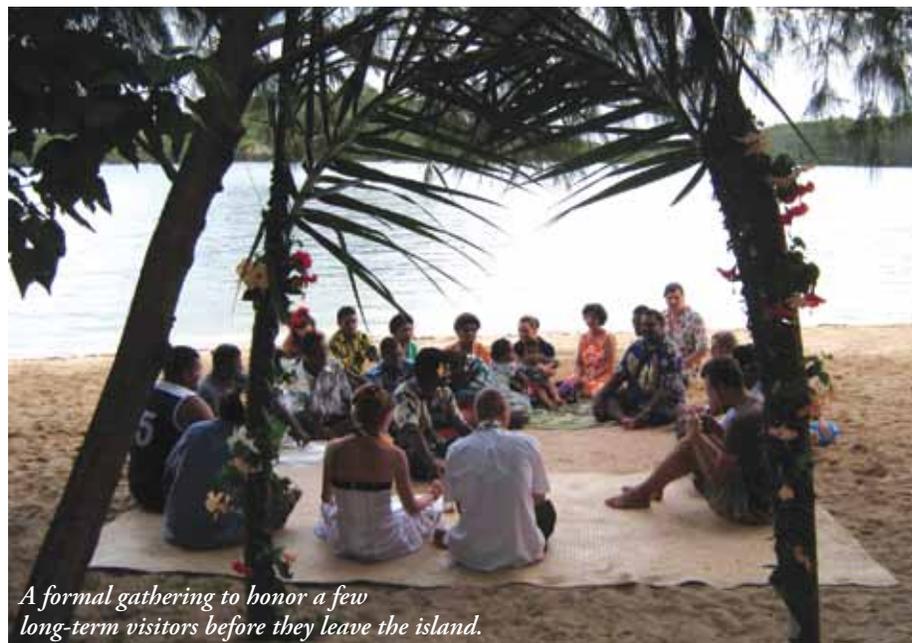
- We respectfully trusted each other to get our jobs done without supervision or judgment.
- Humor and lightheartedness. We laughed at ourselves and with each other.
- Always saying gratitude at meals.
- We focused on solutions and blessings, not problems.
- Little conflict or pettiness. No control-freaks. We “agreed to agree.”
- All were included in village life; feasts were joyous celebrations!



Father Dan prepares kava with clan and community members in our Grand Bure meeting room.



The community eats all their meals together, Fijian style; with smiles from Alesi, Nabola, and Simeli.



A formal gathering to honor a few long-term visitors before they leave the island.

Photos courtesy of Philip Mirkin

- We sang together most nights, often around a bonfire.
- We stayed relaxed and present. No fears of the future nor grudges to hold onto. Resolution came quickly and lovingly with hugs.
- No Fijian quibbled about money, rules, or having it their way. We gave gifts.
- We talked about things openly at the kava ceremonies and at meals. If something came up later we could walk over to talk about it.
- We worked in harmony. Appreciation was freely given.
- We shared common abilities as natural builders, cooks, farmers, and fishermen, interchanging jobs, both men and women included.
- Most of us had special skills as carpenters, mechanics, electricians, etc., allowing the village a high degree of self-sufficiency.
- We were all used to hard work.

Best of the Village: Expertly prepared fresh organic food, calm, relaxed atmosphere, incredible snorkeling, shady park-like beach, kava parties, harmony and peace, daily laughter and singing.

Worst of the Village: unflushed toilets in the morning, cutting feet open, scary fishes, boils, sand fleas, cyclones.

Some of Our Successes:

- Dozens of visitors/communitarians expressed that these were the most peaceful and enjoyable weeks of their lives.
- We built a fully hurricane-resistant 4 meter x 6 meter bathhouse (three toilets, three showers) using Hybrid Adobe blocks with local pumice. The structure itself cost less than \$1000 to build.
- We built a huge community water tank with solar powered pump for the larger village (with British funding).
- Concrete was not used; no generator running for hours; no cars or roads; weekly boat fuel consumption was only 6-12 liters, making for a tiny carbon footprint.
- We integrated traditional farming styles with permaculture principles and methods, using a hand-dug well.
- At capacity we hosted 35 people with flush toilets, solar power, and four-star cuisine (Ratu's sons had been chefs at Turtle Island Lodge).
- We hosted nurses from NZ who gave free health assessments and treatments to hundreds in four nearby villages at no cost.
- We provided free first aid, hurricane response, and local ferrying to Yaqeta Island.
- We prepped the village for flooding, then evacuated 30 people to high ground, all in 90 minutes before the Japanese tsunami struck our island.
- We kept the quiet peace there (usually singing was the loudest sound).
- Projects were done using human power, including hand saws.



Community members sing the traditional farewell song "Isa Lei" before a family leaves the ecovillage on our boat for the Big Island.

- The back-up generator was rarely used (just for large feasts). A small pump was used to fill water tanks from the well.
- Our little shop provided basic goods to islanders at cost.

A Cultural Bridge

I learned the local dialect, songs, ceremonies, and customs. The Fijians rightly saw my efforts as respect and appreciation, enjoying their life-ways. As a cultural bridge between the hardworking Islanders and idealistic westerners I could explain Fijian culture, their community values, and a high level of sharing (including sandals).

Back in the 1980s and '90s I led geographical wilderness trips teaching Native American culture in German and English, and leading humanitarian aid trips on reservations at Natives' request. At FOV I explained Fijian life in cultural terms familiar to residents of Germany, Canada, France, NZ, Australia, US, UK, etc.. I went "Island," wearing a Fijian Sulu (sarong), a nice button-down shirt, barefoot, just like locals. Fijians in other parts of the nation laughed and clapped when I sang Fijian/Yasawan songs. Still, each year I traveled to California and NZ to work on the business end of our venture, the website, etc., gaining support.

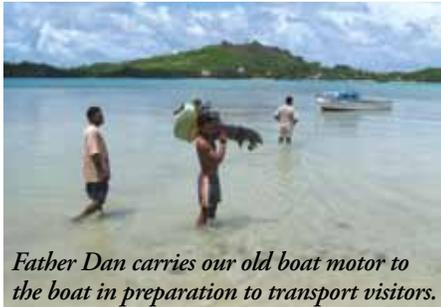
I spent three weeks of every month on our island, before going to the big island for a week of shopping, resupply, business communications, outreach, etc. The cultural and lifestyle changes were harder for new arrivals. Some made mistakes: they got infected, sunburned, or ate a forbidden plant. The responsible geographer in me prepared



Outdoor dining with community members always brings smiles.



The chief teaches an Australian visitor how to weave Taba, or palm frond shingles, for the roof.



Father Dan carries our old boat motor to the boat in preparation to transport visitors.



Feasting on fresh fish and organic farm produce, community members grow 80 percent or more of our own food.



Three women of the village sharing a hammock for the evening singing.

12-page practical briefings sent before their arrival to smooth and guide their cultural integration. I overplayed the annoyances: how massive coconut crabs came into the cottage at night if you left the door open. Plus the real danger of giant stingrays, lion fish, sea kraits, and other poisonous sea monsters.

Communitarians could be invited to live with us for up to a year. Some stayed a few months, most a few weeks. Many had never been to a place this remote. Those who stayed for the rainy months dealt with skin problems, bothersome insects, or ran out of money. Still it became hard for them to go back to their “other,” noisier lives.

We dealt with unforeseen, surprising, and crazy situations:

- The 2006 Coup in Fiji!
- I led the tsunami evacuation, collecting medical/surgical supplies, other emergency/communications gear, organizing teams.
- I spent long nights putting out international appeals for hurricane recovery.
- As the authority on the south side of the island, we also stopped illegal fisherman using dynamite.
- I treated intense infections, a stroke, wounds, and dental emergencies.
- Sometimes Fijians woke up the village at 4 a.m. loudly cleaning fish.
- Plus drunken revelers, a few insane Americans, and some truly difficult visitors!!
- And as the “conciierge”/shopper I had to deal with everyone’s requests: tobacco, birth control, underwear, medications, cellphones, shoes, and so on.
- I had five pages of shopping lists each time I left the island.

Humour

Joy was a guiding principle; we all joked. Fijians waited behind bushes to scare me; we hosted a kava party in lingerie. At a church fundraiser we hosted, all laughed when I suddenly climbed out the window. We played Bocci ball with coconuts. Hilarious! Our Grand Opening party was legendary fun: a quarter of the nearby village celebrated at FOV, some ‘til dawn.

Our clumsy attempts to bridge the culture gap also brought laughter. Early on, as the appropriate thing to do, I brought a ceremonial Tabua to Ratu. Rather than be offended, laughter ensued when it turned out that this whale’s-tooth was a clever fake made from a bulamakau or bull’s horn; we caught the culprits later. Obligated to drink many high-tide bowls of kava at a funeral, I fell backwards, snoring in front of chiefs. At the wedding, a huge white guest wearing only a skirt danced wildly in a conga line.

Fijian nicknames kept it light-hearted: I became “Grandma,” a Colonel in the Fijian Army (Ratu’s brother) became “Mr. Bullshit.” “Father Dan” was an island-style Jim Carrey with a rubber face, fast and funny antics, and excellent English skills...as a former wannabe priest/boat captain he left the sermonizing behind, entertaining us with his funny impersonations.

