C.A.L.L.

Communes At Large Letter

INTERNATIONAL COMMUNES DESK

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No. 27

Summer 2006

Dear Readers,

Welcome to C.A.L.L., the publication of the International Communes Desk. The 'International' in our title is a signifier that communal living is a truly worldwide phenomenon and that we have plenty to share between us; that sharing is not just restricted to within each community.

The face to face interactions with visitors from around the world that I've had over the last month, and to a lesser extent also telephone conversations and personal written correspondence, have enabled me to both learn from others, and share my communal experiences, through an interpersonal dialogue.

It's a good feeling to relate an episode from my community and see in the face of the listener empathy and understanding. They sometimes respond with, "That reminds me of the time that….". The conversation would invariably end up with recognizing a trend, and then together working through a process of developing a theory together. We would then carry this new perspective back with us to our respective communities.

This is the authentic sharing of knowledge to which C.A.L.L. is striving towards. Sometimes we succeed but sometimes the limitations of space and a lack of a deeper dialogue with the communities that we feature causes us to come across as voyeurs and somewhat consumerist when it comes to our genuine attempts to understand the real lives and the real communities we cover.

In essence, there is no genuine substitute for one-on-one interaction as a learning experience, coupled with actually living in community. It seems that we can't turn our heads without someone trying to tell us how to create/build community, with information packaged in bite-sized pieces: international conferences, courses and workshops on anything from consensus training to community architecture, books being published, internet listserves and websites – a veritable information overload.

So, does this mean that you shouldn't bother reading any further? Should you be putting down this issue of C.A.L.L. and going to do something else?

To that, I'd say an unequivocal NO! Why? Because we at C.A.L.L. publish personal correspondence from people living in community, we write much of the content ourselves, we commission people to write articles especially for us, we have no financial incentives in terms of what we print, choosing pieces based on how much of a deeper understanding they can offer the communities community.

Convinced? You will be! Read, enjoy and send us your feedback.

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CONTENTS

From the Secretary's Desk

Dear Reader,

These lines are being written after an inspiring but too-short annual **Conference/Get-together of the Israeli Circle of Communal Groups.** Some 140 members of a variety of communes and urban & educational kibbutzim - and 40 kids - participated in the discussions and cultural and socializing activities. (There will be a report in the next issue). It was most heart-warming to this participant, more than twice the average age. With all Israel's social/educational problems, the environment hasn't been much on the communal agenda, but here it made a welcome appearance ... The Circle has expanded its activities and some time back held a very successful Arts Fair (See p 26), showing the varied artistic achievements of many of its members.

A notable event has come to our notice, the opening by **Niederkaufungen** of a day centre for elderly sufferers of dementia. This most ambitious humanitarian project is a worthy addition to their other activities. See http://www.kommune-niederkaufungen.de/kommune/eindex.htm .

Much to our delight we've had quite a wave of **communal visitors** since the last issue of CALL. These included co-housing expert Graham Meltzer (Australia, now en route to settle in Findhorn), Brian Freund (ex-kibbutznik, ex-Twin Oaker) and several German youngsters, Jens Herrmann and Susanne Friedel, and Jan Schevitz. Also very interesting were Bruderhof members, Chaim, Miriam and Anna Ben-Eliezer from Bellvale USA. And of course, members of the German Katholische Integrierte Gemeinde continue to come to Israel and have contact with various kibbutzim.... If you too are planning to come here, please write to me. I have plenty of worthwhile contacts in Israel for you.

Of special note was the visit to Israel of 4 **Hutterite communards from Canada**: Minister John Hofer, Sara & Ken Gross and Johny Hofer, accompanied by Professor John Lehr. They featured prominently at the annual Conference for Research on Kibbutz and Communes, speaking of the continuity of the centuries-old traditions, together with slight changes with the times. Another distinguished guest was IC expert Prof. Tim Miller of the US, former president of ICSA (International Communal Studies Association).

Preparations are well underway for the **ICSA Conference of academics and IC members** to be held next summer at the Damanhur Federation of Communes, Italy. A call for papers has already been issued. (See p. 5) The ICSA Bulletin is now available at www.ic.org/icsa/.... If you are coming from outside Europe, maybe you want to travel a little further and visit "Communal Israel" immediately after the Conference. If **you** are interested, do let me know.... Damanhur has accepted my suggestion to hold, immediately afterwards, an **ICM (International Communities Meeting)**, as was done following the 2001 ICSA Conference at ZEGG. This less formal gathering brought together communards from Finland to New Zealand, from Brazil to Siberia. No details of the 2007 ICM are available as yet.

Community is very much "in" these days. We can't note all references to IC's in the press, but recently New York Magazine featured Ganas under the title Big Love on Staten Island. Very flattering!... Two more modest German journals, Kontraste and KursKontakte, have featured articles on kibbutz and other communities - and our very own Communes Desk!

In Israel, a first issue of **a Hebrew version of CALL** has appeared. Temporarily called KOL (= "Voice" in Hebrew), it so far appears only on the web at www.communa.org.il/kol.pdf . KOL2, with urban communard Asaf Chertkoff as its permanent editor, is now underway.

And finally, a big thank you to Dina Bookman from Kibbutz Yizre'el, who translated 2 items in this issue. Welcome to CALL, Dina.

Looking forward to hearing from **you**,
Sol Etzioni, Kibbutz Tzora, DN Shimshon, Israel 99803 or solrene@tzora.co.il

PS. If you haven't already done so, do take a look at our website www.communa.org.il .

Growing Old Together, in New Kind of Commune

New York Times by Patricia Leigh Brown February 27, 2006

DAVIS, Calif., - They are unlikely revolutionaries. Bearing walkers and canes, a veritable Merck Manual of ailments among them, the 12 old friends - average age 80 - looked as though they should have been sitting down to a game of Scrabble, not pioneering a new kind of commune.

Some of the residents of the Glacier Circle complex gathered last week for a meeting at the home of Dorie Datel. Clockwise from left, Lois Grau, Mary Ellen and Ray Coppock, Ms. Datel (obscured), and Stan and Peggy Northup-Dawson.

Opting for old age on their own terms, they were starting a new chapter in their lives as residents of Glacier Circle, the country's first self-planned housing development for the elderly - a community they had conceived and designed themselves, right down to its purple gutters.

Over the past five years, the residents of Glacier Circle have found and bought land together, hired an architect together, ironed out insurance together, lobbied for a zoning change together and existentially probed togetherness together.

"Here you get to pick your family instead of being born into it," said Peggy Northup-Dawson, 79, a retired family therapist and mother of six who is legally blind. "We recognized that when you're physically closer to each other, you pay more attention, look in on each other. The idea was to share care."

The four couples, two widows and two who are now living solo live in eight individual town houses, grouped around an inner courtyard. Still under construction is the "common house" with a living room and a large kitchen and dining room for communal dinners; upstairs is a studio apartment they will rent at below market value to a skilled nurse who will provide additional care. It is their own self-styled, potluck utopia.

There are about a dozen co-operative housing developments for the elderly in development, from Santa Fe, N.M., to St. Petersburg, Fla., a fledgling movement to communally address "the challenge of aging non-institutionally," said Charles Durett, an architect in Nevada City, Calif., who imported the concept he named co-housing - people buying homes in a community they plan and run together - from Denmark in the late 1960's.

In Abingdon, Va., residents are beginning to move into ElderSpirit, a development founded by a 76-year-old former nun, Dene Peterson. The community of 37, 10 years in the making, includes a "spirit house" for ecumenical prayer and meditation.

"I just thought there had to be a better way for older people to live," said Ms. Peterson, who formed a non-profit development corporation with three other former Glenmary sisters, a Catholic order, and knit together a variety of private and governmental funds (16 of the 29 units are subsidized affordable housing).

Six more ElderSpirit communities, in St. Petersburg, Fla., Wichita, Kan., and elsewhere, are in planning stages, with some financing from the Chicago-based Retirement Research Foundation.

Stan and Peggy Northup-Dawson in the courtyard of Glacier Circle, communal housing in Davis, Calif., that they developed with 10 friends.

Glacier Circle and ElderSpirit are self-developed cohousing communities. The Elder Cohousing Network, founded four years ago, offers for-profit how-to workshops. General information is available through a national non-profit, www.cohousing.org.

INTERNATIONAL COMMUNAL STUDIES ASSOCIATION
NINTH INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE
DAMANHUR, VALCHIUSELLA VALLEY, ITALY
28nd JUNE TO 1st JULY 2007
Post Conference Tour 2nd – 3rd July

COMMUNITIES: YESTERDAY'S UTOPIA, TODAY'S REALITY

The Ninth ICSA International Conference will be held in the northern Italian community of Damanhur, a federation of communal societies in the beautiful Valchiusella Valley. By locating the conference in a living community participants will be able to experience firsthand the many examples of utopian endeavour, spiritual as well as practical and to engage in a dialogue with those who work and live here.

In the best traditions of ICSA the conference will bring together academics and communitarians from around the world to discuss common interests. The unique setting of Damanhur will encourage an exploration of the continuing potential of communal societies to bridge the gap between utopian aspirations and the realities of everyday experience. The way will be open to discuss this relationship between utopia and reality in terms of past experience, present practice and future prospects.

Registration will take place on the 28th June 2007 and the main programme will be held on the following three days. There will be an optional two day tour on the 2nd and 3rd July.

