



C.A.L.L.

Communities At Large Letter



INTENTIONAL COMMUNITIES DESK



YAD TABENKIN



Dear Readers,

Welcome to this bumper edition of C.A.L.L., featuring a snapshot of how communities around the world are responding to the COVID-19 pandemic. But I'm getting ahead of myself. Some background:



On April 1st 2020, I received an email from Michael Wuerfel from the Sieben Linden Ecovillage in Germany. They produce the wonderful eurotopia directory and accompanying website, which feature European intentional communities. He was asking all the communities in his database to share how they are responding to the corona virus.

Once I'd sent him my contribution, and he'd collected a good few responses from other communities, he sent me the document that he had compiled. I was absolutely spellbound! The stories, dilemmas, challenges and coping strategies were fascinating to read, and helped me understand that we are living through an historical period, also for the communities movement itself.

From that point, I was determined to continue Michael's work, and transform this resource into an international document, collecting responses from communities all around the world. I contacted communities that I had personal contacts at, I contacted communal scholars, community networks and organisations. And as I did, the stories started rolling in.

So I'm both proud and excited to announce that you have in your hands the fruits of unprecedented international co-operation between eurotopia, the Intentional Communities Desk (ICD), and the Foundation for Intentional Community (FIC).

If you are reading this from a community and you have yet to send us your response, you can find the form at: <https://tinyurl.com/communitycorona>

And even though we increased the size of this issue of C.A.L.L. by a whopping eight pages to accommodate as many of your stories as possible, there are still many more that have come in, and will continue to come in. Therefore, we will be gradually uploading all the responses we have received onto our website.

Hope you find the stories as fascinating as I do,

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Dancing Rabbit Ecovillage, USA

Sweeter Milk Equals Better Cheddar: A Dancing Rabbit Update

April 14, 2020

by Ted

Like everybody else in the world we are learning and unlearning new things here every day in these strange times. In my 45 years I have never lived through anything that has so thoroughly gripped the entire world at once as this COVID-19 event.

Ted here to bring you the news from Dancing Rabbit, where intentional community has taken on a different sort of meaning over the past few weeks as social distancing, purposeful isolation, and sanitation practices have seeped in and co-opted our daily lives.

For several weeks now I've had the title of Gabriel Garcia Marquez's novel *Love in the Time of Cholera* running through my head as I contemplate the changes in daily norms we've all been rapidly adjusting to. In a place where hugs are a frequent greeting between fellow villagers, where we often share potluck meals, walks, games, and other events with each other, and where infrastructural elements like kitchens and bathrooms are frequently shared between unrelated people, things really feel like they've been turned upside down.

Like any community, we are a mix of people with different circumstances here. Some are younger, some older; some live with background health issues, some not; some have more exposure to the wider community through their work, while others can go weeks or months without venturing further than Rutledge,



Sandhill, or Red Earth - just a few miles' radius. Accordingly there have been varying degrees of concern about the possible arrival of the new coronavirus in our midst, but increasingly a sense of common cause, all of us trying to adjust our habits to care for the most vulnerable among us.

As more information and understanding about the particulars of this pandemic have accumulated, we've been refining our strategies for keeping everybody safe and healthy. For many years we've staffed an Emergency Response Committee for the village. For most of those years (aside from a chicken pox event coinciding with the arrival of a new baby more than a decade ago) the committee's work has been mostly theoretical, but the team rapidly scaled up a month or more ago, meeting virtually and regularly offering guidance and information resources for the village. We are grateful for their work!



One of the most noticeable adjustments of this time for me has been the increased awareness of who we are each connected to in physical space. Whereas the family might be the basic unit of shared exposure if I lived elsewhere, the daily contact I keep with other Ironweeders to share kitchen, food, and cooking means that for COVID exposure purposes I am connected in turn to the other people each of them shares their days with. The kitchen also serves as the storage center and distribution point for the dairy co-op and all its members, so we have two groups with overlapping use of the same space.

Danielle works in the Dancing Rabbit office in the common building, and Prairie and Aurelia each make use of the piano there on a daily basis, so there is overlap with those who frequent that building for their daily needs, though masks have become de rigueur there. Sara is a midwife with regular trips outside the village and the need to avoid exposing clients



to contagion. She has been almost daily in touch with other midwives very actively adjusting to the needs of the moment, including moms at all stages of pregnancy who had not previously considered home birth but are now keen to avoid a hospital setting.

Multiply this range of factors for each other grouping of people in the village, and it gets increasingly complicated.

What I've loved, and will long remember about this period (assuming I make it through it!) are the individual efforts to help out while still having fun. Katherine, who as one of the consistent users of the common building took on sanitizing its various doors, switches, and surfaces on a daily basis, has also started manufacturing and distributing beautifully made cloth face masks from a workstation in the great room. Alline, along with Apple at Red Earth and others, have joined in producing these as well. Villager and Rutledge fire chief Javi has been deputized to receive and distribute supplies from FEMA to various departments in the area, though there has been precious little coming through, given the challenges first responders are facing in this crisis.

Alline last week arranged a party for Kurt's birthday where individual chairs were set up in the road in front of the Mercantile at six-foot distances (along with grouped chairs for various families), each with a cupcake, candle, and mini book of matches. At the appointed time, we all gathered, each lit candles (or tried to, in the breeze), sang to Kurt, and sat about talking and eating together at approved distance before going our separate ways again. Andi, who as a paramedic for Knox County must already be out and about, has taken on Kurt's regular weekly town trips, doing errands for everybody once a week and allowing Kurt and the rest of us to stay put and get our needs met without venturing out into the world.

Groups that do share exposure with each other, like our eating cooperative, are being re-enlivened as social lifelines. Several evenings after dinner last week, Ironweed sat



around the table playing games, and one night ventured up onto the roof of Osage to see the village from a higher vantage and greet passers-by from an approved distance. Ultimate Frisbee has not been happening (sometimes as much for the windy days as the potential for viral exposure), but some of us have started going out to at least toss a disc each day, sanitizing afterward. New residents and work exchangers are still arriving, and others returning from winters away, and spending two weeks isolating before venturing further into the village.

We don't know how long all this will last, but it is comforting that amidst all the new and different, there are plenty of things that don't change. As spring ripens, the earth greens up, flowers open, trees bloom, and we prepare garden beds and hundreds of tiny seedlings with which to populate them. Turns out gardening is a fine activity for people to share at a slight distance while still providing each other company and contact. **Sugar's milk is sweetening up as she ventures on to the first green pasture**, and now is the time for making the best cheddars of the year.

The goat kids are growing by the day and soon we'll be milking the does again and have a steady supply of chevre. In a time of scarcity on grocery shelves and difficulty getting to the stores, it is extremely gratifying to have abundance here at home. Thank goodness the trees are leafing out, because it has become just as hard here as anywhere to procure toilet paper. Thankfully we tend to buy things by the case when we buy them, and our household had just bought a case of 60 rolls in early February!

Another thing that doesn't change is the need for organizations to keep working. At a time when we would already be hosting our first visitor session of the year alongside Mercantile programs and other events, the nonprofit is turning its energies to producing virtual visitor programs. Prairie and I will be filming the making of sauerkraut this coming week, and those of us who normally offer workshops to visitors have been approached about recording our usual offerings like mine on land use planning and alternative energy. We are working on significantly boosting our online offerings all around, and hope you'll keep checking in on the latest.

There are many more stories to tell, and perhaps Christina will offer more of them in a couple weeks, but we'd also love to hear how you're holding up out there. Despite the massive economic cost of this epidemic, I've been heartened to see the many stories about how rapidly the polluted skies clear over cities around the world as industry has shut down. Do we really have to trade economic progress for breathable air? **I'm hopeful for the many policy debates and personal discussions that will inevitably come out of this event, and hopefully lead us all to thoughtful consideration of what future we want to share.**

The best stories, though, are those about individuals like you, stepping up to do your best and then some amidst unprecedented circumstances that lead us to question all our assumptions about life. However you are getting through this time, whatever inspiration you are finding, I applaud you and hope you'll keep your spirits up and let us know what is keeping you going. From all of us at Dancing Rabbit, strength! Love! Hope!



