C.A.L.L.

Communities At Large Letter

INTENTIONAL COMMUNITIES DESK

YAD TABENKIN

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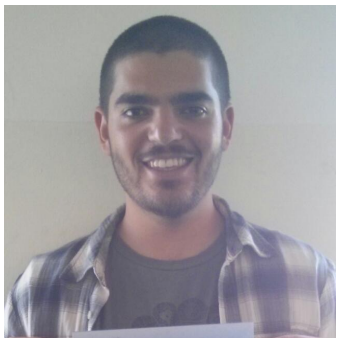


Dear readers,

For those devoted to building communities based on cooperation, peace and unity, 2016 was undoubtedly a difficult year.

The election of a US president who entertains millions of followers by flooding social media with racist rhetoric and unveiled misogyny sent ripples of anguish and uncertainty throughout the world.

The British public's decision to leave the EU also came as a shock to many. For these, the quickness with which great swaths of society responded to voices of isolationist nationalism was bewildering.

Throughout the Western world, far-right and anti-immigrant groups are moving closer to center stage. The volume of their public voice and the support they receive in national legislatures makes them impossible to ignore.

These monumental shifts should come as a rude awakening. Large sections of the lower and middle classes have been left behind by policies of arch-neoliberalism that funnel power and wealth into the hands of the few.

It should not come as a surprise when the disenfranchised many respond in anger. It should not come as a surprise when figures who appear to reject the world order and offer to dismantle it, find such willing and enthusiastic support. It should not, perhaps, come as a surprise that so many are blind to (or simply choose not to see) the dangers of disunity and xenophobia that lurk behind these figures' words.

These dangers are indeed frightening. But now is not the time to cower in fear. On the contrary, we must work harder than ever to promote the values of peace, community and equality. For this is the only antidote to the disillusion. We must show that we are stronger when our lives are bound together. This idea, that so many are trying to fulfil every day in so many different ways throughout the world, must be shared.

This issue of C.A.L.L is a demonstration and an invitation. We bring together some incredible long-lasting examples of intentional community from around the world. And at the same time we call on you to join us in sharing them.

Contents

A Message from the International Communal Studies Association Board

For three decades the International Communal Studies Association has been at the forefront of research into communal living and has tirelessly promoted cooperation between practitioners and scholars of intentional communities throughout the world.

ICSA Board

Since 1985 the International Communal Studies Association has been the most wide-ranging, global network of scholars devoted to the study of communes and intentional communities. Every three years we gather on the site of a contemporary communal movement for workshops on the history, economics, ecology, psychology, spirituality and politics of community. Our most recent conference was at Tamera Ecovillage in Portugal; our next will be hosted by the cluster of Camphill schools and villages located in the Hudson River Valley of New York, in the United States. This conference will take place in the summer of 2019 and will explore the theme of diversity and inclusion in intentional communities.

From the beginning, ICSA has enjoyed the generous and sustained financial support of four kibbutz research institutes: Yad Tabenkin, the Institute for the Research of the Kibbutz and the Cooperative Idea, Oranim, and Yad Yaari. We now seek to expand our base of support to include other communal movements and associated research bodies, as well as individual scholars and community members. Individual membership remains very affordable at $60 or 80 NIS for a three year term; communities and organizations may join for $85 or 120 NIS. Membership information is available at http://www.communa.org.il/icsa/index.php/ics/join-icsa.

Researchers from Yad Tabenkin at 2016 ICSA conference, Tamera.

Organizations that would like to forge a deeper partnership with ICSA, including the possibility of representation on our governing board, should be in contact with board chair Dan McKanan at dmckanan@hds.harvard.edu. And we hope to see many of you in 2019 in the Hudson River Valley!

Building a Socialist Life in a Capitalist World

Sam, a new member of a socialist and activist commune in Israel, discusses the challenges of embarking on a life of pioneering.

This article first appeared on the blog "This Chalutzik Life" (thischalutziclife.wordpress.com)

Sam Edelman, Kvutzat Silan, Israel

Sam Edelman

TWO nights before I moved to Israel, I sat with my family in a Burmese restaurant in Silver Spring, Maryland for a goodbye dinner. My parents still didn't fully understand exactly what it was that I was moving to Israel to do or what my life would look like, and to be fair neither did I. In particular, my parents were confused and somewhat apprehensive about how money would work. They knew that I was moving to Israel to be part of a socialist movement and had heard me use phrases like "shared economy" and "communal lifestyle," but they still wanted to know who would pay my rent, if I would receive a salary, and if I would be allowed to buy a cup of coffee.

I struggled to give answers, partially because I didn't know all of the logistics of what my kvutzah's* economy would look like, but more so because of the unspoken assumptions that seemed to be lying beneath the surface of my parents' questions. It seemed like my parents were still trying to understand my communal, kvutzati lifestyle within an individualist, capitalist framework. Which makes sense; people understand new things by comparing them to what they're more familiar with. The problem is that in contemporary American society, the only economic structure we're familiar with, or taught to accept as legitimate, is individualist consumer capitalism. Our society taught us to glorify "self-sufficiency" and see reliance on others as a failure, to measure people's worth based on their job titles and bank accounts, and to buy our way to happiness.

Our group chose to move to Israel and to be a part of the socialist activist movement Dror Israel because we wanted to live a holistic life based on our values. Joining Dror Israel allowed us to be part of an economy centered on values and human needs rather than profit. In Dror Israel, the graduate movement of the youth movements Habonim Dror and HaNoar HaOved VeHaLomed, the main unit around which our economy is organized is the kvutzah, rather than the individual or the nuclear family. My kvutzah is part of the sector of the movement economy established to deal with the unique needs of new immigrants. The movement directly pays for most of our living expenses (rent, utilities/bills, transportation) and provides our kvutzah a monthly living stipend to cover food and other household expenses. Each kvutzah manages its money somewhat differently, and in ours people can take and spend money freely. We keep track of our spending so that we can budget for different kinds of expenses, we consult each other before making large purchases, and we are ultimately accountable to each other for the choices we make, but we don't need each person to approve every shekel we spend.

**Hebrew for group - in this case used to mean commune.*

The movement gets its money from a combination of government funding for its educational activities and from a wealth of programs and projects that bring in revenue. Some of the movement's activities do not bring in revenue, but we do not want the value of different projects or the people doing them to be determined by how much money they bring in. So while certain projects involve technically paid positions, nobody receives an individual pay-check. Instead, the salaries for those positions are pooled into the centralized economy. This way, people can make decisions about what work to do based on their own skills, passions, challenges they want to take on, the needs of the movement, and the needs of Israeli society, rather than in response to financial pressure. This system is also the reason that it is possible for our group to currently have three out of five members in ulpan (Hebrew language-learning course for new immigrants) rather than in working full-time on a project or a paid job.

In this and many other ways, the movement economy liberates us from the pressure, competition, and isolation of individual capitalist living. But as much as we are committed to a values-based economy, we are equally committed to shaping and being full members of Israeli society – which means participating in capitalism. If we wanted to live a completely pure socialist lifestyle, never touching money and living only off of the products off our own labor, we could do that. We would have to create an autonomous commune in the woods somewhere, but we could do it. But our secluded utopia wouldn't do anything to make Israel a more just society or to take responsibility for the Jewish people. Instead, we choose to live in the tension of trying to fulfill our values while being part of a deeply flawed society that we deeply care about.

Edelman (third from the right) with other members of Kvutzat Silan.

So we buy goods made by people we don't know or see, support institutions we dislike, and face the pressures of modern capitalism. And even though we believe firmly in our socialist lifestyle, we have also grown up and been socialized in capitalist society. We can't just turn off our desire to buy nice things or the sense that having money that no one else can touch gives us security. Every day we grapple with these tensions. It can be exhausting to be financially accountable to and responsible for other people when we grew up being told that money is a private, personal matter. We've had to have really hard conversations about what kind of financial backgrounds we each come from and how we're used to spending money. We have to really ask ourselves what the difference is between our needs and wants and how to meet both individual and collective needs.

