

C.A.L.L.

Communes A + Large Letter



INTERNATIONAL
COMMUNES DESK



YAD TABENKIN



No. 31

Spring 2009

Dear Readers,

Inter-communal dialogue is something we value deeply at C.A.L.L.: Indeed, it is our *raison d'être*. It therefore pleases me greatly to share this issue with you, since it has an *abundance* of original articles where 'community meets community'.



We have pieces describing the *joy of discovery* experienced by those visiting communities, especially those who are community members themselves: Leor Shapiro, from a commune in Israel, visits Zendik Farm in the USA; two ex-members of Twin Oaks travel to Europe, visiting numerous communities, looking for pointers to help them form a new community back in the USA; and Alexia Demetriou reports on her visits to six communities in the UK.

In addition, we bring you examples of co-operation and *cross-pollination* – community to community: We hear about how the Shalom Mission Communities interact and support one another; how Damanhur in Italy both receives and sends delegations from/to communities in Portugal, Germany and elsewhere in Italy; and we take a look at the *re-emergence* of the co-operative idea in Israel and see how it is connected to the International Co-operative movement.

Did you know that one in every three bites of the food we eat - from fruits, berries, vegetables, nuts and seeds - is the result of pollination?

Spring is upon us and nature can always teach us a thing or two. C.A.L.L. is a platform for communal cross-pollination: the confluence of ideas and experiences that we can discover from the diversity of the communal scene.

You can still send us your suggestions, corrections, contributions and retributions to the usual email address,

Here's to a joyful spring,

Anton
anton@kyovel.org
www.communa.org.il

CONTENTS

- 3
Ganas, USA
- 4
The Community Project, UK
- 6
What our community friends *really* mean (Part II)
- 8
The Co-operative Idea, Israel
- 9
Zendik Farm, USA
- 11
Communities Tour, Europe
- 12
Kaleidoscope by Joel Dorkam
- 17
Kibbutz Shorts
- 19
Emerald Forest
- 20
Damanhur, Italy
- 22
Keystone Ecological Urban Center, USA
- 24
Osho Tapoban, Nepal
- 26
Communities Tour, UK



Ganas Community, located on Staten Island in New York, has a weekly newspaper from which the following snippets have been culled.

ONE SHARED DINNER CONVERSATION

One evening a couple of weeks ago, a few Ganasians talked together at dinner about something of common interest. Afterwards I commented on how relaxing I found it, to sit in the dining room with just one conversation happening. It had never occurred to me before that talking with a bunch of people could be easier sometimes than talking one to one. This way of being together is a tradition that we practiced at every dinner when I first came to Ganas, and I miss it. I arranged, as part of my birthday events, to talk Saturday morning, about how we might arrange to have single-conversation dinners more often. We'll talk about my and other people's wishes, the obstacles, and what it might take to facilitate a dinner-time focus. — *Peggy*

SOMETIMES I HATE MY KITCHEN

... And it grieves me to say that because I love the kitchen in my house. I honestly think it is my second favorite common space at Ganas. The first is the porch but when the weather is bad it is no fun. The dish sponge smells worse than the garbage can and it's less than a week old. People use it to wipe up food and then don't rinse it, don't wring it out ... so it stinks. After I use it I spend five minutes trying in vain to wash the smell off my hand. There are often dirty pans on the stove for hours, even days, which is just so obviously uncool I can't believe it happens. Uncovered, unlabeled, half eaten dishes of food in the fridge? Charming. And the dishwasher. Ah yes. It's not rocket science to load a dishwasher. Plates march two by two down the aisle on the bottom rack. Cups form a delightful promenade down each side of the top rack and the bowls stroll single file between them. Pots, pans, and oversized bowls, as well as cooking utensils? Well, the manufacturer of the dishwasher could tell you where to put them but he wouldn't be taking into account the fact that those items get used a dozen times every day and the only considerate thing to do for your housemates is

to wash them by hand and put them back where someone else can use them.

Oh ... and while we're on the subject, it may not be strictly necessary to rinse dishes before putting them in the dishwasher, but the food you leave on plates doesn't magically vanish. It either gets baked to the plate (noodle fragments and rice are likely to do this) or it falls to the floor of the dishwasher where it rots, stinks and draws roaches.

I doubt my house is the only place these things happen. C'mon guys. Your mom ain't here to clean up after you! — *Catherine*

GANAS RETREAT REPORT

We had a retreat all this past week, with a summary discussion on Sunday. During most of the time we shared our individual visions for Ganas and for ourselves. On Sunday we had a brainstorming session wherein we pulled together the themes that had emerged during the week into a set of general topics. Throughout the next few months we will take up these topics during planning sessions for further discussion.

Neither the list nor the discussion is in any particular order. We've started by talking about how to transform planning meetings themselves.

1. Transforming self, group, and world
 2. Work for peace, starting with ourselves
 3. Relationship to the wider world outside Ganas
 4. Relationship to bringing more people in more.
 5. Relationship to children
 6. Relationship to people who work inside Ganas
 7. Relationship to each other in every interaction
 8. Relationship to dreams and visions
 9. Relationship to oneself (personal transformation)
 10. Relationship to others through activities
 11. Relationship to our physical space
 12. Relationship to others in Planning
 13. Bringing people together within community
- Come to Planning, write, comment, discuss, participate, think, dream, propose, create, volunteer, join others' projects, start a project of your own.... How can we invigorate our Ganas community and our lives? — *Jessica*



Cohousing is the new name for commune living

From The Sunday Times - July 20, 2008

By Lucy Denyer

Fancy communal living, but want a home of your own? Co-housing could be the answer. Every evening, John Franklin, 49, who works for a management consultancy in the City, takes the train back to his three-bedroom home in the Sussex countryside - hopefully in time for a spot of gardening. But Franklin is not growing roses in a cottage garden. He is helping to produce vegetables for his 70 or so neighbours. "It's a wonderfully inspiring thing," he says.



This is not a random act of generosity.

Franklin, his wife Melanie, 45, and daughter Imogen, 14, are part of a small but growing number of Britons trying out a different way of living: cohousing. The Franklins live at the Community Project, where 22 households have set up home together in 23 acres of rolling countryside on the edge of the South Downs, just outside Lewes. Although they each own their own property, they live together as a community. Call it a capitalist commune.

After work or at weekends, Franklin and his neighbours might take part in committee meetings to discuss ways of making the site greener, attend a "pot luck" supper, where every member of the project brings a dish to the communal dining room to share, or gear up for the next "Busy day" - a monthly event when all the community's members tackle the endless jobs that need doing around the site, from mending broken door handles in Shawfield - the house in which they gather for various activities - to mowing the lawns.

The project grew from a conversation between a group of friends around a dinner table in London in 1989; the first members moved there nine years ago. Now 74 people - including 34 children - live here, either in four detached wooden houses or in homes carved out of the main building, a converted hospital built in the 1930s to house "high-grade and low-grade imbeciles".

Like Franklin, the other residents own their own homes on a 9,999-year lease and pay a service charge, based on the square footage of each property, to cover heating and water. The project has its own water system and produces its own heat via a biomass boiler.

Each adult is also a director of the company that owns the site as a whole, and is jointly responsible for taking part in decisions on subjects from finances to whether someone should be allowed to build a garden shed. Nothing happens here without hours of discussion - and there are subgroups to deal with everything from looking after the land to general maintenance.

