

# C.A.L.L.

Communes *A* + *L*arge Letter



**INTERNATIONAL  
COMMUNES DESK**



**YAD TABENKIN**



**No. 23**

**Spring 2004**

Dear Readers,

Welcome to the Spring 2004 issue of C.A.L.L.

This issue is jam-packed with features on topics which are vital to the functioning and sustainability of all intentional communities: Settling disputes, decision-making and relationship-building.

### **Settling Disputes :**

The Institute of Arbitration and Mediation in the Kibbutz Movement was established fourteen years ago. Since then they have received 2,300 requests, opened 1,150 files for arbitration or mediation and almost 100% have culminated in a mediation agreement or an arbitration ruling. Read all about it inside this issue.

### **Decision-making :**

Jesse Barton from the Bruderhof introduces this topic with a lovely piece on decision-making in community. "We have obligated ourselves to a much more serious level of decision-making", says Jesse, "one that not only affects us individually, but in a very important way affects the lives of those around us". In addition, Bill Metcalf offers us an exclusive sneak preview of his new book, with an extract describing the different methods of decision-making.

### **Relationship-Building :**

Yoel Dorkam includes in 'Kaleidoscope' an article by Geoph Kozeny (Geoph's video, 'Visions of Utopia', is also reviewed on page 5) in which he reveals the secrets to 'sustainable community and sustainable relationships'.

\*

Elsewhere this issue, there are profiles of two co-housing projects in Sweden, and we ask: Are the Amish Colonies Intentional Communities?

Finally, inside the envelope together with this issue of C.A.L.L., you should have found a questionnaire which we have compiled for the purpose of hearing feedback from you, the reader. We ask of only a few minutes of your time to let us know what you think and we promise to consider all of your suggestions. You can send the questionnaire back to us by snail mail, or you can download it from our website at:

<http://www.communia.org.il/questionnaire.doc>  
and email it to me at the address below.

Enjoy,

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The Kibbutz Movement today



there would be no one left to look after the aged remnants of its founders. Faith in the kibbutz system had been shattered. Hence the general move to change the system. Ensuring a more secure future and a desire for more independence are the major driving forces of this process.

**C: Commentators often link the kibbutz crisis with the collapse of Soviet-style communism. What is your opinion?**

R: There is no connection. The kibbutz way of life has nothing in common with the "communist" systems in the USSR bloc.

**C: Unlike the status of communes in other countries, "kibbutz" is a legally defined entity in Israel. In what way does this affect the changes in the kibbutz movement?**

R: Not only is the term "kibbutz" legally defined, but there are no less than 110 different laws, the application of which requires special mention of "kibbutz". This is not necessarily to our benefit. For instance, kibbutzniks don't receive unemployment benefits.

**C: So how is the legal definition of a kibbutz being changed?**

R: The government set up a special commission, including kibbutz representatives, to deal with the legal aspects of the changes in the kibbutz movement.

**C: What is the present situation regarding this?**

R: The commission has made its recommendations and, after clarification and confirmation by the kibbutz movement, will be passed on to the Knesset (parliament) to be made legally binding.

**C: What are the main points of the commission's proposals?**

R: Two different types of kibbutzim will be defined:

- "Communal Kibbutzim" (Kibbutzim shitufi'im) - in which only minimal changes are being made from the original principles.
- "New-style Kibbutzim (Kibbutzim mitchadshim) - in which considerable changes are being / have been made. Most important! The law will define the limits of a kibbutz. When a community no longer takes mutual responsibility for its weaker members, it will cease to be a kibbutz.

Each kibbutz will have to decide into which category it belongs.

**Check out the next issue of C.A.L.L. for part II of this interview.**



## Findhorn Foundation

Building Community Online: An Invitation of Co-Creation!

Blessings, dear friends, from the Findhorn community.

There is a growing impulse to bring more of what we do at our spiritual centre to the wider world. There is also an impulse to more closely connect those around the world who feel an energetic resonance with the work we do. One of the many ways we are able to do this in today's world is through the gift of technology. This represents one small step in the continuing evolution of our global community. As many of you know, we have made some beginnings in connecting you online both to us and to one another. For instance, we recently added a discussion area to our website called the Forums. Our online community forums are bringing people together around the world to share from the heart, exchange news and information, share experiences, ask questions, offer inspiration, discuss current events and issues, and generally support one another in our human evolution.

There is no charge for using the forums - all you need to do is register online. If you haven't yet seen the forums, go to <http://www.findhorn.org/forums> and click register to get started.

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Bulletin of the International Communal  
Studies Association No. 34 - November 2003

# What's With the Kibbutz Movement Today?

It's definitely about time that communards around the world get an up-to-date picture of the kibbutz movement today. Who better can provide this than Dr. Ran Kochan, who sits daily next to the offices of the joint General Secretaries of the Kibbutz Movement<sup>1</sup>?

**CALL: What briefly is your position in The Kibbutz Movement?**

Ran: I am a kind of strategic adviser to the 2 Secretaries. In effect, I have 2 jobs: projector for special projects and chairman of the committee for strategic planning.

**C: Can you tell us, in a few words, how you got to be a kibbutznik?**

R: At the age of 33, I decided to give up my academic career as lecturer in international relations and completely change my life style by joining Kibbutz Tzora.

**C: How many kibbutzim belong to The Kibbutz Movement today?**

R: 260.

**C: How many urban kibbutzim belong to TKM? How many communal villages (moshavim shitufi'im)?**

R: There are 4 urban kibbutzim and 4 communal villages

**C: What is the total population of TKM today?**

R: About 115,000, compared with 130,000 in 1990. This comprises some 2% of the population of the country.

**C: The Kibbutz Movement has quite an extensive infrastructure. How many kibbutz members work full time in it,**

**besides those who work in the various associated cultural-educational bodies?**

R: About 80. This includes some 20 kibbutzniks who work fulltime in the various youth movements.

**C: Such a big number? What do they all do?**

R: In brief, the staff attends to the various problems of the kibbutzim and works to influence the country as a whole.

**C: How is the staff of TKM organised?**

R: They work in 5 different departments: Economic, Social (including health, education, culture, etc), Assignments (special activities in Israeli society), Regional Guidance/Leadership and Staff & Manpower.

**C: About how many kibbutzniks work in the various cultural/educational bodies associated with The Kibbutz Movement?**

R: Several hundred work in these financially independent bodies, which include: 2 teachers' seminars, 2 research institutes, a publishing house, a modern dance group, 2 orchestras, a theatre, 2 choirs, etc.

**C: The annual budget of The Kibbutz Movement doesn't include the budgets of the kibbutzim themselves. How much is it?**

R: 15.5 million shekel, all of it covered by the kibbutzim themselves by a progressive system of membership fees.



Dr. Ran Kochan

**C: All of our readers have heard that the kibbutz movement is in crisis. On our website at <http://www.communia.org.il/e-israel.htm> is a quite comprehensive article on the subject. Can you explain in a nutshell what the crisis is?**

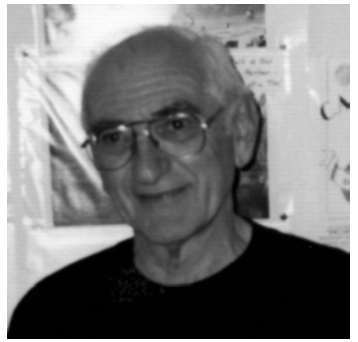
R: The crisis was triggered by 2 main factors:

- The change in the political and social climate in Israel
- The financial crisis in most kibbutzim in the eighties, by

galloping inflation and our mismanagement, which eliminated the mutual support funds of the kibbutz movement.

These led to a significant kibbutz population decline, due to members leaving and the younger generation not joining. For the first time, it was realized that a kibbutz could reach a state where

<sup>1</sup> The Kibbutz Movement (TKM) is the name given to the union of the Takam and the more leftwing Kibbutz Artzi movements. As such, it includes all the kibbutzim, apart from the 16 of the Religious Kibbutz Movement. The kibbutz movement – without the capital letters - refers to kibbutzim in general.



Dear Reader,

We received a fine selection of community greeting cards for the festive season. Among them, Solheimar's snowy Icelandic scene was especially beautiful, but perhaps the most symbolic was Niederkaufungen's buildings with a superimposed rainbow. (The latter is the Biblical sign that mankind will not be destroyed, despite all its efforts to the contrary.)

Only one Community Calendar reached us, but it is outstanding. (Were any others published?) Damanhur has not only issued another most aesthetic calendar, but this time added lots of information about this very special spiritual/artistic commune in Italy.

In Iowa, at the end of June, you will have an opportunity to meet with communitarians and community scholars from various parts of the world. The ICSA (International Communities Study Association) Conference will give you a chance to hear – and talk – about all the topics that concern you, plus others that maybe should. If it's half as good as the 2001 Conference at ZEGG, Germany, it will be well worthwhile. Unfortunately, no one from the Desk will be present – because of the expense to get there.

Although "community tourism" to this part of the world has been very slack since the last report, quite a number of visits are planned for the near future. As always, the exception is the German Catholic communal movement, the Integrierte Gemeinde. Their members keep coming here and 4 of them are at the moment residing at their centre, Bet Shalom, near Jerusalem.... At the Christmas/Chanuka get-together of the Urfeld Circle, some 40 Israelis met up with no less than 10 IG members! The official programme was about various types of education in community, but no less important was the personal contact.

Last time I wrote about two separate attempts to set up Arab/Jewish communities. Sadly, but perhaps not surprisingly, one has collapsed for lack of potential members. The other has found a couple possible sites, but here too there may well be a problem of membership. Good luck!