ICSA is available through the website
http://www.ic.org/icsa
Damanhur through http://www.damanhur.org

Call for Papers

Proposals for papers on different aspects of the conference theme are now invited. These should be submitted in the following format:

Title of paper
Name of author (s)
Summary of the paper – in not more than 300 words
To be sent as an email attachment to
hardy_poundbury@yahoo.co.uk

Ganas, NY

I am grateful that we create and recreate our Community everyday
To all of us that make any and all efforts for that ongoing recreation

I am grateful that we come together to support what each of us wants
That we help clarify for each other the deep meanings of what we "want"
That we help each other understand what can be wanted and what are impossible wants to satisfy
Which are wants that add to life and which don't
Which are wants that make all of us richer and which are wants that are satisfied at someone else's expense
Which wants are sustainable and which are not

I am grateful that we help each other let go of "impossible wants"
and mourn with each other the necessary loss of crazy wants
We give the mourner the space to expose his/her "lost desire, lost dream" and sit with them with understanding
I am grateful that then we help each other move into what is "wantable" and getable and help get that

I am grateful that we know that community is created every moment by looking at what is wanted within the context of what is possible and pull together to make it happen

I am grateful that we look at what is possible, what can be done, what makes life better for each and all

I am grateful that we understand that the "good life can't be given",
but must be created by each of us for ourselves, eliciting each other's help

I am grateful to whatever extent we are willing to tell each other the truth as we see it, especially when it is difficult

I am grateful that we identify strength in each other and support it, and that we don't cater to each other's weakness.

I am grateful that we don't punish each other for our weaknesses

by an anonymous member

We at the desk have made contact with Jindibah Communtiy in New South Wales, Australia. These are excerpts from their last newsletter:

Welcome to the annual newsletter from the residents and non-residents of Jindibah intentional community. The events of the past 12 months at and around Jindibah have been – to us at least - eventful.

Our community is growing: this year we add another new member to our cast: Pippa Markham, who will arrive from London to take up residence in Harry Fowler's old wooden farmhouse.

Christobel and Christopher – who have been living in the classic century old Australian farmhouse – are building a brick and tile home on the 'mezzanine' level of the community (next to the old water tank on the hill), and plan to move when the house is completed, possibly in January. Living for a decade in the Sleepy Creek valley, C+C's house has been a kind of 'gate-house' to the community. Moving away from this key cosy creekside position to face the windy hills will be a radical change for them, as will January temperatures in the 30s for Pippa (after London's winter!) As a community, we are keen to make sure there are special places on our property where individuals can relax and enjoy our rural environment. In 2004, we restored the roof of the community shed in the property's south-western corner to make it more usable. In this past year, our major community project has been to restore the old swimming hole located next to it.

You probably know by now that at Jindibah, we are an eclectic lot, into a diverse range of activities, with some fascinating past-times.

- This year, for instance, Stephan and Bettina Kahlert decided to join 2,000 other Harley Davidson motorbike riders in a ride to Uluru and Alice Springs. Taking time out from their "normal" life, teaching yoga and meditation, the pair drove 9,000km in three weeks. The highlight was participating in a procession of thousands of Harley Davidson bikes from Australia and NZ riding round Uluru at dawn.
- Tania Evers, Jindibah's not quite resident barrister (currently in Sydney) was a speaker at a seminar in Paris, France, mid-2005. (Her talk, based on a specific case she'd handled, traced the connection between a prescribed antidepressant and a homicide.)
- Keira Dott, our horserider extraordinaire, celebrated her 10th birthday on 1 August (she's a Leo) with a gymkhana on the property, organized by her tireless mother Penny Cooke.
- It must have been a fertile year for Jindibytes. Our Melbourne partners, Danny and Vikki Lee, had their first baby in September 05. Christobel's daughter Sasha gave birth to a son, Harrison, in December (causing this newsletter to be postponed by a few weeks), while Maggie Mulham and partner Paul Donovan are expecting their first baby on 17 January.
- Resident novelist and freelance writer Jesse Blackadder, launched her book AFTER THE PARTY, in Sydney and Byron Bay this year, then promptly turned her skills in other directions, taking to ballroom dancing like a duck to water. We often find Jesse and friends hot-footing it in the 'Building once known as the Dance Hall'.

To keep it all together and in good repair, a community needs ongoing, diligent maintenance of all its assets. Our assets include a paved internal road of 1.523km. Alas the enormous July 05 floods channelled huge quantities of flood water from a neighbouring property across our internal road, causing the bitumen to buckle like orange peel at one point. Again we called on Mark Hajjar from Mullum Pools, who brought in his team to upgrade the drainage of the rock wall along our western border, then we patched up the damaged road.
With more houses being built, we decided it was time to widen our internal road at a certain point, to make it safer for two cars to pass.

Thought you might like to hear how our various planting projects have been getting on. Well, we are pleased to be able to report the very high survival rate of all our buffer and screening plantings, planted both to "enhance the visual amenity of the landscape" and to "reduce the impact of the community on neighbouring properties". You may - or may not - recall that Jindibah is a primary producing farm, with 24 cows, one contented bull and their offspring. This means our beef cattle (who provide us with an income to pay for property maintenance) need access to fresh pasture. To protect our plantings while allowing the cattle to graze, we use solar powered electric fencing around our plantings until trees are mature.

Jindibah Community, Sleepy Creek, Bangalow, NSW 2479 is a 12-house site Multiple Occupancy intentional community located on a 46 hectare farm in Fowlers Lane, Bangalow. For more information, see www.jindibah-community.org, or email DIY@jindibah-community.org

The following letter was written to the listserve living_in_community@yahoogroups.com as a response to a post by a couple of community seekers:

During John Kennedy 1960 presidential inaugural speech he said "Ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country". When most people seek community they are asking primarily what it is that a community can do for them. This is usually their entire focus. They shop around at all the different communities to see what each offers them personally and which will make their lives work well. They all have ideals worked out in their heads of what it is they want in a community setting, and how they want it to work out for them. Unfortunately, they never ask what it is they can do for the community, or how they can apply themselves to the community's needs.

I base my feelings upon what the poster said..."*A big issue for me these days is wanting to create community that allows for solitude and privacy. I am in a relationship with someone who needs his alone time as much as I need my community involvement. Cohousing would be the answer if we could afford it, but in NYC it's out of reach for us. I've made some attempts at forming a group to try to address this. I'm wondering how other people have approached this issue. I know it's not an uncommon one. Any thoughts?*"

I personally feel that they will run into the same problems and barriers to their finding their right community as long as they are asking the communities what it is they can do for them. If they changed how they approach a community by asking what it is they can do for the community, then I believe their issues of solitude and community will solve itself. Why? Because I believe they would have established an empathic connection with the community they extended themselves to in this manner. Then if they told that community about their need for solitude it wouldn't feel like they were doing it to exploit the community's good will for their self-interest and personal advantage leaving the community with unmanageable holes in their community life.

My experience of people who approach our community with consideration of what it is the community needs is one of the most endearing things a community seeker can offer a community. However, this is an extremely rare experience. It is one of the hardest things for people in our culture to do. It really is a strange idea to them. When I have tried to point this out as their best way to approach joining our community they almost always respond with indifference and/or outrage. But, in my thinking, it is the proper way to approach a community if they want to make the impression they love the idea of living in community and they are willing to offer their energies into community life to make it work for everyone in the community.

If people could do this for our community, the issues revolving around their need for solitude and community, or whatever, would become minor issues to us. If they do not extend themselves in this empathic manner, then their requests, whatever they are, become major issues of which our response is usually to turn them away.

We ask of ourselves when people apply to join us in community… "Do these people love community, the communitarian lifestyle and those with whom they will be sharing community life?" Do these people love our community in specific? If they cannot convince us the above is their feelings then we are not interested in them, nor in their personal issues in finding their right community for themselves. If people approach us to join us in community for any other reason other then for the love of community then it is a big loser for us, and we're better off not letting these people into our lives.

Now I can hear the protests already. How can you reasonably ask someone to love community when they have never experienced living in a community? Or, how can you ask them to love your community when they have no personal experience of it? Well I respond, we learned to love the idea of living in community with others from all the effort we put into learning everything we could about the community lifestyle and making that lifestyle work for everyone in the community. We also put a great deal of effort into our personal growth to make ourselves into the type of people who could live successfully with others in a community setting. This is how one persuades others of their love of the communitarian lifestyle, or their particular love for your community effort.

When we asked those who wanted to join us in community if they would be willing to make similar efforts as we have in learning about and adapting to community life and its demands they have answered..."We do not have to do this for or with you or anyone because we are not required to do so by the cultural agreements we have known and have been raised in." Now do you see how transparent most people are when they seek community? Is it any wonder why so many communities fail?

If one can find someone willing to do what needs to be done to make community life work for everyone in the community one has found a precious jewel. This is the type of person you want to join you in community. If this type of person approaches us in the loving ways we have described and this person needs solitude it is minor issue because we know this person loves us and the community. We are more than happy to extended these same feelings to this type of person, and to bend over backwards so that community life can work well for him or her.

Daniel
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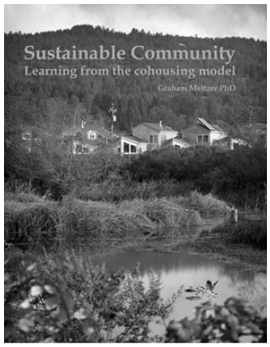


Sustainable Community: Learning from the cohousing model
Graham Meltzer PhD
Trafford

BOOK REVIEW

Dr. Graham Meltzer's *Sustainable Community: Learning from the cohousing model* is a compelling investigation of the connection between intentional community and environmental sustainability. Using case studies of 13 cohousing communities in five countries, Meltzer argues that, "the quality of our social relationships and our 'sense of community' are major determinants of our capacity for pro-environmental behavioural change".