Co-housing schemes like this have existed in Denmark for 30 years and in America for

20. In Holland, cohousing groups get state subsidies and account for 10% of the country's social housing. And they are starting to take off here [in England]. "It's not overly ideological," Franklin says. "We're a fairly diverse group, but it achieves a balance. We all live together, but it is nice to be able to shut your own front door."

Visiting the Community Project on a sunny summer's day, it is easy to appreciate the appeal. The setting is idyllic - the buildings look out over a green valley, narrow paths wind between rambling undergrowth and abundant vegetation, while three horses in a paddock swish their tails lazily against the flies. Come teatime, the place is swarming with children conducting water-gun fights and larking about.

"It's awesome for kids," says Jed Novick, 49, a lecturer in journalism who moved here two years ago with his wife, Gilly Smith, 45, and their two daughters, Ellie, 12, and Loulou, 9. "They have such freedom and independence here, within safe walls."

Julian Morgan-Jones, who, with his wife, Lucy, was one of the founding members of the Community Project, agrees. "Sharing in the stresses and strains of bringing up children has been fantastic," he says. "It's like being part of an extended family - there's always someone to pick your kids up from school. You're never alone."

For some people, of course, this would be the ultimate nightmare - but the community spirit that exists here does seem to have discernible benefits. Sarah Berger, a sprightly 64-year-old who is the oldest person in the community, was diagnosed with breast cancer five years ago and says the response from her neighbours was overwhelming.

"When I came back with the news, within two minutes I had a group of six women in my sitting room opening the brandy," she recalls. "There were offers from people to stay the night, there was a rota to take me to chemotherapy, a rota for bringing me soup - it was amazing."

Nancy Winfield moved to Cole Street Farm just over two years ago with her daughter Vita, 5. Winfield, 42, who works from home as a bookbinder, was attracted by the "green" aspects of the scheme - and by the fact that it is a much easier place to bring up a child as a single parent. "Being a single mum on your own is quite tough," she says. "If you can do it in a community context like Cole Street, it is wonderful - there is a lot of backup. When I need a car I can borrow one and people always help out." When we speak, she is talking on a mobile phone borrowed from another member of the community.

Heeks's advice for those hoping to follow in his footsteps is to start small. "You need a fairly focused core group of 8-10 people who communicate well and can keep up the level of commitment," he says. "Then you can widen it out and bring in other residents." You should also do your research and visit local schemes before starting.

Above all, you need to be able to work well with other people. "There are decisions that you can't make as an individual because the whole group needs to be involved," Heeks explains. "You need to be reasonably tolerant."



This piece, the second of two parts, was written by two long-time communiterians with support from their friends and fellows in the North American movement. Due to the sensitive nature of their ongoing research, the authors are choosing to remain anonymous at this time. We at C.A.L.L. are highly appreciative of their willingness to share the results of their work-in-progress with a wider audience. Perhaps their openness will inspire communiterians elsewhere to send in further contributions to this important project.

COOLER THAN THOU:

What Our Community Friends *Really* Mean (Part II)
(a translation for everyone left behind)

16. ***"We need to think in terms of abundance."***

Translation 1: There's no possible way we could fund this proposal, but let's keep talking about it anyway.

Translation 2: I just used the last of it up myself, but I don't want to admit that.

Translation 3: If we ignore reality maybe it will just go away.

Translation 4: Can you give me a loan?

17. ***"I don't think we should have rules for everything in this community."***

Translation: I think we should only have rules for the things that I think are important.

18. ***"Guidelines."***

Translation: Rules for the rest of you.

19. ***"You're just projecting."***

Translation: I don't have to listen to your criticism/feedback.

Alternate Translation: I'm the paper, you're the glue, whatever you say sticks to you.

20. ***"It's not fair to scapegoat that person."***

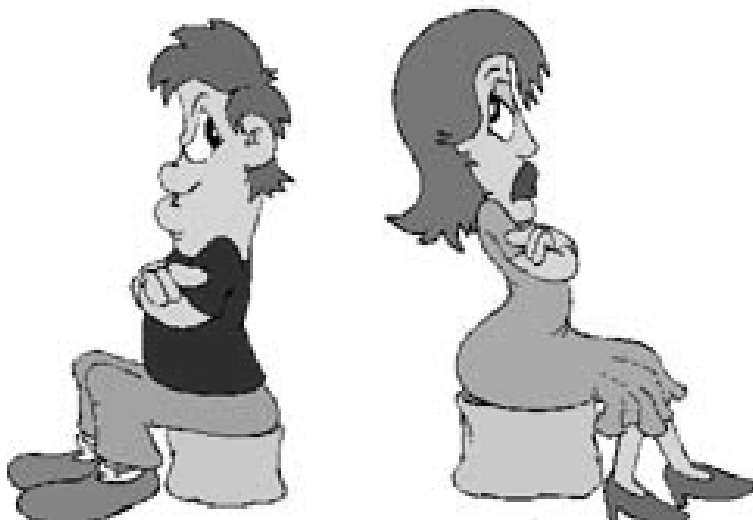
Translation: I like them better than I like you.

Alternate Translation: I don't want them to be held accountable for their bad behavior, because then someday I might be held accountable for mine.

21. ***"That's too hierarchical."***

Translation: I feel insecure.

Alternate Translation: I'd like to be in charge.



22. "It's all good."

Translation: The universe is looking out for me and all of us, thus we don't need to be responsible for our actions, because it is all going to work out fine. Please don't ask me to try to make things be different or better, since my beliefs take me nicely off the hook from that.

Alternate Translation: You are wasting your energy.



23. "It'll all get done."

Translation: I don't want to do it.

24. "Spirit is moving me to say this."

Translation: This isn't little me saying this, this is an absolute authority.

Alternate Translation: My god is bigger than your god.

25. "Let's assume that everyone is acting with the best intentions for the community."

Translation: Even though some people's actions clearly have more negative impact on the community, it's too hard to face up to that and hold them accountable.

26. "Our community advocates sustainability."

Translation 1: Our pool and hot tub are solar-heated.

Translation 2: We plan on doing the right thing for the environment, as soon as it costs less than the conventional alternative.

Translation 3: We will drive to the ends of the earth to purchase green products, or fly to whatever remaining indigenous culture has the most to teach us about living lightly.

Translation 4: We think that other people should use fewer natural resources so there will be more left for us.

27. "You should take this issue to the conflict resolution team."

Translation: I am afraid to talk to you directly.

28. "I can't make the meeting due to personal obligations."

Translation: I'd rather do something else.

29. "My children are my number one priority."

Translation: Any of my children's many activities take priority over all of my community obligations.

30. "Could you please re-state that in NVC (non-violent communication) terms?"

Translation: F*** you!



Could there be a renaissance of the co-operative idea in Israel?

The question of why the idea of co-operative living has earned success and even admiration in other countries while in Israel it has lost its worth and is considered anachronistic has occupied us for some time already. Recently we have seen a process of dismantling the remaining cooperatives - the bus-driver's co-op "Dan", "The Co-op", and the sale of dairy co-op "Tnuva". We are familiar with struggles of the kibbutzim and moshavim. The cooperative organization has fallen from being highly valued in our capitalist country.

The Center for Co-operative Studies in Yad Tabenkin (the kibbutz movement headquarters) is part of a "network" of people and organizations who see collective organizing as an important alternative, particularly in these days when cooperative bodies are being dismantled or falling apart, particularly in the age of globalization and control by the wealthy. When we took part in a few group tours of successful cooperatives (at MCC - the cooperative Basque movement at Mondragon in Spain, and also "Laga Co-op" in Italy), we saw that even in a free-market and competitive world there is a place for cooperative organizing that attains economic achievements and is not embarrassed to talk about social values. The co-operative is a successful "glo-cal" solution, as it is connected to the community - the local - and also to the International Co-operative Association (ICA) - a global network. ICA is the largest social-economic movement in the world having more than 800 million members, members of cooperatives on every continent. The kibbutz movement, which always saw itself as a part of the communal world, has lately connected to the world cooperative movement and joined the ICA.