I'm continually trying to establish new contacts, often without success. As a result, interesting letters have arrived from members of 2 different co-houses in Sweden, one of which is for over-40s only. (See pages 22-25) A promising start has been made in contact with Korea and Japan.... Old correspondents are no less valued. Do keep writing. I promise to reply.... If you find English too difficult, we may have the answer. If you write in German, French, Spanish, Dutch or even Portuguese, we'll be able to translate your letter.

Communal interest in Israel centres on the urban kibbutzim and the newer communes of the youth movement "graduates". The kibbutz movement press gives them a lot of attention and even the general media has discovered them. Simultaneously, new "private" communes – that is, not linked the youth movements - are being set up, but are not easy to contact.... In this connection, the Desk held a well-attended forum of community representatives at a big get-together on the Festival of Sukkot.

At the same time, the problems of the kibbutz movement are receiving not a little publicity, most of it not positive. How Israel has changed and become more like the big wide world! (See page 26 for the first part of an up-to-date survey.)

A new discussion forum for intentional communities can be found at:

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/IC-info/>. This, of course, by no means supercedes the veteran forum <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/INTENTIONALCOMMUNITIES/>.

The hard-pressed Kibbutz Movement was also forced to cut our modest budget. So, a small donation from YOU, instead of a subscription to CALL, will be very welcome indeed.... And if you know of someone (or some organization) who might be prepared to make a more serious contribution to our activities, do let us know and we'll do the rest.

Yours ever hopefully,

Sol Etzioni, Kibbutz Tzora, DN Shimshon, Israel 99803  
[solrene@tzora.co.il](mailto:solrene@tzora.co.il)

Please note! Because of the budgetary cutbacks, our old e-address is no longer valid. You'll have to use mine from now on. The phone number too has changed to (972) 3 5346 078. Sorry about the mix-up!





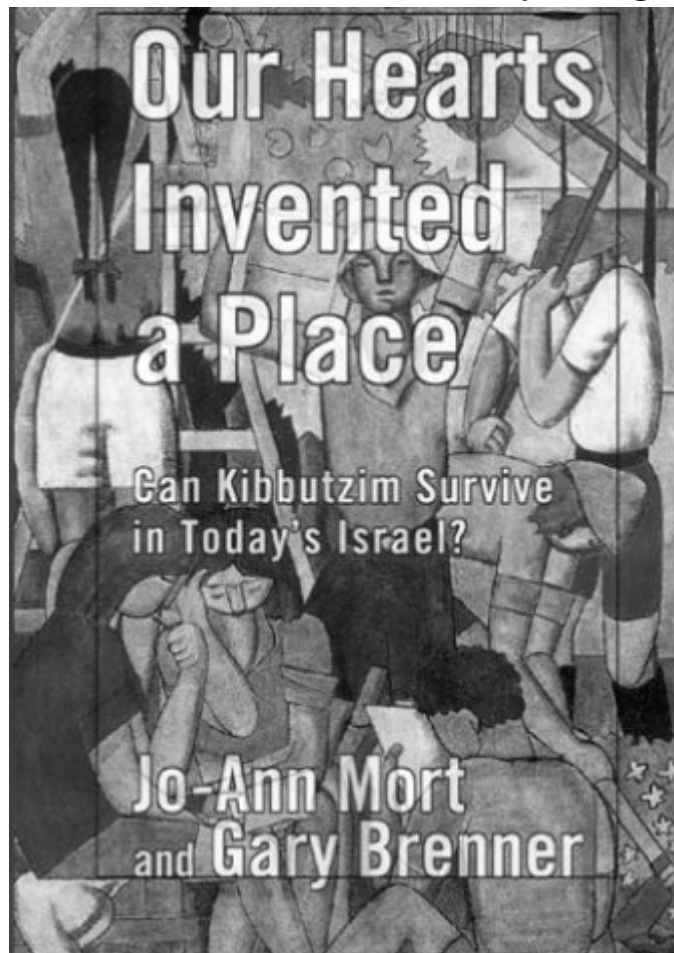
## Our Hearts Invented a Place: Can Kibbutzim Survive in Today's Israel?

By Jo-Ann Mort and Gary Brenner

Cornell University Press, 2003

The kibbutz is the largest and most historically significant communal movement of the last hundred years. Nonetheless, individual kibbutzim and the kibbutz movement are currently in a period of crisis and destabilizing change. Our Hearts Invented a Place is an attempt to understand that crisis and the corresponding changes it has brought about in the kibbutz way of life. The book is based mostly around personal interviews of members of three kibbutzim, Geshar Haziv, Hatzor, and Gan Shmuel, each of which is adapting differently to the crisis. Significant space is also devoted to a history of the kibbutzim and the events leading to the crisis.

There is a definite need for books dealing with the recent changes of the kibbutz, as Our Hearts Invented a Place makes admirably clear. There are many insights here for those involved in communal living. Among them was the clearest analysis I have seen linking the changes taking place in Israeli society and the crisis in the kibbutzim. The importance of the unwritten agreement between Israeli governments and the kibbutz as the vanguard of the Zionist project, whereby kibbutzim received unconditional support, was presented clearly. There is also much to be learned from the personal interviews, about how different generations relate to one another in a multi-generational community and how individuals are dealing with changes.



Our Hearts Invented a Place, unfortunately, suffers from a number of structural problems that make it a difficult read. The historical chapters cover a lot of ground in a short space of time, which makes for repetition for those who know kibbutz history and probably too little information for those who don't. In the personal interviews, the authors do not let their interviewees speak for themselves, constantly adding their own interpretations. I

found myself jolted by changes in subject matter and writing style.

It is hard to understand what this book is trying to be, and who it was written for. It is neither objective enough for an historical study nor captivating enough for a biography, yet tries to be both. I believe that it is best seen as a confessional by proponents of kibbutz changes, although only one author (Brenner) is actually a kibbutz member. There is a constant search for historical and personal justification of the changes. This is not a book written by someone who really believes any

more in creating a new society and a new human being; nonetheless, for those that still do, it may be a necessary read, teaching us the lessons of past communities and providing insights for the future.

*Review by Robin Merkel, Kvutsat Yovel*



houses. Each room is looked after by a working group.

We are very social, arranging parties or making an ordinary dinner party as soon as we find a reason; we eat crayfish in August, have an anniversary party in October, Lucia and end of term in December, New Years Eve, Maundy Thursday before Easter (when the witches are supposed to travel on brooms to meet the devil on a special blue hill (this must be pre-Christian)), end of term in June, Midsummer



Sockenstugan

Eve, and during summer when someone calls! Now and then groups of us go together to concerts, theaters, walks or other activities. Every weekday afternoon, those who are at home, have coffee together.

A new project is embroidering a piece of art for one of the walls in the dining room. Everyone who wants to take part makes his/her section. (We have a few artists among us).

It happens, but not very often, that someone shows pictures or conducts a short lecture. We could do that more often. Politics seems to be banned - I think that is all right, we are too old to change. Many of us have a leftish past, demonstrating against the Vietnam War etc. Sometimes we try to have music evenings.

Most of us are single - only two couples at the moment. A few never were married, but most of us are divorced and have children, many have grand children. This is a very good alternative to living totally single! Did I forget to tell that it is

for the second half of the world - we must be at least 40? No children below 40 are allowed to live permanently here (but as guests, of course). The reason for this is that we will be able to help each other when we have difficulties looking after ourselves, as we get weaker and more ill.

We accept new external members to the organisation, if they accept our statutes. They are welcome to take part in our activities. When an apartment is free, a letter is sent out to the external members and they can apply. We interview those interested and choose those that fit in best at that given moment - "young", "man", "collective". Sometimes someone gets in through changing apartments, according to law. So every year, we get one or two new inhabitants.

Many of us are academics, but there are also people with a shorter education. In Sweden, the economic and class divides are not so wide but some of those with low pensions do have difficulty paying their rent - that is why some have moved out. The house was restored in 1999, and counts as "new built" according to the rent. But here, one can manage with only a small apartment because there are other rooms. If one feels like one is in a prison, one can just go to the common rooms! (Most of the year, it is too cold to sit outside.)

The name of our co-house: *Sockenstugan*.

*Stuga* = small cottage, one or two rooms plus kitchen, not built any longer. Sometimes it also means a room. (u is pronounced between o in woman and y). *Stugan* = the cottage.

*Socken* = earlier administrative unit, parish. (o is pronounced as in woman)

*Sockenstuga* was the common building where all important decisions were taken, courts held etc. If a child or an old person was "put on the *socken*" it meant that the community would have to take care of them. Not a very good connotation.

One of the roads along the house is a very long road, called *Sockenvaegen* (*Socken* road).

Ingrid Eckerman, MD,  
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This co-housing where I live is meant for people from the age of 40 and upwards, the second half of life, with no children at home. It is situated in a nice suburb, surrounded with villas, and very close to a forest and a lake. Everyone has his/her own apartment of 1, 2 or 3 rooms. Together we have a big kitchen, a drawing room and a dining room, as well as some hobby rooms. We rent the apartments from a company that is owned by the town of Stockholm. There is a big garden that we look after ourselves. We cook together Monday - Friday, except for during the summer and other holidays when people travel to various places. There are 44 apartments, and we are 47 people, 75% women (why are men so afraid of moving in???). We try to have all ages, but half of us were born during the 1940's (there was a baby boom at that time). The youngest is 44, the oldest 80 (but he is the only one climbing trees!).



Ingrid plays her violin

In Sweden, the number of old people is growing fast, and too few babies are born. This means it is difficult for us to get good care when we need it. In this kind of house, we move in while we are still strong and well and can take part in all of the work - and make friends. When we get ill, we might get help from our neighbours (if they became our friends). Also, we do not need to feel lonely. There are always people around to talk to or ask for help.