The six main factors of a cohousing community include: the participatory process through which the members create their project, the neighborhood design, self-management, the absence of hierarchy and presence of consensus decision-making and separate incomes. The first half of the book contains "snapshots" of each of the 13 cohousing projects Meltzer studied. Largely anecdotal, these "snapshots" describe the advent of the community, the designing and building process, formal and informal social structures (i.e. common meals, formalized children's carpool, special celebrations unique to the community, etc.), environmental practices, challenges within the community, etc. The second half contains a statistical comparison of the communities, analyzing their successes and failures as both an intentional community and as an environmentally sustainable entity.

Throughout the book, Meltzer successfully proves the link between sustainability and community. The social cohesion and culture of trust and sharing among members cuts resource consumption drastically on both large and small levels. For example, common facilities (laundry, socializing spaces, kitchen, guest room, kids' room, etc.) allow members to have smaller, higher density dwellings and reduce the overall environmental impact of the community. Informal sharing practices also reduce consumption of resources; a member is likely to ask around the community for a tool or an ingredient he or she does not have rather than buy a new one, for instance. Additionally, the close-knitted nature of the community hugely supports pro-environmental action. "Green" members are able to influence the community through education and example, and the organizing of a few often makes practices like recycling and waste management more convenient for the community at large. Also, the constant interaction among members allows them to share tips and support for their environmental practices. These example are only the tip of the iceberg – there are tons more!

Meltzer's study is extremely well-researched and based upon a wealth of both primary and secondary sources, the majority of which are quite current. This book is scholarly, but at the same time it is captivating and easy to read. Meltzer provides a successful analysis of both the successes and difficulties of cohousing. For readers interested in either cohousing or intentional communities in general, this book definitely challenges us to think about the way our community relates to the environment and the feasibility of adapting environmentally-friendly behaviors as a building block of the community. An A+, worthwhile read!

By Rachel Bergstein

Meeting with Graham Meltzer PhD

A group of fourteen attended a session of the Communes Desk, in the company of Graham Meltzer PhD.

Graham began by reading excerpts from the introduction of his new book, "Sustainable Community: Learning from the cohousing model", passages relating to his personal history. He showed a picture of his childhood home in Auckland, New Zealand and recalled with fondness the egalitarian nature of the environment in which he grew up in – from the social cohesion of the society at large to the love and support he received from his family.

Graham recalled his time of having lived in communes, surrounded by politically radical people – tackling issues such as the Vietnam War and Apartheid. We saw a picture showing a long-haired Graham sitting on the roof of a camper van, which was for a while a commune on wheels as he traveled, along with four others, by road through Europe to Israel. He subsequently spent two years on Kibbutz and fell in love with it, although the combination of his pacifist beliefs and receiving his army call-up papers led him to unhappily leave.

He returned to Australia in 1976, and joined Tuntable Falls, a self-sufficient community in northern New South Wales. Graham showed a photo of himself and his kids at the hippy commune. His two kids grew up there with the community as their extended family. They had the same freedom that he had as a kid. He then showed a picture of his children now as adults – describing their values as 'community-orientated', 'willing to serve people' and striving "to make a better society". Because of their communal living, they have non-materialist values.

* * *

Graham now moved on to his PhD topic and his book. The hypothesis was that he found that 90-95% of the people he asked said that they are concerned about the environment, but very few actually said that they did something about it. Why, asks Graham, if they are both intelligent and well-meaning, don't they do anything? According to his research, a lack of either social support or a social context is the main factor.

In the mid-90's cohousing became well-known amongst the middle classes. Projects were being built so that people could live as a community, incorporating recycling, composting, education, communal dining room etc. "It is one thing for hippies and people on kibbutz, but for the middle classes!" exclaims Graham.

Cohousing begins with a discussion amongst friends who ponder how nice it would be to live together. They feel like they don't even know who their neighbours are and are feeling disconnected from their friends and society itself. Someone has read about cohousing where people live with their friends.

After two or three years, with more friends joining, they bring in an architect and a developer and design and build exactly what they want according to their budget and values. Each cohousing project is different because they are built according to what each group wants.

* * *

Graham then showed photos of three cohousing communities in North America that were part of his research:

a) WindSong – a more rural project an hour from Vancouver, Canada. It has a laundry room, recreation space, office, dining room, workshop and a TV room. "It's expensive housing" comments Graham. Cohousing is sometimes subsidized by the government or by other members but it is not particularly affordable. This community practices composting, they grow their own food and eat together. They have committees and rosters and publish their own newsletter. They are engaged in politics and environmental issues and have a very strong culture which includes art, putting on plays, creative writing and drawing.

b) Quayside Village – 19 housing units also in Vancouver. They share 11 cars, grow food, meditate and have a greywater recycling system which recycles bath and sink water to be used for flushing toilets and for gardening. This community consists of members with a variety of spiritual and religious beliefs – a diverse and tolerant community. Communities such as these are able to support people in a crisis – divorce or the death of loved ones.

c) Songaia – Near Seattle, this community grew out of an older intentional community, the Institute for Cultural Affairs (ICA). It began as a Christian enterprise, by working in developing countries. In the 1960's and 1970's they lived communally in a farm building. They heard about cohousing and decided that they wanted to grow. They are very concerned about the environment and have a very strong, cohesive community. They enjoy singing and have their own songbook. They have taken American Indian spirituality. They have a shared food system where each adult pays $80 per month and they can eat however much they want. They can also take items from their pantry to their homes such as toothpaste and toilet paper)

Graham then took questions from those present:

Q. What happens if someone wants to leave a cohousing community?
A. The houses are privately owned but there is an agreement that they sell their house in consultation with the community. The community can interview people. Most have a waiting list. People that want to join are often already associate members which means that they are already known to the community.

Q. Where do the children go when they grow up?
A. Generally, children want to do something different from their parents. It is too early to ascertain what will happen in the USA because cohousing is still relatively new, but in Scandinavia where it all began, some children come back and some don't. The communities work hard to recruit young people. The communities movement is strong because people are fed up with the state of the environment.

Q. Do they have problems with their surroundings?
A. A community in Denver had to contend with a plan to build a freeway right next to them. They got active with the surrounding community and they stopped it. There are probably less successful examples. Cohousing members are generally very motivated and political people.
Elsewhere, cohousing communities have been responsible for revitalizing neighbourhoods, lobbying councils to get better services.

Q. What is their connection to their neighbours?
A. They do make connections to their neighbours. They open their common house for use by local community groups. They throw parties for the neighbourhood and invite people to join their common meals. They try to integrate with the surrounding community and with society as a whole.

Q. Is there an umbrella cohousing body?
A. Yes, the Cohousing Association (http://www.cohousing.org/) is run by volunteers with one or two paid positions. It is funded by donations and subscriptions.

* * *

The final part of the presentation was a series of photos of intentional communities that Graham has visited. These were:

a) Anahata, New Zealand
b) Earthhaven, North Carolina, USA
c) Findhorn, Scotland (The community Graham joined in March, 2006)
d) Ganas, New York, USA
e) Twin Oaks, Virginia, USA
f) ZEGG, Germany

by Anton Marks

New Wool Blanket Tears Commune Apart
February 27, 2006 | Issue 42•09 - The Onion

CARIBOU, ME - Residents of the recently disbanded intentional-living community Harmony's Path said Monday that disputes concerning the shared use of a homemade wool blanket caused the utopian society's rapid undoing.

Harmony's Path residents in happier times, before the arrival of the wool blanket.

"We wanted to create a community of peace and social justice based on the elimination of personal property," charter member Michael Schoenkamp said. "However, some of us - particularly those who refused to obey the 'charter members have the blanket at night due to the cold' rule - lost their way. Sadly, those greedy few were able to rend our community asunder."

Based in a hexagonal wood cabin in the isolated backwoods of Maine, the commune's 14 adult and three child members sustained themselves for more than two years by selling almond butter and hammocks at local farmers' markets, and were able to plant and maintain a large vegetable garden and apple orchard until the blanket came between them.

According to Schoenkamp, the blanket, which was woven over the course of several weeks from the shorn fleece of their pet lamb "Walden," initially symbolized the strength and unity of the community that worked together to make it.
"I began to see a little selfishness when we were boiling the cornflowers to dye the blanket," resident Will Fiorentini said. "Kevin [Uhlenbeck], who comes from a very strong paternalistic, Calvinist background, said something about wanting to keep the blanket in his work area, since its creation was his idea."

The commune members decided to vote on where to keep the blanket. The vote, which took place last Saturday, marked the first time in the commune's history that a gathering resulted in shouting.

"Everyone got really upset when John [Abberton] proposed that the blanket be circulated room-to-room in alphabetical order," Fiorentini said. "Actually, I think Paul [Buckner] supported the proposal, but he wasn't allowed to speak, as no one remembered him contributing all that much to the blanket."

Monica Little, a staunch feminist and one of only two adult female Harmony's Path residents, suggested that the comforter should be given to the women. "I believed the women should have the blanket, not to satisfy the sexist idea that we are frail and deserve preferential treatment, but to correct the imbalance of centuries of patriarchal privilege," Little said.
After many prolonged sessions, commune members drew up a blanket rota that charted the blanket's distribution and gave Dylan Farger first turn with it.