Ganas, New York, USA

Susan Grossman

April 12th

So far we have been amazingly lucky with no one yet definitely positive and only a few people requiring isolation. These are the measures we have taken so far:

- Around March 12 we developed a COVID 19 team consisting of 3 people (I am one) to coordinate community response.
- We decided to not have any visitors or new residents
- Our housekeeping team started sanitizing frequently used surfaces like door knobs, bathrooms, kitchens with a sanitizing solution.
- Our food team started to use masks and gloves for food preparation.
- We still serve dinner, encourage people to wear masks and to stay 6 feet apart.
- We put soap and hand sanitizer and disposable paper towels in all kitchens and bathrooms
- We put signs up reminding people to wash hands before eating. We made it a norm to ask people, "did you wash your hands ?"
- We still have our planning meeting but people sit 6 feet apart and are encouraged to wear masks
- We have a "covid-19 support team" for people in isolation
- Any member returning from another country or from a visit away is 2 weeks in isolation, the support team helps find people to bring them food, take and wash their dishes, do their laundry etc.
- Anyone with one of the cardinal symptoms (cough, or fever) also isolates for 7 days or 3 days after their symptoms resolve, which we have found to be usually after 10-14 days. About 5 people have had to do this so far. Most were not tested. One was and was found to be negative.
- While in isolation people join meetings via zoom (or anyone who doesn't feel comfortable being with other people in person).

Update : April 22nd

Two members were tested positive. One finished his isolation for the 14 days and the other is still isolating. Right now he is the only person still in isolation.



Old Hall Community, UK

David Hodgson
March 31st

The community's daily Coronavirus meeting is still going on. I missed the beginning, dipped in for a while then dipped out again before the end. I'll catch up with any decisions when the minutes are circulated. It seemed well attended with members seated at various dining tables or standing along the walls on the platform in the main kitchen. There seemed to be about fifteen or sixteen attendees all spaced about six feet apart. As more attendees joined, so the gaps between people reduced and so I did not stay too long. Agenda items were the usual generic stuff. Community shopping, private shopping, cash and carry run, who would do what and what was the best way to minimise the number of trips out of the gate into the village and beyond. Then the more specific stuff. Government guidelines and the variable levels of compliance given that we are more than fifty people who share one very large house. The ongoing pressure being put on Friary Household finances and the need to keep tabs on it. These daily meetings have been happening each day since before lockdown and are invaluable.

A community in South East Queensland, Australia

April 22nd

We have chosen as a community to cease all courses, events and market days. The accommodation and camping is closed to new visitors. Our regular Wednesday night oven baked pizza event, Friday night sound lounge and Cafe are all closed. So our growing internal economy has stalled temporarily. It is a different place to be in - a lot quieter. We are, however, reviewing our operations and maintenance jobs to be up and ready when restrictions are lifted. We have taken the recommendations seriously.

There is also lots of good coming through too. We started a weekly check in of neighbours within our clusters to say hello and see if anything is needed. This has brought people closer... with the 1.5m distancing of course. Also one person goes to town each Thursday to pick up a number of family orders. The hardware delivers weekly and the Heath food Coop also has a service. And one family picks up a large egg order and then sells them on via an honesty box in their yard. This has meant people are helping each other more.

There is a lot more gardening and food growing happening. This is great to see. Some seed and shoot swapping.

All in all, while there are significant changes, our community seems to be doing well. It is wonderful to be living in an Ecovillage at this time.

May there be lots of healing, laughs and good times across communities,
:)



Kibbutz Amiad, Israel

Kibbutz Amiad in Corona Times

First, a little background.

Kibbutz Amiad is a community that has gone through a process of privatization over the last 25 years, moving from the intense communal/collective interdependence to a community of independent family units. This has included the division of most (not all) of the kibbutz's assets amongst its members, the most significant of which has been the plots and houses in which we the members live. This profound change was brought about primarily by the need to survive rather than by ideological inspiration, and in the early process was thought to be "the end of kibbutz", and that the kibbutz would metamorphose into a simple community village. Instead, however, the kibbutz has maintained a high degree of communality. This ranges from mutual responsibility and care, direct democracy on all major decisions (one vote per member - meeting together every month), the organization of communal institutions - child care, education, daily after school informal education, care for the elderly - an active golden-agers club house, library, cultural activities for the various age groups, sport (there is a football pitch, tennis courts and a basketball court), and family allotments for growing vegetables etc.

The members pay an equal monthly tax per person to the community. This tax supports other such community functions such as landscape gardening, security, safety, the swimming pool etc. Included also is a "safety net fund" to ensure that no family falls below a certain monthly income, together with a "catastrophe fund" should a disaster befall a certain family.



An elected Management Committee oversees all activity including various economic ventures in which the kibbutz is involved - a factory, orchards, motel, land rental, amongst others. Today

most members work outside the kibbutz, each to his/her own vocation.

So in fact, when the Corona Virus struck with its attached ever-growing stringent regulations, the kibbutz's well-oiled organization was able to immediately mobilize to social-distance, isolate the elderly, and provide all services as required.

A special committee was appointed including a social worker, nurse, and other functionaries to oversee all community and individual issues connected with this special situation.

The kibbutz is surrounded by a modern security fence with an electronic gate at the entrance, which can be operated from afar by a telephone number that all members have.



This is normally closed from 8pm thru to 6am, but with this crisis it is closed 24/7. Members working in essential industry or services off the kibbutz continue to do so in a limited manner.

The community has organized to supply the needs of those homebound - the isolated, self-isolated and the elderly. The dining room (in these days of privatization run by an outside contractor) provides take-away meals.

A newsletter of two or three pages is distributed digitally every few days - we are up to number 21 as I write. This contains updates on regulations, advise, humour etc. There is also a digital community notice board updating constantly on issues concerning the public, including discussions, timetables etc.

The Kibbutz Facebook page is brimming with items including quizzes, information, nostalgia, and a collection of humorous items circulating the social media.

Both the local area council and the kibbutz itself has organized a series of activities through ZOOM which include pilates, lectures and discussions. We even had a ZOOM "Member's Meeting" followed by, for the first time, an electronic voting procedure to vote from home.

Our local convenience store has not closed its doors (open from 6.30am thru 8.0pm) - shoppers wear masks and gloves!

The cultural committee organizes troubadours singing "happy birthday" outside homes where relevant.

A few years ago we discovered that the average age of our members was 62 years old - not very encouraging for the future, so we embarked on an aggressive demographic programme, which is today successfully bringing young families to join us. This is accompanied by the development of a new neighbourhood attached to the kibbutz. Newcomers joining us are voted in as members and commit to building their home at Amiad.

This new infusion of "young" blood has been decisive in ensuring our ability to look forward to the continuing development of the community, and in particular standing stalwart in the face of this present crisis.

The delicate demographic tapestry of the community is made up of the seniors who founded the community in 1946 who were members of a unit of the then striking force of the pre-state underground Jewish Defense Forces (Palmach), through to generations of pioneering youth movement groups from both Israel and abroad who have joined throughout the years. Added to this are those born on the kibbutz and remained to join the community and raise their families here and those many families from both Israel and abroad who simply sought a "different" lifestyle. This demographic variety, whilst undoubtedly contributing to the overall good, also gives rise to tensions, the consideration and debate of which becomes the very essence of our democratic Jewish lifestyle.

Barry Coleman. Kibbutz Amiad. April 2020



Kibbutz Mishol, Israel

Anton Marks
March 29th

Tfw #socialdistancing and #stayinghome are a contradiction in terms.

I've spent half my life removing my front door, intentionally, hinge by hinge. Now I need to put it back on, I haven't got a clue where to find it, and even when I do, I don't even know which way up it goes.

I've had text messages expressing envy that we have lots of people around during a time when others don't. However, since we have lots of people coming and going in and out of the building, those that work in health services or the voluntary work that we are doing, in order to protect our most vulnerable (we have a significant number of people with pre-existing conditions which puts them in danger), and to protect those that we are working with outside, we need to distance ourselves from one another, something which is emotionally, but also practically, a real challenge.

No, I'm not going to lose my job, or the roof over my head. We'll definitely take a significant hit economically, but will probably only start to feel that in the months to come. I won't succumb to this disease personally and I don't have my own parents or grandparents to worry about.



The life I have chosen is an attempt to actualize an antidote to rampant capitalism. An alternative to the fractured society that we see all around us. Aspiring to create a society that challenges the blind acceptance of poverty, violence, racism, sexism as 'that's just how life is'. It's an alternative for ourselves, but also for those we meet and create new realities with.

And suddenly we are thrown into a new, unknown and unexpected crisis situation which challenges us both physically, mentally and financially. But the social side is the most confusing, where our all-encompassing togetherness actually works against us.

I'm not writing this looking for sympathy, but to share the complexities of being part of a very intentional and close-knit community that is also committed to taking responsibility for our surroundings.