Decisions

In council, everyone was respectfully listened to when speaking. My advice was often asked before decisions were made. We didn’t cater to western ways nor shove them into Fijian faces. FOV remained a nascent Fijian village that just happened to have a white-faced elder. Fiji is the most inclusive society I’ve known.

We agreed to add boat radios, life jackets, cellphones, and other emergency gear. Most of this I carried from the US or NZ in my suitcases so we had to decide priorities; it became very important after some neighbors’ boat motor broke down and they spent 17 days drifting to Tonga. Otherwise I brought over large tents, which were needed to house those wanting to join us.

Responsible for communications, leadership, marketing, funding, supplies, outreach, hosting, and snorkel guide, I wore four hats too many. I interpreted Fijian culture for newcomers’ understanding, carefully choosing respectful words.

Ecovillage Details

We built the ecovillage with less than \$60,000! Fijians had no money, but put in serious sweat equity. My job was to find seed money. We started with \$8000 of my own, and Mum put in 10K. Later we each put in another 10K. A friend donated about 15K paying for structures like the Hybrid Adobe bathhouse, kitchen, and toilets. I was receiving \$450 a month for the Hybrid Adobe home I built and sold in Colorado and donated the money for the building and operations; I lived as simply as the Fijians. After a year of hard work we opened the lodge. Revenue from guest stays was shared with community members and used for maintenance and supplies.

Fortunately, I booked the grand opening of the Flying Fish for eight days, with a wedding party of 11. Their prepayment gave momentum, paying for the linens, beds, furniture, dishes, etc. Another 5K in donations came in from the appeal following a hurricane. Guest-stays rebounded after recovery, providing some revenue to start to pay back small loans after the cyclones...some loans were kindly forgiven. (Unfortunately I was stuck with a few of the loans and maxed out credit cards.)

Infrastructure included: a large dormitory/meeting space, five cottages, a simple solar system, 10,000 liters rainwater collection, and a septic tank.

Building materials were almost entirely hardwoods, natural materials, pumice, and earth. Guests donated \$30-50 per night, four gourmet meals a day included. Average stays

Natural disasters, due to extreme global weather, can undo a lot of work. However, the community is people, not farm nor buildings. We repaired and replanted so the infrastructure remains for all island residents' use. Many visitors experienced an authentic, healthy, timeless life in a harmonious village for their first time.

Few of the visitors were prepared for real community living, so be careful who you let join.

Ultimately, the atmosphere/lifestyle was as compelling as the golden sand, palm tree paradise. The locals cherish our village. Isa lei. We miss you. And we thank all our supporters.

Life after the Ecovillage

With my elderly parents' health deteriorating, I moved back to the US. In Fiji I had given my shoes away, so I bought some new flip-flops for the airplane adventure, arriving to immense culture shock in California. Where were the joyous gatherings? I felt the social poverty of the States and saw how important it is that we do create intentional community here.

It was very difficult to keep in touch with FOV, since no one there had real email access. Telephone calls were merely brief pleasantries. I was swallowed up by this overwhelming, alien life in California. Things had really changed in just a few years.

The ecovillage is still there, sometimes just the extended family, as a small, simple village with few jobs, so fewer people than before.

It's good I came back to spend the last year of my father's life near him. This became possible since the Fijians taught me the value of family, and I still had one. I practiced forgiveness. We thrive through community—our chosen extended family, sharing smiles even during the rough times, and disaster.

The nearby village suffered heavily in Super Cyclone Winston, an EF5 that roared through Fiji with 250+ kph winds (February

20, 2016), as the worst storm ever in the Southern Hemisphere. Forty-two people were killed and thousands made homeless. Eight homes were completely destroyed and many heavily damaged, leaving some locals homeless; FOV fared better.

However, the people on our little island are the lucky ones, as the wealthy resort nearby, that often employed them at low wages, is now employing them to clean up the mess at their resort. The village will be repaired and the 8th grade schoolhouse rebuilt after it was literally blown off the bluff to the beach below. Our concern now is with those villages in the north of Fiji that have no wealthy neighbors and little help on their own remote islands.

By the time you read this article I may have already returned Stateside after helping devastated communities rebuild, while also planting the seeds for a new intentional community: a community to provide a sustainable home focused on the safety of women and children. 🌸

Donations can be made to FOV's recovery fund by sending PayPal donations to philipmirkin@hotmail.com, or see their crowdfunding page at gofundme.com/fjirebuild.

Philip Mirkin, founder and designer of Hybrid Adobe, authored The Hybrid Adobe Handbook (Soaring Hill Press, 2003) and has taught over 120 workshops on sustainable building and design (at Solar Living Institute, University of Puerto Rico, for the American Institute of Architects, etc.). Philip was a keynote speaker at the San Francisco Great Outdoors Adventure Fair, the Auckland Ecoshow 2005 (in NZ), Native American Awareness Month at Whitman College, and Ho Ka He in Germany. Last year he taught the Sustainable Sculptural Building course at UC Santa Cruz, where he founded the Navajo Project in Sustainability. Philip cofounded Fiji Organic Village and has designed ecovillages and buildings in New Zealand, Puerto Rico, California, Colorado, Native Reservations, and Fiji. For 15 years he led geographical and humanitarian aid expeditions to remote parts of Native American reservations, while supporting traditional ceremonialists and delivering humanitarian aid to needy families. Current projects include developing tiny house communities in central California, teaching homeless mothers and veterans sustainable building, and designing new forms of lightweight hurricane-resistant relief housing. He also manages a 40 acre off-grid ranch. Philip consults on new ecovillages and sustainable buildings, in the US and overseas. Contact him at philipmirkin@hotmail.com or visit www.EasyAdobe.org, www.HybridAdobe.com, and www.ic.org/directory/flying-fish-organic-village.

We thrive through community— sharing smiles even during the rough times, and disaster.

went from four nights to two weeks. Some guests became residents. Residents mostly did work exchange plus donated cash towards supplies. We bought yams, fish, etc. to help create an economy for island neighbors.

Supporters were amazed at how much we built with limited funds. Exposure from our website complemented the valuable listing on www.ic.org.

Our low-cost website gave a lovely, accurate description of the sweetness of the lifestyle. Connections to the local ferry, travel bureaus, and other lodges helped get the word out. We literally spent no money on advertising, except a simple brochure.

Real upset seemed rare: hurricane damage to our old growth forest and roofs, nasty racist visitors, or a dental emergency I could barely treat. Sadly the lodge business ended when European cyber criminals hacked our website, stealing funds/support and creating divisions. They were deported.

Lessons

Easygoing, joyful ecovillage living is sustainable with skillful, hard-working people. As the founder, I couldn't have anticipated the surprises inherent in this wonderful adventure. Nearly every moment was truly lovely.

Argentina: 13-Day Wavespells at Velatropa

By Henny Freitas



EarthCode Project

In front of the largest football stadium in Argentina lies an intentionally sustainable community. This is the ecovillage Velatropa, located in the city of Buenos Aires, on the other side of the River Plate football club's home. Along with Boca Juniors, River Plate is considered to be the best Argentinian club and, due to their rivalry, they create a classic, world famous game.

Referred to as the Paris of South America, Buenos Aires carries forward an interesting history of emancipation. It was considered an autonomous district after the 1994 constitutional amendment, hence its formal name: Autonomous City of Buenos Aires. And it still exerts its autonomy when ideas of new ways of life are presented.

This is the case at Velatropa. Nestled in a beautiful corner of the city is a small village with ecological projects including natural construction, recycling, veggie gardens, ceremonies, and a more harmonious connection with nature. This place remains both inside a university and outside the system. The community's inhabitants live according to the guidelines of permaculture and are guided by the Mayan philosophy of the 13-Moon calendar.

Unlike the Gregorian calendar, each moon (or month) on the 13-Moon calendar contains exactly four seven-day weeks (or 28 days of a moon-cycle), operating with 52 seven-day weeks annually (364 days), totaling 13 moon-cycles.

Velatropa began in 2007 as an environmental experimental centre, a place to learn to follow the natural cycle in the city, to make responsible use of resources and be aware of the management of our planet. It is based on the foundations of what was to be the fifth pavilion of the University City. The space, abandoned for decades, belongs to the University of Buenos Aires (UBA). Kept out of sight among the trees, vegetation, and concrete, the ecovillage is still not known to most locals, but fairly widely known among students and university staff members.

Threatened by Bulldozers

The ecovillage is an environmentally sustainable, interdisciplinary community self-managed by students of the UBA and travelers who decide to look after this place as their own home. A trail behind the pavilions along the river bank leads inhabitants and visitors to a portal and a welcome sign that says "Natural Reserve of University and Citizen."

The project grew to the point of arousing interest from the gov-

ernment, who once wanted to stop the initiative and replace the natural buildings with a shopping centre, and the permaculture activities with a concrete playground. I happened to be living there when this happened. Bulldozers entered the place and started to pull everything down, starting with the veggie gardens and small trees. Hand by hand we made a human cord and took turns for a week impeding the driver from proceeding with this brutal action. At the same time, supporters of the cause were called and dozens of people started to arrive from everywhere in the city of Buenos Aires. Together we created a task force for planting native and fruit trees, orchards and vegetable gardens.