We have the security of knowing that our needs will be met and the freedom to do fulfilling work without worrying about needing to make money. But it also sometimes feels restricting. I can't spend as much money as I'm used to. It's awkward to go out with a friend to a nice restaurant that a year ago I would've enjoyed without a second thought, but now feels too extravagant for my socialist lifestyle. I have to ask other people if it's ok for me to get a new pair of shoes. We're not ascetics, we sometimes go out to movies or restaurants, but we do seek to limit the role of consumerism in our lives. It is a constant challenge that demands us to be honest and vulnerable with each other in ways we've been taught to avoid. But it is an essential part of our choice to live a holistic, shared life. And for those of you keeping score at home, the movement pays my rent, I don't receive a salary, and I am allowed to buy a cup of coffee.

Community Close Up: Las Indias - Madrid

Long-term ICD member Michael Livni reports from his meeting with the communards of Las Indias - a small Madrid-based commune that is drawing inspiration from the historical kibbutz movement while forging a new path for communal living into the future.

Michael Livni, Kibbutz Lotan, Israel

> *…Belonging to a community is recognition through work and learning, not an "essence" inherited from national culture or birth, or the result of insubstantial adherence or an ID card.*
>
> *…To be a communard is to gain autonomy and security in the fraternity of learning, to be rediscovered as valuable and valued in shared work. To be a communard is to put the values we believe in into action, not compete to shout them the loudest or wield them like a menacing weapon.*
>
> *We are entering a time in which no narrative can be believed if it can't demonstrate, here and now, that it successfully allows a new generation to develop and live decently through work…*
>
> *Inequality, unemployment and demoralization …if anything has been really global over the last ten years it's been the experience of social decomposition...*
>
> *There is no self-realization without work…conquer work, reconquer life…*
>
> *To be unable to access work is to be in social exile*

Excerpts from: https://jardin.lasindias.com/the-communard-manifesto

ON my way to the 12th ICSA Conference in Tamera, my partner, Brenda and I visited Madrid. We spent an evening with the communards of Las Indias on behalf of the Intentional Communities Desk. We were welcomed royally and a special communal meal was prepared for us together with the communards.

Michael Livni (right) in conversation with Las Indias communards.

In preparation for the visit we had received the 36 page "Communard Manifesto" outlining the vision of Las Indias – just a few excerpts of the vision are quoted in the above preamble. In my opinion, the Manifesto is in the tradition of decentralist (anarchist) socialism. The communards believe in a vision of abundance for all. The name Las Indias is derived from a Renaissance myth of abundance resulting from discovering the riches of the New World combined with the concept of the Garden of Eden.

The egalitarian commune of "Las Indias" in Madrid is composed of only six members but its vision is global in scope. The six members consist of two couples and two singles. Legally they are organized as a

workers cooperative. They are associated with another cooperative which numbers 40 members, all under the common ideals of communitarianism. There are additional communities in Spain and in Latin America.

David de Ugarte, 46, is a professional economist and represents the group because he is the most fluent in English. He is well versed in the nuances of socialist/communitarian ideology.

Maria Rodriguez, 37, is an information analyst and art historian. Both David and Maria are examples of university graduates who could never find a steady job in the reality of Spanish society.

David de Ugarte (left) discusses the ideas behind the Las Indias way of life.

May Rodriguez, 31, is a chemical engineer as well as information analyst. Manuel Ortega 31, is a programmer. It is important to note that, in fact, all members function as information analysts.

Natalia Fernandez, 41, was the founder of the group. Originally she trained as a nurse specializing in crisis situations. Currently she is its economic coordinator.

Carolina Ruggero, 43, is a sociologist. She is currently in Argentina, on leave from Las Indias, on a special contract for a four year period as National Director in the Welfare Ministry of Argentina.

Professional Communards

The common denominator: all members have professional training. All have moved out of their normative class standards and have opted for a collective way of life in order to further the larger social vision of the Communard Manifesto. Their cooperative framework is also to be understood against the backdrop of unpredictability of work for university graduates. In Spain, 40% of university graduates under the age of 30 are unemployed.

All the members work on projects for outside enterprises – each project is defined by a contract. As a result, their annual gross income varies considerably. In fact, the members of the cooperative work together as a team regardless of their professional training.

The wolf - legendary symbol of ancient cooperatives - graces the banner of Las Indias' cooperative network.

A year ago the group acquired a 200 sq. meter (2,200 sq. feet) apartment in a middle class district of Madrid. They have six rooms (including one guest room) and three bathrooms.

In the last few years the collective's income has ranged between 150,000 to 750,000 euros. Clearly, part of this income was used to purchase their apartment. David was somewhat reticent to give me figures. He emphasized that Las Indias does not want to project an image that would be interpreted in terms of the values of Spanish class culture as individual professional success. Las Indias wishes to attract those young people who understand that the relative economic success is a result of their ideological commitment to the communitarian ethic which means working outside the norms of that Spanish class culture. This also means that one's formal "professional" training is not necessarily relevant to their actual work in the cooperative. The concept is very similar to

that which existed in the classic collective kibbutz. (Example: Natalia the trained nurse as current economic coordinator).

Some special features of Las Indias

In line with the international aspect of their vision (and a deliberate de-emphasis of the national), Las Indias promotes the dissemination of Esperanto.* All members of the commune have learnt the language and Manuel translates material into Esperanto. In fact, Las Indias views Esperanto as a technique for promoting egalitarian absorption of non Spanish- or Portuguese-speaking members.

From left to right: Natalia Fernandez, Manuel Rodriguez, David de Ugarte, Michael Livni, Maria Rodriguez, May Rodriguez.

A particular feature of the Las Indias ideology is what they term as the "hacker ethic." The "hacker ethic" as understood in Las Indias is the concept of learning about a system in order to use it for a purpose other than the purpose for which it was originally conceived in normative capitalist neoliberal culture. Politically, Las Indias actively opposes the limitations imposed by such measures as intellectual copyright and patent law but that opposition is expressed in ways within the law. Their software, books, industrial designs etc. are published and freely distributed in the public domain.

Looking to the Kibbutz for inspiration

The Kibbutz Movement has provided inspiration to Las Indias. There are many historic kibbutz pictures on the walls. The central point of ideological identification is the perceived decentralist nature of the kibbutz as a community movement within the State of Israel.

"We openly vindicate the historical kvutzot - and believe me if I say this is not easy at all in a country whose left is more and more antisemitic," David de Ugarte commented. "The point we make is: technology today has evolved a lot… so the small, intimate kvutza vs large-scale kibbutz discussion of the twenties and thirties in Israel should be reconsidered now under a new light. Small, urban kvutzot dedicated to technology, services and industry are now sustainable in a way impossible some decades ago. And what is really important: "conquering work" through collective property is the only opportunity available for the 50% of people under 30 who are unemployed and the 40% of people under 30 who work but still live under the poverty line."

For additional background on this fascinating community - https://lasindias.coop/ and https://lasindias.com

** Esperanto is the international auxiliary language founded by Dr. L. L. Zamenhof in 1887.*

Perspectives on Inner and Outer Peace from Long-Term Members of Intentional Communities in the USA

Professor Deborah Altus presents her version of the "12 step program" for sustaining successful peace-building intentional communities based on decades of research and personal experience.