Twin Oaks, USA

Valerie Renwick

April 16th

Twin Oaks is weathering the pandemic relatively well so far.

--We have significantly quarantined ourselves from the outside world. We have cancelled our visitor programs, no guests are allowed to come, and only essential trips off-the-farm (emergency medical needs, urgent business needs, bulk food trips with no luxury items only basics). As far as we know, no-one is sick, and it's been exactly 1 month that we have been in quarantine

--we are allowing a very few people to come in (ex-members, previously-accepted new members) only if they quarantine according to our standards for 2 weeks immediately beforehand. Eventually it will be a problem that we aren't having visitors, for they are our lifeblood. We will cross that bridge as more unfolds around the coming "waves" of the pandemic.



--We are focussing on keeping the virus out of the cmtty, since we share so much (no individual houses, very few kitchens) it will be much harder once it is inside the cmtty

--our most vulnerable members are further quarantined in one of our residences. No one can enter, and we bring them foodstuffs to cook with (which sits for a day or two after we drop it off before they touch it)

--we have prepared one residence as a place to quarantine sick people if that happens

--our Community Planner group and our Health Team (7 people total) are dealing with a lot of the community administration and decision-making about our practices. They meet everyday and we have a community meeting about the pandemic every week or two to clarify information/decisions, and gather input about future decisions.

--significantly, life continues as ever. I'd say about 85% of life here is as it usually is (working in the garden, making tofu and hammocks for our cmtty businesses, cooking and eating together at our dining hall, we are mostly not doing social distancing internally) and 15% is different (no visitors, no snack-food runs to town, etc.)



--our lifestyle here allows us to have things much easier than for most people in the world who are quarantining--we still have lots of space, financial support, etc. for which we are very grateful. However, if the virus enters the cmtty, in a way due to how we live so physically closely, things could be much harder for us than in many individual living situations

--there is a good feeling of togetherness and connectedness during this time. Although we have experienced increased polarization in the cmtty in the past year or so, we have drawn together during this time. This may become more challenging as we move forward with deciding how to deal with how and at what speed to open back up.

--the american holiday of April Fool's happened during our quarantine, and there were a number of humorous papers posted related to the pandemic. This was easier here because no-one has been directly affected so we were/are still able to poke fun without it being too sensitive. (eg. a member who had been staying in town was going to dig a tunnel from town to directly underneath the quarantine building at Twin Oaks and enter the quarantine that way, a member who is notorious for dramatic poly relationship proposed to quarantine here with his 5 off-the-farm lovers all taking over our visitor building, the 7 people who are the Planners and Health Team that I described above decreed themselves "The Council of Seven" and granted themselves over-arching perks such as increased personal spending money for themselves, the ability to take over any member space, etc.) These greatly provided comic relief, and actually a couple of members at least partially believed them, which is proof of the best kind of April Fool's jokes.

Forgebank Cohousing, UK

Chris Coates
April 26th

After a short burst of rather frenetic communal activity here at Forgebank Cohousing (I think we panic bought an extra washing machine.)- we have a Covid19 emergency team sorting out day to day issues, mainly around safe use of essential communal facilities and we are grappling with quite how you do online consensus processes.



Otherwise we have settled down into an oddly calm routine of not really doing very much - which suits some folks and is I think driving others quietly stir crazy. Strangely I have more work under lockdown than I had before - though too much of it is sitting in front of a computer screen for my liking.



Pacific Gardens Cohousing Community, Canada

Generally, really well. We held emergency meetings as soon as the B.C. government announced the COVID-19 restrictions, first, using social distancing, and then, via Zoom. We followed the Jamaica Plains Cohousing model as our guide in setting up protocols, moving through stages one through six as the crisis worsened.

We have two nurses living here who gave us good advice on disinfecting, social distancing, and other information we needed to keep our vulnerable community members safe.

We set a schedule for disinfecting all the touch-points in our building - door handles, light switches, entry phone, mailbox, elevator buttons, etc. - and established a buddy system so that all the residents had someone they could call on for help if needed. We set up a buddy family system so that the children could play together and still maintain the protocols. We let families with children who had to work from home use some of the common rooms as their work-space, with the condition that they had to maintain and disinfect them after every use. There were tensions. Some people were critical of the efforts of others, and accused them of "not taking this seriously." One of our facilitators worked with them to explore their concerns and see if a solution could be found.

We are fortunate in that we live on a large property - 4.37 hectares - and the weather was absolutely gorgeous, so people could get outside as our provincial health officer advised for walks, exercise, and gardening without violating social distancing rules. We also have experienced, well-trained facilitators who guided us through these difficult times with good humour and grace. We started out in an atmosphere of fear and anxiety, but as time passed, we adjusted. I feel incredibly fortunate to be living in such a supportive community during this kind of social upheaval. It bodes well for the future.

Boekel Ecovillage, The Netherlands

At Boekel Ecovillage we are in the process of building our own houses. The climate crisis is still continuing, so we are also continuing.

All our meetings are now held online. Each month we have a meeting for sharing information, and on average about 30 people attend from all over the Netherlands. The first online meeting was attended by 45 interested people and now, three weeks later, almost 400 people have watched it on YouTube.

The children love that they can play together all day without going to school. As for the adults, we still work together on our temporary community centre, but keep a distance of 1.5m from each other. We have one person who has Corona and we take good care of him with dinners and shopping. We have not made any rules or regulations regarding Corona because we see ourselves as very responsible people and as such you don't need to make rules.



Bruderhof, UK

Peter Mommsen
March 25th

It's astounding just how much has changed in the four weeks since we sent the latest issue of Plough to press. Way back then, the COVID-19 virus was a distant threat centered on Wuhan, China. Now it has brought a shocking halt to normal life around the globe, taking thousands of lives, threatening millions more, and plunging the economy into turmoil. Here in upstate New York, I'm working from home, where my family has self-isolated to protect the elderly and vulnerable in our multigenerational household.



Much has changed in daily life; yet more fundamentally, questions of faith and politics have only become more pressing in light of the pandemic. Self-sacrifice for the common good is no longer merely a slogan in political campaigns: thousands of doctors and nurses are literally risking death to test and treat others. Less dramatically but just as crucially, hundreds of millions of ordinary citizens have upended their lives to help slow the spread of the virus. For Plough, as for other publishers, this crisis means changed realities. Like most New York State nonprofits, last week we received orders to shutter our main office as part of the containment effort. By then, actually, most of our staff had already begun working remotely or taken time to care for family.

As early as January, Bruderhof physicians were tracking news of the virus closely, with our community in South Korea the first to be directly affected by travel restrictions in late February, followed by our community in Austria. In the United States and United Kingdom, where most Bruderhof members are located, many in communities of two to three hundred people, we soon decided to refrain from all but essential travel.

At the same time, we - just like our neighbors in the wider community - were having animated discussions about the pros and cons of taking more radical measures to contain the virus. The hallmark of our life together, inspired by the example of the early church (Acts 2 and 4), is to work and share together in daily fellowship, meeting each day for common meals and worship. To self-isolate as individual families seemed to contradict our vocation; it's a step we'd never taken in a century of community living.

Yet by March 12, we concluded we needed to take decisive action to protect the elderly and vulnerable among us, and to do our part to halt the pandemic. We closed our schools, asked all Bruderhof members to remain at home, and halted all community gatherings, while rapidly trying to invent fresh ways to care and look out for each other. Here in New York, we went further, reaching out to local and state officials to offer assistance in building out additional medical capacity to contend with the peak impacts of the pandemic in regions where we have Bruderhof locations.

While these preventive actions by our communities have mostly preceded and exceeded official guidelines, the crisis has highlighted the vital role that legitimate public authority should play in protecting society, especially the vulnerable.

New York State Governor Andrew Cuomo recently called on citizens to be "socially distanced, spiritually connected." While staying home physically, we continue to engage with the wider communities surrounding each Bruderhof. In place of house visits to struggling neighbors, we've set up pick-up spots for food and are providing other help where we can, coordinating our efforts with government leaders. While our manufacturing businesses have been hard hit by the mandatory closure of our workshops and the pandemic's repercussions in the marketplace, some of our facilities are being repurposed to produce parts for COVID-related medical devices. Farther afield, we continue to support the work of humanitarian organizations such as Save the Children. Life in lockdown is far from boring.

As for my own family, despite the always-sobering news from elsewhere, I'm enjoying having my three school-age kids at home for these early spring days. In the mornings, we improvise something resembling schoolwork, then landscape around the yard, take birdwatching rambles through the woods, train the dog, call housebound friends around the world. (Plough readers, have you yet rediscovered the joy of calling people up?) With more family time on our hands, we're pondering how to expand our vegetable garden and orchard, maybe get a few pigs to raise ...