Every day in those 13 days of living, working, and celebrating life together, villagers and visitors such as myself cooked natural foods and shared them amongst all of us. Since we had no money to invest, the food always came in an unusual way. We arranged bicycle tours night after night, in different parts of the city where waste fruits and vegetables were visible. What we could gather was washed with water and vinegar in a bathtub in the middle of the kitchen and arranged on makeshift shelves to dry.

Smoking and drinking alcohol are not allowed, except in a special area. The common buildings are free-styled, designed from adobe, clay, and fully recycled materials: glass bottles, wood, and plastics. Small geodesic domes also serve as accommodation, as do tents and hammocks.

Although it may appear at first as libertarian, Velatropa is governed by an organization of council decision-makers in program meetings held weekly. Members take turns in schools visits, bee cultivation, recycling products, development of appropriate technologies, construction, gardening, and even cooking patties to be sold among students of the University City to generate income. Most of them are vegetarian and sustain themselves with the fruit of the gardens designed on land formed with concrete rubble.

Velatropa would be just another interesting ecovillage if not for its location. While community members eat, discuss, and meditate in a circle, a plane passes at low altitude and roars overhead before landing at the nearby airport. 🍷

Henny Freitas, cofounder of the EarthCode Project (www.earthcode.org), is a Brazilian journalist who has been living, learning, and documenting her experiences amongst intentional sustainable communities since 2008.

The First Ecovillage in Palestine

By Frederick Weihe

Ecovillages are not always founded. Sometimes people are simply together, doing what they feel is natural, necessary, and right—loving their communities and the natural world, working for justice and sustainability—only to discover after a few decades that people are calling them an ecovillage. That’s the story of Farkha, a town of about 1500 people in the Salfit district, not far from Ramallah in Palestine’s West Bank.

In a way, it is also the story of Findhorn and Tamera, two other projects that existed long before the words ecovillage and Permaculture were invented. They are two of the founding members of the Global Ecovillage Network (GEN). And as part of GEN and Gaia Education, representatives of both were present to support the first Ecovillage Design Education (EDE) course in Palestine—and the first in Arabic—in November of 2015 in Farkha.

So this story is about Farkha and the EDE, and what makes a village an ecovillage. But even more, it’s about the synergy of networking, about friendship and knowledge-sharing. It’s about how when human beings discover the shared vision that unites them, the details that separate them become much less important. It’s about the universal truth that when you offer solidarity, you also receive it in the same gesture.

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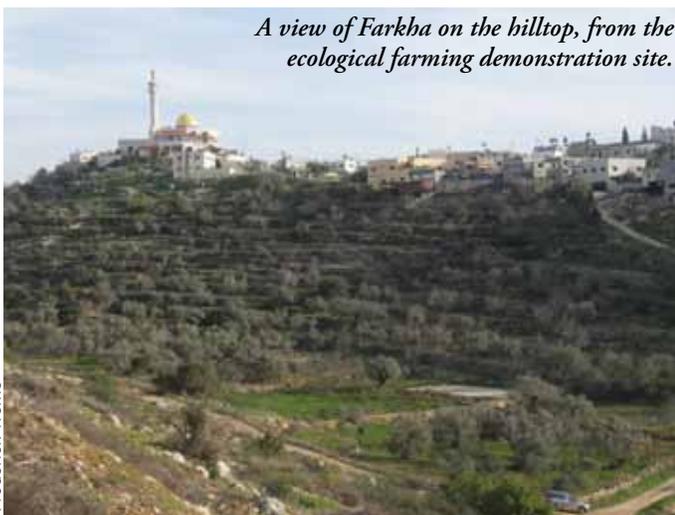
The town of Farkha is just outside of Salfit, a small city once nicknamed “little Moscow” for its communist politics, and still known for its Marxist leanings. The only road to Farkha passes through Salfit and then follows a ridge to the center of the village, which is perched on a hilltop and surrounded by terraced slopes that roll off into the distance. Farkha is home to the Palestinian Organic Olive Growers Association, and this is only the most visible of many ecological and community-minded initiatives: There are a number of women’s associations which, for example, manage a kindergarten and cultural center in a shared building. There is another association that makes cosmetics from organic olive oil. The village has been hosting an international cultural festival for

23 years, and through this has a long history of cooperation with supporters in Central and South America. The murals and graffiti around town often include portraits of Ché Guevara and Hugo Chavez. The town has mixed-gender schools—a rarity in contemporary Palestine—and a high rate of graduation for both young men and women. There is a new, 6 hectare demonstration site for organic farming named for Simon Bolivar. The village has a full-time employee who picks up trash, and the council encourages chemical-free home gardening and rooftop rainwater harvesting.

In other words, Farkha is a concentration of progressive thought and action, and would be a great role-model for small communities anywhere on earth...but it’s not just anywhere. It’s in the middle of Palestine, under a brutal and illegal military occupation. Although Farkha is quiet on the surface, Palestine is a small country; it’s not possible to be very far from the terrible reality. Traveling even short distances means checkpoints, delays, and roadblocks; daily life is marked by negligent or punitive power- and water-cuts; many of the EDE’s students and teachers have been in Israeli prisons, witnessed terrorism and state-sanctioned murder, and all have experienced the racist violence of the occupation. This doesn’t only bring logistical difficulties and the likelihood of having large infrastructure—water tanks and cisterns, for example—destroyed by the IDF (the Israeli military); it also means operating in a culture where fear and despair have been so normal for so long that anger and victimhood have become habits. Fortunately, more and more people in Palestine reject both violence and resignation, and realize that autonomy and sustainability are among the most effective tools of nonviolent political resistance.

Qambaz Baker—mostly just called “Baker”—is the mayor of Farkha, but this official role is simply one consequence of his natural qualities as a leader and visionary. He is accessible, quirky, and endlessly energetic. A true egalitarian, his house is open to the constant flow of supporters; he seems uninterested in the suits and polished desks that small-town politicians so often hide behind. He and his sons—especially Mustafa Baker—were always with us, working on the fields and earthworks, singing, serving food,

A view of Farkha on the hilltop, from the ecological farming demonstration site.



The terrace-swales emerge during a group work party.

Frederick Weihe

sharing knowledge, and thinking together about the future. While we were there, Baker announced that the town had just received a grant to install a complete, autonomous photovoltaic system, to completely fill the town's electricity needs. Farkha has the vision, the knowledge, and drive to move towards real ecological sovereignty, sustainability, and justice; they are a role model not only for Palestine but for the world. We are fortunate to have this friendship; to be there to witness, to learn, and to offer support.

An important bridge between Farkha and the international community is Saad Dagher, an agronomist and permaculture teacher...and yoga instructor, Reiki master, peacemaker, and lover of animals and all living things. He grew up in a village near Farkha, and now lives in Ramallah with his very international family. He speaks Arabic of course, as well as fluent English, Russian, and Spanish. He knew that something special was happening in Farkha, and brought it to the attention of the wider world.

Aida Shibli is a friend of Saad and a key representative of the global community of ecovillages. Herself a Palestinian political activist and peacemaker, she lives in the Tamera Peace Research Village, an intentional community in Portugal. She has long carried the dream of one day seeing an international peace community arise in the Middle East, and in the last years she has focused on network-building in Palestine, putting different activists, visionaries, projects, artists, experts, and students into synergistic and creative contact. This has been within the framework of the Global Campus, an initiative of the Tamera community. One of the many fruits of Global Campus Palestine has been to bring Farkha into contact with GEN, and to bring the EDE and other international networking events to Farkha. Most of the students and experts who participated came as a direct result of this effort.

Many of the teachers came from projects just as remarkable as Farkha, and the EDE also marks a continuation of the cooperation among them. The Bethlehem-based teacher of nonviolence Sami Awad was there; as was activist and author Mazim Qumsiyeh, a professor at the University of Birzeit, and the founder and director of the Palestine Natural History Museum. Permaculture expert Murad Alchufash came from his project Marda Farm to teach. Samera Asafadi came from the animal protection league to talk about her work—also with Saad—to change the often difficult fate of wild and domestic animals in Palestine.

Long-term friend and frequent host of the Global Campus Palestine, Fayez Taneeb, came from Hakoritna Farm, with his special knowledge of how local agriculture and the political situation interact. His family's land in Tulkarem was mostly lost to the apartheid wall, and what remains has been flattened by the IDF's bulldozers many times. But his commitment to nonviolence and resilience is strong; he rebuilds and replants every time.

There are many other innovators and activists who were not present, but who are part of this increasingly solid and coherent network.

There were 31 students, 25 Palestinians from the West Bank, Gaza, from within Israel, and from the diaspora. Twelve came from Farkha itself. There were six internationals participating as well. It was mostly men, but with every event in Palestine we make steps towards parity. Being in Farkha, with its strong women's groups, was a help; we had more women present than ever, as students and on the team.