Editor's note: *This paper first appeared as the key-note address presented by Deborah Altus at the 2016 ICSA conference in Tamera, Portugal. Unfortunately due to limitations of space we have had to significantly condense the article. Some details, including about the interviewees themselves, have been removed*

Deborah Altus, Washburn University, Kansas

Deborah Altus

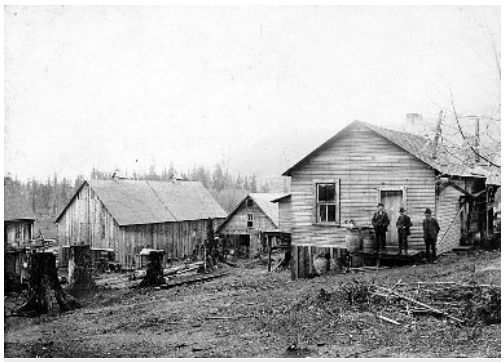
A couple of weeks ago, I was in the Pacific Northwest of the United States, where I visited the town of Edison, Washington. Edison is near the site of the relatively short-lived cooperative colony, Equality, which formed about 120 years ago, in 1897. The colony was named after Edward Bellamy's utopian novel, *Equality*, which was published in 1897 as a sequel to *Looking Backward*, Bellamy's well known 1889 utopian novel.

The Equality colony was founded by the Brotherhood of the Co-operative Commonwealth, an organization started by social reformers from New England with three broad goals: First: "To educate the people in the principles of Socialism; Second: To unite all socialists in one fraternal association; Third: To establish co-operative colonies and industries in one state until that state is socialized." The Brotherhood's idea was that the socialist colonies "would be able to initiate the collective ownership of the means of production in the state by voting in a socialist government" (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Equality_Colony).

The Equality colony was beset with tension nearly from the beginning. The colonists, living in primitive conditions, resented having to contribute to the Brotherhood's national organization, whose leaders didn't reside at Equality but lived in fancier accommodations in nearby Edison. After much infighting and the eventual demise of the Brotherhood, the colony dissolved after 10 years (see LeWarne, 1995,

Utopias on Puget Sound, 1885-1915. Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press; and https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Equality_Colony).

The history of the Equality Colony is not uncommon in the annals of cooperative living. While good intentions may be necessary for an intentional community and its members to develop a cooperative society, the many examples of cooperative communities that have folded in bitter, divisive infighting, or in larger-scale tragedy (think the People's Temple at Jonestown), suggests that good intentions aren't sufficient to create peaceful, cooperative communities.



Equality, circa 1900.

So what are ingredients that help intentional communities achieve the level of cooperation and peace that they so often aspire to? If good intentions aren't enough, how do communities build and sustain a culture that is peaceful and harmonious?

In the 1990s, I had the good fortune to visit and interview members of dozens communities as part of Tim Miller's *60s Communes project*. Recently, I thought it would be instructive to contact some of my interviewees who are still living in intentional communities to see what lessons they have to impart from their many decades of cooperative living. While I asked them general questions about what they've learned, I also asked them specific questions about their personal practices, and their communities' practices, related to inner and outer peace.

As a disclaimer, I want to be clear that I am not setting out to test a hypothesis or develop a theory. I didn't try to obtain a representative sample of interviewees, nor was I trying to conduct a scientific study. I was simply interested in the lessons that communitarians with many decades of experience with building intentional community would have to offer.

I think the perceptions of long-term communitarians have great value in and of themselves, and, in particular, in our current global situation. As we look at current events, it behooves us to reflect on lessons from community elders who have, for decades, been actively practicing peace and cooperation in environmentally and socially sustainable ways.

My interviewees represent a simple convenience sample based on connections that I've made over the past 30 years. They consist of four men and three women, representing 10 intentional communities. Their median time of living in intentional community is 40 years (range 23-44). The youngest is in her late forties and the oldest in his early 80s. All have been actively involved in their communities, either as founder or in other leadership roles, and have been involved in networking with groups like the Fellowship for Intentional Community (the FIC) and the Federation of Egalitarian Communities (the FEC). They are all white, middle class, well-educated North Americans. This latter point is, of course, a significant drawback to my project, and with more time I would like to expand my sample to include people of color from a wider variety of backgrounds.

A continent of communities

While the original communities of which my interviewees were a part have a number of differences, all of them were founded in the 1960s and 70s and all of them contained some elements that would have been considered "counter-cultural" at the time, and perhaps even today – for example, a focus on gender equality and egalitarianism in general, a concern for peace and social justice, an emphasis on environmental and social sustainability, and an interest in experimenting with different configurations of

the traditional family. The communities span the continent from Twin Oaks and Shannon Farm on the eastern seaboard in Virginia, to Dunmire Hollow in Tennessee, to Lake Village in Michigan, to the Ecumenical Institute in Chicago, to Sandhill Farm and Dancing Rabbit Ecovillage in Missouri, to Kerista in San Francisco, and finally Songaia Cohousing community in the Pacific Northwest near Seattle, Washington.

Meet the Interviewees

***Nancy Lanphear**, is 78 years old. She joined the Ecumenical Institute with her husband, Fred, in 1971, when she was in her early 30s. Nancy and Fred, along with another couple from the Ecumenical Institute, gradually founded Songaia over a period of about a decade. Songaia is a cohousing community in Bothell, Washington, which is a suburb of Seattle, in the Pacific northwest of the United States. Songaia has a membership of around 40 people living in 13 homes on about 11 acres of land. More recently, five Songaia families bought a 4,000 square foot home next door, which is operating as a cohouseholding group.*

***Valerie Renwick Porter**, originally from Canada, has lived at Twin Oaks community since 1992. Twin Oaks is an income-sharing community in rural central Virginia, on the eastern seaboard of the United States. Founded in 1967, it has about 100 members on around 450 acres of land. The shared values of Twin Oaks include cooperation, equality, nonviolence, equality and ecology.*

Aerial view of Twin Oaks, Virginia.

***Harvey Baker**, helped to found Dunmire Hollow community in 1974 where he has lived ever since. Dunmire Hollow is a rural community in southern Tennessee. Membership has waxed and waned over the years, but the community has about ten members living in homes scattered on 163 acres. Each household is economically independent, but members share fields, orchards, gardens, woods, springs, creeks, a community center, woodshop, sauna and food co-op.*

***Marty Klaif** was a member of the Kerista community for 15 years. Marty has resided at Shannon Farm, a rural intentional community, since 2001. Kerista, the first community that Marty joined in 1977, was started in New York City in 1956 by John Presmont, known as Brother Jud. According to the Kerista Village Handbook (1979;* http://www.kerista.com/herstory.html*), Kerista became a "*widespread hippie 'flower tribe' that operated communal houses and free stores from New York's Lower East Side to the West Coast" in the 1960s. *After going through a number of changes, Kerista formed as a residential intentional community in San Francisco in 1971. Marty has resided at Shannon Farm, a rural intentional community, since 2001.*

Shannon Farm, Virginia.

***Jenny Upton**, also lives at Shannon Farm. Jenny's first visit to Shannon Farm was in 1975, one year after the land was purchased. She joined the following year, and it has been her home for the past 40 years. Jenny is a woodworker and a business partner in a custom woodshop that has been at Shannon Farm since 1980. She built her own house in 1982 and says she is sustained by having "a private space to retreat to" when she wants to be separate from others.*

***Roger Ulrich**, my next interviewee, founded Lake Village Community in 1971 along Long Lake outside of Kalamazoo, Michigan. Roger was spurred by B. F. Skinner's utopian novel, Walden Two, to create an intentional community based on behaviorism. After meeting with fellow Walden Two enthusiasts, including people who went on to start Twin Oaks community in Virginia, Roger started Lake Village and has lived there for the past 45 years. Lake Village members initially tried to implement ideas from Walden Two but without much success. Over the years, other influences, including Native American spirituality, and ideas from Roger's Amish-Mennonite background, took precedence over behaviorism.*

***Laird Schaub**, is a founder of Sandhill Farm community, an income-sharing intentional community in rural northeast Missouri, which started in 1974. Sandhill Farm, like Twin Oaks, is a member of the Federation of Egalitarian Communities. It is a small community, currently with about seven adults and one child. They own around 135 acres of land which includes an organic farm. They share meals, vehicles, dwellings, and other resources, and grow much of their own food. Their income comes from on and off farm work.*

Sandhill Farm, Missouri.