At the moment, there are two co-houses of this kind in Stockholm, one in Lund (south of

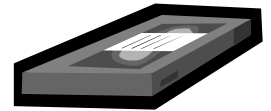
Sweden) and one is planned in Mölndal, outside Gothenburg. Then there are a lot of others, in many different forms. Some are big houses with 100 apartments and many children, others can be just 10-15 young people in a villa. Sometimes the inhabitants own the apartments or the villa, but renting is more common. A few are eco-villages.

Meals: we only cook supper Monday-Friday together. The rest of our meals we do privately - there is a kitchen with each apartment. We are divided into 4 groups with 11-12 members. Each group is responsible for one week - planning, shopping, cooking and washing up. That means six hours of work every fourth week. Very comfortable! It is compulsory to take part in this, but voluntary to eat. We have one meat/fish dish and one vegetarian. On Fridays the food is a little better, with dessert. We can bring guests and pay a little more as they do not work. During the Christmas holiday and in the summer there is no common cooking as people visit their children, travel etc.

Other compulsory work is cleaning inside (common rooms, corridors, stairs, laundry etc) and gardening which we do for the owner of the house (a building company owned by the town of Stockholm). This is the main income of the commune. The owner looks after the house, the big trees and the snow.

There are working groups for the garden, cleaning, computer equipment, party planning, library and furniture etc - about 12-18 people in each working group.

We have a big, well-equipped kitchen, a dining room and a drawing room. We can use these for private parties on Saturdays. Apart from this there are two guest rooms, a sauna, hobby rooms (textiles, physical activity, carpentry - and a photo lab that is used for looking after indoor flowers). The laundry is standard in Swedish



## Visions of Utopia (2002): Experiments in sustainable culture (91 mins)

What were Geoph Kozeny's intended goals for this production? Who is his target audience? These are the questions that come to mind after watching 'Visions of Utopia'. Of course, the standpoint of a member of an intentional community will be different and perhaps more accepting than that of the 'cynical outsider' (i.e. those intending to learn something about these 'intentional communities' that go against the grain of accepted capitalist or 'western' uniformity).

Kozeny's dulcet tones set the scene perfectly: *"For all their variety, the communities featured in this video hold a common commitment to living cooperatively, to solving problems non-violently, and to sharing their experiences with others"*. He illustrates the search for a bigger sense of community as the central focus in the members' lives, the pioneering work in how to cooperate, share resources and live sustainably. He portrays the lives of idealists, peace and harmony, and people living together who share common goals, but at the same time, he also reminds the viewer that: *"If you hear about the perfect community with no rough edges, assume you are not getting the whole story. All have to face challenges of ego and personality at some time in intentional communities"*. Kozeny highlights the need for conflict in order to constructively assist us in knowing who we are and what we can be, leading us to the two simple matters for all members of an intentional community:

- Do the members whole-heartedly believe in the system they are using?
- Are they participating with enthusiasm?

In all communities, no matter how long-established or developed they are, whilst recognising shifts in focus, ideology and practice, which is accepted and part of a process over time, it is essential to question and remind themselves of these two basic

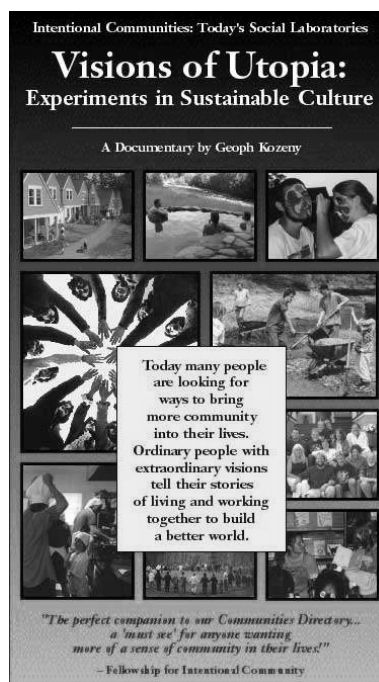
questions.

Essentially, via seven examples of communities in North America, Kozeny draws attention to the "melting pot" of intentional communities. Each community has a blend unique to its own identity living by everyday values parallel with the rest of society, but they are not happy with the corresponding status quo i.e. like all mainstream families, they are also striving for a stable home and good education, meaningful

and satisfying work, safe neighbourhood, pollution-free environment and a lifestyle consistent with their values. They are seeking lives that actualise our untapped human potential via community that is not the end in itself, but a tool to help us in living our lives.

If the viewer lives in an intentional community already, they could see this film from one of two perspectives: (1) an insight into how some other communities live and have developed, thus giving strength and support in the knowledge that there are other

people in the world that are trying to live by similar values, or (2) be patronised by the over-simplicity of the documentary, and the blatant American bias of the communities featured. For those interested parties that are researching into potential life choices for themselves, or gaining an understanding of intentional communities, even though they may also be scared off by the apparent need for long hair or a bedraggled beard in order to gain their club membership card, they will have a better understanding of what may lie ahead of them, and will learn numerous methods by which to execute their dream. This film can give inspiration as to what is achievable in making the world a better place.



*Review by Jeremy Aron, Kvutsat Yovel*

# The Amish Colonies – Are They or Aren't They?

Every so often, on hearing of my interest in communal living, someone tells me that they have visited an Amish colony. My response has always been a negative one, such as, "I have never seen them mentioned as belonging to the communal movement". Recently, my curiosity got the better of me, so – through the good services of world communes expert, Bill Metcalf, I got in contact with Amish member, David Luthy. His brief but informative reply, under the letterhead of the "HERITAGE HISTORICAL LIBRARY, Preserving Old Order Amish and Old Order Mennonite History", is here quoted in full.

"Whether we Amish are 'intentional communities' depends on how people define that term. It is of no concern to us how they define it or if we are included. While we have private ownership, we are communal in spirit and practice. For example, we do not participate in insurance or hospitalization plans. When there is a large hospital bill, money is taken from our 'communal purse' by the deacon and given to the person needing assistance. We also collect money by freewill giving to help pay such bills. Our parochial elementary schools are also supported entirely by freewill giving from our group. We have four in our community. In the event of fire and the destruction of buildings, we all help financially and physically to rebuild. Our Sunday church services last from 9 to 2, which includes a communal meal afterwards. We are very communal without living in a commune. We do live as close as possible depending on which farms come up for sale. We wear distinctive garb and drive horse and buggies. We live separate from the society around us even if we live on private farms.

I hope this answers your questions. I do not have time to correspond further. We do not have electricity, thus have no computers, radios, TVs, etc. We are aware there are many Amish-related materials on the Internet, but we would not know which are reliable. You might write to Marc Olshan, P.O. Box 862, Alfred, NY 14802, USA, who teaches an Amish-related course at Alfred University."

This description really got me thinking along the lines of: "They certainly are very intentional, even if they don't actually live adjacent to one another. Even if they couldn't care less how others define them, aren't they really intentional communities?"

Following David Luthy's advice, I contacted Marc Olshan (folshan@alfred.edu) and his useful reply was (in part):

"I can certainly offer a couple of suggestions with regard to reliable sources of information on the internet regarding the Amish. You need to take into consideration, however, that none of these sites officially speaks for the Amish and that such an official site doesn't exist since the Amish don't use such technology. (There are probably some Amish, or former Amish, who can be found on the internet but their perspective certainly wouldn't be typical, much less official). The following would be a good starting place:

"<http://www.holycrosslivonia.org/amish/origin.htm>" Since your interest seems to be in communal arrangements, let me also make clear that the Amish are not a communal society. They engage in some communal activities and sometimes share labor and agricultural equipment but own real estate privately and live in separate family units, usually scattered over a large geographic area and mixed in with non-Amish farms and houses."

The above-mentioned website was, of course, not set up by the Amish themselves, but by the National Committee for Amish Religious Freedom. (Such a body was set up by friends to defend the Amish from legal action.) Suitably designed in sober black and white, it is well worth a visit. The following quote from the site may be of interest:

"The Amish, called 'The Plain People' or Old Order Amish, originated in Switzerland about 1525.



They came from a division of the Mennonites or Anabaptists (Re-baptizers). They opposed the union of church and state and infant baptism. They baptized people only as adults at about age 18. Adult baptism was a crime in the 16th century. Therefore, the Amish come from an impressive list of martyrs. They were put in sacks and thrown into rivers in Europe. There are no Amish left in Europe; The Amish were saved from extinction by William Penn who granted a haven from religious



Another thing was that I came to the kibbutz as part of a Swedish volunteer group, and I think that this group was very special in itself.

The third aspect was in terms of the politics. I have always been on the left side but my experience on the kibbutz turned me into a socialist. Probably, partly because I saw that a fair society can exist but also because I was captured by the idea of common work and common ownership. I also believe that society as a whole would be a better and more fair society if the idea of the kibbutz was widely practised, adopted in each country according its special conditions. I have, since my time on the kibbutz, worked politically for almost 15 years in different ways. In everything from party politics to the organization that I now live and work in. I would say that both my wife and I are people who try to live according to our values, with all our faults. We are no angels. Just ask Amos, he knows how hard I have to keep time schedules.

Finally, I have to say that the kibbutz experience all together made me a better human being; less egoistic and more able to listen and have compassion for other people. The kibbutz days were a turning point in my life.

**What is the movement called? When was it started?**

It is called Kollektivhus-Nu, which translated would be something like Co-housing-Now. It was started at the end of the seventies, I think.