The EDE curriculum was designed by Gaia Education, and covers the different dimensions of sustainability: Worldview, Social, Ecological, and Economic. Of course, our group was a little different. Our students mostly had backgrounds in natural agriculture and a direct lived experience of the political reality of the world, and we worked to match the content to the needs of our group. To put the local experience in a global context, there were also instructors from the international network, including Aida Shibli, Kosha Joubert—executive director of GEN, and Findhorn resident—and Alice Gray. Alice is a British national based in Palestine, an activist and a certified Permaculture instructor. Thanks to the networking efforts of the last years, the other experts were locals, able to offer the content in Arabic. One of the lasting benefits of the EDE, and the whole process around it, was to put the different experts, activists, and visionaries in contact with one another. Great things are already arising.

One important expert from outside Palestine was the natural rainwater management expert Bernd Müller, who was in Palestine for a series of watershed management

(continued on p. 78)



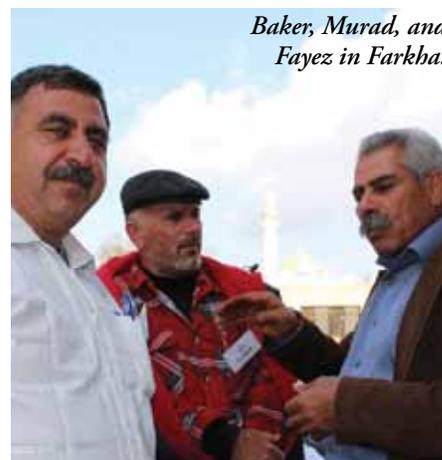
The EDE group during a tree-planting at the Cultural Center in Farkha.

Muhyiddin Sultan



Saad and Aida during a visit to Hakoritna Farm in Tulkarem, in front of the separation wall.

Frederick Weihe



Baker, Murad, and Fayez in Farkha.

Muhyiddin Sultan



Terrace-building with Baker.

Frederick Weihe

Ecovillages at Community Bookstore

The Fellowship for Intentional Community has a special place in its cooperative heart for Ecovillages. Thanks to crowdfunding support from many of you, our Missouri office—the residence of our online bookstore—is now snuggled into a two-room, solar-powered strawbale home on Main Street of Dancing Rabbit Ecovillage. And inside its sweetly plastered walls is a plethora of resources on the topic of ecovillages.

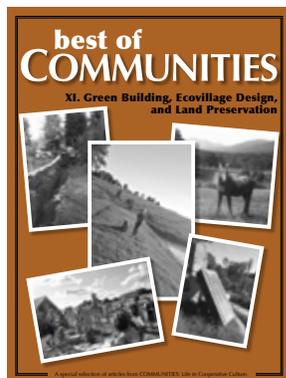
Not an exhaustive list, here are our **Top Dozen Ecovillage Resources** (documentaries, magazines, how-to books, and stories of communities). All are available at our online bookstore at www.ic.org.



Ecovillage: 1001 Ways to Heal the Planet

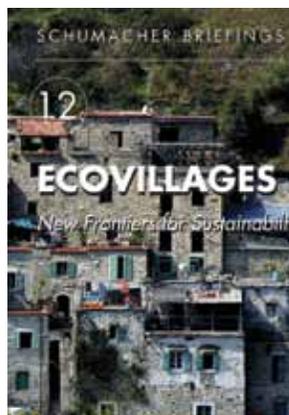
Edited by Kosha Joubert and Leila Dregger

Developed and written by the Global Ecovillage Network, this is our newest paperback looking at the successes and trials of ecovillages near and far. Interviews with members of long-standing ecovillages from Europe, Latin America, Asia, Africa, and North America reveal a diversity of stories, approaches, and challenges. Available in print (\$25) or digital download (\$15).



Best of COMMUNITIES, Issue XI: Green Building, Ecovillage Design, and Land Preservation

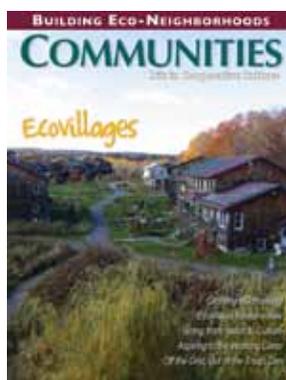
Taken from our distillation of all the best COMMUNITIES articles and compiled into pertinent topics. The 14 articles in this bundle give you an overview of how to read what your land is telling you, how to use materials at hand to build beautifully and sustainably, how to work creatively with zoning restrictions, and how to live and build in harmony with your natural environment. Available in print (\$15) and digital download (\$10).



Ecovillages: New Frontiers for Sustainability

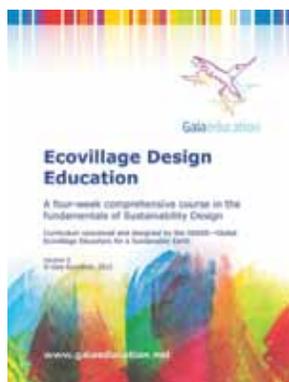
By Jonathan Dawson

Another “how-to” in our collection, this one takes a step further back to discuss the uses, benefits, and characteristics of ecovillages in our social and ecological tapestry. With that said, the book is not simply theoretical, but also uses real examples from leading ecovillages. This book is a timeless resource. Available in print only (\$15).



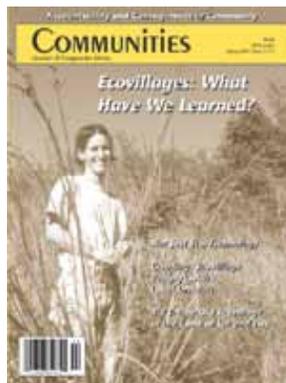
COMMUNITIES #156: Ecovillages

This is one of the most popular issues of COMMUNITIES and is still periodically requested at the bookstore. You, too, can own this classic issue from Fall 2012! Read tales from well-established ecovillages, the lessons of aspiring ecovillages growing their wings, and pertinent advice for those wishing to start one. Available in both print and digital download for \$5 each.



Gaia Education's 4 Keys To Sustainable Communities Everywhere on the Planet

Available individually or as a set of four, the “4 Keys” series lays the foundation for the Ecovillage Design Education (EDE) course, as developed by Gaia Education. Ecovillage Design focuses on four dimensions of sustainable community (devoting an entire book to each subject): ecological, economic, social, and worldview dimensions. Individual books are available from \$25-\$30 or as a set for \$100.



COMMUNITIES #117: Ecovillages: What We Have Learned

Digging deeper into the classics, this issue of COMMUNITIES transports us to Spring 2003, in which experts discuss what they are learning in an earlier age of the conversation. Members of ecovillages across the seas share their experience of this time-tested community structure; younger versions of today's ecovillages discuss pioneering a new way of life; while others share their zoning experiences. Although 13 years of fine aging have transpired, the articles are just as relevant and useful today. Available in both print and digital download for \$4 each.



Within Reach

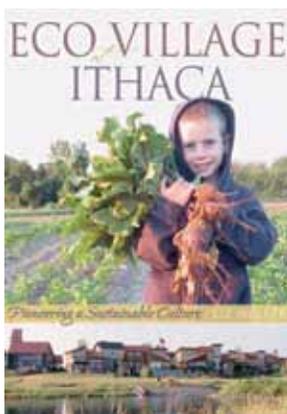
Within Reach is a road movie featuring Mandy and Ryan, who document their travel by bike through very diverse ecovillages, cohousing communities, co-op houses, communes, and transition towns. It's an enriching way to learn about communal living and practical aspects of sustainability, and is a lively celebration of the power of living connect-

ed. Cycling 6500 miles and visiting more than 100 communities, Mandy and Ryan find adventure, friends, challenge, and accomplishment. Available as physical disc (\$20), digital rental (\$6), and digital download (\$15).



A New We

This documentary features 10 ecological communities and ecovillages throughout Europe. The film offers a variety of voices and stories to present a rich, creative, and earth-centered approach to communal living. No matter where you live, this film is sure to inspire and motivate. Available as physical disc (\$17). Digital rental (\$5) and digital download (\$10) are available only for viewers outside the US and Canada.

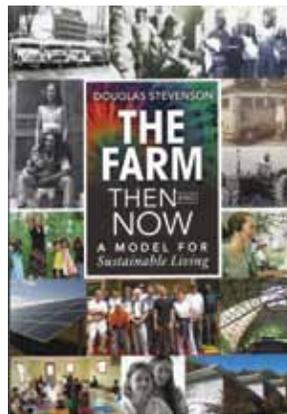


Ecovillage at Ithaca

By Liz Walker

Getting more specific, we also offer a number of books focused simply on one ecovillage. *Ecovillage at Ithaca* delves into the life of this special ecovillage in Ithaca, New York. Human-scale, accessible, and inspiring, the example of Ecovillage at Ithaca will help readers imagine fresh alternatives to "life as usual." It will appeal to all who want to learn about successful working models of a more

sustainable approach to living with each other and the environment. Available in print only (\$15).