Of course, for many this time is far grimmer: for those solitary in their isolation, those who've lost jobs, those grieving loved ones or facing death alone. And before long, the crisis could grow grimmer still. Only hindsight will show whether it proves a short if painful interlude or triggers deep civilizational changes. Either way, these interim days (weeks? months?) can be fruitful for focusing on the big questions to which this magazine is dedicated: How can we live well together, and what gives life meaning? We at Plough look forward to joining in this search for the things that matter most in life together with friends far and near.

Valsølillegård, Denmark

The 35 year old community of Valsølillegård has divided ourselves into families / couples. So we do not associate as much as we usually do. Several of the people consider themselves as being vulnerable since they have pre-existing conditions and we are all older than 60. Eating together has been suspended and so have the meetings until things change. I am the only single person here, so I am more isolated than the others, but two of the other women have checked on me to see if I am still alive, and I go on bike rides with one of them. We talk together when we meet outside - at distance. I am a nurse, so I do get out and meet other people at my job. None of us are ill yet. May it stay so.

Dorte Gringmuth Aagaard



One community near Berlin, Germany

As a smaller, rather elderly community on average (11 adults, 4 children, 4 people over 65 years) with several individuals at an increased risk of dying from corona, we have decided to continue to allow the few children to have individual external contacts, while protecting the elderly as much as possible. This means that the crack goes right through our community. The old and the young have been separated from each other as much as possible. The common room and the canteen kitchen are no longer used by the two families with children and are reserved for the older members.

So the older members come into contact with the younger ones and the children only sporadically, outside in the yard or on those very rare occasions when we sit around the fire in the evening (sitting on opposite sides). Of course we support each other: The younger members do most of the shopping for the older ones, if something has to be bought from the city (otherwise we order it wholesale) - and the older ones cook for the families. Since the younger ones are extremely busy at home studying or working and looking after the children at the same time, their participation in the plenary session and in community activities (cleaning up the yard, working on construction sites) is very limited. New sub-communities are emerging in the yard: the older ones are moving closer together and we, the parents and the children, have also moved closer together. We cook and eat lunch together every day, take turns in child care - we now have our own "Waldkita" for 4-5 children - and exchange thoughts, feelings and now and then a hug - rare and very precious, touching outside of the circle of our own nuclear family.

It is beautiful how we support each other, but sad not being able to be together with the older ones anymore. Unfortunately, the communication does not shift to other channels, it simply does not take place anymore or only very selectively. I cannot imagine at the moment that this will last longer than 19 April; and yet I suspect that we will have to maintain this separation for a long time to come - what will this do to us as a former intergenerational community? And spun further, because I experience our community again and again as a reflection of the processes of society as a whole - what will this do to our society, that we are forced to shut ourselves off from each other for such a long time?

Our elders have decided not to see their children and grandchildren for the time being. And so we have also put the process of getting to know each other for several families on hold.

However, I now doubt whether this decision is correct. At least we younger ones, who partly work, shop and look after children anyway (also single children who do not live with us), could take the "risk" and continue the process - slower maybe, but still: continue.

Valley of Peace, Portugal

We're still open. The reason is, we have a roommate who can see the aura and he is deciding at the moment if and whom we accept.



State of emergency - What about communities?

How are people in (other) communities doing in times of contact prohibitions and distance rules? As a resident of Sieben Linden Ecovillage, I asked myself this question and assumed that our readers are interested in it as well. So I wrote to all the communities that present themselves in the current edition of the eurotopia Directory and asked about it.

Although similar regulations apply to people in communities all over the world, our "households" sometimes include dozens of people, and our contacts to "the outside world" can often be regulated so well that a community can almost be quarantined without having to change its everyday life too much. In many communities, children are looked after together at times when schools are closed - they live together in a dense space anyway, often as if in a common quarantine. And if isolation outside school hours is not possible, it would also be pointless for home schooling.

Often the official guidelines are implemented to a large extent, but cooking continues for everyone and sometimes meetings or sports activities continue to take place within the community - sometimes at a distance. One German community wrote quite openly in their last newsletter that they "move closer together instead of keeping their distance" - so far there have been no legal consequences to admit this openly, even though it might be against German regulations (it's not clear if government authorities would accept communities as a household or as several households; in the latter case they would be obliged to keep a distance. Obviously, nobody wants to ask...)

One answer to my mail to the communities was: "...I am sure that you too will continue to take each other in your arms in Sieben Linden, ... maybe a little less often, but not less warmly because of that..."

Distancing! In fact, we only embrace each other within the groups in which we live closely together anyway. The 1.5 m distance has already become a habit for me when I walk through the village (which I have to sometimes, because we share pantry, washing machine, mail corner and much more). At the moment I'm pondering back and forth whether I may meet a girlfriend who is not part of my "reference group" - so you could say: We take the whole thing quite seriously at Sieben Linden. We are also affected economically. Like many communities, we offer a wide range of opportunities to get to know our community as well as seminars, which usually keeps many people in paid employment; in addition, volunteers are employed in the educational sector (Voluntary Ecological Year, Federal Voluntary Service, European Voluntary Service). We hope that we will be able to make ends meet with financial aid for which we are eligible (thank you, government!) - and the volunteers may help on the construction site of our guesthouse instead of setting up breakfast for guests. In any case, there will be enough to do for many more weeks.

Some reports from the communities display frustration. Anton Marks from Kibbutz Mishol writes:

"I've spent half my life removing my front door, intentionally, hinge by hinge.

Now I need to put it back on, I haven't got a clue where to find it, and even when I do, I don't even know which way up it goes".

Frits from Amsterdam Catholic Worker, where anyone with symptoms is immediately isolated, feels trapped in his own community, worse than in prison. He bows to the decisions of his community and misses the freedom to deal with a possible infection as he sees fit. He feels that the ownership of a car or mobile phone ultimately kills people as well (presumably due to the consequences of the production and mining of raw materials for the mobile phone and the consequences of the operation of the car, MW), but that this decision is left to each community member to make for himself - in contrast to the behaviour in case of a possible infection.

In my community of Sieben Linden - and obviously in most others as well - we are aware that getting infected with the current Corona virus is probably not dangerous for most people, but could be fatal for some, and that the crisis with its measures and effects is simply terrible for many. But when community proves itself here, it is also an important contribution to the social discussion.

I suspect that people who live in familiar neighbourhoods and are familiar with constructive exchange are less likely to experience fear and panic. In many places, it has been shown that a community is a good place when a threat comes "from outside". Some even experience more community in these times, less stress and a special time in a positive sense: Many community residents seem to be doing really well. In the "Giesserei" ("foundry") in Switzerland, community dwellers are singing from the balconies every evening, in Pendragon (England) some enjoy the peace, "because they find normal community life stressful with people coming and going all the time", and elsewhere, travelling journeymen have stayed longer than planned and are building more than had been hoped for.

While I read that in many cases those in danger isolate themselves more strongly within the community or even leave the community temporarily in order to protect themselves, I also read that the communities get involved in neighbourhood help and feel solidarity with the "outside world".

I read about hope that the pandemic will have lasting positive effects (Tamera) - and I read about doubts about that. It does make us impressively aware that globally coordinated action is possible despite economic losses - why are air travel and pleasure travel not restricted simply because they make a disastrous contribution to climate change, why does a pandemic need to happen? - but on the other hand there is growing pressure to make up for the profits missed in this financial year, if possible. Roger from the Pendragon Community in England writes:

Some people think there may be a positive outcome from this situation, like the more socially responsible attitude that followed World War 2, and a relaxation of our murderous assault



on our planet, but I will be surprised if this happens. Generally, I suspect that the pain this is causing is likely to make people even less considerate when they are able to get back to 'normal'.

Of course, there are also some sceptical people among the residents of the community who disagree with governmental measures - wonderfully detached. I find the mysterious text of the Saor Thoil Clan, where it is made clear "that we as a clan do not owe allegiance to unfamiliar politicians and their laws" and that one could actually easily obtain an antiserum against the virus... Also in the Valley of Peace in Portugal people are carefree because: "we have a member who can see the aura and he decides at the moment if and whom we take in".

eurotopia just represents a very wide variety of worldviews (with clear limits as far as violence, racism or other violations of human dignity are concerned).