"I had hoped things would return to normal the next morning," resident Mitchell Redding said. "Unfortunately, Dylan showed up and began insisting how he should get to keep the blanket an extra night 'because it wasn't cold enough' the night before." Redding added, "I always had a feeling it was a mistake to let a traditional Marxist into our egalitarian, nondenominational community."

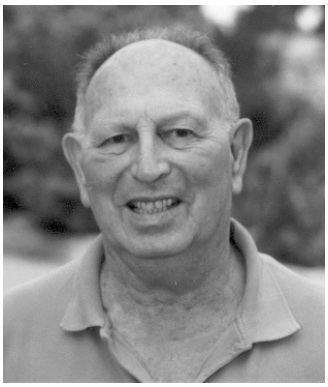
Despite priding itself on accepting individuals of diverse backgrounds, the commune was once again in conflict on the third night, when Desmond Wright, a lifelong naturist with a clothing-optional lifestyle, was refused his turn with the blanket when other members expressed concern that he would "sweat all over it."

According to Horwell, Phillip Gresham, who oversees the community's garden, used the collective's meager savings to purchase a non-organic, mass-manufactured Polarfleece blanket of his own at a local store. "That money was supposed to go into installing a new water-purification system in the coming months," resident Amy Bauer said. "We had never had to oust a member of the commune before, but there was little choice left after Phillip refused to share that synthetic monstrosity with the rest of us."

"Perhaps we were more like-minded in our values and beliefs than we ever realized," Mangum said. "The way we allowed a simple material possession to come between us, utterly destroying any hope of fulfilling our idealistic goal, was, if nothing else, truly harmonious."

KALEIDOSCOPE

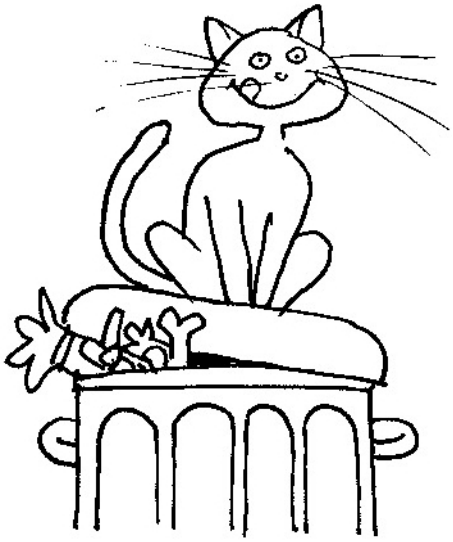
The Communitarian Scene from all Over and Under
Compiled (and partly translated) by Joel Dorkam



The current trend in intentional communities appears to be urban rather than rural, although quite a few seem to be experimenting with some kind of mixture, like half tea, half coffee .... A recent caption in Communities #129, most of which is dedicated to just that topic, caught my attention: "A Home-Grown Ecovillage on our Street". If this doesn't deserve the oxymoron first prize I no longer know what does. Anyway it turns out to be, like so many other arrangements, a kind of compromise between mommy and daddy, namely city-born Eileen and rural-born Jim Shenk. Well, good luck and godspeed to both of you folks!

A Home-Grown Ecovillage on Our Street by Jim Schenk

The seeds of Enright Ridge Eco-Village actually began 31 years ago as a compromise between my wife Eileen, who was city born, and myself, a native of a small rural town. We struggled to find a home that would nourish both of our souls. I wanted a neighborhood that valued green living, with protected land, organic food, resource conservation, alternative energy, and cooperative relationships with happy children and older people. Eileen supported these same values, but insisted that the urban neighborhood she lived in was the perfect location. She pointed out an urban environment offered the best chance for creating a village-like community because of the numbers of people there with proximity to each other, public transportation and options for employment. So we moved to a dead-end street in Cincinnati's Price Hill neighborhood. While Enright Avenue is a half-mile street on a ridge surrounded by 200-plus acres of woods, it's only minutes from downtown Cincinnati and our places of work.



In 1978 Eileen and I founded Imago, a nonprofit educational organization in Price Hill. Our idea was to look at how we would live if we held the Earth and its people as sacred, and offer workshops and conferences about sustainability. Imago eventually purchased eight acres of wooded area about a quarter mile down the street from our house on Enright Avenue, and began an outdoor Earth center which helps 10,000 school children annually connect with the natural world.

In 1993, 15 residents of Price Hill came together to look at how Imago might take a step toward actually walking its talk. We decided to develop a model for revitalizing a transitioning neighborhood into an ecological neighborhood. With suburban sprawl destroying huge tracts of land, we concluded that the human population would be more beneficially located in urban areas.

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Geoph Kozeny on his part wondered, also in Communities #129 of Winter 2005, how many intentional communities are urban, rural or somewhere in between. Having speculated initially on a fifty/fifty split, he found out that in North America the figures are about 40% urban and suburban communities. Kozeny frankly admits having a preference for rural living, although he also enjoys visiting city groups because they, too, have a lot to offer.

THE PERIPATETIC COMMUNITARIAN

The Urban / Rural Spectrum
BY GEOPH KOZENY

Most traits occur on a continuum from urban to rural, with the suburbs and small towns falling somewhere between. For example, the more rural the group, the farther apart the houses and community spaces - the most common exception being rural ecovillages which tend to cluster their buildings to leave more open space for agriculture, woods, conservation, and recreation. Even then, compared to their more urban contemporaries, they tend to be further isolated from their nearest neighbors outside the community.

Similarly, the rural groups usually enjoy cleaner air, and less noise pollution (except when tractors or chainsaws are fired up, or when construction projects are underway). The deep country quiet is especially inspiring at night in the winter, and in the summer the nocturnal sounds of insects, coyotes, and hoot owls can keep a city visitor awake for many hours-while the city's background noise of passing trucks and car alarms often has a similar effect on visitors from the farm. And with low levels of light pollution, on a clear night the rural skies are amazing to behold.

Country kids typically can run around outside and far afield with very little adult supervision, while in the city a tighter rein is usually advisable. Country folks are far more likely to leave the doors unlocked (if they have locks at all) and the keys in the ignition. A fortunate recent trend is that many of the cohousing communities are contained enough that they can also enjoy some of this freedom from worry.

Being more spread out and farther from things in general, people living in rural communities tend to interact more with their fellow community members than do their urban counterparts. A couple of major exceptions to this are the smaller urban collectives where everyone lives under the same roof-sharing meals, bathrooms, and common spaces-and those communities such as Ganas, Goodenough, and Zendik which emphasize everyday interactions and conversations as a central part of their culture.

By now you've probably guessed that I have a preference for rural living, which is true; however I also enjoy visiting city groups because they, too, have a lot to offer. For example, the hardware store is only minutes away, instead of miles, and there are hundreds of amenities near at hand such as bookstores, jazz clubs, museums, and all-night cafes. Being in a population center means there are far more potential customers for a community-owned business. And I've know a lot of folks who moved back to the city from the country because they just weren't meeting enough people of their age group or with shared interests.

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Not surprisingly, the Kibbutz in its early stages went through a similar dilemma. The initial settlers were completely rural-minded, in part by their ideals (back to the earth, back to manual work), in part by stark reality - there existed practically no other way to make a living at the time of their arrival. Nonetheless, many of them came from an urban background and preferred a town-based community life. There were some attempts at urban communitizing, but it soon became apparent that urban lures put too much of a strain on values of equality. Besides, working mostly separately at town jobs lacked the coalescent effect of close rural togetherness. So the early urban kibbutzim either disintegrated (like Efal near Tel Aviv, which became a study and research center) or "converted" to a semi-rural style, like Glil Yam and Ramat Rachel. At present the concept of urban collectives is experiencing a kind of revival here in Israel and by now they are sprouting like flowers in spring. It remains to be seen with what results.

Parke Burgess discovered (anew) that the devil is in the details, whilst trying with only partly success to sort out Needs from Wants - a dichotomy which must sound familiar to any and all members of intentional communities. With unusual depth of perception, P.B. reaches the rather startling conclusion that "No community will thrive without enormous reserves of trust".

Needs and Wants

One of the seven characteristics that defines a community within the Federation of Egalitarian Communities (FEC) is that the community will take care of you - for life. Specifically, the second principle of the FEC states, "Each of the Federation communities assumes responsibility for the needs of its members, receiving the products of their labor and distributing these and all other goods equally, or according to need."

Those familiar with the Marxian formula, "From each according to ability, to each according to need," will recognize the language and intent of this principle. In practice, each federation community has its own way of parsing the notion. Children and the elderly generally work less than adults in their prime. At some communities - I know this is true at Twin Oaks and East Wind - labor quota gradually decreases after adult members reach a certain age, according to an established schedule. Special arrangements are made if an adult member becomes disabled. No one is expected to work more than they are able.

But labor quotas throughout FEC communities tend to be high, demanding enormous energy and commitment from community members. Twin Oaks ranges roughly from 40-50 hours per week for adults in their prime, depending on the time of year. And the work is oftentimes physically intense and exhausting. Even at the Emma Goldman Finishing School, where I live - though quotas are closer to 25-30 hours per week - we find that our quota system demands more than other urban communities we know.

In return, however, all our needs will be met for as long as we remain in the community, possibly 'til death. Thus, in addition to providing food and shelter, FEC communities provide for old age, illness, and disability. Basic daily needs are also met: everything from transportation (cars, train or bus fare, community bikes), clothing and bathroom articles, to telephone and computer access - all within the economic system of each community.