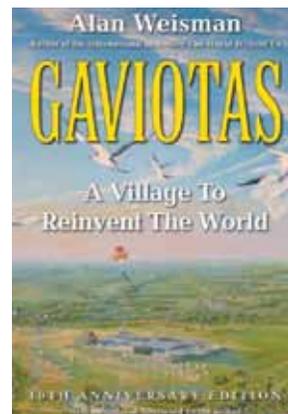


The Farm: Then and Now

By Douglas Stevenson

Another classic on our bookshelf, *The Farm: Then and Now* looks at the growth and development of The Farm community in Tennessee, regarded as one of the leading models of sustainable community in the US. This book addresses common community issues such as governance, health, construction, and green living, and how this particular

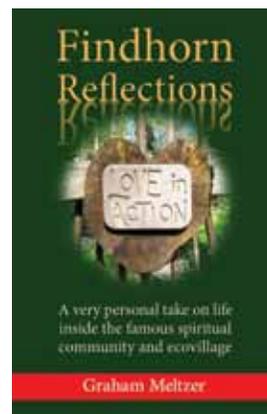
community approaches such issues. Available in print only (\$15).



Gaviotas: A Village to Reinvent the World

By Alan Weisman

This inspiring book tells how a young Colombian development worker helped a war-ravaged area of Colombia transform into a sustainable community. This story takes one on a journey that leaves one suspecting anything is possible. Available in print only (\$13).



Findhorn Reflections

By Graham Meltzer

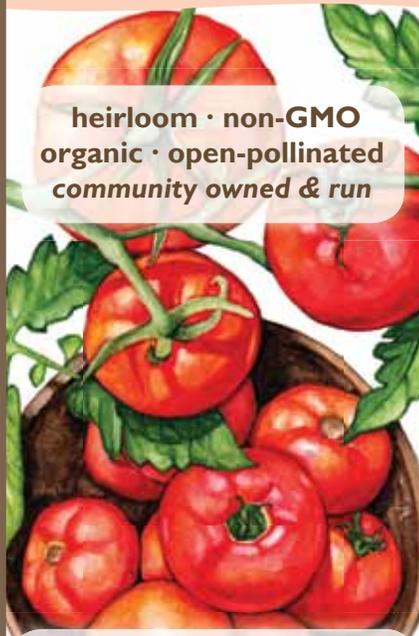
The Findhorn Foundation and Community has been famous since the 1970s for its unique spiritual beliefs and practices, which focus on co-creation with the intelligence of nature, the idea that work is love in action, openhearted relationships, and consciousness. This digital book collects one member's open, honest, and authentic reflections of life inside Findhorn for the

last 10 years. Available as digital download only (\$10).

Be sure to check out our other resources on topics ranging from cohousing to land trusts; nonviolent communication to group facilitation; peak oil to permaculture. FIC aims to support the development of cooperative culture and we understand that can look different for each of us. We hope to offer appropriate resources for all your community-oriented curiosities. Suggestions and feedback can be sent to our Bookstore Manager, Kim Kanney, at bookstore@ic.org.

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Acorn Community celebrates our 22nd anniversary this year. Prospective members and interns are welcome to write to us to request to visit, especially during the summer months.

AcornCommunity.org



REACH

REACH is our column for all your Classified needs. In addition to ads intended to match people looking for communities with communities looking for people, Reach offers ads for events, goods, services, books, personals, and more to people interested in communities.

You may contact the Advertising Manager Christopher Kindig to place a Reach ad. Email Ads@ic.org, call 443-422-3741, or go to communities.ic.org/ads/ for more details or to submit your ad online.

THE REACH DEADLINE FOR ISSUE #172 - Fall 2016 (out in September) is August 24, 2016.

The rate for Reach ads is Up to 50 Words: \$25/issue or \$75/year; Up to 125 Words: \$40/issue or \$125/year; Up to 350 Words: \$60/issue or \$175/year If you are an FIC Member you may take off an additional 5%.

You may pay using a card or paypal by contacting Christopher online or over the phone using the contact information above, or you may mail a check or money order payable to COMMUNITIES with your ad text, word count, and duration of the ad, plus your contact information, to: The Fellowship for Intentional Community, 23 Dancing Rabbit Ln, Rutledge, MO 63563.

Intentional communities listing in the Reach section are also invited to create a free listing in the online Communities Directory at Directory.ic.org, and also to try our online classified advertising options. Special prices may be available to those who wish to list both in the magazine and online.

COMMUNITIES WITH OPENINGS

COMMUNITY FOR MINDFUL LIVING AND CONSCIOUS PARENTING. Our cohousing project is in a natural, yet central and walkable location in Berkeley CA with a rare unit opening up for a new family. We are also actively exploring expansion to two larger sites on the East and West coasts. Visit www.communityformindfulliving.com

RANCHO ECOTOPIA SEEKS LIKE-MINDED INDIVIDUALS who love fresh air, hard work, passion for nature, quietude, and who are ready for making the next step to personal-independence. Priority is given to individuals with Journeyman Skills, and/or Organic Gardening talents to fill these unique positions at this completely, self-sustaining Eco-Ranch in sunny Southern California. Visit: <http://RanchoEcoTopia.com>

WIND SPIRIT COMMUNITY, A 20 YEAR-OLD OASIS AND COMMUNITY IN THE ARIZONA DESERT, has openings for 4 additional residents. On our 16 acres we have a year-round growing season, thousands of fruit, nut and native trees, six organic gardens, and abundant and high-quality water. Our residents enjoy a simple lifestyle surrounded by nature. We are joined by dozens to hundreds of visitors from around the country and world each year who bring stories, new perspectives, talents, energy and income to the community during their visits. We encourage new potential residents to view our website, arrange with us for a visit, work with the current residents on projects and enjoy the Land here. They are welcome to stay in Wind Spirit accommodations (converted buses and RVs, camping or the occasional available dome) or bring their own. More details can be found on the Wind Spirit visitor page at <http://www.windspiritcommunity.org/Visitors.htm>.

HEARTWOOD COHOUSING ~ DURANGO / BAYFIELD, COLORADO. Where the high red-rock deserts of the Four Corners climb into the stunning San Juan Mountains. 24 homes ~ 350 acres of woodland, pastures, and community gardens. Established in 2000. ~ Happily rolling into our 17th year. HeartwoodCohousing.com FB/HeartwoodCohousing

CITE ECOLOGIQUE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE IS LOCATED IN COLEBROOK IN THE GREAT NORTH WOOD REGION. We live cooperatively on 325 acres of land where we grow organic food and practice permaculture principles. Our mission is to give priority to education and sustainable development based on respect for all living things. We aim to share through education and positive network. 2 hr Tours are available from May to October - Wednesdays or Sundays for \$15. Also available: Weekends on Wellness, Community Living or Organic Farming; fees \$150 all-inclusive. Participate in our "Green Wednesday Seminars" and deepen your knowledge on Conflict resolution, Healthy cooking, Solar Energy, Holistic Education or How to grow Shiitake! Fees are \$45 including lunch. Experience an Internship on our farm. PDC: We will have a two-week Permaculture Design Certificate, August 17-30 - Early bird registration \$720 June 30 / Full price \$950 - www.citec.org - Leonie Brien (603)-331-1669 - info@citeecologiquenh.org - www.citeecologiquenh.org

ARE YOU A RAREBIRD? Are you ready to invest in the growing movement of mindful people looking for innovative models for housing and community development? If so, you may be a RareBird! The RareBird's Housing Co-operative in the interior of British Columbia is a vibrant six unit, adult oriented equity co-op with an opening for a single person or couple. We share a beautifully designed, award winning

home on the edge of downtown Kamloops, BC. Our purpose is to create a model of shared living that will enable us to live into new possibilities of social transformation. We value an inclusive environment that embraces our extended families and welcomes our friends. Our intention is to create more financial freedom and emotional enrichment by living interdependently, mindful of environmental responsibilities and sustainable practices. You can learn more about our vibrant community visit www.rarebirdshousing.ca or email us at rarebirdshousing@gmail.com

ESCAPE THE MONEY CURSE! For more than 40 years we have refused to work for money. We are dedicated idealists who try to live out the teachings of Jesus within a communal/nomadic lifestyle. We welcome visitors, even if just for a short time. Full-time members share all that we own in common, living simply, and gleaning most of our food and other needs from what society throws out. We try to share these and other Christian principles through words and actions. We distribute self-produced literature and DVD's, while counselling those in need. Most of us live in vehicles and travel constantly. Visitors need not endorse all of our beliefs, but they would be expected to share their own ideals with others as we travel and to share responsibilities. It's a narrow path, but one of adventure, brotherhood and intimacy with God. Will you walk it with us? www.jesuschristians.com email: fold@idl.net.au

HARBIN HOT SPRINGS invites you to apply to become a part of our community of friendly, hard-working, and creative residents. We are an eclectic collection of individuals who dedicate ourselves to the operation of our heart-conscious spiritual retreat center and the stewardship of nearly 14,000 acres of wild and beautiful land. Our non-profit based community and retreat center seeks to interview potential candidates to live and work in our unique and beautiful holistic environment. Our facility attracts visitors from all over the world who are interested in the restorative effects of our natural spring waters, our gifted massage staff and varied workshops. We are looking to meet individuals who believe they can thrive in this dynamic yet gentle atmosphere. To apply please visit our application/employment page: www.harbin.org/community/employment/. For further information contact Human Resources, 707 987 2994 ext 128 - hr@harbin.org

HEATHCOTE COMMUNITY, Freeland, Maryland. We are an intentional community living cooperatively on 44 acres of land held in trust with School of Living. We have a permaculture farm and demonstration site. Our mission is to live sustainably and share with others through education and service. Heathcote was one of the first "hippie communes" and we are celebrating our 50th Anniversary in 2015! We are seeking new members who want to live cooperatively, engage in permaculture and sustainable farming, and contribute to our educational work. We have rooms available in shared houses and one more building site available for a new residence. We also seek participants for our education programs, which include Visitor Days, workshops, and internships in farming



La Cité Écologique is located in Colebrook New Hampshire. Our ecovillage gives priority to education, the well-being of its members, sustainable development, and respect for all living things. We also believe strongly in serving our local rural community. We are surrounded by 325 acres of beautiful land, forest and mountains. So far we have built one single family building, two large community residences where people live in a kind of condo arrangement, one community building which includes a community kitchen, a community hall, a laundry room and a nice fireplace for our long winters. We offer guided tours from May through October.