Worth reading is the report of a community project in the Algarve - where all sorts of stranded people surprised by the pandemic have been picked up and taken into the community. They've all been immunised there now; they've got the Corona threat behind them.

What I find most moving about the statements gathered below (for example at Solens Hjerte in Denmark) is the compassion and humility in many reports. I do not read arrogance about being in a better position in community than when one has to go through the crisis alone - but a silent gratitude, and a solidarity with those who have to suffer more. This gives me hope in the not unlikely event that we humans will have to cope with other states of emergency in the future. Community dwellers remain connected to their fellow human beings, and the invitation to live in community stands.

And that is what we stand for with the eurotopia Directory.

Michael Würfel
For the eurotopia team

Tifolk, France

Here in Trémel, our concern has been to avoid the closure of our Solidarity Grocery, which helps people in financial difficulty, and which contributes to reducing food waste .

We are also registered as a "Civic Reserve". This is a platform that allows French citizens to volunteer for particular tasks during the quarantine period.

As soon as the confinement began, inhabitants joined their parents / family in order to help them as best they could. Some will return at the end of confinement, and others will leave for new horizons.

But what is happening now gives meaning to our Community. We have to go faster, but we have already done so much ...



Pendragon Community, UK

There are 7 of us living here at the moment, 2 of them have children who are shared with a parent who doesn't live here and those two children also visit and are considered to be within our family meaning that our family extends into their other homes, too, from the point of view of contagion. We have spare capacity and have invited several vulnerable people to join us on the basis that they quarantine in an area of the house where they can stay completely isolated, cook their own food etc. Not all of them have been able to come, sometimes because they don't think their child would be able to quarantine effectively.

Life for us community dwellers is indeed good, we have plenty of good food and large communal meals, we are company for one another, the children play together, we often all play games together in the evening. Some of us actually prefer it like this, because they find normal community life stressful with people coming and going all the time, or because it gives them an excuse to have uninterrupted quality time with their child, etc. But it will be good when we again start to be able to have activities involving the wider community, however far that may be away at the moment.

Unusually our community is on the edge of a small town so it's normally a place used by lots of other people as well as the residents.

Some of the people here are WWOOFers who happened to be here when the pandemic struck. Work continues on preparing and planting the vegetable garden and maintaining the grounds, we do yoga in the morning but there is less to do generally. Financially there is very little income at the moment but we have reserves. There is no testing for the virus currently available in the UK other than for very few people in hospitals so we assume no one in our 'family' has had the virus. I am 67, the oldest, and hoping not to get infected in this crisis phase of the epidemic here and I think everyone is being sensible. Some people think there may be a positive outcome from this situation, like the more socially responsible attitude that followed World War 2, and a relaxation of our murderous assault on our planet, but I will be surprised, generally I think the pain this is causing is likely to make people even less considerate when they are able to get back to 'normal', and in the UK we have an entrenched right wing government for the next 5 years, cut off from our European neighbours.

Roger

A community in the Black Forest, Germany

Our last info meeting was small, 10 had registered to come but only 2 showed up because the school in Furtwangen had already closed due to an infection. So we thought about bringing people together online. Things should go on. We took advantage of the app "Teamspeak". We meet once a week on Thursday evenings at 6 pm. This is also an opportunity for people to make contact with our community if they reside in other federal states. All questions are answered as far as possible and there are also very funny conversations, which are very pleasant in this time of very negative information and moods at home. So we can exchange information easily and safely.



Solens Hjerter ("The Heart of the Sun"), Denmark

Of course, Covid-19 is something that we have been talking about a lot and has affected our lives, all 50 people in our community, on many levels.

Already at the end of February, we established a group consisting of our doctor and other members of our community. Together, we read about this new disease and it was clear for us that it would come to Denmark at some point and that it would be necessary for us to have a plan ready for that time.

It was very good for us to be able to talk through all the different aspects and to help each other find the right information and, throughout this whole process, we have had meetings with all the members of our community, where we can share our knowledge and our plans. That has been really good and has created a lot of security in an insecure time.



No one really knows how hard the disease will hit, if they will get ill and on top of that, the oldest one here is 92 years. We really want to take good care of each other and make sure that no one gets ill.

So now, we buy our groceries online and we have been closed off for guests and visitors for almost a month. No guests, no people passing by, no relatives visiting. That is a huge and unprecedented step and we have never tried anything like this before. Luckily, everybody in Denmark and Germany is in "the same boat" so there is a lot of understanding.

The children are at home, but luckily there are quite a few good teachers here. Until now, the kids loudly declare that they don't miss school at all!

Most people here can work from home and the others, mainly people working in the hospital, are wearing masks when they are in our common house and are otherwise sticking to themselves in order not to infect anybody.

As we often do, we regularly meet and meditate and we send our compassion out into the world to all those who are ill and otherwise affected by Covid-19. So many people are in a terrible situation!

It is certainly a comforting and empowering feeling to stand together and to work together in this special time of crisis; to use the skills we all have to make everyday run smoothly and

to be able to talk things through and find security and perspective in this time where it is so important.

We are all healthy and we are all closer together than before and somehow also more grateful for the company of each other and the many small things in life that we so often forget; the spring and that we are all healthy and alive.

Basisgemeinde, Germany

April 30th

What the WHO has defined as a pandemic has impacted on the life of the Basisgemeinde in multiple ways.

Within the community, we are attempting to implement stricter standards of hygiene. We are taking the threat of potential infection seriously and we are trying to protect those who have been defined as the group at risk.

During the past week we have instituted a joint educational framework and daily schedule for our seven children. This was a positive experience. All in all, we are profiting from our overall system and infrastructure on-site as well as from our valuable contacts in the eco-region.

As of March 23, we had to downsize the extent of our business operation - the production and shipment of playthings and children's gymnastic equipment. Our customers consist almost exclusively of kindergartens and nurseries which are currently closed.

AutarcaMatricultura, La Palma/Spain

We at AutarcaMatricultura continue exactly as before, we nourish, integrate, protect the living, care for the weak and compensate. Our children can now finally stay at home legally, now and then they have to do some homework, otherwise they are with us and do with us what we do. Now there is much more time to play. That is nice for everyone.

The neighbourhood help is a bit more difficult, because only one or two of them are allowed on the public street at a time, but it works.

For our bonds with the region, we see that our years of intensive commitment to the transition to a resilient economy in the region is now, in this time of emergency, showing the first visible fruits... We are happy and encourage us to keep on working on the topics: "Unconditional Basic Income", "Land for everyone" and "Planting trees and building ecosystems for independence and health as well as abundance for all living beings, now and for the future".



Studentenvrijstaat Droevendaal, The Netherlands

Here in Studentenvrijstaat Droevendaal, most of us are students who study at the University of Wageningen. As the focus of most inhabitants lays on studying, we are not self-sufficient. Therefore it is hard to isolate ourselves.

We apply the same rules as the rest of the Netherlands. We try to keep 1.5m distance from each other and minimize the amount of visitors (both from outside and Droevendaal) to our houses. Most group activities are cancelled.

In practise we don't always follow these rules, as it is very much in the nature of our community to visit each others houses and keeping the 1.5m distance is very hard. We do meet outside a lot, and campfires have proved to work quite well to keep distance whilst still engaging in social activities. The rest of the time (when we are not studying) we work in our gardens or play music. It is not really the time of the year to have new students coming to live here, and the movement is further restricted by the University cancelling most internships abroad. But there is no stopping people joining us or moving out, also because the houses are owned by an external housing agency, who ultimately decide who is moving in when, and do not want to have empty rooms.

Bergen Ecovillage, Norway

Life goes on in Norway and the process of establishing Bergen Ecovillage in Norway goes on, but our ecovillage work has slowed down a bit. On the one hand the pandemic has changed and enriched our awareness about the importance and the value of our ecovillage project - and of similar projects in Europe and all over the world.

We have our weekly meetings, but now in our homes or on Skype, because all public places in Norway are closed. We have our monthly Social Friday outside and not inside the Student Centre in Bergen where we used to meet, because the centre is closed. We have our monthly Working Saturday as usual, and guests are still welcome, as usual, but we can only receive one or two guests at a time, since the authorities have announced that only small groups of max 5 people are allowed to gather. When we start working in the fields in May and June, we will probably choose to work in smaller groups at different places, instead of working all together all at the same place.

Tersen, Sweden

At Tersen, those of us who have isolated summer cottages have moved there. Our meetings, drinking coffee together at 10.30 and Friday dinners etc. have been stopped until further notice. Those who feel any influenza symptoms quarantine themselves in their apartments. The younger inhabitants have formed a purchasing group for us 'oldsters'. We keep track of each other. There is a lot of internal mail communication.