Alongside organizing group tours of world cooperatives, we organize conferences and seminars on the subject of cooperative organizing. In conjunction with the theoretical aspect, we have become an address for groups interested in the possibilities of establishing cooperatives and a "network" that gathers aid. We are connected to groups who have established (or want to establish) community purchasing co-ops in various areas of the country. Right now we are busy founding a cooperative of "Women and Delicacies in the Citadel" - a group of women from the Ofakim area who are accomplished cooks and have been given a special site to host events. We facilitate a group of Ethiopian immigrants who have created a gardening cooperative, and arrange weekly meetings with "Cooperative Entrepreneurs" in various fields. Recently we have formed connections to the cooperative "A Horizon for Work", which finds work for people with disabilities. We work together with the "Cooperative Center", with the "Fund for Boosting Development", with people in the Kibbutz Industrial Union, with the Negev Institute, the Organizational Consulting Institute and other bodies, in order to aid the cooperative initiatives. The Cooperative Center supports the creation of each co-op and provides legal advice, checks its business plan, and prepares a budget for the first year - at no cost. Together we make every effort to insure that from the initial idea a cooperative will emerge that can support its members. We meet people in the field and give training courses and seminars, so that they understand what it means to work in a cooperative framework and how to deal with collective responsibility.

By Ilana Lapidot, Member of Kibbutz Tzora, Director of the Center of Co-operative Studies, Yad Tabenkin, The Kibbutz Movement. Translated by Robin Merkel, Kvutsat Yovel.



Zendik Farm

Country roads, take me home
To the place I belong
West Virginia, mountain momma
Take me home, country roads

I live in a commune in the north of Israel, in an intimate group which is part of an urban kibbutz of educators, and like a good socialist and a curious traveler, my trips usually involve visiting other communities that offer modern alternatives to the crazy lifestyle around us. My last trip to the US of A took my weary feet to West Virginia! Finally I found myself gallivanting around the USA; exploring the varied states and meeting people of America. This time I will share one experience: Zendik Farm in West Virginia.

I'd been cooped up in a car for 9 hours all by myself, so the moment I arrived at the artist 'ecolibrum' Zendik farm, I jumped out of the car, climbed up a tree to release that pent up energy, slept for three hours, got up, went running in the forests (did I mention I'm a bit hyper active?), looking down at the ground to be careful to avoid stepping on any bear traps, and obviously being cautious from bears coming out of the woods - it was still quite a scenic and an enjoyable run.

There are all sorts of interesting communities in West Virginia - maybe because of the fact that in rural areas you can legally build whatever and however you want with no hassles or bureaucracy. I know of Zendik Farm, Gesundheit institute and a Neo-Nazi commune (that I didn't go to visit, I figured they wouldn't welcome me there so warmly, or maybe they WOULD welcome me too warmly). You can find beautiful and loving communities very near to very racist and scary ones - and there is probably much more to the communal scene in that area that I don't even know about.



I will try to summarize Zendik Farm in my own words - which will probably do an injustice to the Zendik philosophy, and not everybody on the farm will totally agree with my description and choice of words, but...

Zendik Farm is named after Wulf Zendik the artist and philosopher. Wulf and his wife Arol were the founders of this adventure back in the 1960's. Zendik, influenced by many different theories and philosophers, created their own terminology. For example:



Creavolution - creative + evolution. Basically saying that things have to continue to evolve - religions, beliefs, economics, human beings, etc. "Creavolution, which articulates our ability to consciously determine our uniquely human destiny".

Ecolibrium - Ecology + Equilibrium. "Open ended social political design for a future culture that maintains a dynamic balance, ecologically and socially. In Ecolibrium, decisions are based on their effect upon the health and well-being of everyone and everything, not on the abstractions of money and profit."

The Death Culture - everything from the American (Western?) culture that the Zendiks don't like - the rat race for money for example, competitiveness, war and many others.

Living Therapy - having an emphasis on living truthfully with honesty and openness - putting things on the table and dealing with them. In relationships between human beings - they are a very intimate and open group (when I was there they were about 20 people) and demand the truth from themselves and from others. They are willing to let other people experience and be part of their way of living, which I thought was amazing. Through the years thousands of volunteers, like myself, went through their lives, some decided to stay.



They are a **community of artists** who try to influence and educate people by their art (pictures, music, underground magazines, shirts with catchy phrases that make you think, that say things like "stop bitching start a revolution" or "don't go" (referring to the army and war)), by festivals, by radio and web shows, and by selling their stuff and talking to people on the streets (these people are referred to as "road warriors") - and obviously by having thousands of volunteers coming to live with them for different periods of time.

They are creating a very inspiring and demanding utopia. They are very connected to their work and they look at it as "creation" or "art". They think everyone can be(come) a "**Genius**", you just have to find what you love, and pursue it - which will also eventually create a healthy society of fulfilled human beings that are being their genius. I tried to explain to them that although I'm a well rounded person, I'm not spectacular at anything. They said it is a life long process to find your genius, so I assume I still have a fair chance.

For artists, or those interested in philosophy or in Utopia - this is a very inspiring place to visit.

Leor Shapiro

For more information check out Zendik Farm's website at www.zendik.org



European Communities Tour

In the Fall of 2008, my partner Sky and I spent over two months visiting communities in western Europe. We had both lived at Twin Oaks Community in Virginia for many years (4 for me, 8 for him). We were ready to transpose Twin Oaks' radical level of sharing to an urban context in nearby Charlottesville; but before tackling the daunting project of starting a new urban commune, we wanted to learn from other communities. After a mini-west coast communities tour in the spring and summer, we flew to Europe and spent time at 6 communities; Casa Robino in Amsterdam, Christiania and Svanholm in Copenhagen, Torri Superiori in Northern Italy, K77 in Berlin and Can Mas Deu in Barcelona.

Now that we are back, we have been sharing the stories of our journey with slide-show's and a website of our journey. Our goal is to show that the world is both larger and smaller than we normally think. There are so many amazing projects happening all over the world! And, there are lots of people just like us, struggling with the same challenge and finding similar joys as we try to bring a little more beauty and a little more sanity into this world.

So what did we learn in our journeys? The communities movement in Europe is strong and enjoys a much more respected and prominent role in European society than in the US. Squatting is an integral part of European culture, and under some circumstances is legal and protected. It is also much more common to find old warehouses or industrial buildings that have been abandoned. These can often be squatted or purchased for cheap, and tend to be ideal for shared living with minor remodeling. The culture gap between communities and the mainstream tends to be far smaller than in the US. Additionally, people across the political and social spectrum still share a much stronger sense of cultural and national pride than in the US (especially during international soccer tournaments).

We've learned a lot over this last year of travel, but one thing has become especially clear. Namely that Communities, including social networks that incorporate some kind of economic support system, are in a unique position to support a more comfortable and peaceful transition to a post-carbon, environmentally-destabilized world. They are developing needed skills, both technical and social: like how to grow a garden and how to work out conflict non-violently. What these European communities have taught us is that we need stop doubting ourselves, marginalizing ourselves, and isolating ourselves.