Introducing the 12 Step Program

I've synthesized a set of 12 lessons from common themes stressed by my interviewees. In the *AA* tradition, I suppose you might say that this represents my interviewees' *12 Step Program* for finding inner and outer peace. But please note that this list of steps is not, by any stretch of the imagination, intended to be THE definitive list of steps. There are undoubtedly myriad ways to work toward inner and outer peace in intentional community. What I present to you is only one look at inner and outer peace from a small group of community elders in the United States.

Step 1: A community focused on inner and outer peace is one that nurtures and supports personal growth.

Laird, in particular, stressed the importance of working on personal growth in intentional community, because members have to hone their social and relational skills for intentional community to work. In addition to deliberately investing in teaching communication and group process skills, Laird says that Sandhill Farm "expressly promotes personal work being done by members, which has included meditation, yoga, martial arts, journaling, co-counseling and other forms of conflict resolution."

At Shannon Farm, Jenny says that they don't have any large group spiritual practices, but personal-growth and spiritual groups are held throughout the community in small group gatherings.

The opportunity afforded by intentional community to engage in pleasurable recreational activities, either by oneself or with others, was also mentioned as being important to staying balanced in a holistic way. Harvey says that he stays centered and grounded by bicycling, growing fruits and vegetables in his organic garden, playing the harmonica, and using his hands and creative energy to build custom furniture in his woodshop (see www.icorg/fic-board; http://www.zoominfo.com/p/Harvey-Baker/16534446).

Intentional community can promote personal growth by helping members discover their talents and build their skills. For example, Jenny discovered she "had a talent as a woodworker when exposed to an equipped shop [at Shannon Farm] and people willing to teach [her]". She also learned she "had a knack for organizing community events and an interest in group dynamics." She stresses that "none of these

discoveries would have happened for me if I were not [living in intentional] community." Her talent for community organizing led her to work as an event organizer for the FIC. On the more challenging side of personal-growth work, Jenny notes that Shannon Farm is experiencing some difficult issues with their current cohort of teenagers, a problem she thinks is negatively impacted by social media. Helping to promote the personal growth of young people in intentional community poses particular challenges in an era when the life of their peers in the larger society is often immersed in virtual relationships on social media rather than in-person relationships.

Asking whether you want to remain a part of intentional community appears to be an important part of the personal growth process for several of my interviewees. Jenny has thought about leaving from time to time, and she feels that this "is the healthiest way to be in community." She adds, "If I know I have other options, then I know I am here by choice. It usually boils down to my really not wanting to live anywhere else."

Toward Living Well With Less, by Roger Ulrich (2012).

To Roger, personal growth includes getting out of your head and learning to work with your hands, something he says that rural intentional community living provides lots of opportunities to do. In his life as a psychology professor, Roger was widely regarded as an expert on human behavior and he was lead editor for a series of widely-circulated, well-regarded volumes on the Control of Human Behavior in the 1960s and 70s. But at Lake Village, Roger learned quickly that knowledge from the ivory tower didn't translate well to community life. In fact, he was appalled to find that he couldn't even figure out ways to get kids to put away their shoes. The more he tried to experiment with his life, the less he realized he knew. To Roger, the bottom line from his more than four decades living in intentional community is that "you have to live the truth to understand it." After years of conducting laboratory experiments on behavior, he learned "that there is no experiment other than the real situation", a philosophy he stresses in his book, *Toward Living Well with Less*.

While Roger says that he doesn't want to put down the importance of formal education, he emphasizes, in his words, "learning by doing and the joy that comes with having the ability to appreciate breathing in and out, fresh water, healthy food, and the need for maintaining an abiding allegiance to the sacred mystery of which are a part."

Roger suggests that inner peace is fostered not just by getting your hands dirty, but by getting your hands dirty in ways that are meaningful to you and fit with your values. This point leads to the next lesson from my interviews:

Step 2: A community focused on inner and outer peace is one that provides daily opportunities to live out your values.

While all my interviewees talked about practices that members engage in to promote inner peace, such as yoga and meditation, the opportunity that intentional community afforded to put their values into practice on a daily basis seemed even more important to their sense of peace.

For example, to Valerie, a sense of inner peace comes from the lifestyle that Twin Oaks offers. She notes that "the lifestyle blends the best of everything – a good mix of physical/mental work, extremely flexible work conditions, comfortable living arrangements, a social environment with lots of control for downtime, and an opportunity to live in a manner that is in strong alignment with my values (feminism, egalitarianism, non-violence, etc.). There is nowhere else I know that offers this same blend." She adds

that "Twin Oaks is the closest physical-world manifestation of my internal-personal value system" she has found. She notes that she has, in her words, "never seriously considered leaving. I have imagined what it would be like to live in a different kind of community (smaller, more spiritual, in another culture) but the longer I stay, the less I entertain these thoughts."

Like Valerie, Laird says that one of the most important benefits of intentional community is that, in his words, "it's a place where I can try to integrate my ideals into everyday living, which includes trying to live a sustainable lifestyle on the ecological, social, and economic planes."

The social plane leads to the next lesson:

Step 3: A community focused on inner and outer peace is one that nurtures deep connections and relationships among members.

Intentional community, to Jenny, has afforded the opportunity to form relationships that she values. She notes that having a lot of people know you in a deep way "is a real eye opening experience." She adds that "it's easy to like somebody you don't know that well. But to like someone when you've seen all their warts takes you to another level."

Nancy's sense of peace comes from the day-to-day living with others and getting to know them on a deep level -- and realizing she can count on them when she needs them. Nancy experienced this truth when the community came together to help her care for her husband when he was dying from ALS. They helped get him up, give him massages, take him for walks, put him to bed, and provide many of the things she couldn't do on her own. The help and care the community provided was, to Nancy, the active manifestation of peace and cooperation and cemented her belief in the value of intentional community living.

The Songaia Cohousing community.

More recently, Nancy described how members of Songaia came together to care for an older member on hospice as she died. One member told Nancy that she was not emotionally capable of providing physical care for a dying person. However, as the woman was dying, Nancy saw this member deeply engaged in the nitty-gritty aspects of personal care, even cleaning out basins of vomit in the woman's final days. As with her husband's care, these acts, to Nancy, are living examples of what peace means in community.

In Nancy's words, the focus in intentional community on developing relationships means that: "People listen; they support me, allow me to share. They offer a place of deep care. And I can do that for them. I learn to live with people who are difficult. And I learn to live with myself, who can be difficult. Community members help to mirror for me what is going on. Living in community is a spiritual journey which can be disquieting but important. It's like a marriage. You encounter the other. In the other, you see yourself, but you also see others. Your life is interdependent on the other and the natural world. You learn that you are just a piece of the puzzle – an important piece – but you learn 'it's not all about me'."

Nancy's point about being interdependent with the natural world leads to the next lesson:

Step 4: A community focused on inner and outer peace nurtures deep connections and relationships with the land and natural world.

My interviewees expressed deep gratitude for the land they live on and for the natural world that sustains them, and all of their communities deliberately engage in practices to be more environmentally sustainable. At Lake Village, Roger expresses his gratitude, in his words, for "the day to day reality that has allowed us to be fortunate enough to live and learn on the hunk of earth that encompasses our homestead."

To Harvey, learning to know the land in an intimate way across the decades, and working to understand and protect it, is very important and part of the value system at Dunmire Hollow. He also points out that "living in the woods can promote inner tranquility." Jenny notes that the community's land, which she finds beautiful, provides a critical intangible benefit to life at Shannon Farm. To Laird, developing a relationship with the land at Sandhill is a big part of what he values from his experience in community, and as with my other interviewees, he says that he's developed a deep "spiritual bond with place, with the land."