Defining what counts as a need, and should therefore be included in the community "contract" - as opposed

to a mere want - proves the devil in the FEC's details. There is both a practical and an ideological compunction here: because each community must subsist on limited budgets, it is impossible for any of them to guarantee much more than the basics; and because FEC communities explicitly value ecological sustainability and the ideal of egalitarianism, it becomes a matter of principle to avoid the trap of

excessive consumption.

But it's nearly impossible to draw a definitive line between needs and wants, so each case that comes anywhere close to the line needs to be freshly negotiated. This becomes especially sensitive when we are talking about huge life issues, such as what gets covered by the community's healthcare policy, or how much money a community will allot for educating its children. Is that massage a need or a want? Do you really need at professional development workshop? Or that experimental surgical procedure that may (or may not) extend your life at some future time?

These decisions always strain the community in a variety of ways, but especially by raising the all-important issue of trust. No community will thrive without enormous reserves of trust - both the trust of individuals that they will be supported by the community when they really need it, and the trust by the community that individuals won't abuse the collective largesse. In my experience, this trust is being challenged all the time, and both individuals and communities regularly fail to one degree or another.

It seems to me that the effort of developing a deep sense of trust, even as it is regularly betrayed, by continually re-experiencing the restoration of trust out of the jaws of collapse, is a deep part of the work of radically revisioning a better world. The sweat, blood, and tears of this effort represents the body of labor, one might say, working to manifest the ideals dreamed by the utopian mind.

Parke Burgess lives at the Emma Goldman Finishing School in Seattle (www.egft.org,) and is Secretary of the FEC (www.thefec.org) .

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Ruth Wilson (hello there, all the Bang family!) a former member of Kibbutz Gezer, presently living at the Camphill commune of Solborg, Norway, formulated the following report in Camphill Communities of Nov/Dec 2005, entitled "Transformation":

During 2005 a group of about 20 of us gathered together at Grobunn in Norway on three separate occasions to participate in a Camphill Education Course entitled 'Transforming Ourselves, Empowering Each Other'. The subtitle was 'A whole community approach to intimacy, advocacy, power-sharing, relationships, sexuality, resilience and preventing abuse. Creating a joyful culture of respectful, consensual social agreements'.

Phew! There was a whole lot of ground covered there. Our super competent facilitator was Julia Wolfson who kept us on our toes from 9 in the morning till 9 at night. Her imaginative and dynamic use of resources kept us busy, active, attentive, entertained and learning fast. We discussed many topics, in large groups and small, expressed them in pictures, in drama, in laughter and in tears. We kept those in need of support uppermost in our thoughts, words and actions.

Some of us began the course, thinking it was to be primarily about sexuality. But it was so much more than that. It was really about learning how to make choices in life, how to say yes with conviction, how to say no with strength. It was about values and beliefs in our society that create disadvantage. It was about the rights that should be available to every human being. It was about helping people build meaningful relationships and how to avoid abuse. It was about changing attitudes of individuals and of society, about valuing self respect and respect for each other. We had before us a shining example - Camphill Soltane's Mission Statement, which among other things is committed to 'awareness, approaches, practices and methods that uphold the dignity and respect of all people, particularly those of us whose dignity is under threat, and have limits placed on having a sense of power and control over our own destiny'.

We worked with many concrete examples of problems and challenges before us and dealt with practical ways of finding solutions. We tackled many subjects such as Well Being, Choice and Decision Making, Abuse Recognition and Response, Sexuality Education, and Organisational Responsibilities.

We came away from the course feeling enthusiastic and inspired, if not a little apprehensive of the enormous tasks ahead of us. We are the tiny seeds that will go towards creating a truly caring, supportive and respectful society.

Inside Zegg's 2005 Reader we found an "Apology" signed T.H which sounded vaguely familiar to me: "Why are you always so unfriendly?" ask occasional visitors.

"A few words, or better said remarks, about the frequently expressed criticism that some Zegg residents are always so unfriendly. True, a few years ago when I wasn't as yet one 'of those', I sometimes thought to myself: "these arrogant, unfriendly Zeggies! Hardly are you out of the seminar with them, and already it's over with the heartiness and the hugging, they even don't greet you any more".

Well, and now? Now I am in fact also 'such a one' even one of the worst kind, that practically doesn't ever greet. Shame upon my head! And I actually was so full of good intentions and conviction, not to end up like that - as a non-greeter. I even consider it as nice to be living in a guest center and I am glad when as much people as possible arrive here. However I still remain a human being, indeed one with a limited capacity for contact. Just consider: there are at Zegg only a total of 3-4 officially guestless weeks yearly. During the remaining time we permanently get, at least for weekends, between 30 to 100 guests here, which I meet at least at the two main meals, and certainly half of them additionally once a day on the place. Would I now greet each one of them with a clear gesture and perhaps a little chat with those whom I already carried a more or less interesting, perhaps even intimate conversation - then we arrive daily at about (let's take 50 guests and 50 residents) 250 greetings and around 30 to 40 chats, In addition to 10-15 'intermediate informations' and 5-10 'extremely urgent appointments' which reach me anyway on my route. Poor me, I believe I would have to pack my suitcases sometime. So if somebody wonders, why I suddenly greet him on the place - no matter, it just may happen".

And finally, a few "Letters to God" by some sweet American kids who apparently got a gift of smart insight - as published in the Katholische Integrierte Gemeindes "Heute in Kirche und Welt" (No mention of origin, sorry!).

Dear God
I bet it is
Very hard
For you to
Love all of
everybody in the
Whole world
There are only
4 people in our
Family and I
can never do it.

Nan

Dear God,
Did you mean for
giraffe to look
like that or
was it an accident.

Norma

We read Thos. Edison made light.
But in Sunday School They said
You did it.
So I bet he stoled
Your idea.
Sincerely,
DONNa

Dear God,

Maybe Cain and Abel
would not kill each so much
if they had their own rooms.
It works with my brother

Larry

Hope to hear from you - .... Yalla Bye, Shalom, Joel Dorkam.

Status of the German Communal Movements:

(Paper by Jens Herrmann, a visitor from Germany, presented to the ICD, 2006)

There is a wide spectrum of communitarian projects in Germany.

1. The "Communes"

- Mostly projects with common housing, common work, common economy, common decision-making
- Mostly with an ecological interest
- Most located in the countryside
- Average size around 15-20 people
- Some much bigger with up to 75 people (Niederkaufungen)
- Split up into two main types: the spiritual and the political (around "Kommuja" Magazine)
- A large overlap because the spiritual communes have become more and more politically active. Indeed, many are very problematic - some are authoritarian and even neo-fascist.
- The ones more to the left politically generally directly oppose the nuclear family structure.
- Most of them were founded in the 1970/80's. For this see (but in German): http://www.grueneliga-berlin.de/rabe_ralf/serien/gemeinschaft.html
- Some new interesting projects:
  The urban commune "Alla Hopp" in Bremen has around 25 people in a common economy, without common work, but politically very active (anti-racist and anti-fascist)
  The commune in Waltershausen (Thurinia) bought a old factory in a small town, now around 20 people, some founders came from other projects (like Niederkaufungen)
  Cooperative in Haina (also in Thurinia), politically very active, people who are directly opposed to the capitalistic lifestyle and work-system.

2. The Ecovillage –Projects:

- Located in the countryside, mainly in "lost areas" in the ex-border area between the western and the communist world.
- Mixture of ecology, spirituality and a type of common economy
- Economy is not as communal as in some communes - only in some elements.
- Solidarity is less prevalent than in communes – includes more private individualistic lifestyles
- Projects very different from one another
- Wider range of lifestyles (from family housing to commune-housing or in vehicles)
- Leading ones: Ökodorf Siebenlinden and Lebensgut Pommeritz

3. The Common-Housing projects:

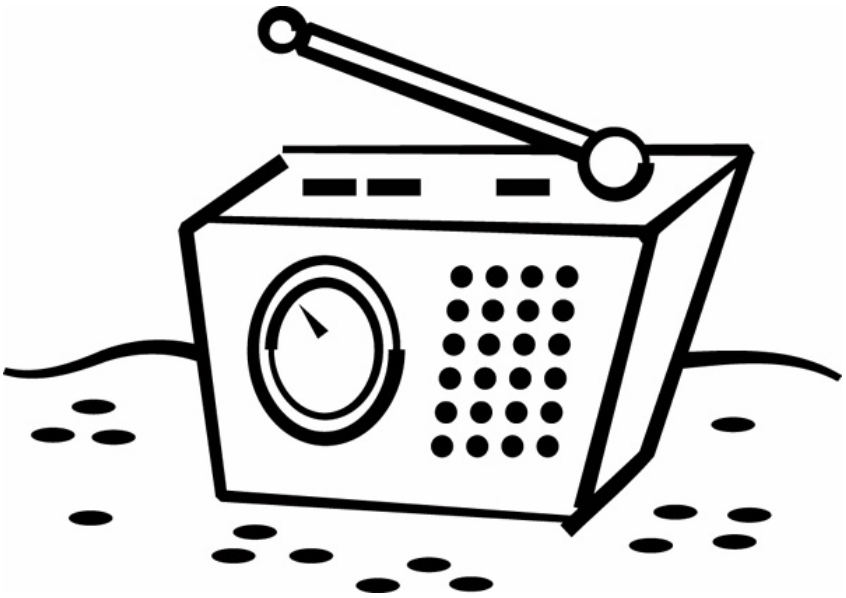
- One can find them in nearly every German big town, but mainly in Berlin, Freiburg, Hamburg
- Wide range of communities.
- Mostly no common economy and no common work
- Mostly individualistic economics, but sometimes social activism projects with immigrants or poor people.
- Main interest: House ownership by the renters - lower rents, physical spaces for running social and political initiatives in the house, space for common lifestyles (big living-communities, with shared kitchens and bathrooms as well as common rooms - for party, sports etc.)
- In Berlin more than 100 project-houses.
- Mostly organized as "Genossenschaften" (cooperatives)
- Sometimes there are communes inside existing house projects, and also places for production or businesses (like pubs), but mostly non-commercial or in cooperatives.
- The most popular model of the last year and the shooting-star of the German alternative housing scene is the "Freiburger Mietshäusersyndikat" (www.syndikat.org) with about 48 projects and about 730 people living in the various projects. Interesting: the aim is to deactivate private ownership and to make it impossible to sell the houses. On the other hand the solidarity fund into which each project pays is gradually getting bigger. It seems to work quiet well.