Contact: Leonie Brien (603) 331-1669

www.citeecologiqueh.org



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FAIR OAKS ECOHOUSING, EAST OF SACRAMENTO, CA - Fair Oaks EcoHousing is a family-friendly, inter-generational group of households committed to creating an earth-friendly cohousing community. We're building 30 homes on 3.5 acres, with start of construction planned for fall 2015. We're seeking others who share our vision to join us! We're pleased to be working with Charles Durrett of McCamant & Durrett Architects and Katie McCamant of CoHousing Solutions, both leaders in environmental sustainability. Fair Oaks is 18 miles east of downtown Sacramento. The site is within easy walking distance of the 23-mile American River Parkway, deemed the "jewel of Sacramento." Nearby attractions include charming Fair Oaks Village, the Sacramento Waldorf School and Bannister Park. Being located on the eastern side of the valley provides access to the Sierra Foothills, with opportunities for hiking, skiing, rafting and kayaking. Interested in learning more? We'd love to talk with you! Learn more at www.FairOaksEcoHousing.org.

BELFAST ECOVILLAGE IN MIDCOAST MAINE is a 36-unit multigenerational community on 42 acres. The super energy efficient homes are clustered to preserve open space for recreation, agriculture and wildlife. Automobile access is limited and the houses are connected by a pedestrian path, making it a safe place for young children. A 4,000 square foot common house is nearly complete, and will have several voluntary shared meals weekly. Many homes have solar systems, making them near net zero. Members gather weekly to harvest food from the 3-acre worker share community farm and there are two multi-household flocks of laying hens. Members come from all walks of life and include educators, naturalist, carpenters, medical professionals, social workers, musicians, and artists. Belfast Ecovillage is located two miles from the quaint coastal town of Belfast, with a harbor, library, YMCA, schools, employers, and health food coop. For more information visit: Mainecohousing.org or call 207-338-9200.

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

DANCING RABBIT ECOVILLAGE, Rutledge, Missouri. Come live lightly with us, and be part of the solution! Dancing Rabbit Ecovillage is an intentional community and educational non-profit focused on living, researching, and demonstrating sustainable living possibilities. We live, work and play on 280 acres of lovely

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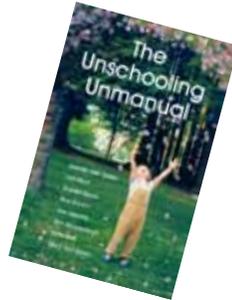
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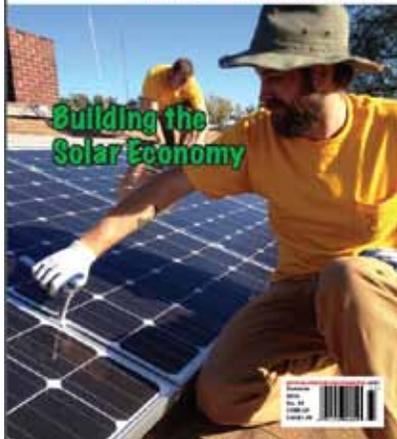
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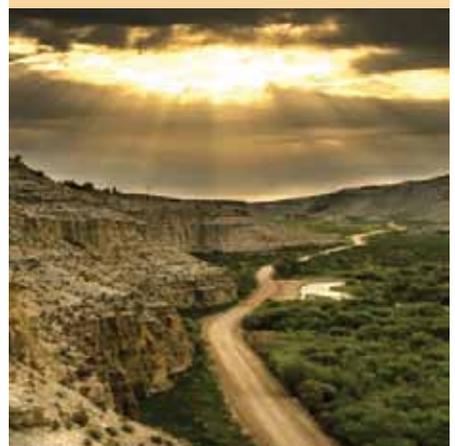
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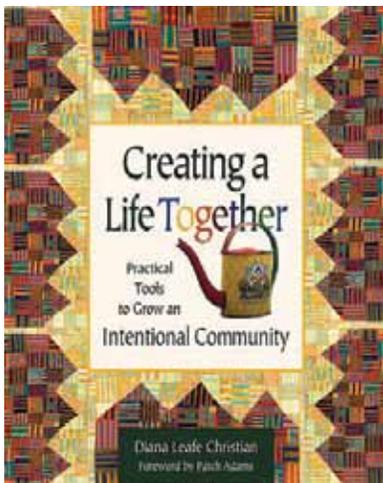
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Creating a Life Together, by Diana Leafe Christian

2003; paperbound; 272 pages; ISBN: 0-86571-471-1

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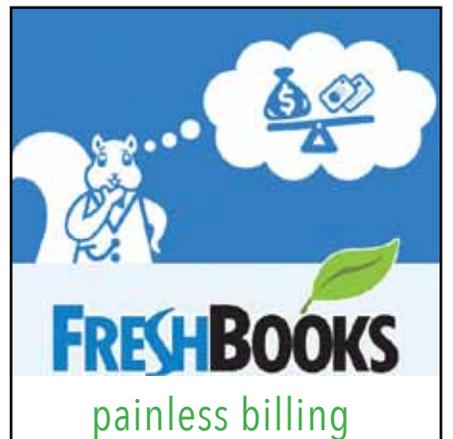
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ECOVILLAGE STRATEGIES IN AREAS OF CRISIS

(continued from p. 23)

security, and creating alternatives to a finance based system. Bernd Müller points out that “ecological crises are the foundation for economic crises.”

Sarah Queblatin, from her experience in psycho-social support in emergency situations, emphasizes how the GEN network transforms the traditional humanitarian response system beyond aid for immediate survival. To her, ecovillage and permaculture solutions recover resilience and “help communities move beyond [the role of] survivors to become thrivers: able to regenerate and recover quickly.”

As members of sustainable communities we experience in our own lives that self-sufficiency is both possible and replicable. As world crises continue to escalate, with multiple triggers occurring in multiple locations within multiple contexts of worldviews and experiences, so too emerges our need to strengthen the diversity of approaches in order to adapt to existing needs. By co-creating a network of support and learning, we continue to deepen and expand our experience and best practices by harnessing collective wisdom that will guide us in defining and designing what a whole systems approach to crisis looks like.

Creating a Body of Experience

Across the world, EmerGENcies Protocol connects ecovillages, transitioning intentional communities, and ecological solutions experts to identify vital best practices, stakeholders, and solutions arising from these experiences. Through storytelling, interviews, and archiving, we aim to create a body of knowledge and resources that embody regenerative and whole systems design as an innovative contribution to the field of humanitarian assistance.

Through its partner education and training organizations, EmerGENcies supports community leaders and facilitators in developing their capacities through ecovillage design education, ecovillage incubation, and technology trainings. Through this engagement, they will also be supported in documenting, developing, and designing modules unique to the context of their experience and learning. 🌱

Leila Dregger is a graduate agricultural engineer and longtime journalist. She traveled for many decades to all the world's continents, encountering various communities and peace projects to identify and write about diverse lifestyles. Her primary areas of focus are peace, ecology, community, and women. She has worked for 25 years in press and radio and is a screenwriter and director for theater and film. She was the editor of the magazine The Female Voice—Politics of the Heart. She was press officer for the House of Democracy in Berlin, the ZEGG community in Belzig (both in Germany), and the Tamera ecovillage in Portugal, where she mainly lives today. From 2012-2015, she was the editor of the Global Ecovillage Network (GEN) International newsletter. She teaches constructive journalism for young professionals and students, as well as in crisis regions. She is the author of several books.

Sarah Queblatin is an integral sustainable development practitioner weaving experience for the last 10 years across core issues of environmental education, cultural heritage, peacebuilding, development communication, and humanitarian assistance for I/NGOs. After responding to conflict and disasters, she was inspired to join the ecovillage movement and moved to Maia Earth Village in Palawan, Philippines, realizing the need for whole-systems-designed solutions. Sarah is working toward a Masters in Expressive Arts for Conflict Transformation and Peacebuilding at the European Graduate School in Switzerland. In 2012, Sarah was recognized by the Arts and Healing Network with its Next Generation Award for her work with Mandala Earth Story. She serves as Country Representative for GEN in the Philippines and is a key member of the GENOA (GEN Oceania and Asia) team. She is also helping incubate EmerGENcies Protocol, an emerging think tank to map out past, existing, or future ecovillage-led crisis response and rehabilitation around the world.