**Roughly how many members are there altogether? Roughly how many children?**

Only people over the age of 18 can be accepted as members and I would say that there are about 2500 members. It is difficult to say how many children there are, since this is different from house to house.

**Is each community situated in one big house? Are the communities only in the cities or also in villages?**

Usually it is one big house but it can also be

several smaller houses. Gebers, which is an ecological community in Stockholm has bought and old hospital where they now live. Communities such as ours are mainly in the cities, with a few exceptions such as Gebers. But there are other kinds of communities in the countryside, like ecological villages and also small farms which are owned by groups.

**What is the average size of each house?**

The average house have around 80-100 people living in the house.

**Do you have many applicants wanting to join? What ages are they?**

Yes we have many applicants, especially now when it is so difficult to get a flat in the big cities. All ages, except older people, above 50. Mostly single people but also plenty of families.

**What about your younger generation? Do they want to join your house or make new houses of their own?**

Most of the young generation leave, but some of them come back or join another community. Since our ideology is so loose, (I would like it to be different), we have no educational process, apart from the seminars which we run, and this makes it difficult in terms of continuity.

Finally, after 18 years, the third community is now being built in the area of Gothenburg.

*Richard Jandel can be contacted on: rnm579y@tninet.se*

**EIGHTH ICSA CONFERENCE  
AMANA COLONIES, IOWA, USA  
June 28-30, 2004**

Make plans to attend the 2004 ICSA conference at the Amana Colonies, Iowa, USA. Proposal topics to date include:

- Hutterite parenting practices
- Kibbutz youth and higher education
- Idealism and community
- Amana history
- Motherhood in the kibbutz
- Social ecology at Camphill
- Kibbutz identity
- Communicating about intentional communities

**For more information and registration see:  
<http://www.ic.org/icsa/conference.html>**

# SWEDISH CO-HOUSING

This issue we are happy to feature correspondence with members of different Co-housing communities in Sweden. On the next two pages, Sol, our secretary, corresponds with Richard Jandel from a community in Gothenberg, and on the following pages, we hear from Ingrid Eckerman from Kollektivhusföreningen Sockenstugan:

I am 40 years old and I am dividing my time between working as a journalist (freelancing), writing books and teaching. So far I have written six books on different subjects ranging from the Spanish civil war to a cookbook about vegetarian food and how to take responsibility for our environment.

I was in Israel for the first time as a kibbutz volunteer and was captured by kibbutz life. Since then I have been back several times and have also worked with volunteers for a short while. My wife is by the way from Kibbutz Givat Oz, if you know where it is.

With our basic values shared with the kibbutz movement, it was not difficult to choose a communal life here in Sweden. Unfortunately there are no kibbutzim in Sweden, Denmark has one, so a sort of co-housing has been our choice.

Since 1992 we have been living in a community. There are about 40 houses included in this movement from north to south. They are all pretty much organized in the same way. In our house there are 38 apartments. Everyone who lives in the house above the age of 18 are members of our local community organization called Tradet. The house is owned by a private company and the organization rents the house. Each family is renting their flat from the organization. We are taking care of the house

and are responsible for it.

Like in a traditional kibbutz we have committees for culture, dining room, absorption and so on. After serving a few times on the board I am now working in the absorption committee and I am also responsible for contacts with the mother organization and other contacts. We have a dining room which serves food three times a week, a garage for fixing cars, a cafe, workout room, sauna etc. etc. We also have meetings. We do not having a common economy so everyone pays for their food, electricity etc.

This is an unusual way of living in Sweden but different ways of co-housing are slowly making progress. Partly, I would say, because of the cutbacks on all levels in Sweden which force people to cooperate, and partly because I believe that a larger group of people, compared to 20 years ago, are interested in a more cooperative lifestyle.

What 'captured' you to kibbutz life?

The answer to that question could fill a book but I will try to answer very briefly. I think it was a combination of different things. One thing was the companionship; the togetherness that I felt existed on the kibbutz, an atmosphere that people took care of each other. As long as you did your best for the community the community did it's best for you. I felt, and still feel that this was a natural way of living for human beings. I never felt at home in the 'normal' society with its extreme egoism and consumerism, where there are few bonds between people, and everything, or almost everything, is counted for in money. I also felt that I, for the first time, was counted as a human being at work and in the society. People appreciated my hard work and I appreciated the work and the companionship.



persecution in America. Since early colonial days the Amish have lived in the United States preserving their distinctive culture, dress, language and religion in peace and prosperity.

The Amish live in nineteen states, Canada, and Central America. However, 80 percent of the Amish live in Pennsylvania, Ohio and Indiana. (\*See comment below.)

The Old Order Amish take their name from an early Swiss Anabaptist, Jacob Amman, who became their strict Bishop and taught them the Amish ethics – Living non-resistant lives (they do not serve in the military, but only in hospitals or alternate service), with brotherly love, sharing material aid and living close to the soil and following the Bible literally. They cite the Bible which says, "Be ye not conformed to the world" as their chief tenet.



To this day they endure as a distinctive folk group because they have preserved a mentality of separation from the world and the sentiments of persecuted strangers in the land. They wear plain clothing fastened with hooks and eyes, not buttons. Their men wear broad-brimmed black hats, plain-cut trousers and the women and even little girls wear bonnets and ankle length dresses. They generally oppose automobiles, electricity, telephones and higher education beyond eighth grade. Their congregations number only about 300. They worship in homes and not in church buildings. They

do not drive cars or ride in airplanes, but drive horses and buggies. This keeps their communities small and close-knit, and their children do not live all over the world. Family values are important to them. They are slow to change and speak the German language along with English. They drive horses and buggies for transportation. They practice 'shunning' for any of their members who break their rules.

Although many people do not understand their simple way of life, the Amish are maintaining a very profound position. They want to be prepared for the world to come rather than for becoming rich or famous in this world. They would rather maintain a close-knit family life than travel all over. The norms and educational goals of our society which stress product centered, high pressure, technological and secular values are antithetical to Amish beliefs. Therefore, they practice old ways, slowness of pace, simplicity, close-knit agrarian living. The 80,000 Old Order Amish oppose higher education because it violates their morals, their religious convictions and takes their children away from the simple ways of the Amish."

\*Marc Olshan comments:

"Old Order Amish are now in 23 states and Canada and total population must be well over 150,000 by now. That includes children (who, before they are baptized, aren't technically Amish)."

**After all this, WHAT DO YOU THINK? ARE THE AMISH COLONIES INTENTIONAL COMMUNITIES OR AREN'T THEY?**

We will be glad to hear your opinion. Do write us at [solrene@tzora.co.il](mailto:solrene@tzora.co.il)

### Notice to readers of C.A.L.L. from the Utopian EcoVillage Network Federation

We have noticed that most people and groups that wish to create a new Intentional Community (IC) have NO well defined and clear goals, nor rules set in writing. To help fill this gap we have created a new website titled "*Utopian EcoVillage Network Federation*" ([www.uevn.org](http://www.uevn.org)). Here you will find 200+ pages of information to help you get your own IC started or join one that agrees with these set standards. Through our website, we provide information on how to create and organize your own IC, by providing you with a set number of rules, goals and contracts to start with. Our goal is to join forces with others who have successfully created communities and provide a complete set of instructions, template contracts, etc. to use. For example we know that there are 200+ IC's in Israel, but to date, we do not know of a single place on the internet that one could go to find information on how to get started elsewhere, based on the experiences of these established IC's. We want to hear from these experiences, what works and how it can be made part of our federation and website, this way others can reduce the number of mistakes made. We want to prevent IC startup failures. We want to learn from others' mistakes and provide information to help others reduce conflicts.

We are seeking individuals and groups to join the Federation, as a member you can simply say I/we are part of the *Utopian EcoVillage Network Federation*, this is what we believe in, these are our goals and this is what and how we are doing it. In addition, as a member of the federation, you will be able to exchange your living place with other members who offer living and/or work exchange programs.



# Settling Disputes in the Kibbutz - Israel Wiesel

The first Kibbutzim, established 80 and 90 years ago, were inspired by national goals. Disputes occurred, even heated arguments, however these differences of opinion concerned the way goals were to be reached, education of the children and such topics. The debate did not deal with the rights of the member to the material assets of his kibbutz. Even those who left kibbutz in those years did not lodge complaints against the kibbutz for possessions or property.

Today, as many kibbutzim are undergoing a process of change, the need to solve differences of opinion that are often extreme has accelerated, not only between the member and the kibbutz, but between groups of members and the kibbutz.

The following are examples of two main areas of arbitration:

## Business-economic

One kibbutz and another; a kibbutz and a regional industry; a kibbutz operation and one outside of the kibbutz; a kibbutz and a movement cooperative; a kibbutz and residents (renting apartments in the kibbutz)

## Social-community

A member and the kibbutz; a member that is leaving and the kibbutz; a couple that is separating; the kibbutz and a group of members; one member and another (for example, neighbours).

Here are a few examples of the arbitration process as an indicator of change in kibbutzim today. In one kibbutz, a large group of members have for many years received monthly 'rental' compensation from Germany, for suffering, loss of health and property during the Holocaust in Europe. Over the years this income has been taken for granted and deposited into the Kibbutz account. Members did not voice complaint. Currently, the kibbutz faces substantive change of life-style in the direction of privatization and the legitimization of private property. In particular, in place of the equality of the value of work, the kibbutz is now confronted with ranking work and allocating a monetary value to work positions. This leads to the evaluation of members' income

and benefits. Members are now demanding that this money should be given to each member individually.