Welcome to "Kibbutz Shorts", where we discover what's new on the Kibbutz in an update from around Israel.

Compiled mainly from the Kibbutz weeklies by Yoel Darom,
Kibbutz Kfar Menachem

It Started With A Radio

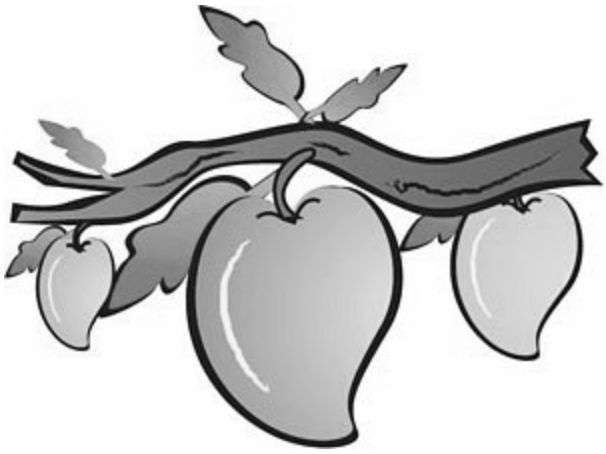
During the Second World War, many Kibbutz members volunteered for active service in the British Army, not so much for a love of Britain but out of a deep-seated drive to fight the Nazi forces. When they came home after the war, some of them brought home a little present: a simple, small radio-set. Some saw in it an advance from the most primitive conditions of Kibbutz life of that era, but others were up in arms. The introduction of private property has only one meaning: this is the end of the Kibbutz!



As Fritz Vilmar writes (p 24), this was only the beginning of a chain of constant change, especially as the young communities came slowly out of their state of poverty and became more "affluent": from tents to wooden barracks and (much later) real concrete houses, from meager meals to a rather decent menu in the common dining room, and a vast increase in the monetary budget that each member received. Is this the reason for the gradual abandonment of the basic principles of complete sharing and equality and of comprehensive mutual responsibility? For 60 years the Kibbutz used to be the shining example of "realizing a socialist society", but then the third and fourth generation steered the Kibbutzim in a different direction and have managed to carry with them a large number of Kibbutzim. How and why? This should be a great subject for research. Who is going to take this upon him/herself?

New Trend in The Israeli Communes Movement

On the other hand, something different is happening in Israel, on the opposite extreme of social development: hundreds of young people (only partly Kibbutz children) banding together to form new communes. Some of them go the" "traditional" way of building new rural settlements, but most choose to settle in towns, in the most disadvantaged neighbourhoods, to become central in the spheres of education, social consciousness and activity for young and old, while they themselves keep studying, at least one day a week, education or art, philosophy or linguistics, dancing or photography. Most of these communities are still in their first years of existence and we do not know where they are heading, but the beginnings are very promising and many Kibbutzniks identify deeply with this trend, help them where they can and wish them every success.

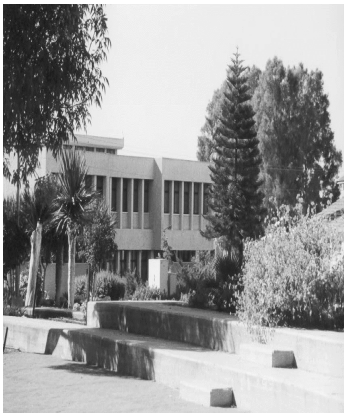


Coexistence and Tropical Fruit

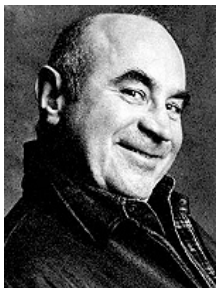
In the Arava (the southernmost and extremely dry part of Israel) a new project was launched recently: a joint program, mainly for Jordanian farmers, led by expert Israeli Kibbutz members, for growing tropical fruit for the European market. This project facilitates close cooperation between farmers of both sides of the border, but also trains many of the Jordanians for growing quality products for choosy customers on the continent. Most Kibbutzim in the Arava concentrate on organic food, which attracts more and more customers in the country (and for export, too).

Activism in the Community

The older students of the Tzafit high school on Kibbutz Kfar Menachem have volunteered this year to work and play with the students of a school for orphans in a nearby township. They bring with them to those disadvantaged kids not only assistance in their studies but mainly close person-to-person contact, and - through games, singing and dancing - a host of emotional and spiritual experiences. The effect on the "tutors" would seem no less important: the deepening of their involvement in wider Israeli society, which Kibbutz children are often lacking.



Tzafit High School



Bob Hoskins on Kibbutz

When the British character actor Bob Hoskins visited Israel, he insisted on touring Kibbutz Zikim, and it turned out that he remembered every comer of that place where he spent time (and worked hard in the cowshed) some decades ago. But the Kibbutzniks did not recognize him right away: they remembered a young man with a head full of flowing locks.

A Response To Kibbutz Changes

"For us veterans it is very hard to go through all those partings from what used to be basics of Kibbutz life: three (free!) meals a day in the common dining room, the weekly General Assembly, the Kibbutz laundry, young foreign volunteers, weddings to which all of us were invited as well as joint festivities", wrote one woman at Kibbutz Bet Keshet. "Most of us miss these parts of community life badly and we remember them with much longing. But this seems to be the price we have to pay for the changes in Kibbutz life, which we ourselves decided upon. Is this really the much-hoped-for progress? We'll have to recognize that the future is here, occurring now ... ".

Kibbutz General Assembly back in the day!

21st-century commune

From the Globe and Mail, Canada

26/05/06

Roberts Creek Cohousing

ROBERTS CREEK, B.C. - It's a sunny day in Roberts Creek, and Kurt Grimm is helping landscape the new common house. He takes off his gloves to shake hands, then heads to a conical pile of fresh topsoil and sits down on the dirt. An associate professor of earth and ocean sciences at the University of British Columbia, Mr. Grimm doesn't miss a beat when asked what drew him to Roberts Creek Cohousing (RCC).

"Climate change and ecosystem collapse are a symptom of a deeper social problem," he says, squinting into the sun. "The highly individuated lifestyle we're leading is driving the problem. It's the huge-footprint lifestyle of the wealthy north, and we moved here to get away from it, toward authentic rather than material fulfilment."

He considers for a moment, then smiles. "Of course, that's not what everyone would say we're doing. My wife would say we're doing this because it's great for us and our kids."

The Grimm family is one of 31 at RCC, an intentional community in Roberts Creek on the Sunshine Coast. It's the first rural co-housing project in Canada, and one of about 40 such communities established in North America. Completed in December of 2004, RCC is also one of the newest developments.

Homes are clustered to encourage personal interaction, in this case on 35- by 98-foot lots around a 2,900-square-foot central common house (with a kitchen, children's room, guest suite, office, laundry and - last but not least - a movie room with a big-screen projector). Decisions are made by consensus, and houses are privately owned in a bare-land strata, fee-simple arrangement.

"We thought once we had everything built, the hard work was behind us. But the real big job is sustaining the community, so it doesn't fall back into that abyss of just a bunch of houses and folks not communicating. It takes work", says Gary Kent, an instructor at Inside Passage, a fine woodworking school based in Roberts Creek. Natives of the Sunshine Coast for close to 30 years, Mr. Kent and his partner Stacia Leech were the originators of the RCC project.

The central neighbourhood lane is mandated as car-free, and on this weekend afternoon is alive with people wielding shovels, rakes and wheelbarrows, as well as kids returning from the Sunday hockey game in the lower cul-de-sac. While the presence of neighbours is delightful, says Mr. Kent, it can be challenging.

"The balance of individual and community is always in your face here. We used to live on a property by ourselves, so it was a challenge to adjust, looking out our front window seeing people all the time. It's not for everyone; it's quite cheek by jowl."

Ms. Leech agrees that living in co-housing is not always a picnic, but is confident the work will pay off. "People are dealing with the major stress of moving and coming into an alien community. It really skews the first couple of years. But we're beginning to see the potential now that those ripples are settling out. The rewards are as intense as the challenges. That's what keeps me here, and keeps me in community."

In the following two articles commissioned by CALL, we hear from two veteran members of the same kibbutz, and discover how each of them relate differently to the changing face of their community.