Relationships with the land in these communities are often nurtured by community rituals and festivals, which leads to the next lesson:

Step 5: A community focused on inner and outer peace engages in celebrations, rituals and traditions.

A shared meal at Songaia.

In my interview with Nancy, she stressed the importance of traditions and rituals to developing a peaceful, sustainable intentional community. Nancy said that if she had one piece of advice to offer a fledgling intentional community, it would be the importance of eating together, singing together, celebrating together, and engaging in rituals together. At Songaia, they eat together five times a week, and they have a common pantry that members can take food from. Nancy describes the bonding that comes from eating together as "incredible." Similarly, she describes their traditions, rituals and ceremonies as essential to creating a peaceful, harmonious community. Songaia has small meditation groups, a book group, chat and craft group, women's circle, monthly sharing circle, a Festival of the Earth on May Day, annual Thanksgiving celebrations, and a large New Year's celebration where they collectively engage in reflection and give gifts to the community. They have healing circles when people get sick, celebrations for girls when they get their first menstrual periods, and celebrations to remember those who have died. Every member is honored on their birthday and asked questions about the highlights of their year, their upcoming challenges, and how the community can support them in these challenges. Nancy stressed that these celebrations help to sustain bonds among members and deepen their relationships to one another and to the community. She added that when you engage in rituals and celebrate with others on an ongoing basis and get to know one another on a deep level, you develop a commitment to resolving conflicts, to forgiveness, and to sustaining community.

My interviewees noted that this commitment to resolving conflicts is greatly enhanced by deliberately working on relational skills, which leads to the next lesson:

Step 6: A community focused on inner and outer peace works on communication and group process.

When I asked Marty about how to sustain an intentional community, he replied "communication, communication, communication. More communication." Similarly, the main piece of advice he said he would give to a fledgling intentional community is to "maximize communication." Along these lines, Marty feels that Shannon Farm's approach to group self-governance has been helpful in promoting peaceful interactions and personal quality of life. He adds that "the desire and effort to incorporate new members [into this process] is critical", as is "not being afraid to address difficult issues."

Group process is crucial to intentional community building. Sandhill Farm.

And difficult issues, of course, will arise in community. Roger, who has often found himself in leadership roles throughout his life, notes that his "tendency to act like a god" has created challenges for himself and others at Lake Village. But he's stayed at the community and faced the conflict instead of hiding or running from it, which, to all my interviewees, seems to be a critical aspect of effective group process. For Roger, as he finds himself "on the other side of 80 years on the globe," his years of experience in directly facing conflict at his community has helped him understand more deeply what it takes to build peaceful, cooperative relationships.

In his interview, Laird provided specific details on this endeavor when he described how Sandhill developed its approach to group process and decision making – an approach that Laird feels has served the community well over the decades. For example, they started having an annual retreat in the 1990s to engage, in Laird's words, in "long-range planning, tackling thorny issues, doing interpersonal clearings and generally resetting the gyroscope." Laird feels that a hugely important part of these retreats was bringing in a neutral outside facilitator who helped them "do the heavy lifting" when they "wrestled with topics where no member was neutral."

My interviewees' communities use a variety of approaches to engage in decision making – consensus, sociocracy, a planner-manager system, and more. However, what seemed more important to interviewees than the specific decision-making process was to teach and support the development of conflict resolution skills.

Laird feels that one of the most important reasons that Sandhill has been able to pull through rough patches is that they've understood the importance of strong social and relational skills and have deliberately invested in getting better at them. Key skills that Laird mentioned include to learn to articulate what you think and feel, to own your own shit, to hear accurately what others say and see an issue through another's lens, to see bridges in conflict, to reach out to others, to distinguish between bad behavior and a person being 'bad', and to be sensitive to the ways you are privileged. As Sandhill got more skilled in these ways, Laird feels that they were better able to resolve tensions and make good choices that allowed the community to continue. In their group process, how things get done, and how relationships are treated, are more important than what gets accomplished. Laird says that "by being committed to cooperative culture, we are committed at a root level to trying to resolve disagreements

peaceably." Key in this process, Laird stresses, is defining the community's common values and its tolerance around deviation from the ideal behavior with respect to each value.

This point leads to the next lesson:

Step 7: A community focused on inner and outer peace defines and sticks to its core values.

Harvey stresses that Dunmire Hollow's longevity is based largely on the fact that they explicitly identified core agreements, one of which was, in his words, "that we would try to work out our conflicts." But he notes that after identifying their core requirements, they made a point to let "everything else be as flexible as possible." Harvey counsels that the most important lesson he has drawn for how to make an intentional community work for the long haul is to "be flexible, but don't give up on your core principles."

At Dunmire Hollow, the Community's core beliefs were tested when the community "went through a two year period of intense conflict created by new members (who dragged in long term members through romances)." Harvey and other long-term members insisted "that the two warring parties had to deal with each other." The long-term members were not willing to budge on the core agreement that they would work openly and directly on conflict resolution. According to Harvey, "some folks left rather than deal with the others." While having people leave is never easy, the community stuck to its core principle of engaging in open, honest conflict resolution. That the community didn't back down from this principle and was able to make it through this period of intense conflict gives credence to Harvey's main lesson that identifying and following core agreements is essential to community sustainability.

Songaia community has had a similar experience with conflict. As one example, they spent five years arguing about cutting down some big trees that were in danger of falling on houses and were shading the community's garden and orchard. The issue kept coming up and they simply couldn't find a resolution. But they stuck with the issue, revisited their community values, didn't sweep people's concerns under the rug, and focused on resolving the conflict even though it took years to do so. In Nancy's words, "Learning to live together takes work. It's a spiritual journey. You just get more of it in community because you have to encounter more people. Living in community provides a built in spiritual path."

But, as interviewees suggested, this path is facilitated by having clear agreements about how community life will be shared. This leads to the next lesson:

Step 8: A community focused on inner and outer peace develops a system for sharing the work.

A common theme in my interviews was that designing your community so that members are able to find work that matters to them and that fits with their values is an important part of finding a sense of inner peace. Additionally, deliberately designing a system of sharing the work equitably is important to maintaining peace within the community.

Years ago, I lived in a 30-member cooperative house called Sunflower House, that was founded in 1969 and inspired by B. F. Skinner's novel, *Walden Two*. I was not only a resident but also part of a research group that systematically studied co-op procedures. We developed and tested the co-op's work-sharing system, the meeting system, a new-member education program, the managerial system, and more. The results of our research suggested that explicit, agreed-upon strategies for educating new members, sharing the work, making decisions, and coordinating managerial tasks are essential to a well-functioning community.

For example, when we tested a labor credit system for sharing the domestic work, the data showed that work was shared more equitably with labor credits in place than without them. Membership turnover also decreased under the labor credit system. And members voted to continue it, where it remains in some form to the present day.

Twin Oaks also has a labor-credit system that was inspired by the system described in *Walden Two*. In Valerie's words: "One of the main reasons Twin Oaks has survived as long as it has is its strong, centralized labour system. Each week one member coordinates each member's individual labour sheet with a list of all the jobs that need doing. In this way, the work that ensures the community's health and survival gets done, and also members are structured to stay very focused on the work, life and health of the group."

Having meaningful work opportunities for the younger generation is an important part of a successful labor system, which leads to the next lesson:

Step 9: A community focused on inner and outer peace involves the next generation.