Amsterdam Catholic Worker, The Netherlands

I speak not for the community, but as Frits personally. I notice in my heart and mind a big and growing tension between complying with all measures aimed at preventing suffering and the suffering these measures cause in the life of society and the life of community and in my personal life.

I fear the suffering the measures cause in society from the micro to the global level, by far outweigh the suffering the virus brings.

Of course, we should slow down the spread of the virus, sure, but at what cost?

In the standard 2.1 average Dutch household sick people can go about in their house and make tea, watch TV, chat with their fellow 1:1. In our 20 person community people with symptoms have to stay in their room. "Let's be safe, and assume it is corona". We make it even harder for them than in society at large where one can go about in one's own home when sick.

After days or weeks in our case when they have no longer symptoms, people are allowed back into the community. Pretty hard though, I find. Prison is less hard, with air, recreation and company.

In NL we cannot know for sure if it was corona because there are no tests in NL for people with only normal fever and symptoms. The current idea in the community is that when a new somebody gets sick and has symptoms including fever, all others cannot leave the house and the ones that have gone through isolation are not declared immune because "Let's be safe and assume it was not corona" and they have to stay indoors as well.

In a 'normal household', I look at the checklist of symptoms and know if I had it or if it is a maybe and I decide if I declare myself 'immune' or a more precautionary 'not yet'. Similarly, buying a car or a cell phone causes suffering, even causing death to the planet and for other people, but each community member decides on his/her own whether to have one or not. I'm pretty sure that I've had corona and therefore declare my self immune. If I am not, and I cause harm, it is on me, just like when I own a car or a cell phone. All this group pressure to go for the absolute surest option at all costs, makes me sad and angry.

At the beginning of the pandemic in NL the prime minister and the scientists said the goal was that we build up to about 60% group immunity and we try to keep the vulnerable people out of harms way. When there is 60% group immunity, the vulnerable people have a good chance to live until a vaccine is developed.

We removed our one elderly person with diabetes from the house. All 20 + others are not in high risk categories.

I say, let us be a normal household, let us not shy away from getting the virus, let us



contribute to the group of 60% immune people, let us be a family where the sick can move about in the house and the healthy can keep some distance but if they want to console someone, like a mother consoles her sick child, it is also ok. And when one is cured, let us assume it was corona, after all, it's a pandemic! And let those who are likely to be immune free. They have suffered enough from the virus, let us not suffer even more from the measures.

As you may have noticed, there is quite a bit of tension in my heart. I am still secluded from the community and I hear the others are doing fine and seem to be happy with these rules (though none of them but one have yet to be behind a closed door) and spirits are high and a lot of beautiful things are also happening because of corona, so mine is a minority viewpoint. It is undoubtedly biased, not necessarily reflecting the ultimate truth, and a little bit bitter. You probably would hear something different from me in two or three weeks, because my insights and the insights of the community do evolve, especially in this time of crisis.

Community can find truth more easily through discussion and exchange, but it's hard to discuss when you don't meet people anymore, not in the kitchen or on the balcony or in the chapel, and for the meetings you are behind your door and are allowed to be present only by phone, but you cannot see and often hardly hear all the others in the room.

Luckily I am blessed with not only a room, but with an apartment, where I can see my wife and son who were also sick, and with a balcony, and a door, so I can go to the garden where nobody else goes, even though I'm infected, I am not likely to cause any harm. But for our illegal refugee housemates, to imagine them having to obey such measures of confinement, even though the healthy illegal refugee housemates themselves promote these measures, I find it very hard to bear.

Isle of Erraid Community, UK

We are finding life on Erraid continues much in the same way, as we already lead an isolated existence in a remote location. We have a full community and a long term guest unable to return to his home. Two members 'self-isolated' for a fortnight on their return from elsewhere, and now we are closed to new arrivals. We are well stocked and gardens are being planted out with this season's vegetables.

Many of us feel enormous gratitude for this extended family where living is supported by daily, weekly and seasonal rhythms. Of course, no guests means no income, but we can ride this out for a while. Daily sharings and meals grown, cooked and eaten together reinforce the benefits of community living.

As an island off an island, we are also engaging outside our Erraid family to offer support to the local island community. For example, we are donating eggs, of which we have an abundance, to local children for their Easter celebrations.

We live one day at a time, however, and count our blessings to be here, now.

A community far in the west of Germany

We are a community of 15 adults and 6 children currently. We became conscious of Corona rather slowly, gradually seeping into our community. Three weeks ago, we decided, with heavy hearts, to cancel our beginning of spring public singing event, and celebrated the evening only internally, but a week ago we found ourselves discussing how we want to be seen to the outside world - since our community is located in the middle of the village - and how to deal with visitors. Yes, outwardly we keep the rules, we only go for walks in pairs and are not seen to be gathering as a large group close to the perimeter of the property. Internally, however, we continue to live our community life as before. There is a common lunch, we have our group meetings, yoga takes place, we have our cinema evenings, we work together in the garden and the children wander from apartment to apartment, always looking for new ideas and relationships. The only difference is that there is nobody from the outside with us. This means that all our public cultural events, our info days and group meetings with people from the surrounding area are cancelled.

For some of us the Corona virus is purely abstract, because our life here means that little from the outside is noticeable. Others who work outside feel, when they come home, relief due to the looseness and relaxation that prevails here, in contrast to many situations at work. But after the first few weeks the question arises here too: "Can we do this? Just carry on living like this and enjoy our island here?" We ask the question: "Is everyone allowed to visit as much and as often as he/she wants to?", which ignites a long discussion. Is it egoistic or solidary to want to bring your grandchildren here and let them participate in this beautiful island life or is it egoistic or solidary to isolate, to isolate yourself because many people have to do it so why shouldn't we?

Of course, the attitude towards this in our community is as diverse as we are different. From 'preferably no visits at all' to 'family reunions at Easter', to 'everything is ok', to 'everything is possible'. So no uniform regulation could be found, but we agreed on the sentence: 'Everyone checks for themselves whether it is really necessary to receive the visit and then decides for themselves'.

The situation is so new for each of us that we are all constantly in the process of crystallizing our opinions or a point of view. Some also want to consciously persevere with knowing less, in order to listen to the deeper meaning and change that all this brings with it. Everyone approaches the topic in their own way, whether through a lot of information from radio and the net, in conversations with people on the spot or far away, or by tracing dreams and images that come from within.

But we all agree that we have it good here: we live together and are not alone, we support each other and can share worries and fears, we live in the country and can go for long and extensive walks and all enjoy the particularly clear air and the overwhelming starry skies at night. And we wish these experiences to as many people as possible, because we know: In reality we are one big family - the human family.



Kirschblüte ("Cherry Blossom") Community, Switzerland

In our community we have no uniform external approach to the Covid-19 virus, except that major events, plenary meetings, seminars and groups have had to be cancelled and we are limited in many ways by the measures taken by the government.

We are about 120 adults and about 80 children who live in five quarters of a village of 1000 souls in single-family houses or apartment buildings. Many of us continue to live very freely, in close contact with roommates, neighbours (cherry blossoms), friends and adult daughters and sons and their families. When this closeness and freedom is spread outside of our houses, it is sometimes a little difficult with the rest of the village population, some of whom lock themselves up rigorously in their houses, no longer let their children play outside and forbid them any contact with each other or with us.

We have some in our community who now teach home schooling, work in the home office or are completely free, and thus have more space and time to cultivate our large vegetable and permaculture field. There we have to pay attention to the distances and group sizes, as the field is located on the main road in the middle of the village.

But there are also some people living in the cherry blossom who belong to the risk or even high risk group in terms of age or state of health. We protect these people and also the people who do not belong to the community with the distance rules. Many of these elderly or sick people avoid physical contact outside of their homes at the moment. Even people who work in the health care sector naturally observe the official guidelines and recommendations conscientiously in order to avoid carrying the virus into old people's homes, hospitals and nursing homes.

We are aware that we are very privileged with our life in the countryside: we hardly have to restrict our children and young people in their contacts and freedom of movement. We can go on foot to the (deserted) woods, to the river and to the fields. We can meet our friends and continue our projects in smaller groups.

Most of us are not directly affected financially and those who are do not have to develop existential fears, as they are surrounded and held by friends. What concerns us much more are the spiritual issues around Corona: what does it do to us psychologically and consciously, what do we learn, what could we learn, what for do we awaken even more deeply? What is the invitation that life just gives us? What is it like among us with the taboo of death, with vulnerability, finiteness, loss of control, fear, search for security?