As we continue to settle into our new lives in Charlottesville, VA, the stories and images of all these amazing places and people reverberate through us. We set out to help build community in this area with an incredible source of inspiration from which to draw.

Kassia Arbabi, Virginia, USA
karmakas@gmail.com

To see the full story of our euro-commune adventures, go to www.sites.google.com/site/eurocommune/
Read about our evolving journey at www.urbanevolution.wordpress.com.

Sky and Kassia have been doing a series of slide shows of their European Communities Tour; 7 so far, including one each at Shannon Farm, Twin Oaks, Acorn, CHUVA, and Chrysalis community near DC. They've had additional requests and might do more if someone wants to host one.



KALEIDOSCOPE

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



The early settlers of the Kibbutz were a select, special breed of youngsters, whose main concern was to shake off the characteristics of the old-fashioned Jewish "Shtetl" of Eastern Europe and create a prototype of "Brave New Jewish Youth". They never thought of themselves as future "Israeli Senior Citizens". On the other hand, they considered their offspring an improved extension of themselves (see Bruno Bettelheim's "Children of the Dream") and expected that those healthy, suntanned, barefoot kids, growing up in our beautiful settlements, getting a modern, liberal education by dedicated, skilled teachers, plus almost any special wishes that they cooked up in their minds - would quite naturally opt for kibbutz life, after completing their one-year national service, their army duty (plus attachments ...) and benefiting from their rights for higher education.

But gradually it dawned on us that our youths took all those privileges for granted and then went off into the wide world, to try new ways of life, until then unknown to most of us. And left their aging, ailing parents to care for themselves as best they could. That in turn, in addition to external processes, resulted in an ideological and economical crisis which put the Kibbutz Movement in jeopardy. It suddenly became apparent that, contrarily to former beliefs, not every single kibbutz could provide for all its members from birth to grave. As a result, many members no longer felt secure about their old age income, and began looking around for retirement plans - non-existent until recently in most kibbutzim. As could have been expected, this created a serious debate, particularly in heavily indebted older kibbutzim, between the younger and the older generation. I won't go into details, but coming on top of other conflicts, this one threatened to cause irreparable damage.

Having said that the question arises: How does it work in other places? Case in point: In "Francesco 33" of Advent 2008, Steffi and Matthias Reihardt discuss generation conflicts and bring us a citation; "Our youth likes luxury. They display bad manners, ignore authority, have no respect toward age. Today's youth consists of tyrants. They no longer stand up when an older man enters the room. They contradict their parents, chatter in



company of other people, slurp their food at table and terrorize their teachers ". Guess who wrote that? This is how the great Greek philosopher Socrates in the year 500 B.C.E. chose to describe "today's youth"! Which goes to show that the generations' gap and conflict have been around for longer than expected, perhaps since the very beginning of Mankind? Listening nowadays to the talk of the older generations, describing present day youth, you cannot help but notice that those who complain loudest at present used to be the "naughty ones" of past times.

The generations' conflicts basically relate to human nature. Children, actually almost all children, grow up nowadays under circumstances quite different from those of their parents, they are conditioned differently from early childhood - which creates stresses and lack of understanding, although the differentiation is quite natural. The older generation has accumulated a lot of wisdom and life experience, whilst the youth are still searching for new ways and values. Maybe the newly elected President Barak Obama will be able to overcome those contrasts? Let's hope.



Some years ago the German "Zegg" community concocted what they called a "Future Generation Reader". Some of the captions in the index are inspiring and intriguing by themselves, such as "Concepts are needed, so you can leave them again", or "Utopia of the genders love" and "How to create a craving for the future". Last but not least "I never went to school!" and "Plant a tree even when the world was due to disappear tomorrow"! From the editorial of the Reader, by Teresa Heidegger, I chose the following passage:

"How can we envision a sustainable future? Most important, as I have found out by now, is not to see your dreams come true - but rather to go on dreaming persistently. We shall beget grandchildren, and they are going to have children of their own. The world is going to carry on, and their ways will be different from our wishes. With or without realizing it, we make daily decisions about this" (Gioconda Belli).

I would like to comment on the meaning of communities, but not with the intent that all human beings should come to live in them. Actually I would like to point out that we already live in community - meaning in a world in which each and everything is connected and the deeds of the one has an impact on others. To live communally would mean a spiritual switch of paradigm. It relates to the inner attitude, which is created by this feeling of connections: Cooperation instead of Competition, Understanding instead of Condemning. Mutual respect and consideration. In short, it means to apply this communal way of thinking, feeling and acting to all areas of life, including our social moves.

The Students of the Bruderhof's "Maple Ridge High School" have begun publishing a cute, charming little newsletter, called "The BeeHive", brimming with zest and joy, but at the same time full of faith and concern. Here comes a report by Travis Glanzer about an exercise in survival - not the media kind, but some real reality - from October 2008:

24 Hours Alone

I was alone with savage coyotes drooling behind every tree and owls hooting. I huddled next to the fire for warmth. It was around 30°F and freezing cold. The wind whipped through the branches of the big oak above me. I felt safe underneath its huge trunk which was planted firmly in the soil. The leaves slowly floated down and covered the rugged rocky ground beneath. I looked at my watch; it was 9:00pm, and I decided to go to sleep. Crawling into my sleeping bag I fell into a fitful sleep. Once I woke with a start to find that it was drizzling. The time was 3:00 in the morning. I fell asleep again and woke to see the sun rising over the tree tops. I had survived the night! This over-night adventure was for a biology assignment. We were experiencing what it was like to stay in the woods for twenty-four hours.



-Travis Glanzer, 14

Most intentional communes have a healthy dislike for party politics and try to stay away from them, but the truth is that they constitute a political factor by their very existence. The Israeli Kibbutz Movement in its various forms and reforms, used to be the backbone of three different "Labour Parties" and was deeply involved in the creation of the Jewish State, its Parliament and its Government. It also was a crucial element in the formation of the Trade Union, the Jewish Agency, the Hagana (defence force) and the Palmach. The Jewish National Funds (Keren Kayemet and Keren Hayesod) who gave the land and the machines for settling the most faraway and isolated regions, the Water Authority and many other functions were all created for and by the Kibbutz Movements.



In Communities #140 of Fall 2008, Nick Licata examines the symbiosis between Politicians and Communes - how communal life can be a pertinent preparation and practical training for entering politics:

Every Politician Should Live in a Commune by Nick Licata

Elected legislative bodies are un-intentional communities, whereas housing collectives and co-ops are intentional communities. Joining an elective body is like joining a club or community uninvited, and perhaps even unwanted - just the opposite of an intentional community, where people seek each other out and choose to live and support one another.

Nevertheless, after living in a collective for 25 years, I recommend that anyone joining a city council, state legislature, or Congress strongly consider living in an intentional community before entering the political fray.

Let me explain by way of example. I lived in the PRAG House collective in Seattle along with about a dozen others while I was both a citizen activist and an insurance broker. PRAG House was started by close friends of mine who had come together as graduate students in Sociology at the University of Washington to protest the Vietnam War in the early '70s.

In the depth of a recession, when urban planners feared that inner city neighborhoods would become slums, housing prices slumped. Taking advantage of capitalism's cyclical economic crash, my friends pooled their meager funds together and plunked down \$4000 to buy a 37-room mansion in the Capitol Hill neighborhood. I joined them as soon as my girlfriend and I returned from our \$5-a-day year abroad.