A challenge that Nancy and the Songaia community are currently grappling with is "how to pass the torch." Two of the four founders have died. About seven members are over the age of 70. These people have "carried a lot of the energy of the community." In response to this concern, she asks, "How do we let go? How does the community deal with dwindling energy resources of members? We don't have many young families. The youngest member is six. The aging of the community is a huge challenge." When asked if she thinks the community will last, she answers honestly, "I don't know. Things change. It will be different. It's hard to say. I hope so, but I just don't know. Nobody knows." Weathering the transition from the founding generation to the next generation will undoubtedly be challenging for Songaia, but the culture of support and caring they have built through a deliberate focus on building deep relationships through ritual, tradition and celebration has provided a helpful foundation as they move into an uncertain future.

Like Nancy, Harvey is unsure that Dunmire Hollow will outlive his generation. He notes that "we currently have two second generation people involved (brother and sister) but that is not enough to sustain the community. [It's] not clear that we are attractive to the new generation."

Every community must figure out how to involve the next generation.

Laird also stressed the importance of recruiting younger members to the long-term survival of intentional communities. They saw early on the trend toward an aging population and realized they needed to create "an orderly transition to a younger generation." He notes that "while it took us about a decade, we ultimately succeeded" in attracting some younger members, and "these people have become the nucleus of the next generation of Sandhill". On a similar theme, Laird pointed out the importance of insuring that a variety of people know how to complete key community roles, and to diversify your income sufficiently, so that you aren't dependent on certain individuals for the community's survival. In Laird's words, he noted that he has "been purposefully working for the last 10 years I was there to make sure that there was nothing that the community relied on me for that only I could do."

To Jenny, the biggest problem facing Shannon Farm may be the aging of the community. She notes that "the active members who do a lot of the work are over 60. The younger set who are joining don't seem

to want to do the work to keep our infrastructure maintained or going to meetings to make decisions together." She concludes that "my community might continue on, but will probably look a lot different than when we started this place 40 years ago."

Marty also has concerns about the future for Shannon Farm. He says they are trying to figure out "how to have the community be attractive to potential younger members in a difficult larger economy when [their] structure largely involves members investing in homes. Even though [they] have kept the economics as affordable as possible, inflation over time has…made it difficult for younger people to have the money."

This discussion of money leads to the next lesson I drew from my interviewees:

Step 10: A community focused on inner and outer peace pays attention to economics.

Though some communitarians may find it distasteful to talk about money, my interviewees made it clear that communities must create a stable economic base in order to have the time and resources to develop and spread a peaceful, cooperative culture.

One big challenge for Sandhill Farm in a rural area with limited employment and income-producing opportunities was "to develop a stable economic base that would cover all expenses." They augmented community income with personal savings to help make it through the early years. One big help was their ability to buy the land with cash. They never had a mortgage. To Laird, this "illuminates an important point about starting a community 40 years ago instead of today: land prices were relatively cheaper then." The lack of mortgage and help from personal savings bought them time "to find value based work (both in the form of outside jobs and community businesses." Their fate may have been quite different had they been "scrambling to stay out of debt" and forced into jobs that didn't mesh with their values.

Laird notes that developing a fairly stable economic situation has afforded the community "some peace simply as a byproduct to doing work we love, instead of work for a paycheck…". This stability also allows them to emphasize "relationships over accomplishments."

The importance of developing a stable economic base was also mentioned by Valerie. Over the years, Twin Oaks has built a number of income-producing businesses, including hammocks, soy foods, book indexing and an heirloom seed business. Valerie notes that "at the risk of tempting fate, I would say we are on secure footing. We have village-scale self-supporting systems (growing much of our own food, solid infrastructure in place, etc.) and several community businesses (even more diversified than in our past) to support our cash needs."

Group hammock weaving. Twin Oaks.

Harvey notes that economics are a big issue for Dunmire Hollow. While he thinks that living in the woods may promote inner tranquility, "having to make a living in southern Tennessee generally may not". Indeed, Dunmire's rural location and the depressed economic conditions of the surrounding area make supporting oneself difficult. As Harvey implies, finding inner peace or being able to devote time to work on outer peace are challenging when the stresses of putting food on the table and keeping a roof overhead are urgent concerns. The difficulty of

making a living clearly impacts the community's stability, and some Dunmire members have moved to the city for employment.

One way intentional communities can help with economic issues is to be able to provide affordable housing. Songaia, for example, acts as a refuge of relatively affordable housing in the Seattle metro area, an area which is known for its staggering housing costs. Similarly, Marty feels that one reason Shannon Farm has lasted for over 40 years is because the economic organization of the community is attractive. The community has deliberately limited the increase in equity in members' homes, which keeps housing relatively affordable. The community also promotes long-term membership by encouraging people to invest in their homes. Additionally, Marty stresses that the inner peace of individual members and a sense of peace within the community is nurtured by "having an economic structure that enables the community to thrive and…to create a good life for its members." Marty notes that members are able to separate themselves to some extent from the many pressures of the larger society, particularly the economic pressures, allowing "more leisure time and less concern about 'making it'."

Jenny calls joining Shannon Farm a "lifestyle investment" not a real-estate investment. The location of the community, which is well situated for finding employment, is another plus that Jenny stresses. It's not far (27 miles) to Charlottesville, a metropolitan area of about 150,000 people, home of the University of Virginia, and cultural hub for the region, and Jenny points out that "commuting to jobs is not a hardship."

Jenny notes that in the early years, the community came close to folding when "land payments were high and cash was scarce." Thankfully, a local bank helped them refinance their mortgage and their payments dropped to a manageable amount.

This point about the importance of good local relationships leads to the next lesson:

Step 11: A community focused on inner and outer peace works to be good neighbors.

My interviewees stressed that being a community focused on peace and cooperation doesn't mean you only practice these values within your borders. Learning to work in a peaceful, cooperative way with people who have different lifestyles and belief systems may be harder than doing so with like-minded people but is nonetheless important. This is a lesson that the Lake Village community learned the hard way but is one they've benefited from.

One of the big challenges facing Lake Village over the years has involved run-ins with neighbors and county building inspectors who didn't initially appreciate the unconventional people, unusual practices, and non-standard buildings in their midst. At one point, the county red-tagged a large number of the dwellings as uninhabitable, and membership dropped dangerously low.

Lakehill Village practices good neighbourliness through educational outreach.

Roger said they learned an extremely important lesson from this time about the importance of being good neighbors, especially "as perceived by township officials." He notes that "things have never been better than now, in so far as we are viewed positively by our neighbors." The community not only provides a source of organic produce to the surrounding area, but it now offers programs for inner-city children to experience farm life, learn where their food comes from, spend time in the natural world and get their hands dirty. This outreach work appears to be very meaningful to the community and clearly brings rewards. Roger concludes that "As we learned to more greatly cherish the surrounding community, we have received a greater return cherishing."

Over the years, Laird notes that Sandhill has figured out how to live peaceably among neighbors who originally viewed them as if they "may as well have been from Mars." While organic farming was unheard of in the area when they showed up, Laird estimates that as many as 10% of the farms in the county are now organic and "no one thinks we're so weird anymore." They've also helped to sustain a traditional local industry, that of making sorghum syrup, and have organized a weekly farmer's market during the growing season. He feels that a "grudging admiration" has developed for the community among the local people which has replaced the "incredulity" that was initially expressed when they showed up in 1974.

In a similar vein, Jenny notes that Shannon Farm was originally viewed as "a bunch of weirdos" by the local community, but they've worked hard to be good neighbors, to participate in local events, and help out when needed. "Now", Jenny adds, "they see us as contributing members of this county."

This leads to the final lesson:

Step 12: A community focused on inner and outer peace models and shares cooperative culture.