The Kibbutz General Assembly did not approve this group's request. Some years ago, because of the rules concerning compulsory arbitration between a member and the kibbutz in cases of dispute, the kibbutz decided to transfer this matter to our Institute for Arbitration. A group of members and the kibbutz, five representatives of each side, appeared before a team of three arbitrators who were kibbutz members (understandably from other kibbutzim). An extensive, emotional discussion took place for six hours. The arbitrators then debated the issue and decided that the money belonged to the members and was to be transferred in a progressive manner. By April 2004, the member would receive the complete sum.

Nowadays, many members receive family inheritance; these funds are not deposited into the kibbutz account. Moreover, city people have joined the kibbutz and left apartments in the city that they rent; the income is not deposited in the kibbutz coffers.



Israel Wiesel

Another example of an arbitration file in this area: thirty years ago, a member transferred to the kibbutz inheritance monies, received from the sale of an apartment. According to the agreement between the member and the kibbutz, the money was to be returned to the member only if he were to leave the kibbutz. With the changes presently occurring in the Kibbutz, for the very reasons raised in the previous case, this member is asking for his money, even if he doesn't leave the kibbutz. The kibbutz agreed, in principle, to the member's request. The arbitrators were asked to decide on how and when the monies would be returned.

Another popular subject for arbitration is related to housing matters. Since kibbutzim are confronted with the issue of members receiving rights of ownership over their dwellings, renovation and extension of dwellings receive increasing attention.

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Israel Wiesel, member of Kibbutz Dafna, is Director of The Institute of Arbitration and Mediation of The United Kibbutz Movement. Reprinted from Kibbutz Trends, Winter 2003.

Why on earth would any suburban Adelaide household need 20 bikes? 9 buckets in the bathroom? An oven in the back garden? To save the earth, that's why!

One Saturday Suzy, Isabel, Ewa and Anna visited an alternative household in the Adelaide suburb of Blackforest. We wanted to find out about their more environmentally friendly way of living. We easily recognized the house due to the amount of greenery surrounding it and the rainbow painted on the fence!

The house had a pleasant atmosphere and the people were happy and friendly and made us feel welcome.

The household consisted of 7 adults (Annie, Sandor, Pat, Dana, Helen, Peter and Ashley) and a nine year old child (Petra). Petra has lived at the house part-time (her parents are separated) since she was 2 and enjoys having many supportive adults living with her. The household is very close and the occupants live together harmoniously.

## Energy

As a household that tries to use technologies that don't harm the environment, we were interested in what sort of energy they rely on.

They actually use a number of different kinds of energy for different purposes. They use electricity from solar cells which they have built on the roof for pumping water through the solar hot water system. They also have mains electricity but use it as little as possible.

Gas they use for cooking and for hot water, (when there is not enough sunlight for the solar hot water to function). They also use solar power for cooking (they have an outdoor solar cooker which they built themselves).

## Food

In summer they grow much of their own food but in the other seasons they shop at the Central Markets. They grow their plants organically which means using natural fertiliser, a compost heap, no pesticides, and lawn clippings for mulch. They also have chooks in their backyard, but these are the only pets they allow, because they are against keeping carnivorous animals that are not native to Australia. They are also a vegetarian household but their dogs and cats eat meat.

## Living Together

The chores are shared on a roster as well as the shopping and the finances are looked after by a different member of the household each month. The people there have found it much cheaper than living in an average household. There are many advantages living in a shared household apart from the cost. Because there are many people living there, it is a very supportive environment. They have meetings every fortnight to discuss new ideas for the household and how they are getting.

### SELI HOO

31 Addison Rd  
Black Forest  
SA 5035

**POPULATION:** 7 adults & 2 children

**SIZE:** 0.1 ha

**VISITORS:** Day visit by arrangement.  
No dogs or cats.

**COMMUNITY AIMS:** Co-operative living - one roof, one kitchen table, but nine purses.

Green, cheap, relaxed lifestyle, car free, creative entertainment, no TV, instead we socialise, have games, read, go out, sing, have international nights. Organic gardening. Vegetarian. part time work. Active in environmental, solidarity and local community groups.

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:** Sel i Hoo is an urban community household which started in 1978. Our aims and the way we do things are gradually changing as new people join, as we become more aware of issues and as good ideas come into our heads.

## Water

For water they have a large rainwater tank which they use for most drinking water. To save water they recycle the washing water and shower water (which is why there are so many buckets in the bathroom!). The recycled water is used for flushing the toilet and watering the garden in summer.

The household does not have a car because of the damage cars do to the environment. Instead they use public transport and bikes. Because they live near the city they can even ride in to do their shopping and they have developed their own special trolley that can be joined to the end of a bike so they don't need a car for the shopping. The household has 20 bikes!!!

As well as these meetings the people do much together so they don't have to spend as much on entertainment. The chores are shared equally regardless of sex so there's a lot more sexual equality than in most households.

## The Future

Our final question was regarding their plans for the future. They said that one day they would like to completely switch off the main power and rely entirely on solar power and other alternative energy.

Some friends of the household might be moving in next door and then they would be able to expand the household into a larger commune with two shared environmentally friendly houses.

You can contact Sandor Horvath at Sel i Hoo using the email address: sandor.horvath@unisa.edu.au

## Changes are not Easy to Bear

"All my life long I have lived in the Kibbutz, taken full part in all its activities, debates and decisions - and now the Kibbutz has moved away from under my feet. I can hardly recognize my 'home-for-life': everything has been privatized, has become goods to be paid for: the food, clothes washing and ironing, part of the education, even part of the health services and medicines". More than one person laments like this, most of them the elderly who work little or not at all and get a much smaller "wage" than they were due for in the past, when they fulfilled central posts and held important jobs. Many others are perfectly satisfied with the waning of communal values and increasing of "privatization" and even press for more of it, meaning a higher wage into their private pocket.

On the other hand, most Kibbutzim keep up highly professional services for the old and the infirm: social and cultural activities, special "protected" work shops, travel arrangements on the Kibbutz grounds, house cleaning and more. But still, while younger people find it much easier to experience change, for the old members this is sometimes exceedingly difficult (quote: this is not just a 'change', this is a revolution!").

## Kibbutz-grown Bees - to China!

The Bio-Bee center in Kibbutz Sde Eliyahu sent its first shipment of bumble-bees to activate the fertilization of tomatoes grown in China. The initiator was a Chinese student who worked and studied for some time in the Kibbutz and now became manager of a huge farm. In this way, he hopes, he will be able to assist his country in increasing vegetable production in new, biological-ecological ways.



## Assistance

After a number of Kibbutzim in the Jordan Valley combined their cowsheds into one big, extended cow-raising place, they decided to devote part of the economising to needy people in their environment. Now they send fresh meat packets to hundreds of families in and around the ancient town of Bet Sh'an. The "cowboys" as well as the butchers and the drivers all take willing part in this venture wishing to stress the importance of interaction between all sectors of the local society.

## An ecological bus-stop

The first ecological bus stop in the world was recently erected on eco-Kibbutz Lotan in the south of Israel. The stop was constructed from recycled car tires, with mud and straw and additional materials. A special feature is the design which follows "green" principles that are environmentally friendly: wind directions, shade, weather conditions were all taken into account creating a shelter that is cool in the summer and warm in the winter. As well as offering excellent refuge from all weather conditions, it is also safe from cars that might drive off the road by mistake, as it is primarily constructed from tires. The designers are hoping that other kibbutzim, as well as urban communities, will adopt the structure.



## Still going strong

To the youngsters on Kibbutz Yifat (i.e. those in their 30s, 40s and 50s), Shlomo Dori, aged 84, is an inspiration. Despite his advanced age he still works in the dairy barn as he has done for many years. How does he manage this at the age of 84? Well, he is possibly helped by the fact that every night before going to bed he downs a glass of vodka, eats a sizable daily portion of meat, and finishes off a packet of 20 cigarettes every single day! As well as recently celebrating his birthday, Shlomo has been enjoying the recently announced partnership between

the dairy barn of Yifat with that of Merhavia, something Shlomo predicted ten years ago. "At the time, everyone thought I was crazy, but now I can see it coming true".



Jesse Barton from the New Meadow Run Bruderhof in the USA, contributed this piece to our discussion on decision-making in community.

Decisions - some are small, everyday and others are life changing, both individually and on a much wider scale. Living in community, living together as a group, determine that decisions can have a very different impact than those made by individuals, individual families and the



larger social organizations in which most of humankind lives and works.

A community, a community of like thinkers, those who have chosen to live together because of a common belief or other basis makes a very different demand upon us as individuals. As members who have made a deeper, more thought through commitment to an order or community of life, we have in a certain way submitted some of the more typical, normal daily decision making to the needs of the larger group. On the other hand, by letting go in this way, we have obligated ourselves to a much more serious level of decision making, one that not only affects us individually, but in a very important way affects the lives of those around us who have similarly committed themselves. In other words, we have yoked our lives and our decisions in a way not possible or imaginable for those who live in the more loosely organized "normal" society.

One of the more interesting parts of decision making in a larger group is the way in which the consequences for one's personal behaviour affect those around you and in actual fact, your own person. In "normal" society one certainly bears

responsibility for how one behaves, but the behaviour is rarely seen more than superficially and the need to try to stay free of blame for one's actions often distort one's personal responsibility and leaves the consequences to land squarely, or not so squarely on others. The exact opposite is an integral part of a common life where one must bear not only responsibility for one's own individual actions, but there is a shared responsibility for how it affects those around us. This is really only possible where a deeper commitment has been made, both because we must always seek to let the needs of the community be of primary importance and our own personal needs must take second place.