And then there is the preoccupation, the compassion with the world: a great pain about the unemployed day labourers in India, the refugees in Lesbos, on the Syrian-Turkish border, in Congo, etc., the people in the slums of the big cities of Asia, South America, Africa. The imprisoned, overburdened families in cramped apartments, where violence and despair are on the rise, existences are threatened or have already collapsed all over the world. Every day

more than 100,000 people worldwide starve to death (even without Corona), and now there will be even more. For these people, not a fraction of the effort (financial, economic, media, friendshipwise etc.) that we are now making in our countries - because we suddenly feel vulnerable and fear that it could affect us or our neighbours - will be done. This makes us sad!

Besides all the pain, the questioning and the personal challenges of each individual, we enjoy the greater silence (our village is located in the flight path of a small regional airport), the empty streets and the time we have for family and friends.

And we use all our collective power of heart and head to go through the "Magic Dream" (i.e. in the energy body) to all those people in need, to help them. As "silent witnesses" we try to bring love, compassion, energy, comfort, courage, strength, solidarity and silence.

Gruebisalm Farm community, Switzerland

We are currently 12 people living here, with very little outside contact.

One can either become anxious and hysterical or simply trivialize the whole thing - both responses are somewhat the same. Our response is neither, but we are careful and take it seriously.

Our groceries are delivered to us, that reduces contact. The agrotourism we run is closed for the time being. We have enough work on the organic farm and in the vegetable garden to prepare for spring. That helps us a lot. We can concentrate on our work, with less distractions than before, which is a good experience. We eat a lot of fruits and vegetables to strengthen our immune system.

We aren't fooling ourselves though. If the virus reaches us, the infected person would have to stay in their room and take care of themselves as much as possible. We would then bring them food, vitamins C, D3 and zinc, take daily hot baths or go to the small sauna. Because 40 °C makes it uncomfortable for the virus. If someone gets a fever, not to try to get their temperature down immediately, because a fever is very hard on the virus... etc. etc. We know that the vast majority of people can survive it.

Keeping a distance of 1.5 meters is not easy to do. Within the community we do not do it. If someone comes to us for an important reason then keeping a distance is right.

The virus is not evil. It makes us humble. It does something no politician could do, like keep the planes on the ground.

We have the advantage of not being locked in an apartment. We can take care of our farm, our animals, the garden with even more attention than before. Somehow we have become more conscious. We are grateful not to have been affected up until now.



Community Sulzbrunn, Germany

We in Sulzbrunn interpret the initial restrictions as meaning that we are one big family, even if we live in several houses. This means that the children play together and we meet in everyday life with the distancing that each chooses for themselves. When we eat together (which is usually only twice a week and at (now cancelled) seminars), there is officially food to go, which is distributed by the kitchen. Joining the meals where everybody sits down to eat together in the dining hall, (at what distance?) is up to you. Larger rounds (formal meetings and social rooms) take place with a distance of 1.5 meters, so that also those who wish to keep this distance can participate. Because there are some people in our community who see themselves or their relatives as a risk group and therefore want to be careful. An elderly couple, who spent two weeks in self-imposed isolation, have now moved into a holiday apartment, as they do not feel safe in the community with this loose handling.

We have a good handful of people who still work outside every day. The large remainder leave Sulzbrunn only for occasional shopping. The basic supply runs through our village shop. Conclusion: Compared to most of the people outside we are privileged.

Threshold Cohousing Community, UK

We do consider ourselves fortunate to live in community, especially as here at the Threshold Centre we have a large communal lawn between the houses plus 1 acre of rented land where we grow fruit and vegetables. We have been gathering on the lawn (at safe distance!) every morning since 'lockdown', to share how we are feeling, ask if anybody needs shopping or help of any kind, and often hold a meditation, sing or practise Qi Gong. Only 2 of us are still working, so the rest of us have plenty of time to work in the garden or just sit on the lawn and socialise - again always at safe distance. We also live in the country, so have plenty of open space to walk in (with or without dogs) without getting into the car.



Disadvantages are that we no longer have our twice weekly shared meals or our daily meditation in the meditation room in the communal farmhouse, and even our monthly business meeting has turned into a "non-

meeting" in the garden. The farmhouse has been designated the family home of the 3 residents who rent rooms, and thus other community members are excluded. We have had to cancel all our events, some of which bring the community a small income, as well as enabling interested visitors to come and check us out. Fortunately we have no vacancies at present, so this is not a pressing issue...! We do have to be extremely careful when handling surfaces in the shared laundry, freezers, door handles, field gates, etc., and I think we all have a secret fear of being 'the one' who brings the virus into the community, especially as we do have 2 or 3 residents who may be considered very vulnerable. On the plus side, life is generally more relaxed and there seems to be more of a feeling of community, so that sometimes the world 'outside' seems quite surreal.



Intentional Community Confronts the COVID 19 Pandemic

By Michael Livni, Kibbutz Lotan
May 5th

During the last 200 years, most intentional communities were established as alternatives value responses to perceived traumatic aspects of capitalism and mass society in urban settings. Utopian socialist communities recognized that rural life in community might benefit health and even provide an environment where epidemic outbreaks (e.g. cholera) might be lessened. But the rationale for intentional community was primarily ideological and economic. Health crises such as pandemics in a globalized world were hardly conceivable until very recent times.

But now, as we live in the real world, we cannot evade an initial evaluation of how intentional communities have confronted/are confronting the coronavirus. This issue of CALL is based on an initial review of anecdotal reports received by the Intentional Communities Desk (ICD) of the Kibbutz movement as of the end of April.

Perspective

Intentional communities constitute a tiny sector within their countries. Their performance in the wake of a pandemic has to be evaluated in the context of how their macro environment relates (or not) to the crisis **in real time**. (For example -

compare on Google: Sweden in relation to other Scandinavian countries). The macro environment is not only a question of political parties in power. The culture in general and the sub-culture in particular (certainly in Israel) can be major variables. Age distribution and geographical location are significant as well.

In Israel, 175,000 people live on kibbutz - members, children and non-member residents. They constitute 1.9% in a population of 9 million.

Corona in Israel: 16,300 cases (one per 550) - 234 deaths (1.4% of cases)

Corona on kibbutz: 41 cases (one per 4,270) - 2 deaths, prominent underlying causes.

What Do We Learn from our Correspondents in Various Communities.

1. Objective Fact: Many intentional communities, especially small ones, describe themselves as isolated in rural regions. They are less vulnerable.
2. Subjective Fact: A feeling of relief among many that that are part of a supportive framework.



Ideological Purposes, Practical Implications

Clearly, when dealing with an epidemic/pandemic situation, a veteran, cooperative community with an ethos of mutual responsibility and which has experience and an organizational infrastructure in place, has an advantage over a non-organized public, an aggregate of individuals in a crowded urban setting.

Clearly, professional medical-epidemiological advice at a national level (if forthcoming in real time) will have more immediate impact if mediated through an organized community than if it depends on individuals for implementation.

The eurotopia document, "Communities and the Pandemic" has been particularly helpful in detailing initial reactions to the pandemic. Many thanks to the editor, Michael Wuerfel, a member of the Sieben Linden eco-village in Germany:

See <https://eurotopia.directory/communities-and-the-pandemia/>

There is a link of further interest within the eurotopia document inserted by the Darvell Bruderhof in the UK. The Bruderhof is an example of how a religious-ideological federation can react to the crisis.



"It is worth reading how the Bruderhof communities, which are spread all over the world, are reacting to the pandemic - very calmly and cooperatively":

<https://www.plough.com/en/topics/life/editors-postscript-notes-from-the-lockdown>

Finally, I would like to share my admiration for a particular intentional community in a unique situation - Ganas. Ganas is not an intentional community in an isolated rural setting. Ganas is located within one of the boroughs of Greater New York - the hard-hit epicentre of the Coronavirus in the United States - a country where the macro environment lost control.

In an increasingly urbanized world, can Ganas serve as an example of a new frontier for intentional community?



Newberry Place Co-housing, USA

We have stopped cooking common meals, stopped having meetings in person, continued to have outdoor work days with social distancing, started to have Zoom meetings, had an uninterrupted series of outdoor Happy Hours at 6 PM on the greenway, and we don't let anyone who is not in the community use the common house for gatherings anymore (except for the delivery folks who still have access to the bathroom). Instead of indoor common meals we have started to cook for the community in our houses and distributed the food as a take-out meal so every household doesn't have to cook for itself every single night.