Twin Oaks has perhaps the most organized, deliberate approach to promoting peace and justice in the greater society of the communities I've mentioned through what Valerie describes as the "movement support wing" of the community. She notes that the community gives "some money and labour credits for people to do activism outside the community." But she adds, "I think more significantly, and less tangibly, we act as a thriving model of an egalitarian, socially just" intentional community. In addition to giving regular tours and having a visitor program, Twin Oaks has held an annual Communities conference (see *http://communitiesconference.org*) for decades that attracts one to two hundred people each year, and an annual three-day women's gathering with around 100 or so participants. Twin Oaks has inspired the formation of a number of intentional communities, including nearby Acorn Community and Living Energy Farm, as well as East Wind in the Missouri Ozarks -- though many more communities have undoubtedly drawn from Twin Oaks' knowledge about how to design systems for sharing work, making decisions, running community businesses, and promoting a peaceful, egalitarian, cooperative community.

Twin Oaks Communities conference.

One way Songaia works to spread cooperative culture is through its efforts to build a larger cooperative neighborhood of intentional communities. In a similar fashion, Sandhill Farm has worked to nurture the development of a strong cooperative culture in the local area. Laird feels much more secure about Sandhill's future due to the nearby presence of Dancing Rabbit ecovillage and Red Earth Farms, which "help create the stability of a three-legged stool." Laird guesses that Scotland County, the county where Sandhill, Dancing Rabbit and Red Earth Farms are located, "almost certainly has the highest percentage of voters living in intentional community of any county in the U.S."

Dunmire Hollow, Harvey notes, is also a gathering place for progressives in the area. To understand this function requires some knowledge of Dunmire's surrounding political and social climate. Dunmire Hollow is located in a rural area in a politically and socially conservative southern state where Evangelical

Protestants, who take a literal interpretation of the Bible, account for a majority of the religiously active population (*http://www.encyclopedia.com/topic/Tennessee.aspx*). As Harvey notes, "we provide the major social connection for many homesteading families that live in the area via our weekly pot-lucks and our food coop." In this way, the community serves as a centralized gathering spot to nourish cooperative culture.

Like Harvey, all of my interviewees have worked in some way as community networkers. Laird values this networking function not only as a way to spread cooperative culture, but as a way to support an individual community's survival. For Sandhill, involvement with other communities has provided "moral support, technical advice, and a safety net for the ebbs and flows of membership." For example, joining the Federation of Egalitarian Communities was a big help in the early years, as it provided them with people to help during their labor-intensive sorghum harvest. This involvement also gave them places for inexpensive vacations at sister communities. And this provided them with a name in intentional community circles, helping them with recruitment. Laird calls the decision of Dancing Rabbit community to locate nearby in 1997 was like winning "the national sweepstakes." In Laird's words, "it allowed us to retain the closeness only possible with small numbers, while enjoying the big community advantages of hybrid vigor and a wealth of increased culture (and prospects for intimate relationships). By having neighbors with very similar values we had the best of both worlds."

Laird also notes the value of networking to individuals. For example, his involvement in the broader community networks of the FIC and FEC, as well as his work as a group process consultant, nurtured him by providing "a wider pool of peers" than he could expect to meet at a small, isolated intentional community, and gave him the opportunity to engage in deeply meaningful social change work that has become, in his words, "one of the central foci of my life over the past 36 years." While Sandhill Farm provided "sanity, renewal and grounding", his work in community networking allowed him to satisfy his "desire to make a difference in the world."

The roles of my interviewees in the process of spreading cooperative culture cannot be underscored. Many of them have worked not only as leaders in their own communities but around the country as educators and trainers to promote peaceful group process and cooperative, egalitarian communities. In doing so, they've trained other individuals and groups to become adept at doing this work themselves. Laird, for example, estimates that he's worked on group process with at least 100 groups, and has taken about 80 students through his 2-year facilitation training. In this way, they've sowed seeds of cooperative culture in an exponential way.

Conclusion

In conclusion, in my travels to scores of communities around the United States, I've seen how the work of intentional community elders, networkers and writers such as Nancy, Valerie, Harvey, Marty, Jenny, Roger and Laird, has spread a distinctive cooperative culture that focuses on the primacy of building relationships over accomplishments. In a blog that Laird wrote in May of this year, he says "to be clear, I don't think intentional communities will eliminate conflict in the world – yet we do think that living cooperatively can be a building block of world peace. It all hinges on how people (and the groups that they create) respond to disagreement" (http://communityandconsensus.blogspot.com/, 5/6/2016).

Laird views intentional communities as the Research and Development centers of the greater society, as they work to "figur[e] out the nuts and bolts of social sustainability" and create "successful cooperative culture". I think Laird's following words sum up the general spirit of my interviews: "The world, I believe, desperately needs what we're learning about." … "I'm hoping to see a shift to where successful intentional communities see a greater responsibility to the wider culture to witness what they've been learning, such that they become centers around which ever-widening circles of cooperative culture radiate out."

Tamera: A Realistic Utopia

Peter Gringinger writes of his experiences at Tamera, a communal ecovillage in Portugal that hosted the 2016 ICSA conference.

This article appeared in its original form on Peter's blog, "Regenerative Blog – Peter Gringinger: Exploring Sustainable Communities and Livelihoods Worldwide" which can be accessed at regenerativeblog.wordpress.com.

Peter Gringinger, Melbourne, Australia.

Tamera ecovillage is located in southern Portugal in the region of Alentejo, some 20km inland from the Atlantic coast. The ecovillage owns 130 hectares of land in the rolling hills of the area with an intense Mediterranean climate of hot and dry summers (up to 40 degrees celsius) and mild winters (with rbetween 300 and 1200 mm of precipitation). The region was traditionally farmed by small scale subsistence farmers, with some livestock (largely sheep and goats), cork harvesting, olives and small scale grain production. Over the last 50 to 60 years many farms in this area where combined into larger scale industrial farms with extensive use of fossil fuels, fertilizers and pesticides. Over the years the area was more and more depopulated as most of the younger people moved to the cities due to lack of opportunities and progressive desertification and soil degradation of the area made even farming more and more difficult. This has also affected the land and soils of Tamera and one of the ecovillage's areas of focus is the restoration of natural soil and water systems in order to support the regenerative development of the ecovillage and to support the needs of humans and ecosystems.

Tamera the Healing Biotope.

Tamera the Healing Biotope was founded in 1995 and two of the main founding members are Dieter Duhm and Sabine Lichtenfels, both still residing in Tamera. The founding thought was to develop a non-violent life model for cooperation between human beings, animals and nature. This is reflected in Tamera's Vision:

The Healing Biotope I Tamera is a peace research project with the goal to create a model for a future society that is free from hatred, lies, violence and fear. Tamera should become an acupuncture point of peace, a greenhouse of trust, a prototype for an existence free of fear on this planet, a post-capitalist societal model and a place where the human and meta realm of life come together.

This is reflected in Tamera's goals, which are implemented in Tamera and elsewhere through various research projects and outreach programs worldwide:

- Development of communities where human beings can rely on each other again.
- Ending the war between the genders and the healing of love.

- Creating a way of living together, in which the sexual attraction of one to another does not cause jealousy in a third; where no hatred or competition is aroused.

- Ethics of truth, mutual support and responsible participation.

- Cooperation with nature and living non-violently with animals and all fellow creatures, even with the smallest ones.

- Creating a material basis of life that is no longer connected with the destruction of nature, exploitation or the exhaustion of natural resources.

- Regional food autonomy and ecological subsistence.

- Water and landscape healing through the creation of Water Retention Landscapes.

- Stepping out of the oil-based economy through the development of autonomous energy systems.

- Healing by way of creating healing life circumstances.

- Re-embedment of man-made systems within the higher systems of creation.

Hence, the physical environment of Tamera was designed based on permaculture principles from the very beginning. Initially the community received support from Max Lindegger (of Crystal Waters in Australia), and later from Austrian permaculture teacher Sepp Holzer. The latter designed and helped implement Tamera's integrated water landscape, which consists of a number of large ponds and lakes, combined with terraced areas and other water retention features (e.g. ditches and swales) to retain much of the precipitation on the land. This landscape has helped to regenerate a healthy water balance and soils that support more intensive agriculture to provide for the needs the village.