In thinking about the experience of most of the world's people and how they live, isn't this also how a family must operate to truly fulfill its task? Don't the father and the mother continually submit their desires to the larger needs of the whole family? Isn't also nature and the order of the universe the same way? A mother always

gives up everything in her care of her children, all of her decisions are based on the

needs of the others of the whole and the consequences of those decisions are borne by the whole. So it must be for us as members of a community, a committed community, that we always have the vision before us of to what we choose to give our lives, a daily choice, but something that is predicated by a much more basic decision, the realization that life has much more to offer, and we have much more to give, than what we see through the



narrow scope of our own personal experience.



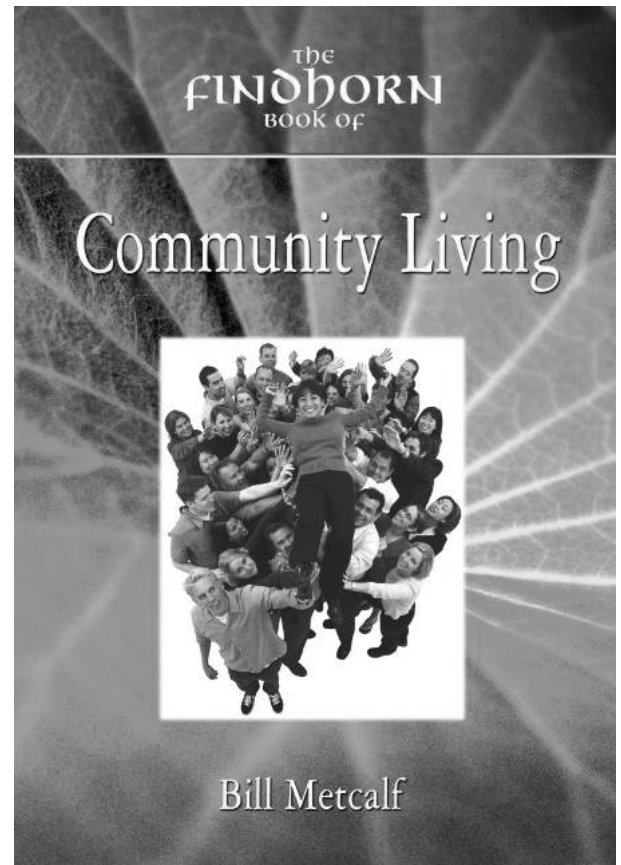
# Decision-Making and Governance

There are many ways by which intentional communities govern themselves. Some have focused or concentrated power, with one person (or a small clique) making decisions for everyone, while other groups have diffused or shared power with everyone taking part in decision-making. Focused-power decision-making can have theocratic or charismatic leadership, while diffused-power groups can employ majority-rule, democratic voting, or consensus decision-making. In some ways, these four are quite different although in practice they often overlap and complement each other. Many intentional communities follow different decision-making methods at different stages of their lifespan, and some groups use aspects of several methods for resolving one major issue.

## Focused Power Decision-Making

**Theocracy:** Many religiously-oriented intentional communities have theocratic governance in which, while everyone is equal on one level, not everyone is seen to be at the same point in her/his relationship with the Divine. Because members of such intentional communities are, by definition, interested in following the selected religious model it makes perfect sense to follow the leadership of those who demonstrate the greatest spiritual progress. The Bruderhof, Hare Krishna communes, and most religious orders follow this theocratic model, generally combining it with a degree of consensus-building.

This is an efficient system of governance until people either lose their faith or cannot agree on who is more religiously/spiritually advanced. At that point, such groups generally change to democratic voting or charismatic decision-making. Historically, some intentional communities have followed theocratic governance for several generations with no particular problems. Theocratic leaders do not automatically become despots although the risk is always there.



**Charismatic Leadership:** This is where an intentional community is led by someone operating through strength of personality, the ability to lead and inspire without people feeling dominated, and an ability to magnetically attract the affection, respect and perhaps adoration of other members.

Charismatic leadership is efficient for making decisions because there is no need for time-consuming discussions, voting, etc. It is assumed that the leader is closer to the heart of the community and its ethos than is anyone else, so when she/he makes a decision it is obviously for the good of all. This efficiency is not only because decisions can be made quickly but also because the leader provides the collective spirit or ethos, and then embodies and represents this through decisions. While charismatic leadership is, in general, an efficient form of governance when developing an intentional community, it is the worst form to help it endure because ordinary members have no chance to develop leadership skills for when their leader dies or leaves.



**Welcome to “Kibbutz Shorts”, where we discover what’s new on the Kibbutz in an update from around Israel.**

Compiled and translated from kibbutz publications by Yoel Darom,  
Kibbutz Kfar Menachem

## **Well-treated Rubbish Turns into Electricity**

Slowly, indeed, but for sure, Kibbutzim are won over to ecological considerations and actions. The latest achievement in this field is the use of methane gas, that is generated in a large organic refuse collection site into electric current which makes Kibbutz Chatzerim, in the Negev desert, independent of the national grid. This includes all the electricity needed in this rather large community: home and industry, communal kitchen and laundry, agriculture and street lighting.

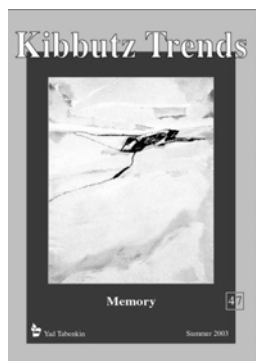
## **Communes are IN**

The urban communes and kibbutzim featured prominently at an annual mass happening at Efal, the kibbutz seminar centre near Tel Aviv. Despite the competition of 19 different attractions, the session organised by the Communes Desk attracted 100 participants. Representatives of 7 different forms of Israeli communal living presented their ideology, activities and lifestyle. They ranged from an urban kibbutz of both religious and secular members, to youth movement graduate communes devoted to education, to a classic but ecology- and Reform Judaism minded- kibbutz. A stall featuring CALL and other ICDesk material also helped spread the good tidings.



## **Desert Zoo**

For 24 years now, ever since he came back from a safari tour in Kenya and Tanzania, Denni Osdon dreamed of establishing a center for Desert Animals in his Kibbutz Revivim. At last he succeeded and now heads the "Negev Zoo - Experiencing Animals". This is a large compound within the Kibbutz grounds, with good sidewalks and authentic mud-houses where you can find almost all desert creatures: birds of prey, hunters like wolves, foxes and jackals, reptiles, rodents as well as wild ponies. Also to be encountered in this idyllic far-out corner of Israel: a small lake with birds and fish. All nature lovers - come and visit!



## **How sad!**

For many years "Kibbutz Trends", published by Yad Tabenkin, the Research and Study Center of the Kibbutz movement, has brought to the English reading public well-chosen articles and stories (and some poems) that dealt with Kibbutz life, its achievements and problems. Its last issue (January 2004) tells us the sad news that owing to financial circumstances “Kibbutz Trends” has to close. The magazine has been presenting the trends apparent in the Kibbutz movement, exploring broad issues as well as portraying outstanding individuals. CALL shares the regret and sorrow over the demise of K. T. Back copies are still available on a first come first served basis from Yad Tabenkin, Ramat Efal, Israel 52960.

## Bawa Muhaiyaddeen Fellowship, Philadelphia

I got my first taste of communal living in 1965 when I was an ulpanist (student-worker) on a religious kibbutz. As an American teenager, accustomed to freedom and a degree of independence, I found it impossible to adjust to the rigors and restrictions of kibbutz life. After I finished my ulpan stint, I returned to the States.

I went to university, married and had four kids; the youngest was born in '75. My husband and I were concerned about the kind of world we had brought our children into. We doubted that we could change the world but we thought it might be possible to find a good community in which to raise our family. We visited a number of 1970's communes but could not commit to any of them, and it's a good thing we didn't. By the end of the 70's most had failed. In some cases drugs and promiscuity broke down the sense of community. In others, bad weather was the culprit. I recall one commune in Kentucky where the housing was creative but impractical: one couple lived in a tee pee, another in an African mud hut, and another in a tree house made of carpet remnants. This was fine in the spring, summer, and fall, but by the end of the first winter many were ready to leave. So much for 'returning to nature.'

In 1975 I heard about a community that was forming in Philadelphia to study the teachings of a Holy Man from Sri Lanka and I went to investigate. I sensed immediately that this community was different. It had a strength, peace, and focus that others lacked. The main difference was that this community had Bawa Muhaiyaddeen.

In simplest terms, Bawa was the kindest person I ever met and the most brilliant teacher I ever had. In his teachings I found the antidote to all of the poisons circulating in the American system: greed, selfishness, rampant materialism, violence, etc., etc. Bawa's core message, as I understood it, was: There is a God. There is one God. And this Creator of all things wants us to live our lives in such a way as to do no harm to other lives. Rather, we should seek to do good. Bawa told us that in order to accomplish this, we needed to rid ourselves of bad qualities and we needed to learn wisdom. From 1971 until his death in 1986, he devoted his life to helping us achieve that good state.

Although Bawa is no longer with us physically, his presence guides this community. The Fellowship now has branches in several states, also in Canada, Sri

Lanka, Australia, and the UK. The central Fellowship house is on Overbrook Ave. in Philadelphia. There we gather to share meals, enjoy fellowship, worship, and study Bawa's teachings. Each person contributes whatever he or she can to the life of the community. The Fellowship also has a rural property which serves as a cemetery and gathering place.