Translated by Dina Bookman

Daily Life On A Privatized Kibbutz
By Eli Avrahami, Kibbutz Palmachim

A stranger happening upon a privatized kibbutz probably would not even be aware of the difference between the place he is visiting and a traditional kibbutz. However, that would be true at first sight only, for shortly after that, he would notice that the institution once considered the heart of the kibbutz, the dining hall, is empty. No-one has come in to eat. At the most, maybe the dining hall is open for lunch, and most of the diners are strangers – passing tourists, and hired workers who are employed in the various branches in the 'village'. (I find it hard to use the term 'kibbutz'.) Usually, tucked away in the corner are a handful of kibbutz veterans, the elderly, who find it difficult to cook their main meal at home, and come in for the one daily communal meal, hungry for a little social interaction. General meetings are few and far between and when they occur, they are reminiscent of a shareholders' meeting, the annual report given by the directorate. An exchange of words and ideas has become a rarity at these meetings. Also the clubhouse is closed. In some 'villages', a cultural club is open for the elderly in the mornings, but again, there is no multi-generational contact, it appears to be more of a 'reservation' for the elderly, who are separated from the rest of the society.

Kibbutz Palmachim

The rest of the population in the village/kibbutz can no longer be described as a closed support system. Most of the work-age population have been banished from their homes - their village, and have been forced to find employment elsewhere, where they create new social networks, replacing the previous social network that existed in their home – kibbutz.

The privatized kibbutz's premises are characterized by many spacious parking lots, in order to make enough space for the abundance of private vehicles which serve the members who leave the village and travel to work every morning. As the procession of members working off the kibbutz flows out each morning, there is a trickle of parents from the neighbouring area, flowing in the opposite direction. They are bringing their children to be educated in the kibbutz educational system, particularly in the pre-school system. Even the privatized / new-style / changing kibbutz seems to have retained its name as a place which provides superb education.

In the corner of the parking lot you may see a small group of people, again – mainly elderly, who are waiting for a lift into the doctors' clinic in the neighbouring town. This transportation is one of the few services that the community continues to provide for the few members who are unable to purchase a car of their own. However the members must pay for this service, be it a full or subsidized price.

Privatized kibbutzim which still manage to collect a community tax from their members (a progressive tax, graded according to their income level, although in many places the progressive tax is very limited) continue to cultivate the gardens and keep the public areas clean. They are not overwhelmed by neglect, as happens in the kibbutzim which are unable to collect their communal taxes, or their taxes are minimal. However, it is not uncommon to find that in places where neglect is rampant in the public domain, construction is flourishing in the private domain: individuals enlarge their houses, each according to what they can afford, and each according to what they need or desire. On

the margins of the regular apartments, or in an extra room in the enlarged houses, is a washing machine. If you wander through the living areas on a Saturday morning you will be accosted by the smell of soap powder and the sound of busy dryers. This odour swaps the delightful fragrance of French toast on Saturday morning, so characteristic of the old-style, traditional kibbutz dining room.

Eli Avrahami is a veteran member of Kibbutz Palmachim, a social scientist and a fellow of Yad Tabenkin Kibbutz Research Institute. He is co- editor of the Hebrew journal "Mifne – Forum for Social Issues".

Kibbutz Palmachim is situated on the Mediterranean coast, south of Tel Aviv. It was established in 1949 by a group of young men and women who had served voluntarily in Israel's War of Independence. The young settlers wished to work in agriculture and fishing and build a communal home. In Palmachim there are presently about 260 members, 150 children and a few residents who rent apartments. There is no longer any fishing, and the kibbutz makes its money from some agriculture, a pre-cast concrete factory and many salaries brought in by members who work outside of the kibbutz. The kibbutz has been privatized and has a "social security network".

Palmachim is about to accept approximately 50 families from those who were evacuated from the Gaza Strip. This is seen as a positive step, creating certain social and economic opportunities, but not without certain inherent risks.

Changes and Privatization on Kibbutz Palmachim
By Tzvi Zahavi, Kibbutz Palmachim

Palmachim's major crisis occurred when our economic mainstay collapsed (ed: due to a recession in the country) and no alternative was found. We accumulated large debts and couldn't see any way out of the situation. It was not a one-time phenomenon, but a process that continued for several years, during which time we did not conduct discussions with the members in order to look for ways to earn a living by developing new initiatives. Relationships between the members became progressively more and more strained, and attempts to make some changes were met with difficulties, disagreements and opposition.

Establishing Palmachim

Criticism directed at the management was received with intolerance, inflexibility and intransigence. Construction was almost totally frozen, we started to make cutbacks due to the lack of funding and this caused a lot of tension and anxiety. One can not ignore the fact that as the public treasury emptied out; private individuals appeared with their private kitty suddenly filling up, due to the existence of previously undeclared external sources of funds. Severe cracks appeared in the egalitarian ideology and no leadership arose to analyze the situation and to involve the general public in the problems, while at the same time truly listening to their feelings, and most importantly drawing practical conclusions which the new situation required.

The general feeling was that we had to completely change our whole life-style, and urgently find sources of income before the banks closed Palmachim's financial tap. In addition to that, as a result of discussions with many of the grown-up sons and daughters of Palmachim, it became clear to us, that we would have to implement some major changes, if we wanted them to return to live on the kibbutz. At this stage, I personally defined the situation as "*Either make a fundamental change, or be left with a retirement village*".

At a certain stage, a team was chosen in order to lead the process of change. The team received professional advice from specialized consultants, and after much hard work,

which from time to time drew slanderous accusations, the proposed changes were approved by the legally required majority, and also received the stamp of approval from the Registrar of the Cooperative Societies. The proposal included changing one of the most fundamental conventions: *saying Yes to differential salaries.* We had never imagined that this would happen. The process of the change involved placing the responsibility for

one's livelihood on each individual. We put in place a social security network and community taxes in order to ensure the continuing existence of education, health-care services, mutual assistance and a few other details that stemmed from the move away from the traditional value system.

I won't attempt to relate to all the details and all the unsolved problems. The process of change has not yet ended, and it requires continuing communication within the community, comprehensive information and explanations which must reach every individual, every family, the children and the youth. We have to hold discussion groups together with counselors and consultants. For sure, we have lost some of the beautiful things we had in the past, but some of them were lost well before the big change. The fact that people are focused mainly on their own private lives and that of their families, is not something that has occurred recently as a result of the change. The members of Kibbutz Palmachim, which is now defined as a "new-style kibbutz", have an obligation to continue to search for the balance between social togetherness, and the concern for the individual and his problems, and all of that has to be connected to the livelihood, and there is nothing new in that. We will have to keep working on social solidarity, we will have to nurture it as a precious asset, and not relinquish it. Moses said, "*Man doth not live by bread only*" and the Sages of the Talmud phrased it as, "*If there is no flour, there will be no Torah (Learning) and if there is no Torah, there will be no flour*", and Hillel the Elder said, "*If I am not for myself – who will be for me? And if only for myself, what am I? And if not now, when?*"

We must continue to look for a balance. A healthy community, just like every family, must strive and search for the balance, because imbalance no doubt will cause damage.

Summary

Privatization is not a vision. Palmachim was thrown into this necessity. It is a result of the old system failing, and the need to try out a new system. The reasons for the failure of the old system have not been examined in Palmachim, and there has been no open public self-criticism. It is important to analyze the past system, in order to give the new system a chance to succeed. We must re-examine our goals, define and create a new realistic vision. It must be a vision with a good chance of success, which gives us hope. It must include components of demographic growth, social and economic development including mutual assistance. A realistic vision would be to create a better future for the people who chose in the past and will choose in the future to live together, not only to live in the privatized territory of Kibbutz Palmachim. This is particularly important in light of the complex process of legally handing over apartments to members and dividing up the estate. Let us not make mistakes. Let us not dismantle something that is whole and beautiful, into parts where any connection between them is purely coincidental.

Tzvi Zahavi, a founding member of Kibbutz Palmachim, was in the past a ceramics teacher and educator. He is still active in the local archaeological museum which he directed.

Inviting Anarchy Into My Home

NY TIMES 9th March By LIZ SEYMOUR

ON Aug. 1, 2002, I left behind the comfortably roomy semicircle marked "married-couple household" on the Census Bureau pie chart and slipped into an inconspicuous wedge labeled "two or more people, nonfamily." Having separated from my husband of 28 years the day before, I opened our three-bedroom 1927 Colonial Revival house to a group of men and women less than half my age. Overnight, the home I had lived in for 12 years became a seven-person anarchist collective, run by consensus and fueled by punk music, curse-studded conversation and food scavenged from Dumpsters.

Liz Seymour, in white, sitting beneath a collection of hitchhiking signs, began an experiment in group living at age 52. Five of her six housemates are pictured; the youngest is Skye Tull, 6.

Now, faced with the prospect of becoming a 52-year-old single mother to a teenage boy and the challenge of supporting us both, I panicked. Trying to imagine how I could make it work, I found my mind turning to a collective house in Oregon where Isabell, my older daughter, had lived the summer before, and to a group of young anarchist artists and musicians in Greensboro whom I knew through both of my daughters.

After Isabell came home from college an anarchist herself, I began to put aside my preconceptions about these people — as disorderly, violent and destructive — and to see them as a community dedicated to replacing hierarchy with consensus and cooperation. (Isabell once described them as Quakers who swear a lot.) Over time I found myself drawn to their hopeful view that people know best what is best for them and to their determination, naïve or not, to build a better world right away. Anarchism, at least as practiced here, seemed to be more about building community gardens and making your own fun than about black bandannas and confrontations with the riot police (although it was about those things, too).

Amid the chaos of my own life I wondered if this approach to living might have something in it for me. Unconventional as it was, I figured it couldn't be any worse than struggling to pay the mortgage and being Justin's mother on my own.