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Thank you!

LEARNING IN ECOVILLAGES AND GETTING A COLLEGE DEGREE

(continued from p. 35)

The Gaia-Goddard partnership is a step in that direction, making much of that vision possible for students.

Both Gaia Education and Goddard College also have other partnerships that can deepen and expand the learning opportunities available to students. For example, Gaia Education has partnered with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and uses the EDE course as a key component in grant-funded sustainable development projects. And Goddard College has partnerships with other organizations doing work in sustainability and social and ecological justice such as the Permaculture Institute of North America, Food First, and Yestermorrow. Students can engage in experiential learning with all of these partners.

Together, ecovillages, Gaia Education, Goddard College, and their partners give students the opportunity to have a global, transformative, and impactful experience where learning is integrated with work on meaningful projects that help to create a more sustainable and socially just world. 🌱

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Giovanni Ciarlo (Gio) is an ecovillage activist and educator. He also performs and records with his musical group Sirius Coyote in both the US and Mexico, where he cofounded Ecoaldea Huehucoyotl, an ecovillage based on the arts and ecology (www.huehucoyotl.net). He is the Academic Director for Gaia Education, former advisor in the M.A. program at Goddard College, past president of GEN (2009-2011), and the recipient of the FIC's 2016 Kozeny Communitarian Award.

Karen Stupski is a sustainability educator, nonprofit administrator, and communitarian. She currently serves as a faculty member at Goddard College, Development Director for the Gunpowder Valley Conservancy (a watershed organization and land trust), and Executive Director of School of Living (a community land trust). Karen lives at Heathcote Community, where she coordinates the permaculture education program. She holds a Ph.D. in the history of science, medicine, and technology from Johns Hopkins University and a Post Masters Graduate Diploma in Organizing Learning for EcoSocial Regeneration from Gaia University.

YARROW ECOVILLAGE: COHOUSING AS A BUILDING BLOCK TO THE ECOVILLAGE

(continued from p. 43)

We have seen many cohousing communities, like Yarrow Ecovillage, that begin as small infill projects and, over time, bring new life to an entire neighborhood. Yarrow Ecovillage is no different and has the potential to catalyze other developments nearby, helping to stem the tide of sprawl in this beautiful valley. As an infill project that reinvigorates a former, underutilized site with a variety of uses, it is a model to be expanded upon in similar rural settings.

The Yarrow Ecovillage group has successfully completed a design and construction that captures a true *genius loci*, the spirit of a place that is memorable for both its architectural and its experiential qualities. This combination also allows for a wonderful balance of economics, ecology, and positive social space. This type of calculated diversity assures flexibility and longevity for Yarrow Ecovillage. The cohousing, first in the development process, is really the kingpin of the larger whole. It is the cornerstone or the incubator for thoughtful and efficient processes and investment models in the future. It not only catalyzes the Yarrow Ecovillage larger whole, it also helps to synthesize the three separate endeavors to accomplish the overall goals of the ecovillage.

In Conclusion

At one point, we were talking to the city about adding the 17-unit senior cohousing community. We asked, *can this work?* The city replied, *we don't know, it's zoned as an ecovillage—you tell us. We don't claim to know anything about ecovillages.*

And they were correct. It was up to the residents to come up with what made sense from an ecological, economical, and social point of view. Where is the synergy that will make it an ecovillage? What the group has designed couldn't be more sophisticated, more synergistic, likened to the organic villages of old that you find in southern France. Those villages were created before development became big box and big subdivision. Like when human environments were human scale—that's Yarrow Ecovillage. 🐦

McCamant & Durrett Architects | The Cohousing Company is an architecture and consulting firm with offices in Nevada City, California. Principal Architect Charles Durrett and his wife, Katie McCamant of Cohousing Solutions, have become well known nationally and internationally for the design of cohousing communities, sustainable design and development consulting. Since 1987 the firm has provided complete architectural services for a wide range of clients. Charles and Katie have published many essential cohousing books, including Cohousing: A Contemporary Approach to Housing Ourselves, Creating Cohousing: Building Sustainable Communities, and Senior Cohousing: A Community Approach to Independent Living. MDA has adapted its cohousing design experience to affordable housing developments and senior neighborhoods. Other projects have included custom strawbale homes, mixed-use developments, town planning, commercial projects, and childcare centers. MDA's Lindy Sexton helped with the editing of this article.



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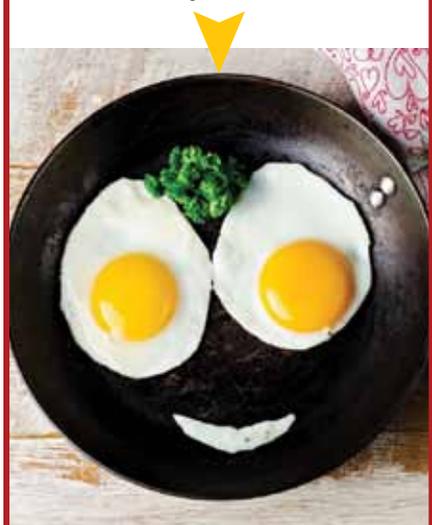


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THE FIRST ECOVILLAGE IN PALESTINE

(continued from p. 63)

consultations with the Palestinian Authority, local governments and farmers, and NGOs. The course had many classroom hours, but also days of hands-on action, and one of the most exciting was when we began to rebuild the neglected—but centuries-old—fieldstone retaining walls on the ecological-farming demonstration site. Baker brought his knowledge of traditional terracing, which fit beautifully with Bernd's contribution from Permaculture; what emerged was an innovative and aesthetically-pleasing hybrid of terracing and swales. Among Saad, Baker, and Bernd, there was so much collected expertise, so much love for life, water, and the land...how could anything but deep friendship emerge?

For the student group also, these days working outdoors were a high point of the course: two joyful days of work towards food and water autonomy, cooperation with nature, and community-building. What we accomplished exceeded our expectations. Not only was a lot of stone and earth moved, but—as if by magic—time expanded to allow plenty of stories, ad hoc language and history lessons, abundant conversation and Arabic coffee, spontaneous song and poetry, and the occasional nargile. Some came to teach, some to learn...but everyone came to connect.

• • •

In the last few years, the definition of ecovillage expanded beyond agricultural collectives and intentional communities, to include traditional villages and other projects that support a new human relationship with the natural environment. The 2016 EDE marks the moment when the growing scale and complexity of the projects in Farkha began to overlap with the growing global network of ecovillages.

For me it's a real source of hope to find people who, despite living in a small village under such constant challenges, nevertheless wake up every day and take a global perspective: They know very well that when they move towards autonomy and sustainability, they are working not only towards their own liberation but towards the liberation of everyone, for example their friends in South America, where farmers are driven off their ancestral lands by mineral speculation and industrial agriculture.

When I leave Farkha and pass through the checkpoints and borders; through traffic, cities, airports, and highways, I don't have the impression of leaving an oppressed people and stepping into the "free world." I have rather the feeling of leaving an island of joyful hope and beautiful resilience, and re-entering a culture of distraction, plastic, and hidden exploitation. Truly, my main thought is not "I'm glad I could help." Rather, I am humbled and grateful that the people in Farkha are working so tirelessly for my survival and liberation—as they are also working for their own survival and liberation, and for yours—by helping to build a world in which community, sustainability, and peace are possible. 🌱

Dr. Frederick Weihe lives and works in Tamera (www.tamera.org), an intentional community and peace research center in southern Portugal. His main professional activity there is in sustainable technology, especially decentralized energy systems. He blogs occasionally at www.physicsforpeaceworkers.org.

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ECOVILLAGES IN OUR DNA

(continued from p. 80)

This was an ambitious project and (as someone who contributed a chapter to it) I know that GEN had limited time and staffing to produce a book this wide-ranging and inclusive by the publisher's tight deadline. As a result, some opportunities were missed. *Ecovillage* begins by celebrating the benefits of ecovillages without first clearly saying what ecovillages are, and that they include indigenous and rural sustainability projects and education centers in the Global South. I found chapter titles, subheads, and author information sections at the beginning of some stories confusing; I wasn't always sure at first who the author was. And while many of the first-person stories—describing the evolution of the contributor's ecovillage and that person's interactions with it—are well-written and interesting, some begin with no statement of the project's name or scope, but simply launch into biographical information about the author's childhood experiences.

Yet *Ecovillage* has many inspired and memorable moments. "Over the years I came to realize that the Ladakhis' joy and dignity arose from their deep sense of connection with one another and with the Earth," writes Helena Norberg-Hodge, director of the Ladakh Ecological Development Group. "And this is how we have evolved for most of human history. This is why people...who have (been) cut off from others and from nature develop a yearning to rebuild their spiritual connections to life...Ecovillages must be in our DNA!" 🌱

Author of Creating a Life Together and Finding Community, Diana Leafé Christian is a Council member of GEN-US, and is a member of the Sociocracy Implementation Circle for GEN International's Board of Directors. She contributed a chapter on Earthaven Ecovillage for this book.