Bawa did not depart this life until he had given us the tools to maintain our unity. He taught us the proper way to work and pray together. He outlawed gossip and the practice of judging others. He also taught us how to solve conflicts when they arise. If we fail to use the tools correctly, the fault is ours not his. Bawa referred to our community as the "funny family" and to himself as the father of our wisdom. It still amazes me that this tiny man from the jungles of Sri Lanka could attract people from all walks of life, all corners of the earth, and all manner of religious traditions and make a real family out of them. Again I encourage anyone interested in The Fellowship to visit our website: [www.bmf.org](http://www.bmf.org). There you will find a listing of publications, video tapes, and audio tapes that will tell you more about Bawa, his funny family, and his message of love.

Yours in community,

Yehudit Felcher-Francis

### Greetings to the readership of C.A.L.L.

Shalom! My name is Yehudit and I'm a member of a community called the Bawa Muhaiyaddeen Fellowship in Philadelphia. I am also a medical anthropologist and a geriatric nurse. I'm very interested in the subject of aging in intentional communities and I'm hoping some CALL readers will be willing to share their experiences with me. Basically I would like to know how various communities provide for the needs of their elders (physical, social, emotional, spiritual, etc.). I find that, very often, communities do a great job of addressing the needs of children; after all, the children are the future. But what about those at the opposite end of the age spectrum? How does your community deal with issues of aging?

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and my home address is:

Yehudit Felcher-Francis  
1 Dutton Farm Lane  
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U.S.A

Yours in community, Yehudit

## Diffused Power Decision Making

**Majority Vote, Democratic Decision-Making:** Kibbutzim and most large ecovillages around the globe use forms of voting, often modified to give a vote to each household or 'share' rather than to each person, or perhaps setting other than 50% + 1 as the support needed for decisions. In some intentional communities, matters are referred to all interested members who discuss and then vote, with different percentages required for different sorts of decisions, and sometimes by people with different sorts of membership. Intentional communities such as Damanhur, Kibbutz Kadarim, Twin Oaks and ZEGG have forms of 'representational' democracy wherein members select a subgroup who then make decisions. Such decisions can, in many cases, be challenged by members and become subject to consensus.

Democratic voting systems are easy to understand and are capable of making decisions reasonably fast, but have the problem that with majority rule, while there are winners, there are also almost always losers. Intentional communities which use voting generally temper this with a degree of consensus-building, to reduce the problem of having losers.



**Consensus Decision-Making:** Proposals are introduced, discussed, and eventually decided upon by the group but without voting as such. Typically, a proposal will, if necessary, be modified and remodified to meet peoples concerns, perhaps deferred, and when it is time to decide, people either consent to the proposal, 'stand aside', or 'block' it. To stand aside means a person does not agree but is willing to let the matter proceed, while blocking means stopping a proposal.

Some naive critics assume consensus simply means that each member can veto any decision. This is simply untrue. Any decision-making system where each member has a simple veto vote is a form of majority rule where a 100% vote is needed on every issue. With consensus decision-making, however, people work diligently toward getting complete agreement on an issue or, failing that, at least to a position where those who are not in favour are willing to allow the others to carry on, and will 'stand aside', or at least not 'block' the proposal. If the group cannot achieve this then the proposal fails but it is a far more complex than someone simply exercising a veto vote.

In practice, consensus decision-making can take up a great deal of collective time in discussing and modifying a proposal to try to meet the concerns of all participants. Generally, however, once a decision is made, the group will rapidly implement it because there will be no foot-dragging by members who might have been losers had they followed simple voting. The better the group has been trained in consensus decision-making, and the better the members know and trust each other, the faster they can reach consensus. Good consensus decision-making can become fast and efficient.

An edited extract especially for C.A.L.L., from Bill Metcalf's latest book, *The Findhorn Book of Community Living*, Forres, UK: Findhorn Press, 2004, pp. 92-6. Bill is a past president of I.C.S.A. (International Communities Study Association).



*Letter from Monika,  
Niederkaufungen,  
Germany*

*December, 2003*

*What is news here with us?  
I personally am well and  
healthy (which is so  
important), and  
professionally there are  
interesting new  
developments:*

*A few weeks ago I passed  
the last test as a trainer in  
non-violent  
communication and hope  
to work in this field in the  
future. I think that our  
future depends on the  
question: if we are in the  
position to create peace  
(within ourselves, with  
other human beings and  
also in the political arena).*

*This is a key point,  
especially for those of us  
who live in communities  
and underwent their  
socialization in Western  
industrialized countries;  
how we wish to live has not  
been learned. If we want to  
exist without private  
property or to make our  
decisions by consensus, we  
know that these values are  
not transmitted by our  
society, and that is why our  
competence in this respect  
is not sufficient.*

*Violence-free  
communication turns out  
to be of great help here and*

*I very much want to foster  
it. My collective granted me  
complete freedom for the  
whole of next year to devote  
myself to this aim, and that  
made me very happy.*

*Last weekend we had at our  
commune a small  
meeting/feast to celebrate  
20 years since our  
"constitution" paper was  
written. We invited people  
who were here during the  
early years of our project,  
as well as people who work  
on similar themes within  
other parts of society, in  
order to talk over subjects  
like common economy,  
collective work and  
consensus decision-  
making.*

*Altogether some 70 people  
took part in that meeting  
and many old contacts  
were re-established. A tense  
debate on power structures  
in collectives occurred. We*



*also discussed the question  
of whether collective  
economy can serve as an  
anti-model to ruling  
capitalism or does it only  
assist its stabilization.  
Another question that came  
under discussion was how  
to succeed in day-to-day  
decision-making using  
consensus, without  
delaying the group's work.*

*Next Sunday Klaus-Peter  
and I go to ZEGG for the  
third communes meeting,  
which started as a result of*

*our demand for Eco-  
balance. Representatives of  
some other large  
communities (Oekodorf  
Sieben Linden, Pommritz,  
UFA-Fabrik and more)  
will also attend. The main  
theme will be what methods  
should the groups use in  
trying to organize and  
develop our social  
togetherness. I can hardly  
wait for that meeting.*

*The plan for our new  
project - caregivers for the  
aged with dementia - will  
have to be postponed until  
next year, as we have not  
received a budget yet.*

*Socially and politically the  
devil has been let loose in  
Germany. What is being  
planned by the red-green  
local government and the  
black central government is  
truly hair-raising: an  
unprecedented knockout.  
Many women, youngsters  
and needy people will soon  
be OUT.*

*Living in community is  
some comfort because the  
consequences of these  
policies don't hit me as  
hard. We do take an active  
role though; many of our  
members participate in  
demonstrations and other  
(protest) actions.*

*Here at the community we  
are in good mood; in  
contrast to the forecasts,  
our economy is balanced.  
But a problem that occupies  
our thoughts a lot is the  
housing situation. People  
want to join us, but cannot  
find room. This is a silly  
situation.*

*Many regards,*

*Monika*

I've told you repeatedly  
not to play with little  
Arabs!

Don't go beyond the red  
parasol, Corinne!

Come here, Corinne -  
come to Mummy...

Komm her, Corinne,  
komm her  
zu Mutti...



Ich hab dir schon oft  
gezeigt, daß du nicht  
mit kleinen  
Arabern spielen  
sollst!



Geh nicht weiter als bis  
zu dem roten Sonnenschirm,  
Corinne!



Corinne, watch your sandforms!  
the little girl is trying to take  
them away - and I won't buy you  
new ones, I'm warning you!

Corinne, pass auf deine  
Formchen auf, das kleine  
Mädchen nimmt  
sie dir sonst  
weg! und ich  
kauf dir keine  
neuen, ich  
warne dich!



Kannst du dich denn nie  
allein beschäftigen?  
mußt du denn  
immer direkt  
vor meinen  
Füßen spielen?



Can you never keep yourself  
busy? Do you always have  
to play before my feet?

After a rather extended silence (since August 2000!) we were agreeably surprised to get a Newsletter of June 2003 from Kommune Niederkaufungen, entirely dedicated to the theme "Children and Youngsters in Community". Here comes a small sample by Antje Rausche, entitled "One-parent Education in Communes":

Kommuja's latest issue, No. 57 of Fall 2003, was edited by several "Laerifari" people, comprising at present 15 humans, 4 cats, 2 dogs, 2 sheep and one chinchilla. The current issue was put together by the trio of Christina, Jana and Mel - who dedicated the first five pages to a debate about: Are we or aren't we a Commune?

"So much has already been written on that subject! Sure, but yet - it's different with each Mother or Father. At the outset of my Commune period, being a single parent meant to me that almost everyone had some advice to offer. Of course it was well-meant advice, for which I am quite thankful in hindsight - but it reminded me of the saying "Ratschläge sind auch Schläge", loosely translated meaning "Advice can also be Vice"... or shall I put it that way: they were "incitements" which amongst other things, incited my spirit of resistance!

Nonetheless, to let the religion teacher residing inside myself, which I allow to appear much too seldom, express himself in the words of Paulus: "I checked everything out and kept the best for myself!" and sometimes I even decided to pass on some of the advice that I appreciated.

When the phase of like "if I may tell you for once..." (which according to my theory is much less used with 2-parent couples) was concluded, the one-parenting changed to a nice "you can go to work at ease, we'll take care of your child!"

Not having a joint economy nor communal jobs or children; but processing a great collective mission: LIFE - can we claim the right to be publishing "Kommuja"?

Subsequently, 24 year old Christine expresses her views: "We are people who have a place here, where we feel sheltered, from which we start afresh every morning, to shape our day individually. Some of us commute to town, to study or to work. Other ones often just stay here. All of us bring life to this place ... I always dreamt of living in a commune ... I understood it to mean, living together with many other people whom I like; owning a place to which I can retire and live fully. It ought to be green, with a lot of animals. All the people should have the same Philosophy: living together considerably and peacefully. Commune means many people who care, plan, discuss, embrace one another and occasionally even quarrel - and create a home for themselves ... How wonderful for me to have discovered a second home!