So Justin and I entered a microeconomy in which it is possible to live not just comfortably, but well, on $500 a month. When we pooled our skills in our new household, we found that we had what we needed to design a Web page, paint a ceiling or install a car stereo. Sharing services and tools with people outside the house saved us thousands of dollars a year.

Every Sunday it is someone's turn to fix dinner while the rest of us sweep and mop, with Al Green or the Pixies blasting from the kitchen stereo. Since the dining room has been turned into a bedroom (as have the downstairs study and a small upstairs room that was my office), we eat on the screened-in side porch or in the backyard under the crape myrtle tree when the weather is warm, or around the kitchen table or in the living room when it is cool.

On Tuesday night we hold the weekly house meeting. It is surprisingly helpful to know who has a headache, who just fell in love, who is sleepy. More than one set of roommates have blown apart over dishes piled up in the sink and wet towels left on the bathroom floor; then again, so have quite a few nuclear families. We talk things out.

I have friends who tell me they could not live the way I do. I believe them. The constant sound of footsteps on the stairs, the coffee cups in the sink, the mysterious things in the refrigerator that no one claims, the sheer intensity some days of so many personalities rubbing up against one another, is not for everyone. But then neither are more conventional living arrangements. For me, a household of friends — more loosely bound than a family but tied together by loyalty, affinity and shared space — satisfies a need for kinship and companionship that did not end when my family did.

Kibbutz - Idea in Danger

by Fritz Vilmar (translated by Yoel Darom)

When we look at the Kibbutz today, let us not forget that between 1910 and 1948 the Kibbutz played a decisive role of pure self-defense. This has to be stressed, especially in view of the 'leftist' anti-Kibbutz ideologies which worship the Arab presentations without the slightest reservation ...

The "existential crisis" that the Kibbutz movement has been going through for the last two decades does not pivot only around the demand for more individualization and liberalization of Kibbutz life. After all, this ongoing confrontation has been a constant companion of all Kibbutzim from the first days on, when pure collectivists got all excited over the "individual luxury" of comrades who brought a tea kettle into their tents. Later stages of this trend brought with them a telephone, a T.V. set and lately even a private car!

In view of the melting-away of more and more collective regimentation, I have often heard the question raised, mainly by veterans: "Is this still a Kibbutz?". So I put up a counter-question: "What actually is the basic principle of the Kibbutz?". An intensive spiritual debate brings up as the basic principle: EACH ACCORDING TO HIS/HER ABILITY, TO EACH ACCORDING TO HIS/HER NEEDS". And this means absolute separation of your contribution to the general income of the community from your own part of it: everyone works for the common pocket as well as you are able to - and society lets you and all others have their fair share.

Fritz Vilmar

But this seems to be, today, the "wrong" base in the eyes of the "reformers" in the Kibbutz movement, who succeeded to pull over to their side 30-40% (ed: many more than this) of the Kibbutzim in Israel. The introduction of differential wages and private property, no more rotation in high-up positions, less and less solidarity in the communal caretaking of members and high salaries for the managers, all this is now being accepted on these Kibbutzim.

With these capitalist elements of inequality, of profit-orientation of the individual and the re-introduction of class and leadership, I see the poisoning of Kibbutz life, a deadly crisis of the Kibbutz movement. Wherever these radical changes were introduced - by the way, with no striking economic success - it is, in my eyes, not a Kibbutz anymore, even if that is what they keep calling themselves.

Excerpted from KursKontakte, Eurotopia, March 2006. The writer, FRITZ VILMAR has been active in Berlin, for many years, researching and writing about alternative strategies and ways of democratization.

News from Damanhur, Italy

Observations on health

A new scheme has been proposed by the [Community] Health Center to assist everyone in maintaining their health. Each citizen will receive a self-observation form to compile every month for a year. The form contains 11 categories of observation to carry out in order to monitor their body.

The scheme is designed to help everyone to become more aware of the condition of their health and anticipate any problems before they become of serious concern.

Many Damanhurians took a trip to Turin during the Winter Olympic Games to join in the party atmosphere and attend some of the sports events, concerts and exhibitions.

It was interesting to see 'Magic Turin' transformed into an international arena; the roads around the Egyptian Museum turned into newly paved walking streets and art installations in all the piazzas. It was easy to feel at home in this new international and artistic Turin, it seemed almost an echo of the direction Damanhur is taking through its association with the Club of Budapest, Ministries for Peace, the Conacreis Association, and the Italian Green Party, not to mention artistic exchange with Rumania through 'Operation Smile', new links with Dubai and Denmark and Damanhurian fashion at Prêt a Porter in Paris.

The Damanhur Crea Conference Centre is also playing its part in this increasingly international climate.

Damanhur is no longer seen as a 'community' in the sense of the 1960's word but as a model of a sustainable eco-society. It has been constructed with the best renewable energy around, that of human beings: living proof that shared spiritual ideals can produce extraordinary results if applied on a practical level. We enjoy turning our dreams into reality, it is a challenge, it is fun and it brings hope to others who are seeking to realize theirs. Turin dreamed of being reborn as an international Olympic city and despite the difficulties, the delays and the obstacles, it succeeded. Damanhur's dream is a different one but like that of Turin, it is being realized with the help of people who share a common aim and who, like the performers of the opening ceremony, are willing to work as one to inspire the creation of a better future.

Uat Uati in Paris

The Damanhurian fashion house Uat Uati will be showing their winter collection 2006-2007 at 'Prêt à Porter' in Paris next month. On display for visitors, their elegant range of dresses, separates and scarves in hand painted silk.

The use and abuse of television

The Head of the Way of Education, Iride Pistacchio has produced a guide for Nucleos on the use of television with regard to children of different ages.

Suggestions arising out of the leaflet are welcomed and everyone is invited to contribute comments on the subject as part of the public debate.

Maagal Hakvutsot (lit. 'The Circle of Groups') Creative Arts Gathering

Around 80 people, every one a member of a communal group somewhere in Israel, gathered recently for a half-day Creative Arts Gathering in Tel Aviv.

The subject of the meeting was: Culture and creativity in the communal group, communal group creativity and creativity of their members, the influence of the communal group on the general culture in Israel and the cultural dialogue that exists between the communal groups and wider Israeli society.

By 9am most people had already arrived, and we were tucking in to the very tasty homemade cakes and biscuits (art in themselves!). It had been six months since the last gathering of this forum and it was lovely to catch up with people and hear news from all the communes that were represented.

When the coffees were finished, we were invited to view the exhibition of the creations of members of the Maagal. There were two large rooms full of poetry, photography, ceramics, paintings, sketches, music, dolls and even decorative cakes. The artists were all on hand and were more than happy to chat about their compositions. It was overwhelming to discover the depth of talent and creativity of people living communally in Israel.

Just after ten am, the first round of Workshops started. I didn't choose the workshop entitled: Group creativity: The cultural dialogue that is conducted by the [communal] groups and their members with Israeli Society.

Instead, I chose to attend the session looking at the contribution of Judaism to the [communal] group's culture and the contribution of the [communal] group to Jewish culture. Esti and Uri were the facilitators, both from communes in Jerusalem (Esti is from a relatively new community and Uri lives in a much older community which has an interesting mix of both religious and secular members). During the workshop, we looked at various examples of resources that have been written by communities for the purpose of celebrating Jewish festivals and life-cycle events. An eclectic mix of traditional texts, songs, contemporary poetry and passages written by members of the communities themselves (and quotes by Karl Marx!) had been thoughtfully brought together to create meaningful ceremonies and holidays.

At eleven-thirty, the workshops finished, and people wandered back to the brunch buffet table and partook in more homemade food. Each group had contributed by bringing something. We feasted on salads, dips, quiche, bread, cheese etc etc

At twelve, the second round of workshops were starting. I decided to pass on the dance and contact session, so too the workshop on the meaning of creativity and culture in the life of the group, run by Maor from a community in the desert town of Be'er

Sheva. Instead I chose a session on the Jewish festival of Tu Bishvat (the Jewish New Year for trees – an ecological / environmental festival). Reut and Neta from the Kibbutz Judaism Centre, ran this session, talking about the development of the festival and what it means to us today. The discussion went in interesting directions, especially when we asked the question as to why the communal movement in Israel, on the whole, is not as environmentally aware and active as communal movements abroad?

When these workshops ended, everyone in attendance gathered together to reflect back in the morning, make announcements and say their goodbyes. Another thoroughly enjoyable and successful gathering of the Maagal Hakvutsot. I'm already looking forward to the next one in the summer.

Anton Marks

RICOCHET

Ricochet are a TV production company who are currently developing a documentary series which will follow a new self sufficient community being set up. They have earmarked several possible sites in Italy and France, which range from derelict medieval villages to 160 acre plots with 4 or 5 farmhouses in need of renovation. These sites all have great potential and could provide a new community with a great quality of life.

Now they're looking for someone to front the series, someone who could act as the leader of this new community, someone who could instigate the financing of the project and then source and bring in other families or groups to buy into the project. They will then all move to continental Europe full-time, start renovations and build the community from scratch. The whole process will be filmed for the series, over a year to 18 months. They want to talk with people who have a really strong vision and the ability to make it a reality. They would have to invest a substantial amount of time and money into the project and it would become their new lives. The series is in the early stages, but they are anticipating starting full production soon, hopefully to film next year. If you feel this challenge is for you, please get in touch with James Christie-Miller on 0207 251 6966 or email james.christiemiller@ricochet.co.uk

Announcement taken from the diggers and dreamers website – the guide to communal living in Britain. http://www.diggersanddreamers.org.uk/

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