Interestingly, the people who come out for Happy Hour most evenings are those who have been the most engaged in the community for the longest. The newer members are not coming out, even though they are invited and they know about it. And those who don't show up anyway for anything are obviously not coming out. So it is mostly the core group of founders and longer time residents who persistently come out to stand around in our masks and share the day's news. The second generation kids (now in their 20s) organized a Fashion Week, encouraging people to dress to a different sartorial theme each day. Participation was high.

GreenRise Intentional Community, USA

There has been stress. Our community has 30 members. About a fourth think we need very disciplined health safety measures, about a fourth think there is no need for them to be extreme, and about half more or less are inclined to to have more safety procedures than not but they're rather relaxed about it. Those estimates may not be completely accurate but they do represent a difference in opinion. This all came to the fore when some from the "more minimum safety procedures" people wanted to create an exercise room (something to which we have never really given much thought). This horrified the the "maximum safety people." In our last community meeting, the issue was not really resolved but the gym people pushed forward, many think in a very heavy handed way, and went ahead and created the gym. The coronavirus situation, therefore, occasioned a discord that probably would have never surfaced without. First, interest in the gym was largely driven by the "shelter in place" orders and second opposition was strong because it was seen as a risky practice. The good news is that there now is a general agreement that our community should objectify its decision-making process and make it much more clear by putting it in writing. There was never much motivation to do this in the past due to some unique conditions in our community. The fracture making this necessary has appeared precisely because of matters related directly to the virus.

The Vale, USA

The community play set is cleaned before each use. Monthly meetings are done on Zoom. Birthdays are celebrated by doing a parade - each person is 6 feet apart, we sing happy birthday, drop cards in a basket. We are not restricting visitors unless they're planning on using the play set (must get permission). Checking in on each other often.



Findhorn, UK

The Findhorn Foundation Community is an eclectic collection of individuals, families, businesses, and organizations, located in and around The Park Ecovillage, Findhorn, North Scotland. We are an interwoven mix of Findhorn Foundation co-workers and independent persons, generally aligned with the global transformational work of the Foundation. Exploring community living, and our individual and collective connection to Spirit, we live, work, play and worship together as one diverse international, intergenerational and interspecies (human, animal, and non-physical) conglomerate. We consider ourselves a caring community, where relationships are nurtured and family, friends, neighbors, colleagues and guests are valued. Our community of approximately 500 persons has the scale and complexity of a small village, while still affording us the comforts (and challenges) of a large extended family.

The arrival of Covid-19 with subsequent governmental lock-down conditions has had its own transformational effect on daily routine. It has given rise to fears for what our indeterminable future may hold, along with the precious gift of needing to be fully present in each moment as we make decisions not only for ourselves, but also for the community.

Much of our internal economy is tied to our being an educational and demonstrational site. So the cancelation of multiple guest programs, courses, and conferences has had wide reaching effects, not only for the organizations but also for those individuals who rely on such activities for their livelihood. Those more fortunate continue with their paid work, many have temporarily been placed on furlough, while others now struggle with interrupted income. The steps our organizations are taking to combat this include sharing their funding sources (governmental or charitable) and supporting those qualified to apply for grants. Our small businesses are maintaining services as best they can with staff working remotely and our shops are keeping shelves stocked and offering home deliveries. On a smaller yet full-hearted scale, private individuals are sharing with those in need both monetarily and in-kind. For example, extra contributions have been received by our Abundance Fund and donations to our local Food Bank servicing the whole region against food poverty, continue with full force.

As a mature community (58th anniversary this year!) our social structure is well developed. Many of our social programs and services are overseen by our community organization, the New Findhorn Association (NFA), and are delivered by volunteers. In fact, the vast majority of our residents volunteer in some capacity, whether it be neighbour helping neighbour, in working groups, or in holding Committee or Trustee positions. The very infrastructure that holds all this together is run on dynamic volunteer power!

Addressing the serious health risk that Covid-19 brings, our People Care Circles, which tend to the needs of our most vulnerable community members (whether medical, mental or due to age) are considering how to expand their capacity. And we are in the fortunate position of having recently hired a professional Coordinator through the Caring Community Circle to oversee the existing as well as expected rising number of persons needing this kind of



support. The most recent addition is the Volunteer Action Group, especially formed to coordinate and respond to those needing help with food shopping, picking up prescriptions, going to medical appointments, etc. Under this group we set-up Neighborhood Reps who help the flow of communication to and from our various housing clusters so that we can be aware of how each person is fairing during this time of self-isolation and distancing. And, it must be noted that our Town Criers, making their rounds to each neighborhood, keep everyone entertained by performing (at a safe distance) current official information while sharing their signature message, 'Let's be infected by Love!'

Our community holds governance lightly, yet respectfully, through collective representation. When the impact of this pandemic became clearer the COVID Action Group was formed, bringing together community members who lead membership-based organizations or hold specific expertise, for weekly discussions and the forming of task groups as needed. One of the initiatives is a COVID Tracking App designed to help us to map the location of anyone within our community experiencing symptoms and to monitor their recovery. Any concerns requiring more in-depth consideration are taken to the Collaboration Circle, which is composed of representatives from a selection of major community organisations. This valued group was formed approximately 4 years ago as part of our Community Change Process, and holds the remit to oversee community-wide topics and issues.



We believe that the COVID dictates of physical-distancing are understandable and (temporarily) acceptable to the community, but social-distancing can feel a real challenge, particularly while living in a

community that normally guarantees lots of personal contact. In response, we are embracing technology as a way of staying connected. Everything from friendly chats, children's education, group gatherings, business meetings, and community meetings are being conducted online. Morning Taizé, daily check-ins and meditations, weekly Zrunch and socials, and monthly Whole Community Meditations, have all been revamped for Zoom (video communications). And, a number of workshops and programs are generously being offered online, at reduced rates or for free, during this time of staying-at-homeness.

For all of our communal infrastructure and responsiveness, the humanness of feeling isolated, depressed or fearful under this mysterious, world-wide viral threat is very evident. Whether living in a housing cluster, as a family, or on one's own, a sense of aloneness and loss of control over our daily lives and the future can take grip. Various initiatives are underway to raise awareness and help ease such suffering, from providing personal befriending and counseling to sharing public education information. While there have not been any confirmed tested cases of COVID, a few of our members have been ill and are in various phases of recovery. And some are grieving for ill or departed beloved family and friends. So, like people everywhere, we live with unknown probabilities, being vigilant yet mindful of gaps in our wellbeing.



Whether by blind luck or truly inspired insight and guidance, prior decisions, some made very long ago, serve us well in this current time. We are fortunate to be located in a sparsely populated area with relatively low rates of outbreak and with ready access to bay, beach and woodland for daily outings. We have a vigorous food sustainability programme, which we are boosting with our gardening. But most importantly, we benefit by being held in a strong ethos of community spirit.

Many of our community members are not only keeping well informed, but are active with local and global initiatives to slow the spread of the pandemic. There are world-workers amongst us who, in monitoring the pulse of what's happening out in the world, remind us to hold compassionate thoughts and prayers for those without the privileges and blessings that we experience. Intellectual, monetary and energetic contributions are given with the hope of healing humanity as we navigate through these unprecedented times. Never have the ending words of our Whole Community Purpose document rung any truer: 'Together we aspire to respond to the call of the world, to the call of our time.'

Lorraine Rytz-Thériault
NFA Listener Convenor

My position with the New Findhorn Association is elected by the membership to work alongside a voluntary Council addressing the needs, concerns and aspirations of our community. I draw on a professional background comprised of Small Business Consulting and Community Development to serve my adopted community.

Kooperative Dürnau, Germany

We cook for everybody, then the food is driven to the different houses where we eat together in groups. We no longer gather in front of the dining house in order to not be seen to be coming together by the village. Whether the whole cooperative should actually be considered a "household" we probably won't have an answer anytime soon.

We are continuing with the joint child care, I have agreed to take care of a child of school age and now teach every morning.

For our guests, we make sure that they do not come from the "risk areas" that the state of BaWü names on their website. If we need to, we will sign an internship contract with the guests.

Our operations are running without significant changes. The nursery is asking the customers to keep their distance and in sales we can currently only offer small quantities of hand and surface disinfectants because Sonett cannot keep up with the production.

Surprisingly, we are seeing an increase in requests for visits and employment. In the last weeks there have been six inquiries, which is unusually high for us and surprisingly, three of them were doctors.



C.A.L.L.

Communities At Large Letter

Have you visited our website?

www.communa.org.il