From the mischievous “Leaves of Twin Oaks”, No. 99 of (late) Summer 2003 I lift this delicious, charming little piece signed “Ultra-Violet Waterfall” aka. Valerie:

## What's In A Name?

by UltraViolet Waterfall, a.k.a. Valerie

Some things haven't changed much since the late 60's when we were founded. People are still using and choosing wonderfully creative, mythical, and nature-based names. Some people choose a new name because there is already a member here with their birth name, while others just want to celebrate a different aspect of themselves.

Current and recent members include Dream, Butterfly, Frodo, Leaf, Light, Phoenix, Samadhi, River, Indigo, Juniper, Piankhy, Promethea, Pilgrim, Paxus, Pele, and Shakti. Sky had a head-start in the naming department—his parents lived here in the '70's and Sky Blue is his birth name!

Several members retain their birth names, but use a nick-name. This includes Debby (Forest, Moss), Kristen (Kelpie), Meredith (Mermaid), Melissa (MoonDance) and yours truly (see byline).

# KALEIDOSCOPE

The Communitarian Scene from all Over and Under  
Compiled (and partly translated) by Joel Dorkam



Dear Reader,

When getting ready to give birth to another one of these funny whatsoevers, (hello there, is anybody reading me?) I usually make a choice of some peculiar topic and begin reading some choice newsletters of yours – hoping to discover some exquisite, much relevant tidbit.

This time, leafing through “Communities” No. 118 of summer 2003, the theme “Lovers in Communities” (a favourite of mine – and yours?) jumped into my biased eyes. From the very first introduction line by editor Diane Leafe Christian, my mind was captured by the sheer honesty of the expression of her feelings – and the precision of her observations. I very much hope she won’t mind my borrowing a few excerpts from the wealth of this magnificent issue:

## Community is for Lovers...

BY DIANA LEAFE CHRISTIAN - *Editor of Communities magazine.*

Standing alone in the moonlight, peering up at the bedroom window. Is your still beloved up there with someone new-one of your community mates? (*Can you bear another moment of this?*)

Or it's you up in that bedroom-and you know your new love's ex is in pain down below. How can you face this person tomorrow? How do you balance the loyalties of friendship with the richness of romance?

What if you and your partner break up in sorrow and disillusionment, or get divorced how can you stay in the community? Does one of you have to leave?

Or you and your partner are fine, but can your relationship take all this public attention? With everyone knowing everyone else's business, where's the privacy, the "space" for your relationship?

The authors in this special section – lovers all - explore how community affects marriage and love partnerships and friendships. They observe that:

- Community - that magnifying mirror - makes good relationships juicier and shaky ones shake apart faster.
- Neither of you has to leave the group when you break up. Impartial, loving community mates can help you both heal more quickly.
- You and your partner can create new forms of love relationship. Your community mates can support you in this.

- Intense community scrutiny of your love and sex life can heal and enhance your relationships.
- You can have more than one lover - and all remain dear friends.
- You can dearly love your community mates of the opposite sex - and all be celibate.

While the intentional community setting tends to make exploring new forms of relationship relatively easier, and non-traditional relationships tend to be more common in communities than in the mainstream, plenty of communities - probably most - are comprised of single folks and monogamous couples. Yet non-monogamists are often good writers with fascinating stories to tell, and we've got two such tales in this issue.

(We'll leave to a future issue other important issues: How do partners find time to nurture and enjoy each other when they're obligated to so many damn meetings and community labor projects? fue the benefits and pressures the same for gay couples? What happens when one partner is eager to join the community and the other isn't, or one is far more interested in community life and the other is more reclusive? If you have a story along these lines - let us know!)

Meanwhile, here's what our current authors - monogamous, non-monogamous, and monastic - have to say. Enjoy!

## Geoph Kozeny offers us what seems to me to be good advice, out of his rich personal experience – in “Happily Never After”:

To me the question of how people get along, cooperate, and resolve their conflicts is far more interesting - and empowering - than the story of how they initially got together. Here are some hopefully helpful suggestions, based on my observation of thousands of folks pursuing what they hoped would be sustainable community and sustainable relationships:

Step 1: The hard work of relationship becomes considerably easier if we're aware of, or at least forewarned about, the probable challenges. That way, when setting our expectations we can allow sufficient time, energy, and resources for working through the difficult stuff that will inevitably surface. Yet the fairy-tale outlook so deeply ingrained by our culture often has the opposite effect: planting overly simplified images in our consciousness that breed unrealistic expectations. So study the pattern enough to learn the basics, and prepare yourself for some challenging yet growthful (and ultimately satisfying) work.

Step 2: Look within to learn what you really value at your core, your likes and dislikes, your inclinations and natural talents, and your needs and wants. (It's so critical to understand the difference between needs and wants! If you know that something is a "want," you have far more flexibility to take it or leave it, and thus much greater latitude to negotiate workable terms

for your relationships.) And beware a second fairy tale trap: many people mistakenly believe that they need someone or something else (e.g., a mate or a community) in order to feel whole or complete. The fact is, people who feel whole and happy within themselves tend to make the best partners for a co-creative relationship.



BY GEOPH KOZENY

Step 3: Learn to communicate clearly, and to listen carefully. Aspire to be "transparent" (totally open and honest, with no withholding) about your thoughts, feelings, fears, and concerns; ask for 100 percent of what you want 100 percent of the time; and be able to hear and accept a "no" in response. There are many approaches for learning these skills - check out your nearest library or bookstore. (Examples: "active listening," the ZEGG Forum, Susan Campbell's book *Getting Real*, Marshall Rosenberg's "Nonviolent Communication" process.)

Step 4: Make sure you have regular contact with understanding folks who are supportive of your growth

process: friends, lovers, extended family, community members, or a support group with the ability to work with challenges similar to what you're facing-and hopefully including a person or two who have already been through it. It's *much* easier to keep your vision and intention in perspective when your peers know what you are up to and are there to offer encouragement and to serve as a sounding board. And when you fall short of your stated goals (such as that especially tough one: transparency), they can lovingly remind you not to be too hard on yourself, and that bad habits instilled in us since birth may require an extended, diligent effort before the conscious reprogramming can take hold.

Step 5: Celebrate your life, including whatever progress you've made in finding yourself, manifesting your relationships, and letting your light shine. These celebrations can be formal or informal, public or private. What's important is that, in the face of ever-present "growth opportunities" (i.e., challenging situations), you take the time to tune into what you've accomplished and what's working in your life. Otherwise the challenges begin to assume a bigger chunk of your attention than they rightfully deserve, and you'll very likely get knocked off center and pulled into discouragement or depression. Celebrating your successes helps keep everything in perspective.

*Geoph Kozeny has lived in various communities for 30 years, and for the last 15 years has been on the road visiting over 350 communities. He recently released Visions of Utopia, a video documentary about intentional communities, and is now editing a follow-up video profiling 11 additional communities. Geoph loves to give presentations on the history, reality, and lessons of shared living. [geoph@ic.org](mailto:geoph@ic.org).*

**Most communities were established by young twenty-somethings, who couldn't care less (or at least couldn't think that far ahead) about what was bound to happen in the course of time: old age. What follows is what Jon Kent of Amherst, Mass. has to say about that from the outlook of those between the ages of forty and sixty.**

## Meet Our New "Non- Bio" Family

Can creating non-residential intentional community replace certain functions of the traditional family?

Several years ago a group of friends and I, all in our mid-40s to early 60s, began to discuss how we would care for ourselves as we aged and if we became ill. We knew that neither the government, insurance companies, nor whatever families we had left would be able to attend to us as we aged. Some of us didn't want to burden our children with this care. Others had grown in different directions than our extended families, and wanted to have more self-determination over our care in the second vulnerable stage of life (childhood being the first). We decided to call our function a "co-care circle." We are now six in number, mostly with modest incomes and one or more graduate and/or professional degrees. Three of us have lived in cohousing communities. At this point none of us have the energy nor desire to live together under the same roof, although this may change in the future.

Many changes have occurred in the way families support their members through life since World War II. The generation that raised the Baby Boomers saw the decline of the extended family the clan of aunts, uncles, cousins and grandparents who organized and supported each other through life's ups and downs. In the extended family, roles were defined and, for

We knew that neither the government, insurance companies, nor whatever families we had left would be able to attend to us as we aged.

the most part, followed. This was the time when people did what they were "supposed" to do even though the discomfort of doing one's duty might result in behaviors such as alcoholism or extramarital affairs. The Baby Boomers saw the rise of the nuclear family - mom and pop did it alone, buttressed by the material resources of a wealthy country. Doctors made house calls. One income was sufficient to support a family, and health insurance companies actually reimbursed families for medical expenses with no questions asked. With a 50 percent divorce rate, the Baby Boomers also saw the nuclear family begin dissolving, leaving individuals alone and without support from either biological clans or institutions like the government or insurance companies. Now, in what some have called the "thermonuclear family" phase, single house holders are doing everything they can simply to survive.

...We now meet every six weeks for a potluck dinner. We talk about our reasons for being together and spend the time getting to know one another. We are something like a family, because while we are not each other's best friends, we still value our community connection, tolerate our differences, and focus.

Jon Kent lived in a cohousing community for two years and wrote his graduate thesis on cohousing. He lives in Amherst, Massachusetts.

**And Ma'ikwe Ludwig presents us with a basic tenet for any and all couples planning to join some intentional community:**

"Simply put, healthy, aligned relationships get stronger and blossom in community; unhealthy, misaligned relationships come apart, sometimes very quickly."

Ma'ikwe Ludwig

C.A.L.L.

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