In the beginning we were a political collective in the fullest sense: we wanted to change the world by changing our environment and our lives. No processed foods entered the house, only one phone was allowed but no TV, we shared a '54 Ford Pickup for local trips and also to haul our 30-pound metal milk canisters in from some farm over an hour's drive each way come Sunday evening. We broke bread together, at first every day, then several days a week, and eventually once a week and so on. For years we ate only home-baked, and at first we even tried to grind our own wheat.

And although we did not pool our incomes, we did institute a limited income-sharing scheme whereby a small percentage of each person's take-

home pay was included in our monthly rent. The word rent itself is slightly misleading. After a couple of years, the house's value began to rise and those who had provided the down payment were moving on.

As a collective, we faced a problem: what to do with a valuable asset that was increasing in value. No one wanted absentee owners; it was anathema to our values. We couldn't agree on selling the house: how do you divide the amount by over two dozen people who had lived in the house over various periods of time and who had not all contributed equally to its operation? So we turned to the easiest solution: none of us would get the house and no one would ever get it. We placed it in a trust for perpetuity. In essence we rented the house from ourselves, since anyone living in the house helped operate the trust and once you moved on, you were no longer part of the trust.

And so the collective, PRAG House, which began in the summer of '72, is still chugging along, albeit now with multiple TVs, computers, phones, and yes, even processed foods, although for the most part they are still organic. But the core principle of people choosing to live under one roof and to meet regularly to manage their collective environment remains the same.

This brings me back to politics, or more precisely the formal political structure of legislative bodies. Like PRAG House, they are a group of people living under the same roof for at least part of the day, meeting regularly to manage the collective environment of themselves and others who have elected them to this body. And while they do not choose each other to live under this common roof, they are forced, like those of us who lived in PRAG House, to arrange a common budget, manage resources, and make laws governing our social interactions.

Managing a collective's many functions can be practical training for a legislator, but that is only the beginning. At the core of living in a collective are interpersonal relations - these are also at the core of practicing politics.

So busy were we contemplating internal communal issues that we didn't give much thought of late to ways and needs of collaboration between communities. Shalom Connections of August 2008 reminds us through an editorial by David Janzen entitled "Why communities need each other", that mutual communal support can be crucial:

I recently asked Reba members why we need other communities. Why are we in a covenant with Shalom Mission Communities and in intentional connection with many other groups?

David Lukens began. "Just as we personally need each other in community to be real, to not hide from God, so it is between communities." We observed that over time, the dominant society tends to wear down prophetic communities unless they find renewal from new movements of the Spirit in a wider community of communities.

Penny recalled such a turning point in Reba's history. "The visitation from the Church of the Redeemer in Houston in the early 1970's was very influential. Graham Pulkingham and others introduced us to the gifts of the Holy Spirit, to freer worship and to dancing before the Lord. Their example caused us to form many ministering households."

"When we were starting a community in Newton, Kansas, in the early 70's." Joanne remembered. "Fellowship of Hope. Reba, Plow Creek. and many other groups came to our aid with visits, practical help and counsel. As a new community we drew on a wider circle of wisdom and experience."

"There is also another side to the story." Joanne added. "Other communities help minimize the damage we can do to one another. We remember the tragedy at Jonestown and other groups that isolated themselves from the wider church. Groups that go it alone can get off track."

"When Koinonia came under great persecution in the 1960's for practicing inter-racial fellowship." Julius recalled. "their high school children were sent here for a time. We made many trips back and forth to give support. Clarence Jordan came to tell us his Cotton Patch parables, and he made recordings here that were widely circulated. Clarence inspired us to 'be strong in the Lord.'"

"Communities can carry out resistance together," Tatiana reminded us. "sustaining subversive actions like the Underground Railroad, where Jubilee Partners and Reba moved hundreds of Central American refugees to asylum. Now many Christian communities support Christian Peacemaker Teams, praying for them and providing a home base for members who spend part of the year in areas of world conflict."

Communities can come to each other's aid. When Church of the Sojourners' two senior leaders died within a year of one another, other Shalom Communities sent delegations to offer deep counsel and support because we already knew each other well. Likewise, we can join each other in times of joy, especially when there is a reconciliation or a wedding to celebrate.

Visits, sabbaticals, and retreats at each others' communities renew us in our vocation to radical discipleship. Tatiana added, "Chico and I have visited Jubilee Partners several times to review our life. We get rest and retreat time - and clarity to discern our life questions with people who share the same calling. They know us and can be honest with us in whatever we are going through."

Others recalled the courtships and marriages between communities. "If you are part of a group that renounces personal possessions and careers, where will you find such a mate?" Young people who grow up in community are shaped by radical commitments, but also need to "fly the coop" to test their own faith and calling. They are encouraged to visit other communities, which sometimes - thank you Lord - has romantic consequences.



After all this serious stuff we need a little refreshment. We can always rely on Twin Oaks to deliver the goods, this time by a little tongue-in-cheek piece by Valerie Renwick-Porter, as reprinted in *Communities of Spring 2007 : Distinguishing "Acceptable" from "Combustible"*

Here at Twin Oaks, we generally consider ourselves beyond conventional conversation restraints; this becomes immediately obvious by listening to a mealtime discussion of the lurid details of gruesome symptoms related to the latest sickness going around.

When it comes to talking about politics, it becomes a little more complicated. There are certain topics that we can all discuss with ease and generally agree upon. However, somehow there are others that are more like opening a can of worms while walking through a field of landmines ...

ACCEPTABLE: Global warming and polar icecap melt

MORE DELICATE: What temperature to set the communal hot-water heater, and the ecological implications of using ice-cubes

ACCEPTABLE: Obama versus Hillary

A BIT TRICKIER: Organic versus Local

ACCEPTABLE: Increasing water shortages and the evils of the bottled-water industry

TREAD CAREFULLY: The fact that a certain communard-who-shall-remain-nameless replaced the low-flow shower head with one that delivers the approximate force and volume-per-minute of Niagara Falls, without any process

ACCEPTABLE: The discriminatory aspects of impending US immigration policy

WALKING ON EGG SHELLS: Our membership process about whether to accept that controversial visitor from the last visitor period

ACCEPTABLE: Gay marriage

CALL IN THE PROCESS TEAM: Your lover announces a desire to form a polyamorous triad with that statuesque blonde who arrived as a new member last week...

Valerie Renwick-Porter has weathered 16 years of politics at Twin Oaks community in Louisa, VA.

To round it all off, from Plough 45 again, a little inspiring poem by Jane Tyson Clement.
Have a wonderful Spring, Shalom Joel Dorkam

The Spider

I watch the spider fling

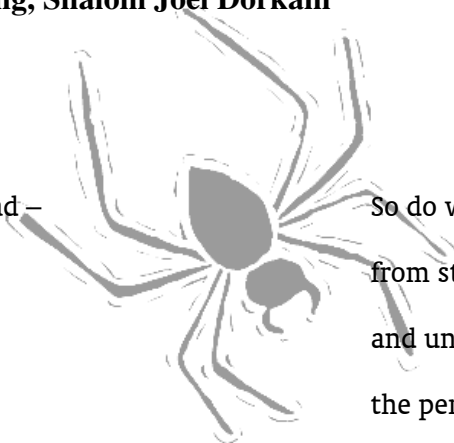
its most improbable thread –

frail filament

yet steel strong –

from aspen limb to birch

and back again.



So do we fling our faith

from star to star

and under God's eternal, watching care

the perfect orb

will come.





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

How Many?