Tamera's water retention landscape.

The lakes and ponds as well as two to three terraces along each water retention structure were successively constructed since 2007, with as minimal earthworks as possible but with maximum impact on ecological water systems in mind. The steep slopes of terraces are used for fruit trees and bushes to stabilize the slopes. The flat areas are used for vegetables and berries supported with drip irrigation systems, with very careful zoning of tree types according to their water needs, over time developing into food forests and timber forests. Soil erosion has been minimised, soil and groundwater restoration achieved, and a highly resilient and balanced water system (one of the focus and research areas of Tamera being shared with the world for creation of regenerative settlements).

At the geometric and heart center of Tamera one finds a stone circle – a community artwork, modeled after the prehistoric stone circle, Almendres, near Evora. It serves the community as a spiritual place for prayer, meditation and celebrations. Originating at the stone circle, a network of Pilgrims' Paths and geomantic power places weave throughout the landscape. These are places of contemplation, silence and communication with nature.

With currently approximately 170 people living permanently in Tamera (including around 20 children) and thousands of visitors and volunteers coming to Tamera every year during the summer season, less than 20% of required food consumed in Tamera is produced on the land. However, Tamera's aim is not food self-sufficiency. Even though Tamera has the land area, seeds (produced on the land), water systems and soils to be self-sufficient, the focus is not on food production (but other areas – elaborated upon below). Rather, Tamera helped develop a local and regional network of sustainable food producersto provide for most of the food needs of Tamera and other local communities. Tamera is 100% self-sufficient in its water needs, 80% in energy needs.

Researching sustainable energy

Another research focus for Tamera is in the fields of sustainable energy and living systems. The research is undertaken by a sub-community of around 30 residents, who put their research effort into appropriate technologies and techniques for urban water management, urban high-intensity farming, solar and biogas systems and more. For example the sub-community called Solar Village uses an outdoor (covered but no walls) community kitchen, utilizing a commercial-scale solar oven and a biogas system that uses all kitchen and green waste from the village. All of these systems have been designed and built by and within the community using simple technologies. In this way, Solar Village demonstrates integrated examples of alternative living to our current outdated fossil fuels based systems, while emphasizing sustainability and transcending the industrial complex with its conventional "green" solutions.

Biogas tank fuels the kitchen using food and green waste.

Trust, truth, transparency

Tamera's community structures are built around creating and maintaining a community of **trust**, **truth** and **transparency** to achieve peaceful shared living, and on a larger scale to create communities and societies without violence and wars. This model is based on the idea that the issues that arise in small-scale communities are a reflection of the issues facing the entire world. The basis is to transform our personal and community narratives from violence, separation, exploitation, destruction, selfishness into a regenerative culture of love, peace, cooperation, connection, care and restoration. These are, of course, very ambitious aims that some might say are unrealistic. Nonetheless, this is Tamera's core project - working together as individuals and as a community internally and externally to create pathways and tools to achieve these goals. Tamera, like many other intentional communities, is a very good example of an incubator and laboratory for different ways of being in the world, experimenting with the creation of a regenerative culture of creating and living community and for sustainable one planet living.

One of the tools used in Tamera for both personal development and community building is the **forum.** The forum is a form of sharing circle, but much more. It is a guided and facilitated open space for deep

honest sharing and reflection on all issues which individuals or the community find themselves confronting. Inside the forum, members of the community reflect and provide feedback with a loving heart, which helps foster self-knowledge, self-acceptance, trust and empowerment by learning through community what is difficult or impossible to learn on ones own.

Shared decision making

Tamera's approach to decision-making offers an alternative to what would conventionally be considered personal choices made alone (or in a nuclear family). For example, having and raising children is a collective decision, though of course in deep and caring participation with the individuals (i.e. parents or caregivers) involved. Raising children takes the support, energy and resources of the whole village, and this is particularly true for Tamera, where raising children is literally shared by all in many different ways in genuine and mutual support. Children in the community have a number of adults who they can consider as their parents, and issues of children's development and wellbeing are discussed and decided upon collectively. Children also live together in a children's village, supervised by a group of adults and most are home schooled (together). The aim is to educate children so they can trust adults and find safety in adults and others by being nurtured in mind, body and spirit to trust and feel safety. This approach demands the adults' self-development and commitment to live by the basic ethics of speaking your truth, providing genuine mutual support and actively participating in the community and the world.

As mentioned above, personal and interpersonal issues are dealt with in the forum. For more formal discussions on specific issues there are a number of **carrier circles** on specific topics (e.g. water, children, etc.) with around 20 members. These carrier circles discuss topics in-depth until a consensus is more or less reached, after which an issue can be passed to the Plenary, where the entire community can provide input before a decision is made. In addition, there are also **councils** (eg. womens' council, finance council, guests council, etc.) with 5 to 7 members each. These councils deal with assigned topics in great detail in order to come to a position on a topic.

Forum - creating transparency and trust in community.

One of the chief impressions that I got from all the systems and structures used in Tamera, is not only their overall complexity but more so their great flexibility and constant organic evolution. The structures are in constant flux to account for individual circumstances and needs, community needs and the ever-changing composition and character of the community itself (including generational changes). Indeed, the only constant is change. This is also reflected in the fact that approximately 30% of work (on average) is put into community building, social relations, education.

Reaching out for global peace

Tamera also operates a research group as part of the **International Global Peace Network** (IGP – currently with approximately 15 people working full-time on it from Tamera). It is based on the vision of a strong outreach program developed in the community's early days, initially with extensive involvement in peace work in Israel-Palestine. Tamera sees itself as a living laboratory of alternative and peaceful, cooperative existence of humans irrespective of cultural background, religion, sex, color or creed.

Practical peace work from Tamera not only includes work in Israel-Palestine but also being at the frontline of peace negotiations in Columbia, forming models of socially just and ecological living in the favelas of Brazil, and developing permaculture villages in Kenya and many other places worldwide. In addition. The Tamera-based IGP is a reference point and resource of support and expertise in the creation of socially just and sustainable communities addressing underlying systemic issues. Much of IGP's work is through networking, conventional and social media work, and collaboration. The aim being to combine environmental activism with spirituality in order to develop a more holistic and sustainable approach to peace work through the inner and outer transformation of individuals, partnerships, communities and societies as a whole. IGP provides information and resources on inner/outer change work, blueprints for community living, development of consciousness.

A shared economy

Tamera partially utilizes an income sharing system. Full members of Tamera (i.e. co-worker) have all basic living expenses, including food, health care, schooling for kids, transport, etc. covered, as well as personal living stipend. However, additional income from outside sources (every co-worker is required to work standard hours in and for Tamera in their chosen area of interest), is allowed for personal use if so desired. Similarly, personal wealth (e.g. from before joining Tamera) can be retained individually (but can also be transferred to Tamera if one wishes to). The internal economy of Tamera itself is gift based and without exchange of money.

Tamera hosts a wealth of sustainable community building seminars and training courses.

At present, most of Tamera's income comes from education and training programs (seminars and workshops) operated at the Tamera campus during the summer months. Income is distributed also to the various research projects run in and from Tamera (see above). The land is owned by two separate entities and hence coworkers do not personally own any land, rather it is owned collectively.

In summary, Tamera and its people have created a beautiful, regenerative and energetically outward looking, honest, loving and peaceful community. They are truly a lighthouse of hope for what is possible. Tamera is a laboratory of experimentation for new forms of living, living together, and sharing the knowledge and wisdom which needs to be spread far and wide. My brief description and summary cannot hope to do justice to this community. I recommend that you visit yourselves to immerse in all its diversity and depth and to experience fully with your body, mind and spirit what Tamera is. If you do, I hope you internalize its philosophy, messages and knowledge and that Tamera lights your internal fire to join this path of personal and cultural healing and regeneration.

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C.A.L.L.

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