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- | | |
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ECOVILLAGES IN OUR DNA

Ecovillage: 1001 Ways to Heal the Planet is a collection of ecovillage stories published in 2015 by the Global Ecovillage Network (GEN) to celebrate its 20th anniversary conference. It features 30 first-person accounts by founders or longtime members of ecovillage projects worldwide.

“Ecovillages combine a supportive and high-quality social and cultural environment with a low-impact way of life,” writes GEN Executive Director Kosha Joubert. They are projects “in which groups of committed people experiment to find solutions for some of the challenges we face globally. Rapidly gaining recognition...ecovillages naturally become places of inspiration within their regions and societies.”

These stories from five continents are truly representational of both the Industrial North—where well-educated, mostly middle class people band together to create sustainability demonstration models for a new culture—and the Global South, where desperately poor people adapt methods like Permaculture and other ecologically and economically innovative methods to restore the traditional cultures they already have.

Intentional-community style ecovillages from the “North” include large, relatively well-known projects such as The Farm, EcoVillage at Ithaca, Earthaven, Findhorn in Scotland, Damanhur in Italy, Sieben Linden in Germany, Auroville in India. Stories of smaller, less-well-known residential ecovillages include Sirius in the US, Source Farm Ecovillage in Jamaica, Lakabe in Spain, Kibbutz Lotan in Israel; and a newly forming ecovillage, Narara in Australia.

Some of the “South” stories of indigenous people struggling against the ecological, economic, and social aftermath of colonialism and the depredations of multinational corporations include La Favela de Paz, organized around a shared love of music and drumming in an area of deep poverty in densely urban São Paulo; Baga village in Togo, a rural farming community transforming itself economically and ecologically and affirming its traditional West African culture through applied Permaculture and micro-lending circles; and the Ladakh Ecological Development Group, which is transforming Ladakh in the same way and with ecological and economic means to revive its traditional agrarian Himalayan culture. Organic farmers in rural Turkey, indigenous tribes in Ecuador and Brazil, Afro-Colombians on Caribbean islands, and villagers in Kenya, Senegal, and across Zimbabwe, Malawi, and Zambia have all begun transforming their heartbreaking economic, social, and cultural challenges into much better circumstances.

My favorites are what I call “hero communities.” At Kitezh Children’s Village in Russia foster families raise and educate orphans and “social orphans,” children whose alcoholic parents are unable to raise them, in a rural settlement not far from Moscow. Most of these desperately traumatized children become caring adults, and often graduate from college; some even return to help raise other children. Sekkem began with a Biodynamic farm in the Egyptian desert and now employs 2000 people producing organic foods, spices, herbal teas, and organic cotton products, and managing a kindergarten, grammar school, high school, vocational training school, university, and medical center. At Hakoritna Farm, a Palestinian organic farmer, Fayez Taneeb, practices nonviolent resistance and maintains his courage and dignity by continuing to farm and developing a demonstration and training site for ecological sustainability—doing so on the two hectares which remain after Israel confiscated and destroyed 80 percent of his farmland to build part of the Separation Wall and a series of chemical factories. And at San Jose de Apartadó in Colombia, 100 farmers and refugees subject to threats of, and actual, massacres, attacks, and bombings by guerrillas, paramilitary forces, and/or the Colombian Army, continue to hold onto their principles of peace and nonviolence. These include taking no sides, having no weapons, using no alcohol or drugs, and sharing their farming labor. Their story, and those of many of the “against-all-odds” African projects, moved me to tears.

And the cover—the cover is one of the most beautiful and evocative images of “ecovillage” and a tantalizing “green” future world I can imagine. The photo of a girl in the jungle evokes a warm emotional response in me whenever I see it.

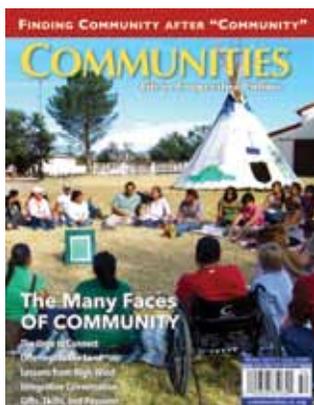
(continued on p. 79)

Ecovillage:
1001 Ways to Heal the Planet
Kosha Joubert
and Leila Dregger, Editors
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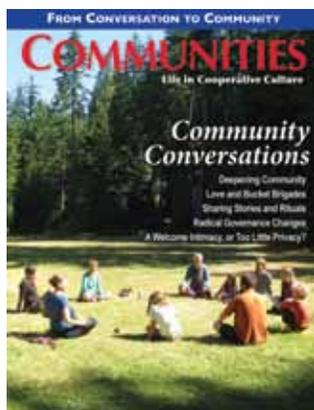
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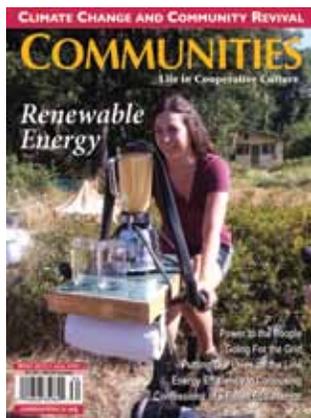


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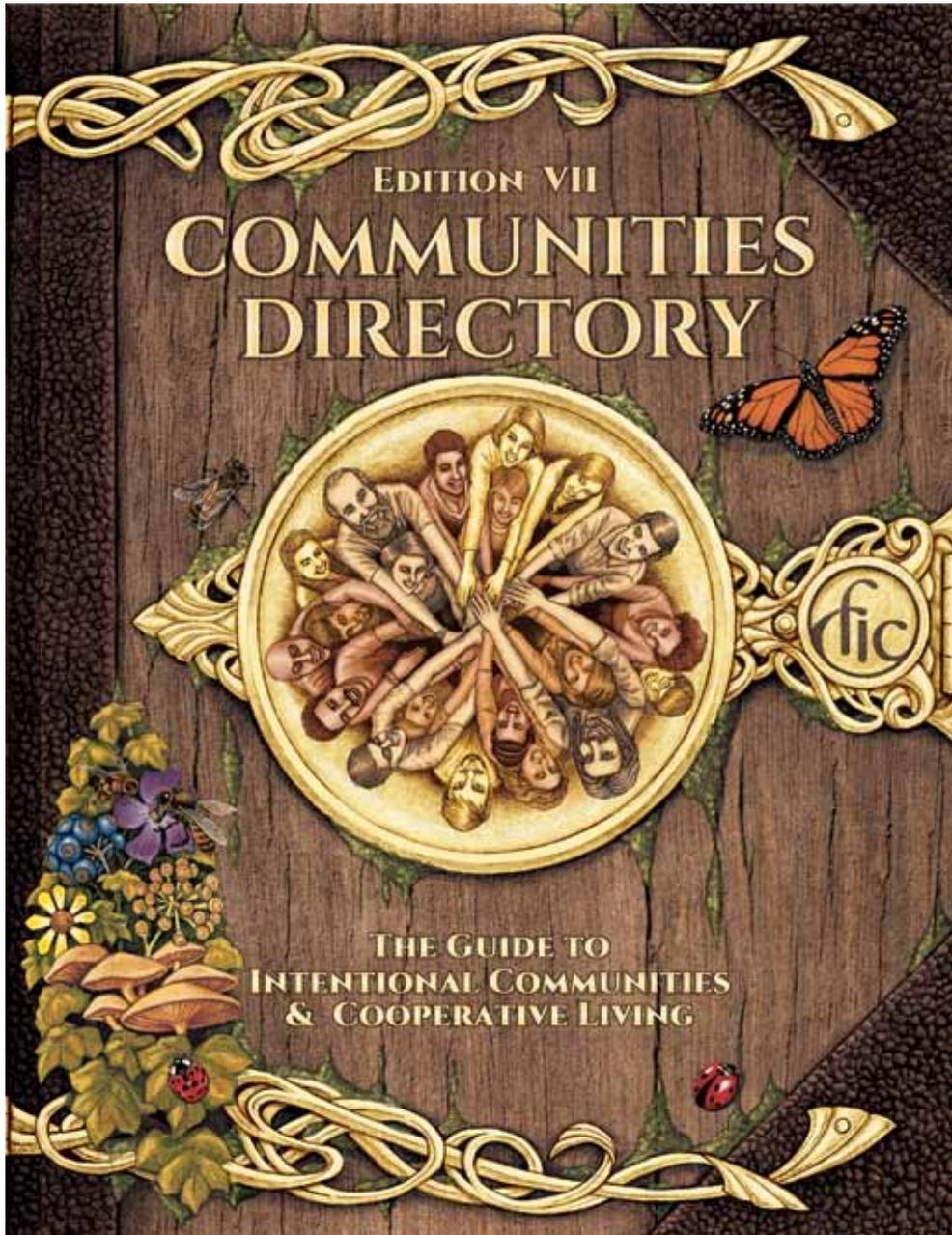
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