"In the spring of 2007 we went through an existential crisis: out of the 8 founders (in 2001) of our Commune HOF ROSSEE, only two were still living here. One new person joined us, but another two announced that they would leave towards the end of the year". This tells us the German monthly paper "Kontraste" (for Self-Organisation), and goes on detailing a well-planned one-year-long campaign for attracting new members. "We achieved less than we hoped for, but more than we thought we would", concludes Bettina Kruse, the writer of the story, **"Now we count five adult members and two children"** and see ourselves as a "commune in new foundation".

And - as another "contrast" – I shall describe the situation and strivings of my Kibbutz Kfar Menachem, which found itself some years ago with "only" 250 members, many of them of the founding generations, which means OLD. As many of our sons and daughters chose a different way of life, we (like many other Kibbutzim) found ourselves in an awkward demographic situation and had to take a decision that was unprecedented: to draw new, young people to come and settle here, who would not be Kibbutz members. There followed a long and deep-going debate, 150 families are now building their homes here (and we don't know yet how to deal with the multitude of problems that will surely arise), but one "common truth" was agreed upon by all: **200 are not enough to keep up a fully functioning, self-servicing community.**

How diverse, how widely different is the world of communes!

"Let's Meet Tonight" (Long live the internet!)

Ronen (born and bred on his Kibbutz) was 41 years old, had toured the world, worked in the fields and at the same time studied and taught literature, but did not find his beloved. Billy, at the age of 36, had become a full-time teacher, riding in her free time, and stayed single all those years. Nowadays they celebrate 7 years of happy marriage (and two children), in her home Kibbutz Lochme Hageta'ot. Both of them recommend warmly the electronic "Kibbutz Singles Meeting" site, especially for people like them who had been for so many years somehow slow and unsuccessful in their romantic attempts.



including herself.

There are many singles among the thousands of Kibbutzniks, bachelors growing older, divorced, widows and widowers, and nowadays quite a few of those find their partner through the Kibbutz Internet site "Let's Meet". Chava Klass (Kibbutz Nir David), who founded and still activates the site, tells us that in the 8 years of its existence many lonesome people found their "true love" through the site,

Would you like to try too? You can find it from the homepage of the Kibbutz Movement, but it is all in Hebrew.

KIBBUTZ SHORTS

The World Crisis Hit Us Too



Many Kibbutzim established, during the last decades, industrial enterprises, and some of them are flourishing and bring in a decent profit, much more than any agricultural branch could dream of. These luckier Kibbutzim could now enlarge the old flats where the old-timers lived for many years in very crowded conditions and build new houses for Kibbutz sons and daughters who want "to come home". But the economic world crisis hit out on all sides, including some Kibbutzim who now have to cancel or at least minimize their plans and demand patience from all concerned. Further proof that we are an integral part of the world.

My Baby...

Brachah remembers the days (actually: the many years) of the exaggerated worry over the babies' health and welfare, whom the young mother handed over to the Metapelet (nurse, caretaker) as soon as she came home from hospital, in her Kibbutz Mishmar Hanegev (like in nearly all other Kibbutzim). This was not only an ideological principle: the members' housing was so poor, lacking the most essential facilities, that only the Kibbutz baby house could provide the children with all the necessary care and equipment. But, the "professional" nurses were so devoted to their task, sensing that the full responsibility for the children's welfare rests on their shoulders, that Brachah's Metapelet did not let her bathe her baby. She explained and demonstrated carefully all necessary actions to be taken, but all this remained theoretical: day after day Brachah had to watch, from a safe distance of two meters, her baby taken all care of by "the expert". Only after six whole weeks of the "learning process" she was declared "ripe" for independence and had her little one handed over to her to wash and dry, now recognized as a fully qualified mother.



As we all know, this way of communal child-raising ceased to exist in all Kibbutzim, in many only after lengthy and heated discussions, and today the baby comes home to its parents, who get full, constant and adequate guidance from the nurses. A parent (most often the mother) can even decide not to return to work (do without full wages) and keep her child at home for a longer period. As all deep-going changes in the way-of-life, there are some who regret this "move towards normalcy", others who are happy with this "proper" family life, in spite of the additional burden which it heaps on the parents.

They Too Came To The Kibbutz

Israel, thanks to her geographical location, is the main thorough-way for millions of birds from Europe to Africa (for the winter) and back in the spring, and has therefore become a paradise for birdwatchers from all over the world. Of course, they are all on their way and don't breed here. One day a wounded female stork came down at Kibbutz Tirat Tzvi (near the Jordan Valley) and was unable to go on, even though devoted Kibbutz members built a nest for her on top of a high streetlamp. A male came along, made his home in the new nest, but could not get her up and stayed single, too. The following year a new female stork came along, fell in love with the male (or his nest) and now they have there what is extremely rare in Israel – a full stork family. Congratulations!



T. McClure has written this piece especially for C.A.L.L., suggesting that those communities whose vision encompasses living sustainably with nature, should create a collective identity by changing their names.

The Emerald Forest of Sustainable Communities

There has been a lot of talk about creating a whole new understanding of what the communal way of life is now becoming. Why not use some new names and come up with some new identifying concepts that will help us to bridge the gaps between the past and the present, and between the young and the old?

Why not let the many names float around for a while and let them take their time to float up to the surface, until we have become sure which ones we want to use and which ones we really can live with, that don't stand out too much but are not completely forgettable either.

Why not call ourselves the Kindred Spirits of the Emerald Forest of Sustainable Communities, and let those choose to identify with it or not.

The Kindred Spirits would be a good name for who we are, for obvious reasons.

The Kindred Spirits of the Emerald Forest refers then to the people who identify as being supportive members of the Emerald Forest concept, which is about saving the Earth through the creation of a large network of EcoVillages, or the sustainable communities, around the world that will take deep root, and hold everything else in balance.

The Emerald Forest of Sustainable Communities would be used to refer to the voluntary network of solidarity that we are forming as communities of people, that are linking up without becoming dependent upon each other, like trees of a similar kind who can use each others support, even if that means a little competition, who might be able to link up with a few other trees at the root level, for the exchange of nutrients and resources which is done by a positive exchange and mutual support.

T. McClure
edenproj@yahoo.com
<http://sustcomm.com>

In Memoriam

The world lost a communities movement icon when Kat Kinkade, community visionary and founder, died this past July. She died in her room at Twin Oaks, from complications of cancer.

Kat was a founding member of three communities in the United States: Twin Oaks in 1967, East Wind in 1974 and Acorn in 1992. She was also involved in the early Federation of Egalitarian Communities, a networking group linking income-sharing, egalitarian, non-violent communities in North America. She is the author of two books about Twin Oaks Community, which have been widely read by academics studying communal living as well as people simply interested in this lifestyle. Thousands of people's lives have been touched by Kat's lifework, babies born from relationships that blossomed in the communities she founded, and innumerable people finding a viable and vibrant alternative to a mainstream way of living.

She was buried in the graveyard at Twin Oaks the afternoon of Friday July 4, in a simple ceremony. Two memorial services were held: one at the local church where she had been an active member of the choir, and one at Twin Oaks itself, with many ex-members and friends sharing their colourful memories of her life and times. Her obituary appeared in a number of major national newspapers, in the US and Canada.

A memorial webpage has been created, and everyone is invited to post photos or write memories of Kat there:
<http://katkinkade.ning.com>



The Italian community of Damanhur cultivates partnerships with other communities, both by sending delegations abroad, and by inviting guests to visit them.

Tamera, Portugal

The search for innovative new technologies sent a delegation of Damanhurians to visit Tamera, an eco-village in Portugal. Gorilla, Formica, Grillo and Indri went to learn about some interesting ecological solutions Tamera has instituted in its community. In Tamera, energy autonomy and self-sufficiency are the primary concerns of this unfolding solar era.

The Tamera Solar Power Village is a model for social and ecological sustainability, decentralized energy, and for food supplies grown in harmony with nature. This first model facility, with a technological core planned to accommodate fifty people, was developed by Jürgen Kleinwächter. The technical system has a decentralized solar energy supply that can be built to be 'off the grid'.



Members of Damanhur visiting the Portuguese Ecovillage, Tamera

The Damanhurian team was particularly interested in new building construction techniques such as using straw and wood for climate protection, beautification, and harmony with the natural landscape. The Damanhurians were also impressed with ingenious energy saving solutions like a solar kitchen that transforms heat into electric energy and a new solar water pump, based on the Stirling engine, that can transfer water from one lake to another at a distance of ten meters.

The community of Tamera is going through economic hard times similar to what Damanhur experienced fifteen years ago prior to encouraging free enterprise. The Tamera people were very interested in learning from Damanhur's experience about complementary value systems.

Tamera and Damanhur are also different in many ways. At Tamera the people live primarily in tents, they use compost toilettes, open air showers and they have a very good relationship with the local administration. The delegation was very impressed to see these new technological ideas put into practice and they are hopeful that a fruitful collaboration will flow between the two communities.



Straw-bale construction

Sieben Linden, Germany

During the first two weeks of September the Dendera Association hosted the inaugural straw-bale construction course in Damanhur. The initiative for the project came from Inti China, a Damanhurian citizen and member of Dendera who became fascinated with this style of construction and studied the technique at the Sieben Linden Eco Village in Germany.

Using straw-bales as prefabricated walls is one of the new innovative techniques for building large complex houses. Inti's interest in straw-bale construction encouraged the Dendera community to commit to the project for many reasons; it is inexpensive, sustainable, can easily be

made 'off the grid', and with the guidance of an experienced teacher, people, with or without prior building experience, can participate in the construction.

Martin Stengel and Stefan Ohnesorg of Sieben Linden and Inti China of Damanhur were the course instructors.

The Dendera Association is very excited about strawbale construction and it has become obvious that Damanhurians have a unique contribution to make to this new eco building technique. The exterior walls of straw-bale structures are plastered and adding Damanhurian artistry and many years of experience transforming plaster walls into art installations they will help turn ordinary buildings into extraordinary homes.

The event was a great occasion to make new friends and strengthen bonds between the communities of Damanhur and Sieben Linden.

Ananda Assisi and Osho Miasto, Italy

Two Italian spiritual communities each sent twenty people to visit Damanhur; Ananda Assisi, the Italian spiritual community following the teachings of Yogi Paramansa Yogananda, and Osho Miasto, the followers of Osho formerly known as Bhagwan Rajneesh.

The Ananda group are creating a new community in Insubria, a town in the Lombard region. Members of this group have previously visited the Federation but this time they will be focused on the social model of communal living, an experiment they will undertake for the first time at Insubria. Damanhur is happy to share information from its communal experience to help the group in whatever way they can.



Ananda Assisi

The coordinators of the Tuscan Osho Community decided to spend a few days in the Federation collectively meditating in the Temples of Humankind to solidify and gain inspiration. A few members of the group are making a return trip to the Federation and others are first timers. The group visited the Temples, and some of the



The Osho Community

communities and were very satisfied with what they saw and learned. It was their first time travelling together and represented an important experience and achievement in their collective journey.

The Osho Community is composed of 40 people who sustain themselves by offering various courses and hospitality. Most residents spending time at Osho Miasto stay for 5 or 6 years, there are however two people who have been there since 1988. The community has recently received many requests for residency so they need to grow quickly to meet the challenge, erecting new buildings and welcoming new possibilities.

The Osho disciples were particularly impressed by Damanhurian 'individual laws', conceived as concrete steps, objectives defined by the individual towards their own growth, and accomplished with the help of observations by people living in their group.

Living simply is simply cheaper

CNN

Keri Rainsberger isn't rich. She works in the nonprofit world for a relatively low-profit salary. Yet, as many Americans are scrimping for every penny, she hardly feels the pinch.

She still tithes 10 percent of her income to her church, even as other members have cut back. She rarely worries about rising gas and food prices. And she never bothers to balance her checkbook, because she doesn't come close to spending what she has.

For starters, she has no car and commutes by bicycle each workday. She also has no mortgage payment and chooses to live in an "intentional community," a partly shared space where \$775 a month covers everything from utilities to meals.

"In one fell swoop, I pay for the roof over my head, the food in my stomach and the lights to read by. That's a big advantage," says Rainsberger, whose high-rise living space is part of the residential program at the Keystone Ecological Urban Center in Chicago's Uptown neighborhood.



Residents of the intentional community at the Keystone Ecological Urban Center in Chicago, sit down for a group dinner

Her private quarters - larger and a bit more expensive than some - are about 400 square feet, divided into a sitting room, a craft room and a small bedroom. She shares bathrooms, showers, a kitchen and a large dining room with 28 other residents whose ranks include young professionals, professors and retirees.

"I live so far below my means that it doesn't really register," says Rainsberger, a 31-year-old Chicagoan with a wiry frame and unusually sunny outlook. "I don't have to think about money."

How is this possible?

"It's like a college dormitory, but with better conversation," she often jokes.

Of course, the concept of sharing resources has been around since the beginning of time and is used today from Amish farms to the Israeli kibbutz. For low-income families, it's often simply a matter of survival.

But those who track consumer habits say a growing need to cut costs, along with a wish to be more environmentally and spiritually conscious, is causing even more people to pool their resources, whether defined as an intentional community or not.

"The economy starts to tank. People get tired of it," says Daniel Howard, an expert in consumer research and behavior at the Cox School of Business at Southern Methodist University. "It's people saying, 'Let's get together and help one another.' And it works."

Few may have the desire or even the ability to live the Spartan lifestyle that Rainsberger learned from her Depression-era grandmother. Not everyone is willing to bicycle, for instance, in the stifling mugginess of a Chicago summer or the cold, blustery winds that sweep off Lake Michigan in winter.

But those who advocate a simpler, less consumer-driven life say there are lessons in the strategies she and other intentional communities use. By buying their food in bulk, for instance, Rainsberger and her neighbors spend \$100 to \$150 per person each month for meals. (Consider that the U.S. Department of Agriculture "thrifty plan" for a single person is \$200 a month.)

Some residents who own cars also share them, drastically cutting overall vehicle expenses.

While this particular intentional community has no children, similar

communities trade childcare or keep costs low enough so more parents can stay home or work part-time.

The Fellowship for Intentional Community, a Missouri-based nonprofit that began a steadily growing directory of such communities in 1990, estimates that at least 100,000 Americans now live in one. They define them as groups of people living together who share common values that are religious, economic, environmental, social or any combination of those. Sometimes they own property; others rent. About a

third live in urban areas, while the remainder are rural.

Laird Schaub, the Fellowship's executive secretary, says he has no proof that the growth in numbers they've seen is tied to the economy. But he has little doubt that intentional communities are better equipped to weather hard times.

"We're pretty isolated from the ups and downs of the regular economy," says Schaub, who has lived at the Sandhill Farm intentional community in Rutledge, Missouri, for 34 years. The farms' 10 residents grow most of their own food and sell organic produce to the surrounding community. Some have other jobs and all share their income with the group, as do about 13 percent of the intentional communities in the Fellowship's directory.

"You don't have to chase as many dollars to have a quality of life," Schaub says.



Nepalis choose to live in a commune

by Kushal Regmi December 20, 2008
GroundReport

"I will not make a private house," declares Anil Nepal, a consultant engineer, who has spent ten years of his life living in a commune.

Joint families have become a thing of the past and nuclear families are the accepted way to go as far as families are concerned in today's Nepal, but few individuals, like Anil, are opting for alternative ways of living that suit their own lifestyle.

Anil tired of a variety of lifestyles before deciding that commune was the best form of family for him. After finding that he was a misfit in the joint family where he grew up, he opted to live alone in a flat. But staying alone wasn't the solution either. He realized that a human being needs a social support system to lead a healthy life.

Staying alone in Kathmandu as a young professional meant that his circle of friends had a great influence in his lifestyle. Thus smoking and drinking on a regular basis became his way of life even if he hadn't consciously desired it. This is when he encountered meditation and a commune lifestyle in the form of Osho Tapoban.



"I knew I had had enough of that way of life when my body started becoming allergic to drinking and smoking. I needed a more natural lifestyle, which I had found in Tapoban, but I still wasn't ready to commit to actually staying there because my habits demanded a different lifestyle," as he recounts a phase in his life which he has left far behind.

Anil finally had to decide which way to take, whether he wanted to continue the lifestyle of his peers or completely change his way of life.

"I moved to Tapoban, because the milieu there was what was required for my spiritual growth. I was possessed with the quest to realize who I was. Slowly I began to realize that I needed to purify my body, mind and emotions to go deeper into meditation and it was not possible without a spiritual commune and at that time, Tapoban was my only option," Says Anil, who looks like he is very much at ease with himself.



There have been many communes of various forms around the world in the last century. Artists, poets, writers, hippies, communists all tried their hands at commune living, but hardly do we hear a success story. Either the communes were authoritarian in nature and with the fall of the system that implemented it, the commune fell as well, or it broke up due to internal feuds or external intolerance.

"The average age of most communes till today is probably only five to seven years," says Swami Anand Arun, coordinator of Osho Tapoban and Anil's mentor, who has been, surprisingly, running a commune for the last 18 years against all odds.

The breaking up of traditional family systems and the isolation of the individuals caused by the demands of the post modern era has meant that people are wanting a social support system that suits and aids their own priorities in life. Anil was lucky to find a space that supported the lifestyle he wanted for himself and for him, the base of the commune he lives in has to be meditation but are communes that are not spiritually inclined possible as well?

"People can come and live together if there is a uniting cause that is the most important thing in the lives of the ones who form the commune," shares Swami Arun from his experience.

"Apart from that, it is also very important to have a uniting figure who has the capacity to keep things together despite major ego conflicts and also the commune should be able to generate its own finances," he adds.

So according to Swami Arun, dancers can live together in a commune but their passion for dance has to surpass all else and they must have a mentor who is mature enough to gain the trust of the lot and keep them united.

For this evolving humanity, which is getting even more individualistic by the moment, this type of living might be a plausible option. People who prize their freedom tend to go astray in life and end up as social misfits because they don't get a support system that respects their individual freedom. But Swami Arun, after a lifetime of experience with running communes knows of the difficulties that come along with the task.

"Communes are bound to fail, because humans can neither live alone nor can they live together. To keep a commune running has been the greatest challenge of my life," he states pensively.

It seems that only when civilization matures to a certain degree, can communes that respect and aid individual freedom be possible. As for Anil, who doesn't live in Tapoban anymore and doesn't want to live in a private house either, life presents a challenge, and that too a difficult one. Currently, apart from his consultancy work at Ithari, in eastern Nepal, he is running weekend meditation camps in various towns in the area. We can only wait and see what plans existence has for him in the coming years.

The following is an article written specifically for a C.A.L.L. by Alexia Demetriou, a researcher based in the UK, who spent a week each in six different communities.

Outside the Alternative....

I have always been intrigued by alternative ways of living. Having been brought up within the restraints of mainstream society I decided to flirt with the notion of opting out and living collectively. My journey began as I explored an idea for my anthropology dissertation, but has developed into a thirst for knowledge, on what seems to be a more collective and sustainable way of life.

My visit to the unknown took me from the woods of Devon, to a Town House in London, from those with no religious persuasion, to those living the way they felt the Bible required. I visited six different communities in the UK, spending a week in each. The places were as varied as the people I met - vegans to staunch meat



Othona: This beautiful building hosts a small, spiritual community. Based on Christianity, the community opens its doors to people of all faiths. While visiting I was considered a community member, and felt a real connection with the place and the people.



Monkton Wyld: Membership to this community has changed since my visit, which was at a very turbulent time for the community, struggling with ideals versus practicalities of living together. The new community remains a holistic education centre, open to families certain weeks of the year, and continues to run a kindergarten.

eaters, spiritualists to hard core activists, and, perhaps most surprisingly, many people like me - just people who felt that there must be more to life than the conventional.

Naively, I thought I would encounter militant activists, hippies and sexually liberated groups. I was surprised to find this not to be the case. I found communities that worked as a

viable way of life and others that struggled with practicalities versus ideals. I saw ways that people could live and support one another, in many forms that could suit a broad range of personalities. The only difference was that these people saw merit in the collective, in the support and unity of community, rather than the individualistic way that mainstream 'society' promotes.

Having had little experience of what true community meant I found the experience to be an eye-opening glimpse into the alternative. I cannot do the communities justice in one article. I feel that my journey has not yet ended and my visits have sparked something in me that I wish to pursue. I want to continue to examine why people choose this way of life, challenge the misconceptions and show it is an alternative to the mainstream.



Stewards woodlands: Based in the woods of Devon, pictured is an example of community members' homes. This community was one of the most interesting I visited - living close to nature, without the creature comforts that I am used to.

The three other communities included...

A therapeutic community, for people with deep rooted psychological issues, offering a space for group therapy, reflection, and a chance to take responsibility again for their lives.

A deeply religious community, who lived a more basic life, free of television, papers, or computers. Over 170 people lived here, many of whom grew up within the community, and stuck closely to Christian values.

The last was a community based in London. Members were diverse, and all worked in a range of professions from acting, to prison staff to labourers. The house provided a sense of community to those who maintained much of the mainstream way of life.

I am currently working in a University as a Research Assistant, carrying out qualitative research in Mental Health, but would love the opportunity to study communities further and am considering embarking on a PhD. If anyone reading this may be able to offer advice or funding opportunities on how to take this further please get in touch...

Alexia Demetriou
alexia.demetriou@hotmail.com



C.A.L.L.

Yad Tabenkin
Seminar Efal
Ramat Efal
Israel 52960

C.A.L.L. (Communes At Large Letter)

Editor

Anton Marks (Kvutsat Yovel)

Editorial Board

Yoel Darom (Kibbutz Kfar Menachem)

Joel Dorkam (Kibbutz Tzuba)

Have you visited our website? <http://www.communa.org.il>

Subscription Form for C.A.L.L.

I wish to receive C.A.L.L. regularly. Please find enclosed my contribution for the amount of in cash/ by check (payable to International Communes Desk).

If you haven't got the money, you can still receive C.A.L.L.

Alternatively you may prefer to receive C.A.L.L. on an exchange basis:

I will arrange to send our publication in exchange for C.A.L.L.

This publication is produced times a year.

Please fill in the following details in clearly printed letters

Name: Date:

Address:

..... E-mail address: